

BOOK REVIEWS

Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England. By Alan Stewart. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. xlv, 224 pages. \$35.00 US.

Close Readers is both a highly impressive work of original research by a young scholar, and a study of great significance for any reader interested in the relation between humanism and the development of early modern subjectivity. (I stress this general significance at the outset because my own experience suggests that books on “sodomy” have often been, at least until very recently, overlooked or avoided; an editor who asked me to review Gregory Bredbeck’s *Sodomy and Interpretation* [1991] “bluntly” informed me that the title of the study was in itself a major deterrent for other potential reviewers.) *Close Readers* is less a literary study than an enormously valuable historical sourcebook that explores the connection between the social discourses of humanism and sodomy in five Renaissance contexts. Chapter 1, “From Singing Boy to Scholar: The Deaths, Lives, and Letters of Angelo Poliziano,” explores the experience of a famous humanist at the Medici court of quattrocento Italy. Chapter 2, “Remapping the Bounds of Sodomy: Humanism and the English Reformation,” is liable to become the book’s most influential discussion, and deals most directly with sodomy as a sexual act; it examines the exposure of “abominations” during the Henrician dissolution of the monasteries, and traces the emergence of specifically Protestant ideas of acceptable manliness; the discussion is in particular concerned with the role of John Bale in the history of the English Reformation. Chapter 3, “Traitors to Boyes Buttockes’: The Erotics of Humanist Education” treats the institutionalized beatings of schoolboys and attitudes towards this practice, as well as the ambiguous social status and role of the schoolmaster. Chapter 4, “The Proof of Friends’: Reading *Amicitia* in 1548,” applies the condition of close humanist friendships specifically to Roger Ascham’s potential involvement with and avoidance of the Thomas Seymour investigation and trial for treason during Elizabeth’s adolescence. Finally, Chapter 5, “Epistemologies of the Early Modern Closet,” investigates the secret or private dealings between secretaries and their patrons in selected political manoeuvres of the late sixteenth century.

While I wish to stress again the historical interest of these explorations—the generous quotation from various letters and documents provides a fascinating window into the thoughts and attitudes of early modern individuals—the nature of the argument, that is, what Stewart actually sets out to prove, sometimes seems obscure, leaving this study potentially controversial. Locally the language is quite clear, never obfuscated by jargon, but within each chapter the argument seems to turn in so many different

directions, and the reader is offered such a wealth of documentation to consider, that the conclusions arrived at often remain in doubt. Except for Chapter 2, the real presence of “sodomy” as a sexual act seems elusive. Perhaps Stewart assumes that we have grown so accustomed to viewing sexual relations as a form of power negotiation, that we might now be inclined to view all negotiations of power as in some sense sexual, although such an assumption is, I think, questionable. At moments the argument seems to equate the homosocial with the sodomitical, as if the potential sliding between the two has always already taken place; in other places the reading of “sodomy” does not take into account the potentially broad definition of the term in the Renaissance.

