Book Reviews

William C. Carroll, *The Great Feast of Language in "Love's Labour's Lost."* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. pp. 279. $15.00.

This book aims, through a close and extended exploration of language and linguistic styles, to demonstrate the thematic coherence and structural unity of *Love's Labour's Lost.* In six chapters, while attempting to follow most, if not all, of the play's main debates, particularly "the debate about poetry and the use of the imagination", Professor Carroll treats in detail such aspects as the prose of the *commedia* characters, the language of the play-within-the-play scenes, the poetic styles of the main male characters, the larger unifying themes especially of fancy and delusion, and finally, the form and significance of the concluding song/debate between Spring and Winter. There are two appendices, notes on the Nine Worthies and Hercules, which offer suggestive comment upon their respective links with the themes of Fame and Worth. There is no speculation about the date of the play — he assumes it to be between 1593 and 1597 — and there is no concern with historical and literary sources or with problems of textual revision. The satiric portraiture and parody is treated lightly *en passant.* Quotations are from the New Arden Edition.

Professor Carroll believes the widely held view that *Love's Labour's Lost* "finally illustrates the rejection of Art for Life or Nature" is a critical oversimplification. He claims that the goal of the play "is to reject not Art, but bad Art. Ultimately [he thinks] the various prototypes of style presented and qualified in the course of the play are set aside. Instead we are given as models of reconciliation and imaginative incarnation the final songs . . . ." The form and content of the Owl and Cuckoo lyrics, then, are of crucial importance to his argument. He sees them "not only as the finest poetry in the play, but as an example of the dialectical blend of Art and Nature which is debated only theoretically elsewhere . . . . The debate on the right uses of poetry and the imagination cannot be resolved by logic or theory, just as there cannot be a clear-cut victor in the *conflictus* between Spring and Summer." In his view the songs are a "grand coda", an "exemplum and resolution."

Professor Carroll's guests will find *The Great Feast of Language in "Love's Labour's Lost"* well prepared and hospitably, though at times somewhat tendentiously, served. They will be more likely to enjoy themselves if they come to his table with keen appetites for a concentration upon literary form. Such is the focus, and notwithstanding the host's scholarship, skill, and affability, one is left at times, particularly in the early chapters, with the impression that Shakespeare was bent upon composing a treatise

— say, a clever illustrated compendium of rhetoric and style — rather than a courtly stage play. One longs, amid the accumulating detail of the perspicacious examination of speech, for some awareness of the play's association with the theatre, some recognition of the play's elaborate and carefully crafted visual and kinetic appeal. Professor Carroll hears acutely all the words and responds to them sensitively, but to the music and dance of the script he is seemingly immune.

Professor Carroll's approach calls for the display and examination of a large variety of rhetorical modes and he is thus compelled, throughout his study, to turn to the primary male exemplars, the Lords, the *commedia* group, and the rustics. Overall, one notes, the Princess, her Ladies, and her Chamberlain are only lightly treated. This emphasis upon the speech of the males is especially featured in the first three chapters where, despite the writer's generally scrupulous and exhaustive perception, the analysis sometimes tends to overreach, and sometimes descends to triteness. For example, he tells us, "we can say with certainty of experience that everything spoken by Armado and Holofernes is pompous and foolish . . . ." Are they really never simple, sincere and even poignant? "In structural terms," he lectures, "Costard balances scenes; one of Shakespeare's favourite methods is to juxtapose opposites, to bring them into dramatic conflict." Quite so!

Much the best of Professor Carroll's book lies in the three remaining chapters. There is less didactic exposition of individual attribute or idiosyncrasy as the larger linguistic and structural patterns now engage him. We leave, as it were, the tributaries and enter the main stream. As guide, he is more successfully persuasive, and his matter more complex and arresting. His view of the play's structure as one proceeding "from the inner ring of concentric circles to the outer, from the less to the more inclusive, from 'artifice' and 'illusion' to 'reality' " appears to govern, to some extent, the teasing circularity of his own argument which carefully sustains his determination to avoid what he rightly claims the play avoids, dogma and doctrine. It is not only a clever performance but a valuable one.

T. N. S. Lennam

Norman Sherry, ed., *Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration.* London: Macmillan, 1976. Pp. xvi + 224. $19.90.

C. B. Cox, *Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination.* London: Dent, 1976. Pp. 191. £1.50 pb.

In January 1924 just before Joseph Conrad's death, an advertisement for his last completed novel, *The Rover*, proclaimed its author "The Greatest Living Writer of To-day." Shortly after, his reputation declined. It was sustained by friends and by several perceptive critics for twenty-five years until a torrent of books and articles reinstated Conrad as a modern master. Following various critical persuasions there were psychological, social, political, mythological, philosophical, symbolical, and then as a consequence bibliographical studies; numerous "readings" of individual texts; a fine biography by Jocelyn Baines (1960); and a journal, *Conradiana,* devoted solely to his work. The torrent has subsided slightly, and the state of Conrad criticism today is suggested by *Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration,* papers from the International Conference on Conrad held in Canterbury in July 1974.

