

Book Reviews

***Olaf Stapledon.* By Patrick A. McCarthy. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982. Pp. 166. \$13.95.**

Although a few voices can still be heard decrying the literary worth of science fiction, the names of H.G. Wells, Karel Capek, C.S. Lewis, and Yevgeny Zamyatin provide evidence that excellent minds and talents have found in science fiction the literary form best suited to express their speculations, admonitions, and criticisms of man and society. Writers of this stature have given us works that define science fiction as something more than the rockets, death rays, mad scientists, and bug-eyed monsters of the American pulp magazines of the thirties. These are writers to be reckoned with, and among them—indeed, if judged solely by depth and scope of imaginative and conceptualizing power, at their head—stands British philosopher and author Olaf Stapledon.

Stapledon was an unlikely figure to be the creator of such uncommon protagonists as Odd John, for whom murder and incest are neither crimes or sins, founder of a utopia of supernormals whose quest for full spiritual realization includes a phase in which shifting sexual liaisons are a means to increasing personal awareness of the universal spirit through communion of minds. Or Sirius, a dog with human intelligence, who achieves physical and mental symbiosis with a human female. Himself a conservative family man, Stapledon's only apparent unconventionality was his left-wing political sympathies, enjoyed while living on a comfortable inheritance. Still, there are marked correspondences between his personal beliefs and the major themes of his fiction. His conception of the creative force as an impersonal, continuously evolving spirit beyond the limits of man's comprehension underlies both his philosophy and his fiction. Toward this spirit the "awakened" individual aspires, achieving growth through a symbiotic relationship with other individuals.

Stapledon's importance as a writer extends far beyond his own books, for no other author has contributed so many fertile ideas about such subjects as the forms and variety of life in the universe, evolution, and intelligence. The novels *Last and First Men* and *Star Maker* are inexhaustible mines for later science fiction writers. His imaginative energy has stimulated authors like Stanislaw Lem and Arthur Clarke. The group

minds and symbiotic relationships in Clarke's *Childhood's End* and Theodore Sturgeon's *More Than Human*, can be traced to their source in Stapledon.

Despite Stapledon's significance, little information on either the man or his work has been generally available. The most accessible source has been a brief chapter on the life and major writings in Sam Moskowitz's *Explorers of the Infinite*. In *Structural Fabulation*, Robert Scholes refers to Stapledon as "one of the great neglected authors of modern British fiction." For such a man, a reliable full-length introduction has been long overdue, and Patrick McCarthy's book is a welcome, ably-written guide. It is the first of what is certain to be numerous books on Stapledon, and one hopes to see a substantial biography soon. At least one study, by Leslie Fiedler, is slated for publication in 1983.

In the Preface, McCarthy describes his book as "a critical introduction to the works of . . . the most important British writer of science fiction since H.G. Wells," a man whose books "deserve to be studied by critics of the modern British novel, [and] by anyone interested in the relationship of literature and philosophy." Following the straightforward plan of earlier volumes in the Twayne Authors series, McCarthy opens with a brief biography before moving on to "consider both the literary merits and the political, social, and metaphysical implications of Stapledon's fiction." He fulfils his objectives with relevance and economy.

McCarthy's survey of Stapledon's life leaves one wishing for more. We learn of the Oxford education, the ambulance corps service in World War I, the marriage and family life, the extramural lecturing at Liverpool, the involvement with political and social movements, and the correspondence with, among others, J.B.S. Haldane, Julian and Aldous Huxley, Philip Toynbee, and Bertrand Russell. McCarthy touches only the peaks of Stapledon's career, but it is the best coverage now available.

Much of the volume is devoted to critical summary, which is always informative to some degree, though the quality of the commentary varies. The summary of *Last and First Men* does not rise far above synopsis and description, but McCarthy improves on *Last Men in London*, and from that point the route is upward. The treatment of *Odd John* places it among other works which in one way or another deal with the theme of the *superman*—works by writers ranging from Nietzsche and Beresford to Wylie. The analysis of *Sirius* is also valuable, and the discussion of *Star Maker* and *Nebula Maker* makes useful points on the paradox of Stapledon's conception of the ultimate creator as both an absolute and evolving entity.

The books just mentioned are Stapledon's best known novels. Concerning them, McCarthy's remarks will guide new readers to better understanding, but will not open new territory. By contrast, the sections that deal with lesser known writings should stimulate readers to seek them out. One hopes that some of the titles will become available in paperbacks. An example of such a book is *The Flames*. Although Sam Moskowitz speaks

of it as written "cogently and well," he dismisses it as a "minor story, "being little more than a review of ideas Stapledon had previously presented." McCarthy, on the other hand, offers an endorsement:

The Flames is a particularly subtle novel, one that rewards careful readers with an increased appreciation of the beauties and dangers of the life of the awakening spirit. If Stapledon's "observations of human beings as seen through the eyes of the flame creatures fail to reveal any new patterns of thought," as Sam Moskowitz believed when the book first came out, then at least Stapledon's old observations are presented here with unusual precision and economy, and with . . . refined irony.

The interpretive discussion which precedes McCarthy's evaluation supports his assertion.

In a chapter titled "Final Visions," McCarthy discusses "the most autobiographical of Stapledon's novels," *A Man Divided*, and the post-humorous works *The Opening of the Eyes*, *Encounters*, and the short stories. Among other matters clarified in this section are the distinctly different views Stapledon held toward the ideal of communism and its political actuality, and the question of his late acceptance or continuing rejection of a conventional faith in God. E. V. Rieu, Stapledon's long-time friend, thought that Stapledon achieved serenity and orthodoxy near the end of his life. McCarthy does not accept this opinion, concluding that "the basic pattern of Stapledon's thought changed little during his twenty-year career as a writer." Remaining an "agnostic mystic," Stapledon hovered between belief and scepticism to the end.

McCarthy has written a reliable introduction to Stapledon which is also a working reference, since it contains a chronology, bibliography, notes, and an index. This book is a necessary addition to libraries, and anyone with an interest in Stapledon or science fiction will want a personal copy.