Most crucially, another assumption hovers over this study which, although it cannot be addressed adequately here, needs to be more fully explored by critics in the future, and which, in my opinion, makes *Close Readers* impossible to ignore. Ironically for a book which in its final chapter implicitly denounces the closet as an arena of illicit and oppressive political transactions, *Close Readers* remains closeted with respect to its own ideological agenda, a decidedly anti-humanistic one. It lacks the kind of prologue that Rebecca Bushnell offers in *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (1996), which relates our critical attempts to understand early modern humanism to current debates about humanism and the humanities. Perhaps the battle has already been lost and won, and an anti-humanist bias goes without saying; many have by now experienced academic environments which seem to regard “humanism” as a term only to be mentioned with derision. Nevertheless, the overall tone of *Close Readers* sometimes surprised me, with, for example, its subtle way of implying that Erasmus is a figure naturally to be distrusted, not naturally to be admired. I am also surprised that a book which explores in detail the prolonged and difficult struggles of early modern men for professional, economic, and personal survival so often seems emotionally unsympathetic to and curiously dismissive of these very men. Moreover, the evidence and documentation Stewart presents us with sometimes suggest readings rather different from the interpretations he offers. For example, Richard Taverner in his translation of an Erasmian tract praising matrimony is accused of being contemptuous and using a “rather double-handed manner”(67), yet his attack on sexual hypocrisy and his assertion that young men and women should not be encouraged “to professe & vowe perpetuall chastyete before or they suffyciently knowe themselues & thinfirmitie of theyr nature”(68) seem to me wholly admirable morally, in spite of the (heterosexual) bias in favour of matrimony. Finally, the concluding chapter’s implication of the political “right” in closeted wheelings and dealings—Stewart mentions in passing the “anti-homophobic perspective” committed to exposing “right-wing homosexuals wielding power through networks of closeted contacts”(162)—might very well be challenged by daring humanists who assert that such closeted dealings are, within the academy, more characteristic of the highly efficient networks of the anti-humanist “left.” The controversial nature of my final statement is meant to indicate the polemical,

and general attention, with which I feel Stewart's book should be met, for this study suggests strongly what most devoted scholars of the Renaissance have for some time suspected—that our current ideological difficulties and struggles can be illuminated by a greater understanding of early modern social and political conflicts.

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Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century. By Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. 185 pages. \$45.00 US, \$18.00 US, paper.

The analysis that Kowaleski-Wallace puts forth in this book has to do primarily with “three cultural moments” that occurred between 1720 and 1820: the development of the tea-table, the evolution of shopping, and the “discursive definition of ‘business’ as male.” In these three phenomena, according to the author, one may find the intersection of the “dual processes of constructing consumerism and female subjectivity” (11). However, what one soon notices about the book is how these subjects spill over the eighteenth-century focus; Kowaleski-Wallace seems to be as interested in contemporary consumer and gender issues as she is in Hanoverian England. While many literature and history specialists might be put off by this conflation, I suspect others will not, for there is still a fair amount of intellectual satisfaction to be had from considering certain aspects of western modernity from a bird's-eye view. The relationship between shopping and gender, for instance.

Notwithstanding this satisfaction in tracking broad cultural phenomena across the centuries, there are places in *Consuming Subjects* where Kowaleski-Wallace's associations run the risk of confusing the reader. In the Introduction, for example, the reference to Mica Nava's work on consumerism seems an effective means of signalling how complex the phenomenon of shopping can be, but when this is followed up by a rather long passage in which Susan Douglas describes her experience in reading *Vogue*, it is a struggle to get back to the eighteenth century. One of the more jarring of these associations occurs in the concluding section of the “Business-Prostitutes” chapter; an insightful line of commentary on Mrs. Sinclair from Richardson's *Clarissa* and Mandeville's notion of male sexuality as “business as usual” is interrupted by a paragraph on Demi Moore's character in the film *Disclosure*. While it is understandable that the author would feel obliged to account for the difference in body type between Mrs. Sinclair and Demi Moore, the parenthetical comment on the latter's physique, “so slim, so toned after all those children!” (142) reads like a disclosure of sorts about the author's own dreams and projections. The chapter on the tea-table as a gendered site in the eighteenth century succeeds despite the fact that its first few pages are devoted to passages from

two Victorian texts. The Conclusion is dominated by analyses of contemporary subjects: the tragic story of the trans-sexual Venus Xtravaganza and the Pleasant Company's marketing of "American Girls" dolls. And, as intriguing as these subjects are, the author might have been wiser to have given more prominent attention to her specific subject of consumerism and women in the eighteenth century.

