Book Reviews

David Burnley. *A Guide to Chaucer's Language*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1983. pp. xv, 264. $22.50.

The chief concern of Burnley's book is the variety of Chaucer's language and the significance this has for interpretation of Chaucer's meaning. The book is divided into two parts, "The Language of the Text" and "Variety, Context, and Style." Though each may be read independently, Burnley perceives that "if read consecutively its chapters adumbrate a coherent conception of Chaucer's language as a variety of Middle English." Be that as it may, the first part in general will not be of as much interest to the experienced reader of Chaucer as will the second.

"The Language of the Text" does not attempt to be a descriptive grammar but to emphasize some of the ways Chaucer's grammar differs from modern grammar. Grammatical forms are discussed not simply in the introductory way of student texts but to illustrate and clarify in context constructions that may lead to misinterpretation — as, for example, the periphrastic *love of frendes* existing alongside *frendes love* — or lead to ignorance of tone and style, as in the use of the singular *ye* and *thou* as pronouns of address, or cause simple confusion as in the use of impersonal constructions. These are things anyone who wishes to have a reasonable acquaintance with Chaucer should know. What is noteworthy in Burnley's book is their ample treatment of function and effect in context.

Of more significance for the advanced student of Chaucer is a chapter on time and tense. Here we have discussed such concepts as the difference in modality implied in the choice of *shal* or *wol*, and the use of the present tense for attribution of speech and thoughts (as in the portrait of the Friar in the *General Prologue*). Tense shifts in general are well documented to illustrate, among other things, their importance in slightly punctuated medieval texts, their metrical convenience, or their use for stylistic effect as in the

shift in narrative tenses to actualize events or control the audience's perspective. An example of the last is given from the *Knight's Tale*:

> In derknesse and horrible and strong prison
> This seuen yeer hath seten Palamon
> Forpyned, what for wo and for distresse.
> Who feeleth double soor and heuynesse
> But Palamon, that love destreyneth so,
> That wood out of his wit he gooth for wo.

What Burnley perceives here and elsewhere is deliberate tense manipulation to bring the audience into clear association with the characters.

To sum up part one very briefly, it deals with verbal patterning in Chaucer and its functions of ordering discourse. Part two is an extension of observations made on the language in part one when viewed in a broader context. Critics and scholars will find more here to interest them.

In part two Burnley looks first at the linguistic diversity of the London language and the metrical and rhyming possibilities that its variant forms offered. In this study variants between the Elismere and Hengwrt MSS. play an important part (Burnley's choice of MS for the *Canterbury Tales* is the Hengwrt). Burnley's scansion endeavours to show that scribal exercise of grammatical options has resulted in damage to both metre and sense, particularly in the Ellismere MS. Though his point seems well taken in many cases, it seems to me that in others he clearly forces scansion to place an interpretation on lines that suits his argument. More edifying is his analysis of Chaucer's vocabulary. He finds that "hende," for example, though used commonly in London romances a generation before Chaucer in the sense of "courteous," has to Chaucer become declasse, hence its ironic use for 'hende Nicholas' of the *Miller's Tale*. In the same category belong the French-derived words *tretys*, *fetys*, *coy*, and *gent*, "once used in courtly contexts, but since declined into socially-ironic rise." Burnley says of the Prioress: "If Chaucer sees the Prioress as a social aspirant of *bourgeoise* origin who has an imperfect grasp of the ideals with which she would like to be associated, and whose moral sense is dubious, then his choice of inappropriate and outdated courtly language to describe her may seem to reflect his view." Similar considerations of word level use are given to vocabulary coming in from the Norse.

Chaucer's vocabulary is also discussed for its register and propriety, as in his use of *termes* (used technically in *termes of phisik*, etc., also in *cherles termes*, etc.) in definition and classification, or scholastic vocabulary used allusively, wittily, or for moral instruction. Burnley notes: "In the presentation of character the unexpected

appearance of proper terms may add a historical resonance, as when the Wife of Bath employs the school-terms she may have learned from her fifth husband. A case like this raises a critical problem as to whether it is justified to assume that the use of *termes* by the Wife is intended in a realistic way to reflect her past history, or whether, as so often, it is really a device of the author seeking to reach his audience with a display of witty erudition on the subject he has chosen to discuss through the medium of the wife. There is no doubt that *termes* which can be used in various contexts, whilst still retaining associations of their properties, are immense value to Chaucer in reaching his audience more subtly. . . ." Rhetorical orthodox terms also become *verba translata*, expressions transferred from their original application and perhaps also sense, and fitted to new contexts where they can be understood allusively and figuratively. To illustrate, among these is the legal term "heigh imagacioun forncast'" used in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* with the sense "malice aforethought." Dependent on vocabulary, register, and propriety are levels of style.