Dalhousie University

S.A. Cowan

***Dracula was a Woman.* By Raymond T. McNally. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983. Pp. 254. \$14.95.**

Voltaire once stated that the memories of bad princes are preserved as fires, floods and famines. But even Attila and Chengiz, Tamberlaine and Halagu,—all seem to pale into insignificance before the sadistic and ferocious figure of the Blood Countess Elizabeth Bathory. Because of her perverted methods of torture and bestial cruelties, her bloody rituals and masochistic activities, she has often been theorised as a witch or a vampire, a heretic or a werewolf, and even a necrophile. Although her original legend recalls that her gory needs urged her to slash the bodies of her maid-servants to indulge in blood-baths and sanguinary showers to rejuvenate herself, her torture-chambers did exhale an evil stench of decaying

bodies. She tossed the corpses of her murdered servant girls from the ramparts of her castle and often picked out aristocratic ladies for new victims. Stinking lumps of flesh were strewn into her garden and often mutilated skeletal remains dropped into flowing waters. Such bloody acts of violence and crude macabre demand a close analysis of pertinent historical, sociological, psychological and anthropological perspectives in relation to established legends of the vampire, werewolf and necrophilia. This unique book fulfills such a need.

Professor Raymond T. McNally is an expert of the Russian and East European lore. There is nobody more qualified than he to carry on this specialized piece of archival research. Equipped with his successes in *Dracula* lore, he has persevered through on-the-spot investigations: he has gleaned into the source materials in Bytca, Czechoslovakia and the records of Bathory court trials. He opens his narrative in Jonathan Harker manner, describes the torture chambers, and transports us to the very stage-setting of those lurid obsessions. By his convincing range of materials and documentation, he establishes that Elizabeth Bathory is not the shadowy reflection of a myth, but a fact of history. And this real tale is more ghastly than any horrid fiction.

Ever since Godwin's St. Leon quested for the Elixir of Youth and the Philosopher's Stone, the fear of aging has always been dominant in the minds of men, and the irrevocable horror of death and mystery of life beyond the grave has haunted mankind. Professor McNally's well-researched book not only taps those secrets, but also examines the possible transformation of a human being into a beast and charts the whole spectrum of the magic of blood. He touches upon demonic possession, and all its possible influences upon writers of fantasy. Earlier, he had located the unpublished Stoker papers in private archives; now he sets to explore the Bathory legend and its impact upon the creation of *Dracula*. It is true that the blood-bathing Countess Bathory had kept her skin looking young and healthy.

The deeds of this "notorious vampire lady" are now being made available to a large circle of English readers for the first time. Apt in poisoning, and an expert in sorcery, her life was linked with practice of the occult. The court evidences, the detailed accounts of her trial, the incredibly large number of victims, the confessions of her main accomplices, have all been faithfully recounted by Professor McNally. He pictures her incarceration in the icy prison cell of Cachtice fortress with no ray of light penetrating through its walled windows and doors, where "only a very small food hatch and some ventilation slits linked Elizabeth with the outside world."

The dramatic story of the capture of the Blood Countess (p. 70) is suspenseful to the core, and the famous raid led by Count Thurzo during the winter night of 1610 is vividly captured by the pen of Professor McNally. The description is more Gothic than fictional endings, and more interesting than film conclusions: there are the frightened castle guards, the thick impregnable walls, the dim light of the torch, the mangled body of a sixteen-year fair-haired girl exposed on the snow. Thurzo staggers

down the winding tower staircase; there are muffled voices; he pushes the handle of the spiked doors which swing on their rusty hinges. The air is damp and fetid, a combination of stale smoke and vapor. Through the haze he notices the crouching figure of a fifty-year-old woman. This is the frenzied Elizabeth Bathory with a female victim at her feet. In the far corner there are three other maidens bound and gagged. The terrible scene closes when the Count brings justice to those accursed walls, and further discovers a mass grave of murdered girls lower down in the dungeon.

Then one day in 1614, through a small aperture of that solitary cell, the guards discover Countess Elizabeth Bathory sprawled across the floor, once the most beautiful woman of Hungary, dead at the age of fifty-four.

Scenes like these could make a great play, and one wonders how effective the dramatised version might be. The portrait of Bathory first emerges as a beauty gazing at herself in front of a mirror: one feels captivated by her astonishingly white complexion, almost translucent; her delicate blue veins, her raven-black silken hair, her sensual scarlet lips; and dark, large eyes expressive of a savage temper. Her proud, imperious figure does not betoken any "tigress in human form." But her legend highlights the perennial search for the elixir of youth and loveliness. There had always been seekers of knowledge, power and eternal life. She remains another intriguing figure of that quenchless quest.

Dalhousie University

Devendra P. Varma

***Surrealism, Insanity and Poetry.* By J.M. Matthews. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. 1982. Pp. 155. \$22.00.**

The impact of the surrealist movement, most essentially French in character and initial elaboration of its multiple energies, has been undoubtedly profound not only within France but in most Western literatures. At home, in accordance with that perhaps special sense of cultural heritage that French intellectuals sharply maintain, French writers, critics and artists of all persuasions have over the past sixty years tended to define themselves in relation to the tenets and practice of the Surrealists, just as today younger writers wrestle with the various intricacies and branching ideologies of formalism, structuralism and so on. And abroad we have seen writers of widely divergent cultures and histories—such as Aimé Césaire, Robert Bly, John Ashbery, Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo, Tomas Tranströmer, Hans Arp, Paul Celan, etc.—either openly espouse surrealist causes and modes or more obliquely demonstrate with different degrees of refraction the influence that Breton, Desnos, Eluard, Péret *et cie* have unquestionably exercised upon their work. If, then, the struggles and debates over surrealism have been most heated and keenly felt in France, it is clear that a broader, more subtle seepage of the movement's significance may even be sensed in writers as distinctive in their tone and

Salvador Dali's timely contribution to the surrealist search for new means of psychic exploration and poetic realisation through his technique of voluntary paranoia; Breton's sensitivity to Picasso's "implacable lucidity".