On the whole, Kowaleski-Wallace's arguments are sensible and persuasive, but there are some weaknesses. The special case for shopping in interior spaces as opposed to the open market falls flat—sellers and buyers might just as easily survey each other and engage in a ritualized dance of bargaining in the open air as they would in an enclosed store. (What about the middle ground, so to speak, which would include the covered and congested stalls—not exactly an open market nor an enclosed shop?) There can also be problems with drawing general conclusions about a society based on a selective collection of literary evidence. Granted, Richardson's Mrs. Sinclair does represent the businesswoman as grotesque bawd, but what about Fielding's innkeepers, Mr. and Mrs. Tow-ouse? The former may be nominally in charge but is commanded by his termagant wife and his own sexual desires for the servant Betty. Mrs. Tow-ouse is a strong and competent manager, but it must be admitted that her comic grotesque depiction appears to support Kowaleski-Wallace's contention about the negative representation of businesswomen. In the course of marshalling textual evidence, Kowaleski-Wallace briskly covers some very familiar ground, like the exotic nature of Belinda's dressing-table and china references in *The Rape of the Lock* or the excremental misogyny of Swift and Richardson (95, 53, 134). Then there are the standard studies of consumer goods in the eighteenth century, all of which are duly cited. Considering how much the author draws upon contemporary cultural theory, I think it unfortunate that while referring to Rachel Bowlby on visual fascination in shopping Kowaleski-Wallace would make only an indirect and passing reference to Guy Debord's *La société du spectacle* (1967), a work that seems to be attracting more attention as the technologies of electronic representation become more prolific. Given the importance that Kowaleski-Wallace places on performing the gaze of shopping or the lure of selling, a greater familiarity with Debord's ideas (indeed with the "spectacle" aspect of western culture) might have yielded fruitful results.

As it is, we must take the author's own "semiotic square" (introduced on page 76 and, for some reason, repeated on page 102) in which two meanings of the words "commodity" and "luxury" are conceptualized as "binary pairs." The top line tracks the evolving meaning of "commodity 1"—that which is "commodious"—to "commodity 2"—that which is strictly speaking "not commodious" but which has exchange value. The bottom line "displays a related tension between two ways of thinking about luxury" and runs from luxury 2—that which is "not lascivious"—to luxury 1—that which is "lascivious." No reason is given for the 1/2 2/1 reversal but it seems necessary to produce the diagonal "continuums" between "commodious-lascivious" and "not commodious-not lascivious." This geometric conceptualization, then, is offered

as a means of understanding how “*commodity* and *luxury* depend upon each other for their definition” (76-77). The diagram and accompanying explanation recall Lévi-Strauss’s culinary triangle (cooked/raw/rotten), imitated by Foucault with his medical perception triangle (life/death/disease) in *Birth of the Clinic*, but they only obfuscate the author’s main point here, which is nothing more complicated than the recognition that luxuries evolve into necessities as surely as our wants become perceived needs.

Readers, however, still have much to gain by reading *Consuming Subjects*, and only a tight-assed new historicist would dismiss out-of-hand the wide-ranging cultural approach. Nor does one have to be in complete agreement with the details of the analysis to find illumination and stimulation. Despite existing scholarship on eighteenth-century consumers, Kowaleski-Wallace can be credited with focusing specifically on subjects like the tea-table and women in business in the eighteenth century and, while her arguments will no doubt be refined by others, she has succeeded in drawing our attention to how consumerism and gender are intricately related.

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James Boswell's "Life of Johnson": An Edition of the Original Manuscript, in Four Volumes. Vol. 1, 1709–1705. Edited by Marshall Waingrow. Edinburgh, New Haven, and London: Edinburgh UP and Yale UP, 1994. xlii, 518 pages. \$75.00 US.