The concluding chapter of Burnley's book ends as follows: "An appropriate awareness of stylistic subtlety will, of course, develop naturally in the sensitive reader from repeated readings, but that awareness can be advanced and encouraged by learning the possibilities inherent in the language, and by discussing particular examples of their litreary exploitation. This book has sought to offer a guide to such useful activities." This seems a modest claim for a book that, on the whole, has much to recommend it to both student and scholar. The latter is particularly well served by extensive and informative notes.

E. GUY

Linda Woodbridge. *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620.* Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1984. pp. 364. $21.95.

Discovering the subtle knot that binds sexuality to textuality and gender to genre is what literary criticism can presume to contribute to the proper study of womankind. Renaissance English literature offers feminist critics — some of them male — a particularly ample field to explore because its representations of women are both varied and complex. Diana and Venus, Mary and Eve, stock archetypes of womanhood during the period, are two dominant paradigms that beget persistently polarized stereotypes of women. As recent commentary has demonstrated, such binary models — which maintain that women are either saints or whores, virgins or vamps, redeemers

or destroyers, nurturing mothers or emasculating lovers — are products of the male imagination. Renaissance English literature trades, of course, in such stable oppositions, but it also creates some unconventional images of women. It is fascinated with androgyny, for instance, as the cross-dressing of Spenser's Britomart and Shakespeare's Rosalind or Viola, say, intimates. This preoccupation is consonant, on the one hand, with the Salmacis and Hermaphroditus myth and, on the other, with the fact that the essentially patriarchal society of the period was headed by an "Amazonian" queen who was succeeded by a homosexual king. When assessing the status of women in Renaissance England it is not easy to say how literature and life mesh, since paradox and ambivalence are implicated at almost every juncture.

A strength of this book is that it carefully distinguishes literature that belongs to a virtually self-enclosed and self-perpetuating system from literature that reflects life, more or less, and relies on the actual for its vigour. The distinction made, Woodbridge cleverly negotiates a *via media* between these extremes. The first five chapters centre on the "formal controversy" about women, a controversy whose medieval antecedents Francis Utley has described in *The Crooked Rib*. A key point about the Renaissance continuation of this tradition, which Woodbridge traces from Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Defence of Good Women* (1540) to an apogee in the Swetnam controversy of 1615-20, is that it involves game more than reality. One of the proofs for this proposition resides in Woodbridge's discussion of the dynamic of attacks on and defences of women: sometimes, as in Edward Gosynhill's *The Scole house of women* and *Mulierum Pean* (both 1542?), C. Pyrrye's *The Praise and Dispraise of Women* (1569), and Middleton's *Women Beware Women* and *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, which in the earliest extant edition (1657) were bound together, praise and condemnation of women issue from the same (male) pen. This feature of the tradition suggests that the masculine mind is fickle, perhaps, but it also suggests that "women" was a rhetorical topic men best explored by arguing *in utramque partem*. Woodbridge observes, moreover (in a book that itself contains an exordium and a peroration!) that the form of many of the defences and attacks she discusses is the judicial oration. This form accommodates even the facetiousness and sophistry of Cornelius Agrippa's *De nobilitate et praecellentia foemenei sexus* (tr. David Clapham, 1542), a paradoxical encomium. Although defences outnumber attacks — one reason for Woodbridge's assertion that "defence was the formal controversy's basic format, the attack a variant" — the premise that underlies use of the judicial oration is that Woman is on trial. Thus, the exemplary

figures such as Virginia, Griselda, and Susanna, who appear in formal apologies for women and become in the 1560's subjects of plays, are, in fact, witnesses against the prosecution of women that was carried on, both within the plays and without, by the accusers and misogynists.

Throughout this first section, Woodbridge is alert to paradox and ambivalence in the texts she treats and also in the relationships of those texts with the lot of real women. She argues that stereotypes of the Bad Woe-man are less insidious to the cause of feminism than stereotypes of the Ideal Woman. She is aware that the jest-book depiction of women has serious social implications. In the course of discussing the third book of Castiglione's *The Courtier*, she avers that the aristocracy was a seedbed for female equality, whose growth was blocked and blighted in the middle classes. She reproves Daniel Tuvil, one of the respondents to Joseph Swetnam's *The Araignment of . . . Women* (1615), for supporting women with the Platonic notion that men and women complement each other like a pair of hands; her objection is that Tuvil associates men with the "right" hand and women with the hand sinister.