Broadly, then, there is a crucial shift in the surrealist strategy (rather than perspective), a shift that sets the automatist activities of the 1920s somewhat against the simulative, analogical and increasingly controlled experimentation of the 1930s. Throughout these intense years, surrealist thinking and practice display a tension and interplay of those forces that lie at the heart of that poet deemed by the surrealists in 1925 to be the greatest living French poet, Pierre Reverdy: availability, expectation, dream, drift, derangement on the one hand; control, awareness, domination, appreciability, poeticity on the other. Reason and the "anti-rational," as Matthews has it. Above all, raw insanity is inimical to poetry in the eyes of the surrealists. It fascinates, but it repels, it is only obliquely relevant to the tasks they contemplate. Staying on "this side" permits, precisely, that consciousness of illumination, that gauging of distance and degree of surreality that ultimately count. "Un long, immense et *raisonné dérèglement*," Rimbaud spoke of, bringing the marvellous—beauty or beast—to the surface, offering us our secret face, our shadowed otherness, without plunging us into the despair of disintegration or dissociation. Such is the tightrope walked by the surrealists, with some terrifying slips into the aching chasm below. Matthews is to be congratulated on his single-mindedness of endeavour. *Surrealism, Insanity and Poetry* deftly walks the surrealist tightrope, albeit with a net; its clear text dispels certain lingering illusions and offers us a sound sense of both the imbrication and the separation of the central themes he treats.

Dalhousie University

Michael Bishop

***The Way Home.* By Elizabeth Brewster. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1982. Pp. 104.**

***Lords of Shouting.* By Joseph Sherman. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1982. Pp. 80. \$13.95/\$6.95.**

***The Rain Falls Like Rain.* By David Helwig. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1982. Pp. 204. \$19.95/\$9.95.**

***Sucking-Stones.* By John Smith. Dunvegan, Ont: Quadrant Editions, 1982. Pp. 64.**

***Voices Noises.* By Rafael Barreto-Rivera. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1982. Pp. 127. \$6.95 (paper).**

The rubric, stated openly or buried in the publisher's blurb, that the poems in a collection are "new and selected" should sound a note of

warning to the reviewer. Collections which reprint, in whole or in part, earlier collections offer hazards to someone attempting to assess the current state (technical or otherwise) of the art manifest in the poems thus assembled. Moreover, hazards aside, a thin book of new poems is always more exciting than a fat one of (mostly) reprints. Hence, in the present group, Brewster and Sherman, both presenting new work, have an edge over Helwig and Smith, who present "retrospective" collections, and over Barreto-Smith whose work is not clearly described by the publisher as either new or reprinted.

The poems in Elizabeth Brewster's *The Way Home* are small (and I do not say this pejoratively), neat, spare, contained poems, whose outstanding virtue is the transparency with which they manifest the phenomenal universe:

Trees on the opposite bank
start up in layers
steeply
repeat themselves
growing upside-down
in green water.

But although they present their subjects transparently, they do not lack either vividness or accuracy. In a poem on an Australian scene (somewhere near Ayer's Rock, I suspect), she describes "the central desert's red heart/melting my sullen snows" in a pointed and commanding image. So too, she notices in New Zealand the "small towns/with Maori names and English faces," and catches perfectly the quality of the country "subtle, muted,/with gentle maritime air, drifting/clouds, the ferns lacy and intricate/as a Maori carving". Her poems capture psychological truth in her glances back to childhood and adolescence, of which she shows both the humour (the indulgence in "long inaccurate daydreams/of copulation with handsome men") and the romanticism (lovers swim in "seas where stars float like fat golden fish"). Her self-portrait is keenly aware of sorrow, but without bitterness: "I have lived all my life in rented rooms./my loves have been temporary,/ . . . Yet I would not change/these forty years." A distinct and remarkable poetic persona is manifest in this volume, yet one which is extremely difficult, because of its transparency, to characterize.

Joseph Sherman's poems in *Lords of Shouting* contrast sharply with Brewster's. They are dense and solid, and the persona manifest in them is at once profoundly sensuous and profoundly religious in its sensibility. In one poem the persona speaks of "monsters/Who walked as beslobbering men," in another a child remembers a mill-worker's "smile un-/folding like a dark, wet flower," and in yet another "fingertips caress/his brown oiled body." Yet in the most sensuous of the poems the action is sharply isolated: the child remembering the millworker's smile is presented without background in time or space —there is no density of general detail, only a sharp focus on one or two essential ones. His religious poems tend

to be ironic; in his poem on Abraham he offers an imaginary contemporary who comments "This son of Terach/has been listening/to another voice/again." In "Of Tongues," a religious poem becomes not so much ironic (although some irony is present), as enigmatic: the berries "whose taste/I am unable to name" have for the protagonist of the poem some significance which he can only grope after, and the reader can only grope after his gropings. Because of the density of their sensibility, the poems present the phenomenal universe in a transmogrified form: everything is recognizable, but at the same time unfamiliar. (Some of the unfamiliarity comes from Sherman's unusual vocabulary — "rectrices," which the OED defines as the strong feathers of the tail in birds by which their flight is directed, and "skaine," which the OED shows as an obsolete form of "skein"—and some of it comes from vocabulary which is simply unclear: "obeissant clamour" leaves the reader uncertain whether to understand the introduction of the French "obeissant" into an otherwise English poem or the misspelling of the English "obeisant," that does not mean quite the same thing.) It is the extent of the deformation which allows Sherman's poetic individuality to be more easily characterized, whereas to a large extent, Brewster's transparency evades characterization.