After so much explication and speculation, the book indicates a welcome return to basics. It informs us that the Textual Institute of Texas Tech University plans to produce a complete scholarly edition of Conrad. Zdzislaw Najder is writing a biography which will, I presume from his earlier work, treat the less-known Polish years of Conrad's life. And Frederick Karl is preparing a Collected Letters, much needed in view of the scattered, incomplete, and occasionally censored state of Conrad's correspondence.

The papers in this collection testify to the value of these projects. Conrad revised his work continually during composition, editing, publication, and reissue, and an essay "On Editing Conrad" traces his emendations through numerous editions of two earlier novels. In *Almayer's Folly,* for example, there are 306 variants, 95 of them substantive, between the British and American first editions; and 440 variants, 105 of them substantive, between the first English edition and subsequent collected editions. Establishing a definitive text, therefore, is a major task, and an important one to judge from the critical trends displayed in these essays which employ styles of analysis which pay the closest possible attention to the text. Albert Guerard, for instance, examines the narrative "Conradian voice," observing nuances of tone, syntax, and rhythm. "Voice" depends on but is distinguished from "style" as a peculiar movement of mind or temperament, and such discrimination requires sensitive attention to precise details in the novels. Avrom Fleishman also listens to narrative voices, but his emphasis is linguistic. He distinguishes different "texts" in *Under Western Eyes* (Conrad's, the narrator's, Razumov's), each based on different kinds of speech or writing. The novel develops through the interplay between these, and Razumov's struggle and failure are expressed as conflicts with language. Tony Tanner builds his argument on imagery and vocabulary, how they are stressed and how arranged to suggest opposed types of consciousness or ranges of experience. Using real and metaphorical cannibalism in the story "Falk" as a base, Tanner raises an elaborate structure by using anthropological categories (nature and culture, the cooked, raw and rotted, fusion and mutilation), a structure which abstracts itself from the story, but depends on a close and often ingenious use of details from it.

All such studies require an accurate, dependable text since they argue from the smallest particulars. Fleishman, for example, notes that the epigraph to *Under Western Eyes* actually misquotes Natalie Haldin's statement: "I would take liberty from any hand as a hungry man snatches at a piece of bread." Is the misquotation significant, and if so, how? Fleishman's distinction of texts and voices offers one explanation. Clearly the job of the editor is crucial in such instances.

The value of biographical studies is demonstrated in several articles, including one by Ugo Mursia which shows that even facts as elementary as Conrad's birthplace have been mistaken. Renewed interest in Conrad's turbulent childhood has prompted essays which re-examine his antagonism to Russia and his debt to Polish traditions, subjects on which earlier critics offered convenient but suspect generalizations. Instead of a simple sailor or a romanticized "Slavic soul," we now find a responsible Polish intellectual. This re-orientation is evident in Najder's essay which contrasts the social views of Conrad and Rousseau, and finds the key to Conrad's traditional-progressive attitudes, not in the English Burke tradition (as suggested by Fleishman in *Conrad's Politics*), but in the cultural conditions of nineteenth-century Poland. Interest in Conrad's Polish years also explains the emphasis given *Under Western Eyes* which seems to be re-emerging as a key work in the Conrad canon by virtue of its debt to but rejection of Dostoevsky, its narrative complexity, and its treatment of ideas and emotions so basic to Conrad's character.

The value of Frederick Karl's editorial work is demonstrated in his article on the letters from Conrad to his literary agent, J. B. Pinker, many of the 1200 items still unpublished. It provides fascinating glimpses of Conrad's nervous character: he wrote for twelve hours a day while plagued by family worries, financial disaster, and physical disorders; he portrayed himself as a martyr to his literary talent, and wavered between self-doubt and self-assertion until he was on the verge of collapse, a point at which he somehow worked best. The letters reveal his chaotic yet controlled mode of composition: *The Secret Agent, Under Western Eyes,* and *Chance,* though written between 1905 and 1913, all overlapped in composition, with Conrad moving back and forth between them. The letters also reveal his developing insights into works in progress which usually began as short stories but worked their way, to Pinker's amazement, into full novels.