Just over forty years ago I had the pleasure of meeting Marshall Waingrow in New Haven, Connecticut. We were both at work on the Boswell Papers, that huge cache of manuscript materials, regarded by our generation of eighteenth-century scholars as the find of the century. My research on that occasion was confined to the correspondence between James Boswell and his friend and brother confessor, the Reverend William Johnson Temple, and Waingrow had the far more extensive task of transcribing the original manuscript, then quite recently discovered, of Boswell’s monumental *Life of Johnson*. The miraculous survival of that manuscript, together with many more papers of the prolific Boswell, has been well documented, most notably by David Buchanan, in *The Treasure of Auchinleck: The Story of the Boswell Papers* (1975), a detailed recounting of all the legal obstacles encountered before the final release of the collection to Yale.

The manuscript of the *Life of Johnson* was found in three places at Malahide Castle, near Dublin, home of Lord and Lady Talbot, descendants of Boswell through the female line. Sixteen leaves were discovered in an ebony cabinet or *escritoire*, one hundred-and-ten in a croquet box, and the remaining nine hundred in, of all places, a stable loft. Most of the papers had been removed from Boswell’s ancestral home in Auchinleck, Scotland, in the 1920s.

Their condition, not surprisingly, was frail and brittle. Yale ordered photostats to be made of most of them, but these quickly darkened on the margins and were not wholly reliable.

The repository at Yale became known as the Boswell Factory—well named, as it was anticipated that some forty or fifty volumes would be required to include everything: the entire journals, the massive correspondence, the *tacenda* (materials not intended for publication), and miscellaneous bits and pieces. The Yale librarians had to take extraordinary measures for the protection of this truly rare assemblage. A special area of the Rare Book Room (the predecessor of the magnificent Beinecke Rare Book Library) was sectioned off with padlocked wrought iron gates within which the bulk of the collection was housed. Each morning at nine the distinguished Keeper of Rare Books, Professor Chauncey Tinker, had his Assistant, Marjory Wynne, open the gates and then lock us into this prison-paradise; at precisely five o'clock in the afternoon she liberated us from our voluntary bondage. There were, of course, some short breaks in between for coffee and other essential purposes.

I have a clear recollection of Waingrow painstakingly transcribing in pencil on yellow paper every word of the original manuscript of the *Life*—no easy task, as it now appears, from his comprehensive Introduction to this, the first of four volumes that will eventually contain the entire work as Boswell composed it, with all the passages he had felt necessary to suppress, or bowdlerize, restored to their appropriate places.

The period this volume covers, 1709–1765, the first fifty-six years of Samuel Johnson's life (he died in 1784), was the most difficult for the biographer, as he did not meet his already famous subject until 16 May 1763, with the result that he had to depend heavily on the testimony of others for most of his material. To complicate matters, Johnson tended to be reticent about his infancy, and only partially communicative on the subject of his school and college years. Indeed, when on his deathbed he had most of his personal papers destroyed, and only a fragment relating to his early years, known as his *Annales*, together with his private *Prayers and Meditations*, survived. Both were published posthumously.

Boswell's sedulous efforts to discover all he could about Johnson's career before their momentous meeting in 1763 were described in detail by Waingrow in *The Correspondence and Other Papers of James Boswell Relating to the Making of the "Life of Johnson"* (1969). As that valuable work demonstrated, Boswell made many personal contacts with Johnson's friends and wrote scores of letters soliciting information. Some of his correspondents only grudgingly permitted him to quote them, but he did not always respect confidentiality, preferring to reserve any apologies or amended phrasing for second and subsequent editions of the *Life*.

What is fascinating about the volume under review is the extent to which Boswell patched together all those bits of testimony, adding the products of his own direct acquaintance with Johnson from 1763 onwards, and finally, with the help of his friend Edmond Malone, preparing his extraordinary collage of a manuscript for the press. Strangely enough, after all those exacting

preliminaries, neither Boswell nor Malone collated the printers' proofs against that manuscript. Waingrow's description of the processes followed by the biographer up to the critical moment of publication may serve to explain how complicated such a collation would have been:

The manuscript of the *Life*, broadly defined, consists of more than a thousand leaves and a comparably large quantity of separate materials which Boswell at marked points in the main manuscript directed his compositor to 'Take in'. The separate materials, or 'Papers Apart', included books and magazines from which passages were to be reprinted, original letters and copies, Johnsoniana from contributors, portions of Boswell's journal, drafts of texts composed in advance of the composition of the *Life*, articles on special subjects composed when the *Life* was in progress, and various additions and revisions written on separate sheets where there was no space for them on the pages of the main manuscript. That this manuscript—despite the forbidding look of many of its pages—was in fact the printer's copy is established by the presence of press signatures and marginal queries by both compositor and the corrector. (xxii)

The resultant hodgepodge must have constituted a mammoth challenge for the eighteenth-century printers. Mercifully, Boswell's handwriting (unlike Johnson's) was large and legible, as the two pages reproduced in facsimile in this volume demonstrate.

Waingrow has devised an ingenious system to indicate the various changes made by Boswell before the printing of the first edition. All readings of the manuscript that were not eventually included as printers' copy are enclosed within square brackets, so that changes from the original draft to a later revision are made apparent. Isolated deletions and additions are accompanied by appropriate notations, and alternative words and phrases interlined in Boswell's basic or rough draft are connected linearly by means of hooked virgules. This method makes some demands on the reader, of course, but the difficulties are easily overcome after a few pages.

Boswell was rightly proud of his achievement in reproducing throughout his biography what he claimed to be the authentic voice of Johnson. Yet, when transcribing from his journal, in which so much of his subject's conversation was carefully recorded, he often modified the tone and emphasis of the original for diplomatic and other reasons. Moreover, he deliberately excluded passages and source materials that might have presented Johnson in a lurid or ludicrous light. As Waingrow pointed out in his volume of the *Correspondence*:

His indolence, his oddities and asperity of manner, his excesses in eating and drinking, his profanity and bawdy,

his sexual lapses, his intellectual narrowness and prejudice, his use of drugs, his insanity—all these subjects appear among [Boswell's] unused sources, and seem to compose themselves into a pattern of suppression. Yet it is an equally demonstrable fact that all of these subjects are admitted to the published work in one form or another. Whatever construction Boswell may have put upon Johnson's weaknesses, it cannot be said that he concealed either the fact or the issue. (xxxvi)

One example of his softening, and at the same time reconstructing in erudite Johnsonese, the rough speech of which his subject was capable, is the well-known passage describing Johnson's reluctance to visit the Green Room at Drury Lane when David Garrick was in his heyday as actor-manager. The original version read as follows:

I'll come no more behind your scenes David; for the silk-stockings and white bubbics of your actresses excite my genitals.

This is how the same passage appeared in the published *Life*:

I'll come no more behind your scenes David; for the silk-stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities. (147 and n.)

Though Garrick was an important source of information, his penchant for mimicry sometimes got in the way of the truth. One of his favourite performances at private parties, for instance, was his supposed re-enactment of a hilarious bedroom scene at Edial Mount, when Johnson and his new bride, Tetty, who was almost twice his age, were running a private school for a handful of pupils, including Garrick. As the boys peeped in through the keyhole, according to Garrick, they witnessed Mrs. Johnson in bed while Johnson, still clothed, read aloud some bits of dialogue from a tragedy he was then composing. Paying little or no attention to his wife's plea to come to bed, Johnson continued his reading and absent-mindedly seized the bedclothes, instead of his own shirt-tails, and kept trying to tuck them into his breeches. Meanwhile, poor Tetty, feeling the cold, protested in vain against this unhusbandly behaviour. Evidently resisting the temptation to reproduce this scenc in the *Life*, Boswell contented himself with a muted version of it:

From Mr. Garrick's account he [Johnson] did not appear to have been profoundly revered by his pupils. His oddities of manner and uncouth gesticulations could not but be the subject of merriment to them; and in particular the young rogues used to listen at the door of his bed-chamber and

peep through the key-hole, that they might turn into ridicule his tumultuous and awkward fondness for Mrs. Johnson Mr. Garrick described her to me as very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance with swelled cheeks of a florid red produced by thick painting and increased by the liberal use of cordials I have seen Garrick exhibit her by his exquisite talent for mimickry so as to excite the heartiest bursts of laughter, but he probably ... considerably aggravated the picture. (68)