David Helwig's collection *The Rain Falls Like Rain* is a retrospective collection that winnows out "all the best of the published poems" (back-cover blurb) from his five previous collections, and adds one section of New Poems. (This information is not so easy to figure out as you might imagine, since the book has no table of contents.) Many readers will want to dispute the claim to represent the best of previous collections; no one, I think, will care to dispute the quality of the new poems. These are poems of a dense translucency, solid and satisfying. With the exception of the curious verbal experiments of sections two and four of "The Death of Anton Webern," the language is clean and economical and lucid. "Minnows," one of the briefer poems, can hardly be faulted in its presentation of its subject:

Transparent,
all nerve. Eye and backbone flicker across
the pale submarine prairie of sand.

The poem itself however, is by no means transparent; in fact, it is quite difficult. The longer poems are perhaps even more difficult: "Landscape with Buildings" becomes, with its curious shifts of place and colour, and its unidentified personae, in the end a sombre, sinister, and enigmatic statement of human confusion: "We try to remember who promised to meet us,/ears bending softly, listening for their call." But Helwig has not lost, or abandoned, his earlier lucidity. It is simply that these poems have gone on to explore, more than before, areas of human experience that border on the unknowable and hence are not altogether susceptible of lucid exposition. His portrait of himself in these new poems is sombre ("Once I wrote poems about my children./Now they write their own"), in

sharp contrast to the playfulness which characterized earlier portraits of himself interacting with those children ("Except/that Maggie and I own all the birds/and all the plants and animals/because we know all of their names"). Now he seems to view the past as something dead: in "A Box of Snaps," for example, the snaps represent the dead, not only because some of them are literally dead, but because their existence as it was at the moment the snap was taken ceased immediately afterwards, cut off by the click of the shutter; this view of the past represents a much more sombre outlook than the view of the past in "A Book of Hours," where present and past interact, as the poet paces the house with his feverish child, and simultaneously revisions his own childhood which continues to exist as long as he continues to remember it and reenter it in memory. The increasingly sombre persona of these new poems has not abandoned irony ("This muse business/All very well for critics, but pity the much bemused poet,/at the mercy"), but Helwig is markedly shifting away from this half-humorous tone, to the bleak, biting, sardonic irony of "War Story", a searing examination of the difference between lunacy and sanity in soldiers at war. Helwig's very considerable reputation is well-served by the new poems in this volume.

The poems in two sections of John Smith's *Sucking-Stones* are reprints from two previous collections; the third section appears to consist of previously uncollected or new poems. It is not easy with Smith to distinguish any change between the older and the new poems: all of them create the impression of an Apollonian personality persistently attempting to produce a Dionysian persona. The most emphatic example is perhaps "The Breasts: Baudelaire in Love," where Smith piles image on image in an effort to produce an effect of luxuriant sensuality, yet consistently defeats himself by the dry, cerebral coolness of the images themselves: "fauve-brushed with polleny light," "mandalas of memory," and "pendula descending" (in the second of these examples it is the abstract quality of both nouns which robs the image of sensuality, and in the last it is the careful Latin plural "pendula" which does it). The same self-defeating problems arise in the diction, where abrupt changes of register leave the reader constantly confused, most markedly in "The World Heavyweight Champion Prepares to Defend his Title at Lake Nemi." Here the confusion might be deliberate, in order to mark the distinction between the reality of boxing and the dreams of the boxers, and if this were the only poem in which such shifts occur, Smith could be given the benefit of the doubt. But there is a similar error in register in another poem, "How God Came to Make the World," where the poet writes: "There was, as it were,/a tiny spot within him that was numb,/an infinitesimal gimpiness, a pinhole blank." Here the sudden interpolation of the slangy "gimpiness" undermines the cool irony of the texture of the poem, and yet cannot be justified as the cue to that irony (which is already established by the civil-service-prose blandness of the opening line: "Something unprecedented had occurred"). Apart from this momentary faltering, this poem is one of Smith's most successful: it illustrates the smoothness, clarity, and

contained energy which he is able to command when the Apollonian side of his personality is allowed to shape the poems and to produce its own lucidity, as it does also in "After the Ice":

In the remote interior of Ammura's house in Babylon,
 a woman scents her breath with lemon.
 It is always evening here, cool,
 and so quiet
 you hear the flutter of the lamp flames.

Wherever Smith attempts to shift out of this mode, and impose the Dionysian on the Apollonian, he falters dismally. But wherever he allows his persona to manifest itself naturally in the Apollonian mode, the effect is almost breathtaking.

How much of Barreto-Rivera's work in *Voices Noises* has appeared in his two previously published chapbooks is a problem at whose answer he or his publisher will only hint ambiguously in the book's blurb. The poems do not show any of the fumbling of the absolute beginner, so perhaps if earlier work is included it is at least carefully selected. The work in the volume is always interesting and solid. Awkwardnesses do remain, however, so that within the space of a few lines he can include the peculiar and disconcerting "Fast furious bloom of / autumn sugars" (where presumably "sugars" is a technical allusion accessible to the botanists among his readers), and the lucid:

The land . . .
 is beautiful
 in ways the short and bitter
 difficulties of spring
 are not.

The long and introspective final poem, "Base Infinite," suggests a tendency to self-indulgence in the length and looseness of its study of the poet's consciousness and interface with his environment, for although his lines are short and spare, they meander down the page, and then down the next page, and so on, just as his thought appears to meander through the subject. Compression would give the poem greater impact, and he is certainly capable of the right kind of compression elsewhere, notably in "Near La Perla", with its portrait of "the macho man" and "the blood that he releases / [which] performs the thirsty baptism of his symmetry." There is an authentic sensuousness in these poems, and a rare knack for conveying the gross physicality of places and people:

A bunch of gulls flies by.
 Stench of belly-up. Far off
 a far-off cliff. Beached whales
 imagined
 and beached men.

There are undeniably still rough places in his work, but at his best Barreto-Rivero is an impressive poetic talent and worth watching.

Each of the five poets in this group offers a different mode, a different tone, a different vision of the human universe around her or him. Yet all are undeniably similar in poetic authority — in their command of the language to perform the necessary transmutation of phenomena into poem. It is a healthy situation for Canadian poetry to have such diversity of talent and such rising standards of performance among both established poets and relative newcomers.