The collection comprises seventeen essays including two on Impressionism, two on Ford Madox Ford, two relating Conrad to the history of ideas (to Nietzsche and Rousseau), and one comparing Conrad and Malcolm Lowry. Edward Said's contribution, "Conrad and Nietzsche," outlines the conceptual framework used by C. B. Cox in *Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination,* which argues that Conrad has a "profoundly modern sensibility" which he displays in crises of identity, a "philosophical scepticism about the nature of reality" and about the power of the human mind to grasp it, a sense of the fallibility of language, and a "paralyzing vision of a universe absurd and meaningless." Chapters analyze the imagery, forms, and techniques used to embody this sensibility in the major novels. This is familiar territory already charted by Said, J. Hillis Miller, Ian Watt, Royal Roussel, and James Guetti. Cox explores the terrain with sensitivity, thoroughness, and wit, but without breaking new ground. He is best when closest to the texts — and then often very good — but he is weakest when he relies on generalizations that have the ring of set formulae: "one possible response to the suicidal claims of moral nihilism is a stoical recognition of the precarious state of mind." His dependence on such statements and on beliefs about Conrad's life and psychological condition which are now being revised also testify to the value of the primary research illustrated in Sherry's collection of essays.

Jon Kertzer

Juliet McMaster, ed., *Jane Austen's Achievement*. London: Macmillan, 1976. Pp. xvii + 139. $17.50.

An ambitious title may promise too much. In *Jane Austen's Achievement* Juliet McMaster has gathered six papers read by scholars from three continents at the bicentennial conference she chaired at the University of Alberta in 1975. Lacking a central theme, the collection offers four glimpses of Jane Austen's historic awareness, and two of her art and influence. Nor do the essays share the unity of a single assumption about the order of her novels. In the first essay B. C. Southam argues that *Northanger Abbey* is her last finished novel, whereas most of these scholars assume it to be her earliest. This inconsistency as to what is most amateur and what most mature limits the volume to assorted achievements.

In "*Sanditon:* The Seventh Novel" B. C. Southam explores the historical bent of Jane Austen's late new directions. He finds that "Jane Austen is the most important nineteenth-century historian of 'Improvement' and of the process of change that it signified; and 'Improvement' would make an apt thematic title for *Mansfield Park,* where an elaborate sematic [*sic*] drama is formed around the whole concept of improvement . . . ." This claim gains a sense of historical movement by the treatment of *Northanger Abbey* as a late novel containing the archaic remains of an earlier decade sufficiently stressed to prepare for a similar historical sense in *Sanditon*. What is parody in Catherine Morland's false Gothic expectations in her visit to General Tilney's "improved" Abbey grows into satire as the General proves to be an up-to-date Montoni exercising a similar tyranny and greed in a more social context than that of Udolpho. In *Sanditon* the apparent villain, Sir Edward Denham, who daydreams of becoming the Lovelace of the Byronic era, recalls the Gothic parody in his faith in obsolete literary images. In sharp historical contrast the busy, greedy Parkers around him are emulating every latest social fad. This focus leaves Charlotte Heywood more a detached observer than an involved protagonist and explains some puzzles of the fragment, including Sir Edward. Yet it depends on assuming the existing chapters are close to their final form, overlooking the well-dramatized insights Charlotte shows in the one long chapter (Seven).

A more specific historical paradox, the marriage of convenience as social practice in the times of the Romantic poets, concerns Lloyd W. Brown in "The Business of Marrying and Mothering." The business of fiction as well as society was courtship and marriage, but the goal differed sharply between the two. Fiction idealized the love match, and society couplings of wealth and rank. Jane Austen built her novels around plots which climax in a romantic proposal but are strewn with unrewarding marriages. This paradox worried Jane Austen the woman as well as the novelist, as Professor Brown shows from her letters, especially those to Fanny Knight. He may be right that Jane Austen meant a moral lesson by imposing happy endings on a context of sour marriages. Yet she may instead have been satirizing the fictional ideal by weakening the intensity of her climactic proposal scenes.

A tangible historical presence, the impact of physical objects in these novels, variously concerns A. Walton Litz and Barbara Hardy. For Professor Litz the environment of a Pemberley can fix Darcy's character for Elizabeth Bennet, but in the changing world of *Persuasion* the character of Anne Elliot must respond to an unstable society in which the landed gentry may have to vacate their stately homes for newly-rich naval officers. For Professor Hardy physical things in the novels not only reflect those who own them but vary in the eyes of those who experience them. Reactions to Barton Cottage can reveal a Mrs. Dashwood's impracticality, a Mr. Palmer's rudeness and a Willoughby's glib superficiality. Only the things necessary for such reactions appear: "Jane Austen keeps very strictly to what appears to be her self-created rule of characteristic description. If someone in the novel is not registering the appearance, cost or savour of things, they are kept out." This idea of the "self-created rule" may well apply to other omissions in the novels. It invites expansion into a larger study of self-imposed rules in the works of our most artistic novelist.