On a much more serious level, Boswell surveys the literary achievements of his subject, and this edition of the manuscript clearly shows the painstaking nature of the biographer's efforts to evaluate every important production of the great man, including the work that many still regard as the most impressive achievement of all, the *Dictionary* of 1755. Even here, however, Boswell is careful to note the errors committed by the lexicographer:

A Lady once asked him how he came to define *pastern* the knee of a horse? instead of making an elaborate defence as she expected, he at once answered 'Ignorance Madam! pure ignorance!' (213)

Boswell's critics—most notably the late Donald Greene—have dealt quite harshly with what they see as gross distortions, at times, of the truth of Johnson's character. Yet none can deny his assiduity, his often obsessive attention to detail, and his deep devotion to his subject. Even distortions, like caricatures, can sometimes illuminate. Waingrow's edition will, I believe, go a long way towards vindicating Boswell's achievement in throwing light on a great personality from every conceivable angle.

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The Photographer of Wolves. By John O'Neill. Toronto: Wolsak and Wynn, 1997. 77 pages. \$12.00, paper.

The Man with the Dancing Monkey. By Barbara Mulcahy. Toronto: Wolsak and Wynn, 1997. 75 pages. \$12.00, paper.

What Kind of Love did you Have in Mind? By Eric Folsom. Toronto: Wolsak and Wynn, 1997. 92 pages. \$12.00, paper.

There is a discomfiting edginess to John O'Neill's accomplishment in his third collection, *The Photographer of Wolves*. The poems in this volume are sometimes shocking, occasionally brutal. But we know we are in the hands

of an extraordinary talent when the particularized instances that flash before us resound as if we had lived them ourselves.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first is a single long poem, "The Story of Snow," a meditation on the speaker's early life growing up in Scarborough, Ontario. The poem follows a strict chronological progression, taking the speaker from childhood to adulthood. As the narration moves forward in time, we begin to realize that the poem is largely about the speaker's brother Ronny. Initially we glimpse Ronny as a child, even then "always the one to darken things." Through the medium of snow, O'Neill introduces elements of unsettledness and conflict, finally stating

The snow is my father's words
the snow is my brother
the snow their argument....

Ronny's behaviour achieves a kind of erratic apogee on the day he leaves home in February 1973, drunk and jobless. As he chronicles his brother's descent into alcoholism, O'Neill's narrator never slips into maudlin regret. To be sure he is perplexed, but his search for meaning is a broader one that returns again and again to snowbound landscapes and replays family confrontations. The "Postscript" to this sequence is a tranquil backward glance at the best of what the brothers shared.

In the title section O'Neill presents a series of poems that proposes a symbiotic relationship of sorts between man and wolf and suggests ways in which each inhabits the life of the other. "Werewolf" begins, "Man into wolf. What's so frightening?" and describes wolflike characteristics from which man could benefit.

The wolf life is simple, direct,
without pretence or deceit
and ferocious only when required, tidy as knives.

By contrast "wolf into *man*" is "Much more frightening":

Imagine the animal's horror,
its sleek, straight arrow head
suddenly gone
flat, round, fleshy:
and fat, reflective, morose
its once edgy heart.

O'Neill's writing in this section—indeed, throughout the book—possesses the same animal sleekness. It is unpretentious and unsentimental. The wolf metaphor is apt because O'Neill's is a predatory art. In these inward-looking poems he is on the hunt for raw emotion which he presents to the reader with unsparing frankness, as if it were vanquished prey. These are not

poems we read for solace or to be cheered. However, O'Neill's terse facility with language and image is often revelatory and this is certainly reason enough for anyone to seek out this book.