Dalhousie University

Patricia Monk

***Politics in the Republic of South Africa.* By Leonard Thompson and Andrew Prior. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982. pp. xiii, 245.**

Perhaps when Leonard Thompson's *Politics in the Republic of South Africa* appeared in 1966 as part of the Little, Brown Series in Comparative Politics it was so warmly welcomed (at least by this reviewer) because it filled a gaping need, left by the outdating of Leo Marguard's *Peoples and Policies of South Africa*, for a general, non-specialist overview of politics in South Africa. Then Thompson's book, too, disappeared into the "out of print" limbo. Enthusiasm for that work was re-kindled when, in collaboration with Andrew Prior of Cape Town University, Thompson brought out *South African Politics* under the imprint of Yale University Press. Alas, however, on reading *South African Politics* one has a sense more of disappointment than of enthusiasm.

South African Politics follows the format, imposed by the Little, Brown Series, of the earlier work, and on the whole it is content simply to bring that work more or less up to date. Perhaps one's disappointment stems in part from what now seems a rather tired treading of the old "systems" mill which, while it does have a certain heuristic utility, does not succeed in bringing out the complex, dynamic forces at work in South African society. But perhaps Thompson himself does not believe in the existence of such forces. In 1981, as in the mid-60s, he still describes South African society as a "caste system," identifying "the Whites, the Coloureds, the Asians, and the Africans" as "the four South African castes." One of the characteristics of castes, is surely their immutability, reflecting in part the homogeneity of each caste, but reflecting, too, the permanent imprinting in the minds of the society of the legitimacy, or more accurately the sanctity, of the caste structures. The very use of the term suggests, then, a condition of stasis which is now much more misleading than it was in the early 1960s. It is true, of course, that so far the structures of the South African system have not been significantly changed; nevertheless, within

almost every major sector of South African society forces are gathering that will surely change the future shape of South African politics. A reader of *South African Politics* will come away with little awareness of these dynamic potentialities.

In part this may be the problem facing every writer on South African politics: events tend to outstrip publication dates. Almost everything that Thompson and Prior have to say about the Afrikaners, the National Party, and the Broederbond needs qualification in the aftermath of Dr. Treurnicht's split from the National Party and the emergence of the Conservative Party. The gathering conflict, too, between the NGSK (the Mission Church, predominantly Coloured) and the mother Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) has, become much more apparent in the last two years, with Dr. Allan Boesak of the NGSK playing a leading role, especially since his election earlier this year as President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Such developments make such a comment as "the Dutch Reformed Churches ... encourage their black members to accept their subordinate lot" (p. 125) somewhat otiose, to say the least.

There are, however, omissions that cannot be explained away on these grounds. There is no mention of the role of Bishop Tutu or of the South African Council of Churches (currently under investigation by a government-appointed commission), nor, even more strikingly, of the boycott of educational institutions by Coloured students in early 1981. And references to increasing guerilla tactics by the ANC and the increasing radicalization of black youths of all races are too cursory. The book does provide a reasonable if unexciting overview of South African politics for the uninitiated; but one would hope that the reader who wanted a fuller, subtler understanding would proceed to such books as Adam and Giliomee's *Ethnic Power Mobilized*, *The Apartheid Regime*, edited by Price and Rosberg, and *Which Way is South Africa Going?* by Gwendolen Carter.¹

Dalhousie University

K. A. Heard

NOTES

1. Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *Ethnic Power Mobilized: Can South Africa Change?* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979. *The Apartheid Regime: Political Power and Racial Domination*. Edited by Robert M. Price and Carl G. Rosberg, Berkeley: Institute of Internal Studies, 1980. Gwendolen M. Carter, *Which Way is South Africa Going?* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.

Thinking about Sex and Love. By J.F.M. Hunter. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1980. Pp. xi, 172. \$12.95. Paper, \$8.95.

Sex Without Love, A Philosophical Exploration. By Russell Vannoy. Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1980. Pp. 226. \$14.95.

Up to a point Hunter and Vannoy agree on the basic moral issues about sex and love. Both believe that there is nothing intrinsically evil or wrong with sex without love or marriage. When sex is wrong, it is because of *other* considerations, e.g., when a person (perhaps a third party) is treated cruelly or unjustly. Hunter's basic test for determining whether any behaviour is morally defective is to ask whether it is "dishonest, unfair, cruel, selfish or dangerous" (p. 28). Since sexual behaviour motivated simply by lust need not have any of these features, from a moral perspective there is nothing *inherently* undesirable about it. By the same principle sex in the context of love and marriage may be morally repugnant when it is dishonest or unfair or selfish. Vannoy argues along similar lines in his chapter "Sexual Perversion: Is There Such a Thing?" He shows how various attempts to define perversion by reference to some norm implicit in the nature of sex itself are arbitrary and confused. Thus masturbation or homosexuality need not be deficient in any respect as sex. Still, there can be external reasons why some forms of sex are always wrong. Rape, for example, is invariably wrong and to be condemned because it violates the basic right to liberty and personal security. So far their views represent what is nowadays the orthodox position among philosophers on sexual morality.

Their disagreement concerns the value of sex based on love. The central argument of Vannoy's book is "that erotic love suffers from certain fatal contradictions" (p. 131) and consequently "on the whole, sex with a humanistic non-lover is far preferable to sex with an erotic lover" (p. 219). By "erotic lover" he means someone with whom one is in love. In part he is saying that sex without love tends to be *better sex* than sex with love, which tends, because its aims are incoherent, to lead to confusion, frustration, and disappointment. But there is an underlying moral concern. Erotic lovers *harm* those they love. "Why is the generous type of non-lover more likely to treat his partner better than the erotic lover? The answer I think, is that he is free of the things I have already claimed that erotic love does to its victims, especially the violence that such a love seems to do to their altruistic nature" (p. 219). The implication is that sex without love is also *morally* preferable.