The two remaining essays discuss artistic rather than historical problems. In "The Great Tradition Revisited" Norman Page explores the meaning of F. R. Leavis' famous title, which included Jane Austen without explanation. By tracing her influence on George Eliot, Henry James, and, surprisingly, E. M. Forster instead of Joseph Conrad, Professor Page concludes that the essence of a Jane Austen tradition is threefold: "ironic comedy and commentary," the heroine's revising her judgements of the society she enters, and "the pervasive assumption that conduct matters". Although as Professor Page admits, recording echoes "can be positively baleful," he shows indeed that these novelists sensed the proper scope for their own novels when they saw it in their predecessor's.

More could be said on this subject, and more needs to be said on George Whalley's fresh topic, "Jane Austen: Poet." Using two criteria for poetry, "craftsmanship in language" and "the conduct of the action within each novel," Professor Whalley finds an unexplored greatness in Jane Austen in the "energy" of her language and the "emotional depth and moral scope" of her action. In *Mansfield Park* at least they go beyond comedy for him, and trace the "arc of tragic action." Disappointingly, his search for his criteria allows only a bird's-eye glance at each of the six novels and leaves the reader longing for a more searching view of Jane Austen's poetry.

These essays expose the complexities of odd corners of Jane Austen's fictional world. They show that she knew her times more deeply than is often supposed, and wrote with more power and influence. Yet they leave the reader hoping that this is not indeed Jane Austen's Achievement.

William H. Magee

Books Received

BEER, JOHN, *Coleridge's Poetic Intelligence.* London and Toronto: Macmillan, 1977. pp. xviii, 318. $19.90.

BLAKE, NORMAN F., *The English Language in Medieval Literature.* London: J. M. Dent, 1977. pp. 190. £7.95.

CAVALIERO, GLEN, *The Rural Tradition in the English Novel 1900-1939.* London and Toronto: Macmillan, 1977. p. xi, 240. $22.40.

CULLER, A. DWIGHT, *The Poetry of Tennyson.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977. pp. x, 276. $15.00.

FERGUSON, FRANCES, *Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977. pp. xvii, 264. $15.00.

GRAY, RICHARD, *The Literature of Memory: Modern Writers of the American South.* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press; Don Mills: Burns and MacEachern, 1977. pp. xi, 377. $17.60.

HARMON, MAURICE, *Select Bibliography for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature and its Backgrounds.* Port Credit, Ontario: P. D. Meany Co., 1977. pp. 187. $17.50.

JOSIPOVICI, GABRIEL, *The Lessons of Modernism.* London and Toronto: Macmillan, 1977. pp. xiv, 208. $22.40.

KELLY, A. A., *Liam O'Flaherty the Storyteller.* London and Toronto: Macmillan, 1977. pp. xiii, 154. $19.90.

LOW, DONALD A., *That Sunny Dome: A Portrait of Regency Britain.* London: J. M. Dent, 1977. pp. xv, 208. £5.95.

MEYERS, JEFFREY, *Homosexuality and Literature 1890-1930.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977. pp. 183. $12.00.

MIKHAIL, E. H., ed., *J. M. Synge: Interviews and Recollections.* London and Toronto: Macmillan, 1977. pp. xiv, 138. $16.95.

MIKHAIL, E. H., ed., *W. B. Yeats: Interviews and Recollections.* 2 vols. London and Toronto: Macmillan, 1977. pp. xiii, 426. $19.50 per volume.

PEAKE, C. H., *James Joyce: the Citizen and the Artist.* London: Edward Arnold; Toronto: Macmillan, 1977. pp. x, 369. $24.75.

PRITCHETT, V. S., *The Gentle Barbarian: the Life and Work of Turgenev.* London: Chatte and Windus; Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1977. pp. 243. $11.95.

SEIDEL, MICHAEL AND EDWARD MENDELSON, eds., *Homer to Brecht: the European Epic and Dramatic Traditions.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977. pp. viii, 352. $17.50. $4.95 pb.

THOMSON, PATRICIA, *George Sand and the Victorians: Her Influence and Reputation in 19th-Century England.* London and Toronto: Macmillan, 1977. pp. 283. $17.40.

THUMBOO, EDWIN, *Gods Can Die.* Singapore: Heinemann (Asia) Ltd., 1977. pp. xiv, 63. $4.50.

WICKHAM, GLYNNE, ed., *English Moral Interludes.* London: J. M. Dent, 1977. pp. xvi, 213. $1.95 pb.

WHITAKER, THOMAS R., *Fields of Play in Modern Drama.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. pp. 192. $11.00.

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