Much of O'Neill's imagery is drawn from the natural world, as is Barbara Mulcahy's. In her first collection, *The Man with the Dancing Monkey*, she composes with an ingenuous fascination for natural phenomena. Mulcahy obviously delights in description, in diligent observation of the real world. Her poems are animate with colour and texture. And this is both a strength and a weakness.

The book is divided into two sections: *Three Beginnings* and *Raven Meditations*. The poems in *Three Beginnings* are united by their reliance on natural imagery. Often these poems are richly textured and lush with detail. Mulcahy's eyes and ears miss nothing. Her gift for observation is everywhere evident, as in "Shore":

Noon. The water sounding ... the sway of a
pregnant woman's
hips. Thrust
and slide, thrust
and slide, and a mussel closes it lips
on the blue elastic water.

And in "Three Beginnings":

Wait like a silverfish dry and boneless.
Wait with legs and the castanet
back of a beetle. Wait in the woollen cowl
of the sky.

When she zeroes in on the event or the object, Mulcahy proves herself a brilliant chronicler of the precise moment, skewing her observations according to a perspective uniquely her own. Her phrases often shimmer, appear to us authentic in their ability to capture and convey, much like a camera does, the details that breathe life into the moment, details that most of us are too distracted by mundane concerns to notice. Other poems in this section are less successful: poems that describe but do little else. In these—"The Chair" and "Belief" are examples—Mulcahy lets the images speak but stops short of infusing them with the quickening spirit of her imagination. These poems seem stingy compared to the others, which offer so much.

In *Raven Meditations* she relies more on straightforward locutions and the poems are sometimes simply declarative in style and structure. These poems, some of which have been reduced to statements that convey information, do not always work. The most successful of the poems in *Raven Meditations* are those that introduce a speaker who can offer a perspective on ravens and "raven-ness" and link external and internal worlds.

On the evidence of *The Man with the Dancing Monkey* Barbara Mulcahy is a talent to watch. Even her weaker poems possess subtlety and wit, qualities that will serve her well as she refines her art and develops her voice.

Eric Folsom's second collection, *What Kind of Love did You have in Mind?*, at 92 pages is the longest of the three works under consideration and suffers for its length. The poems in this collection revolve around relationships and the theme of love in all its multiplicity: conjugal love, love within the family, love of the planet, warring love, etc. There is passion here, and sex, sorrow and ecstasy. Folsom writes in a measured and reflective voice, usually in the first person. The moments he chooses are those in which his speaker is reminiscing on love lost or won. In "The Dog in Compton Park" he states,

I used to lie beside you
 in bed at morning
 unable to quiet the dreadful voice
 that thought of things about me
 not quite the inner mind searching
 for the orgasm of self-pity
 but more like a moment of insight
 self-knowledge dropping from my jaws
 bouncing and wet with saliva
 a corrupted understanding
 of why I didn't deserve you

While there is undeniably an earnest and searching intellect at work here, there is also no doubt that the power of these poems is diminished by their sheer length, which often makes the writing seem flaccid, the effect of word and image diffuse rather than focused. Startling images and apt metaphors languish amidst a surfeit of utterance. Some of Folsom's longer efforts stretch to three and four pages. In these poems the reader senses that the speaker will always take the argument as far as it will go or push the metaphor one step further just to see if he can do it. The poems in this volume also suffer from a sameness of tone and voice. Just as they all look alike printed on the page, they all tend to sound alike. Perhaps as separate contributions to literary magazines the poems work quite well, but presented together as a book, the boundaries between them seem to melt away and they become fused in the mind as a single poem.

Folsom's strengths are many—individual stanzas cohere nicely, his descriptive powers are finely honed—but one hopes that he will learn to trim back his profusion of words before publication so that future volumes are not hampered by the same monotony of voice and meandering style that mar much of *What Kind of Love did You have in Mind?*