Hunter would disagree. He grants that problems are apt to arise when sex involves an emotional commitment. "The undesirable aspects of the emotional significance of sexual activity are that it makes it more difficult to achieve sexual satisfaction, that it creates possibilities of deception and misunderstanding that would not otherwise exist, that it often ties people together who are ill suited to one another, and that it frequently leads to bitterness and heartbreak when lovers prove false" (p. 17). But he does not

believe that sexual love is inherently harmful: "... when we regard making love as demonstrating personal solidarity, something splendid can come to pass that would not be possible under less romantic auspices, namely the exultation that two people will find in making love when each knows that the other would not do it if he were not in love and the utter confidence in their good relationship that the lovemaking demonstrates" (p. 17).

So who is right? A difficulty for Vannoy's position is that it is not easy to see how he could possibly know that for people in general the costs tend to outweigh the benefits. To be fair, he usually states his position with considerable qualification, e.g., "sex with a generous, considerate, and sexually adept non-lover committed to humanistic principles can provide a sexual experience that is as good as or even better than sex with a lover" (p. 218; see also pp. 23 and 29). But then his position is uninteresting. Who would want to deny that sex without love *can* be a good experience? Not Hunter. The problem is with the stronger claim.

How does he support it? His only significant argument (pp. 129-147, 212-219) is that erotic love entails desires for incompatible (pairs of) goals: to have an ecstatic but long-lasting relationship; to be valued for one's own sake, yet also to be valued selfishly, out of need; to be chosen for rational yet deeply emotional reasons; to have one's lover be both secure and insecure; to find a deep unity with one's lover without losing one's freedom and individuality; to have a mysterious lover who is also compatible and reliable. But this argument is beset with difficulties. Suppose (though one needn't) that all of these goals are desired by all lovers. Still it is possible for them to be desired coherently if they are desired in different respects or in varying degrees. One may, for example, want moments of ecstasy in a relationship but not enough to threaten its stability; or one may want to be valued by one's lover partly for self-interested reasons and partly for altruistic reasons. Incoherence results only when these goals are desired in an uncompromising way, say, wanting to be valued by one's lover *only* for self-interested reasons. There is no reason to believe that in general love between sexual partners has to be like that.

Vannoy compounds his difficulties by arguing at length (pp. 148-191) that no philosopher has ever adequately defined the concept of erotic love and concluding that it defies nontrivial definition. This move is disastrous. He cannot argue that the concept of erotic love includes self-contradictory elements if he cannot first permit himself to state nontrivially what the concept includes; and if he lacks an argument for incoherence, he loses his main reason for advocating the moral superiority of sex without love.

Hunter's own analysis of love implies another, perhaps deeper problem with Vannoy's argument. Vannoy apparently assumes throughout his book that erotic love—to the extent that it is definable at all—consists in having certain sorts of emotion and desire. Hunter rejects this assumption (p. 71), replacing it with what I shall call (after J.L. Austin) a *performative*

the surface of that vast sea of biographies from Boswell to Clifford, from Hawkins to Bate, from Murphy to Wain, from Tyers to Krutch? Above all, will it tell us anything that was not known before?

The editors appear to have some doubts themselves: "That Samuel Johnson somehow remains unknown to us seems improbable," they caution us in their blurb. Yet, they suggest, the familiarity with which we believe we know "the imposing Doctor of Boswell's *Life*" may well be exaggerated. And they offer the nine essays in this volume as revealing "an engaging, provocative, largely unknown Johnson" whom two centuries of readers have somehow failed to find. If their promise of new light on the unknown is to be fulfilled, our expectations of this book are entitled to be high indeed.

What, in the event, do we find? Nine interesting but largely discursive pieces, originally designed as papers to be delivered at the Seventh Alabama Symposium on English and American Literature (date not given), by scholars whose credentials, in some instances, are as well respected as were those of the Bank of America before the recent recession. The nine are preceded by an introduction by John J. Burke, Jr., presenting his team of authors, if not as avatars of a revolution in Johnsonian scholarship, at least as bringers of "eye-opening surprises for those who know only the Johnson of the popular tradition." (p. 7) Are there any such people left? For those "who think of Johnson as a gloomy stoic," for instance, Donald Greene's "surprise" is to disclose that the great man was "impatient with the rigidities of stoic formulas" (p. 8) and that his ultimate message was one of hope. Coming from a scholar with a well-earned reputation for visions and revisions, such a "revelation" would be as surprising as a soggy firecracker. Incidentally, Greene himself appears to be mistaken in his view that Johnson was invariably negative about Stoicism as a philosophy, and he is certainly wrong when he says (p. 19) that there is no reference to the word "Stoic" or "Stoick" in the index to the Hill-Powell edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. (See, e.g., III.10, where the Stoics are commended on having a creed they were prepared to defend seriously.)

Jean Hagstrum's essay on "Johnson and the *Concordia Discors*" adds, according to the editor, to our awareness that Johnson "promoted an ideal of warm and loving relationships between the sexes" (p. 8) — a phrase that conjures up a vision of the anti-Stoical, optimistic Johnson celebrating the triumph of hope over experience by playing Cupid to Mrs. Thrale's Campaspe. If true, this would indeed be a surprise, but this is not what Hagstrum, albeit the author of *Sex and Sensibility: Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart* (Chicago, 1980), appears to have meant at all. What he does say, in a refreshingly clear and sensible way, is that Johnson anticipated Wordsworth and Coleridge in insisting that "only that poetry is finally worthy which succeeds 'in representing or moving the affections.' For this reason the *concordia discors* of life is inextricably bound to *discordia concors* of art." (p. 51)

When Professor Burke represents Maximilian Novak, "one of our most knowledgeable students of the English Restoration," as showing that Johnson "had a keen historical sense and made superb use of historical information when examining the literature of a period far different from his own," he is on surer ground. (p. 8) Johnson the historian certainly deserves greater recognition than his biographers have allowed him. In his somewhat leisurely, off-the-cuff essay, Novak vindicates Johnson as one who thoroughly understood Dryden and his time, and who shared most of Dryden's views, both negative and positive, on Shakespeare. But did we not know that, too, before?

Paul Alkon is given a rave notice by Editor Burke for demonstrating "to what dazzling effect Johnson could perform in a sermon, something we are not likely to think of as literature and therefore something we are inclined to exclude from consideration." (pp. 12-13) It is hard to believe that such a statement could be made in 1983 by anyone versed in recent Johnsonian scholarship, when so much has been done (including the work on the Yale Edition of Johnson's *Sermons*) to reinforce Johnson's own view that sermons make a considerable branch of English literature. Alkon's essay, however, deals with an address rather than a sermon — the celebrated "Convict's Address to his Unhappy Brethren" — delivered at Newgate prison in 1777 by the Rev. Dr. William Dodd, a convicted forger, to his fellow prisoners close to the time of his execution. Alkon praises the skill with which Johnson composed this address for Dodd, and suggests, contrary to the opinion of this reviewer, that there was no inconsistency between Johnson's arguing against capital punishment in such cases (he even petitioned the Crown for a lighter sentence for Dodd) and, in the Address itself, adopting an abjectly submissive and meekly confessional tone. Nothing in Alkon's essay persuades this writer to alter the view, expressed some years ago, that the moralist in Johnson was more pertinacious than the defender of individual rights. From statements Johnson made following Dodd's execution, it was quite plain that he believed that justice had been done: *currat lex*. To say, as Alkon does, that this endorsement of the harsh penal code indicated that Johnson was supporting the rights of *all* citizens as against those of the one criminal is a rather specious argument.

If, from Alkon, we have little more than a reaffirmation of Johnson's ability to ghost-write an effective and moving address for a clergyman on such an emotionally charged occasion, from Edward Tomarken in "Travels into the Unknown" we are given what the author claims to be a suggestion that no-one has made before, that "the entire procedure of [Johnson's] *Rasselas* is what points beyond itself, ... the motif of the whole tale is developed in the end into a principle that exists on the periphery of literature, Janus-faced, looking within and without...the extra-literary application of the literary; formalism and mimeticism are both part of this process." (p. 153) It is difficult to restrain oneself from asking: if this is

indeed a new suggestion, what have all the many volumes devoted in recent years to the study of allegory been about?

Tomarken draws some parallels, not all convincing, between *Rasselas* and Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands*, arguing that the interplay between history and autobiography is best understood as a process common to both. The examples of such a process given in this essay are a bit tenuous, unfortunately; neither the generic nor the structural parallels seem apt, though the exploration of Johnson's thinking, and of the way in which his attitudes to what he finds in the physical landscape and in the culture of the Highlands in the 1770s actually change and develop, makes Tomarken's essay worth reading. The provision in his notes of a useful list of recent writings on both *Rasselas* and the *Journey* is another bonus.

For reasons best known to the editors of this volume, another essay, John B. Radner's "The Significance of Johnson's Changing Views of the Hebrides," is included, despite the fact that it covers much of the same ground as Tomarken's paper. If we were not fully persuaded before reading this book, we must be persuaded now, that Johnson's strictures on the failure of the Scots to plant trees and on the disposition of many of them to emigrate to America became modified during the course of the composition of the *Journey*.

After this catalogue of cavillings, it would be pleasant to report that Richard B. Schwartz's essay, "Johnson's Day, and Boswell's," really does succeed in breaking new ground. Schwartz argues that the oft-repeated details (which are repeated here for good measure) of Johnson's daily habits — late rising, sloppy eating, untidy dressing, etc. — are less important to students of the period than his "imaginative relation [with the] continuum of art and learning, of rebellion and of order, of faith and challenges to faith, of the making of books and the making of literary careers" (p. 88) that constituted the salient feature of the London he knew, lived in, and loved. The way in which we should approach Johnson's daily experience is Schwartz's theme, but, alas, it still does not bring the "unknown" out of the shadows. His essay is important, nonetheless, in reminding us that the area of London around Fleet Street where Johnson dwelt for most of his life was close to the hub of all aspects of eighteenth-century culture, and in noting that, for Johnson, "the liturgical cycle was of far greater importance" (p. 79) than the domestic, though, in sometimes unexpected ways, the two cycles were interwoven.

The single essay in this volume that might have shed new light on the "unknown" Samuel Johnson, Thomas Curley's "Johnson's Secret Collaboration," takes us only part of the way into the arcanum. That Johnson helped Sir Robert Chambers to compose his Vinerian law lectures between 1766 and 1770 at Oxford we already knew. Curley, as editor of these lectures, tells us that he has had "a unique opportunity to study their relevance to Johnson's literary canon," (p. 91) as well as to find out more about his friendship with the relatively young (29 in 1766) and apparently reticent Vinerian Professor. The recent discovery, discussed by Curley, of

over a hundred and fifty letters by or to Chambers, together with "a wealth of political documents, legal cases, and a correspondence pertaining to his fortunes in India" (p. 92) whets our appetite for fresh revelations. What we have, instead, is a sketch of the circumstances of their collaboration "on a project which in many ways represents the intellectual synthesis of Johnson's lifelong convictions about his country's constitution and culture." (p. 108) But the most important questions raised in this essay remain unanswered: What was the true extent of the collaboration? Can we be sure that it is Johnson's voice we are hearing in these lectures? Do they provide irrefutable evidence of his knowledge of the law? And what, if anything, did he learn from Chambers himself?

It may seem churlish to bemoan the fact that this volume of essays by nine more or less eminent Johnsonians adds so little to the sum of our actual knowledge of an every-fascinating subject. Perhaps the choice of the book's title was an unhappy one, for it tends, as do the blurb and the Introduction, to lead the reader to expect a series of scoops rather than consolidations, however valuable. As it stands, the collection serves to remind us that a Johnsonian is one who has his own exclusive, proprietary view of his idol, and who would not concede for one moment that *his* Johnson is "unknown," except, of course, to others.

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***Like One That Dreamed: A Portrait of A.M. Klein.* By Usher Caplan. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982. 224 pp. \$24.95.**

Among A.M. Klein's voluminous writings are several unfinished attempts at an elaborate novel set in the Montreal of his youth and modelled after Joyce's *Ulysses*. These drafts date from the 1940s when Klein was already recognized as an important Canadian poet. They are evidence of his feeling, as he matured, that he had to produce a fictional work of epic proportions to prove himself more than a talented ethnic writer. Fortunately, his Joycean scheme hardly sapped his energy. During that decade, he found his own exquisite voice for celebrating Montreal and Quebec life in *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems*, and a powerfully Jewish-Canadian voice of universal appeal in "The Psalter of Avram Haktani". As well, he created in *The Second Scroll* his unique novelistic vision of the heroic journey: a modern and Jewish pilgrim's progress.

Klein's own pilgrimage began in Ratno, a small Russian Jewish town, where he was born in 1909. Klein's biographer, Usher Caplan, briefly describes the Jewish *shtetl* life of Eastern Europe, then deals succinctly with the Montreal Jewish environment in which Klein was raised from 1910 on. Caplan is good at distilling the prominent social influences on a bright, ambitious boy in that milieu: the labor movement and strikes,

socialism, Zionism, the hardships and aspirations of an immigrant group, the awareness of French-Catholics and English-Protestants hemming in the Jewish district. Caplan provides an engaging glimpse of "these social and intellectual crosscurrents" which stimulated Klein's development and careers as poet, lawyer, journalist, lecturer, politician and speech-writer.

In the foreword to this book, Leon Edel describes Klein's life as "a personal five-ring circus...he was caught up in more conflicts than any human should carry. And yet in his struggle for self-assertion and livelihood he had an astonishing capacity to remain open to the world's splendors, and the splendor of words...." Klein's life is certainly one of the most fascinating in Canadian letters, and Caplan adequately documents the complex interplay between Klein's public activities and his central preoccupation with poetry.

While Caplan is generous with information about Klein's literary career and poetic concerns, and basic details of his public roles, he infrequently risks psychological commentary on Klein's personality and crucial relationships. In fact, this book is labelled "a portrait", not a biography, and serves more as a knowledgeable record of Klein's life, rather than an in-depth examination. Caplan's text is 203 pages, of which approximately two-fifths consists of photographs, exemplary poems and excerpts from Klein's non-poetic writings. These afford insights into Klein's personality. But the sheer expanse of Klein's involvement as writer, public figure and private man leaves little room, in a relatively short "portrait," for imaginative discussion of Klein's "conflicts" and "struggle."

The essence of Klein's struggle may be described by Caplan's statement that "The question of the relationship between the creative artist and his people was always of the utmost concern to Klein." His dedication to his family, until his mental breakdown in the 1950s, was unswerving. He filled the pages of the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* with current events articles, poems, editorials, stories, book reviews, translations and literary essays. Lamenting his lack of direct involvement in WW II, he poured his energy into his long satirical poem, "The Hitleriad." In one of the most disappointing and embittering episodes of his life, he ran unsuccessfully as a CCF candidate for Parliament. His poetry addressed the suffering and survival of Jews and, later in his career, of French-Canadians and Canadian Indians. In 1949 he travelled to Europe and Israel — a journey leading to *The Second Scroll* — and visited the Jewish ghetto of Casablanca where its hellish conditions shook him profoundly.

Yet Klein was an emotionally private man with demanding artistic ambitions. As a McGill undergraduate he triumphed as a debater and man of wit. His brilliance as a poet surfaced astonishingly early. Later, having obtained a law degree for practical reasons, he felt hampered by the legal work for which he had no great liking. Yet he could not forswear his chosen role as provider. At the height of his writing career, increasingly acclaimed and with long-time friendships including David Lewis,

F.R. Scott, Irving Layton and Sam Bronfman, Klein's mental health deteriorated. He suddenly abandoned his law practice one day in 1956 and fell eventually into a personal and literary silence lasting more than ten years until his death. Early in this portrait, Caplan attributes to Klein the sense that "if the Jew is ever spared from evil, it is only by a divine miracle." The miracles of Hitler's defeat and Israel's rebirth as a nation, of Klein's own literary success, and of his rich experience as the successful son of poor Jewish immigrants, were not enough to outweigh whatever frustrations drained his strength as a person and paralyzed his creativity and humanity.

Caplan does venture speculation about Klein's mental breakdown and years of silence. His assessment that "The self-destructive element of his character seemed to emerge out of some deeply-rooted messiah complex" is not substantiated by Caplan's own account of Klein, and makes one a bit relieved that Caplan did not attempt much in the way of psychological evaluation. It is a minor misfortune that Caplan offers this heavy-handed opinion on the last page, in the middle of a moving summary of Klein's achievements and lasting vision.

More valuable is Irving Layton's suspicion, reported by Caplan, that "there must have always been a tragic disparity between Klein's intellectual and emotional development." Even if this was the case, Klein has left us an extraordinary body of poetic writing. Caplan says that "He will probably always be regarded as a poet's poet...his abiding respect for formal excellence and technical virtuosity often brought him close to a pure 'art for art's sake' attitude." This is not true of Klein's finest poems, where Klein's craftsmanship is matched by what Caplan calls his "sense of justice," and by his humanistic passion, his lamentation and praise for a world we can all recognize.

Caplan is a scholar, archivist and editor who has devoted much of his early career to Klein's writing and life. *Like One That Dreamed* is a warm and informative appreciation of a vital and problematic life. Klein continually responded to crucial events in modern Canadian and world history, and Caplan chronicles this response crisply and coherently. Klein's literary development is outlined gracefully. Klein may someday have a biography as expansive, rich and intellectually passionate as the man himself. For now, *Like One That Dreamed* excellently helps ensure that Klein will be regarded as more than a talented ethnic poet.