Following her provocative analysis of the controversial literature, Woodbridge proceeds to five chapters that nest together, somewhat uncomfortably, under the rubric of "Toward the Hermaphrodite." Beginning with the *hic mulier/haec vir* affair of 1620, best known, perhaps, because of its pertinence to Jonson's *Epicoene*, Woodbridge investigates the scope of literary hermaphroditism, its affiliations with the sartorial practices of Tudor and Jacobean women, and the various myths that informed Renaissance attitudes toward the man-woman and the womanish man (especially Venus-Mars, Hercules-Omphale, Salmacis-Hermaphroditus). She contends that the shrewish and the saintly woman were cut from the same cloth, since both are species of the ascendant female who threatens the "natural" order. It follows that "the milksop husband was the domestic, bourgeois equivalent of the male courtly lover." She identifies a notable synchronicity in her coupling of the female transvestite movement in the early seventeenth century with plays that revolve around Griselda figures: the fictive is a safety-valve, in this reading, as Desdemona and other docile literary wives become manifestations of "a male wish-fulfillment fantasy." The final chapter in this section, "Pistolas in the Playhouse," deals with the assertive women who dominate the drama from 1610-20. These swaggerers mirror obliquely, says Woodbridge, the "pistol-packing London dames" then abroad in the streets. Two criticisms can be launched against this, the central portion of the work.

Woodbridge privileges drama over other literary kinds, and when

she does turn to non-dramatic literature, her soundings are relatively shallow. Witness her remarks on Petrarchism: how the English sonnet sequences themselves deviate from and modify the "tradition" is overlooked entirely. Although Shakespeare looms large in "Toward the Hermaphrodite" — Woodbridge parts company, however, with much feminist criticism that takes Shakespeare as champion — neither the "master-mistress" nor the dark lady survives the pruning shears that Woodbridge has used on the available material. Donne, who was preoccupied, both as attacker and defender, with the "woman question," is quite ignored, even though much of his work appeared during the period covered here. Woodbridge recognizes Spenser's importance for her subject, but she casts him as the poet of marriage, and offers only reductive comments on Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, which, as Harry Berger noted as long ago as 1969, "consciously and conspicuously revises not only a literary and cultural view of love but also a literary and cultural view of women." Woodbridge touches on the myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus but does not allude at all to the protracted analysis of its considerable influence on erotic poetry found in Hallet Smith's *Elizabethan Poetry.* In sum, poetry here is clearly the spare rib. Despite the promise of the subtitle, this book, like Juliet Dusinberre's, Lisa Jardine's and most Renaissance feminist criticism, in fact, emphasizes the dramatic corpus.

Comparison with Lisa Jardine's *Still Harping on Daughters* (1983) highlights another deficiency in Woodbridge's central section. Jardine's last chapter focuses on Elizabeth and what has been called "the persistence of patriarchy" during her reign. Woodbridge, however, fails even to acknowledge the shaping force exerted by the cult of Elizabeth on an England bereft of the cult of Mary. She does not mention that Schleiner, Goldberg, Montrose, and Wells, for example, have attached wide-ranging psychosocial and literary significance to the roles played by England's Eliza. In a work that professes interest in how life impinges on the literary imagination, this ellipsis is a large gap.

The book ends strongly, however, with a bid to attract attention to the anonymous and "now obscure" *Swetnam the Woman-hater Arraigned by Women* (1618). Woodbridge dubs the titular character of this play a "stage misogynist" who, though a fictional surrogate for Joseph Swetnam, the pamphleteer, is also related to woman-haters such as Benedick (*Much Ado About Nothing*), Mendoza (*The Malcontent*), and Bosola (*The Duchess of Malfi*). All the characters of this type have military leanings; all are blocking figures who serve an antimasque function in the dramatic action. Woodbridge thinks highly of the artistry of *Swetnam the Woman-*

hater and conjectures that its author may well have been John Webster. She is a persuasive advocate.

Although Woodbridge does not avoid completely the tendency to compile catalogues of motifs and characters that fit her thesis, this robust book is gracefully written. The author has a keen eye for the quotable. From Cornelius Agrippa, she cites an observation on the full extent of Christ's condescension at the Incarnation: "He toke upon hym manhoode, as the more humble and lower kynde, and not womankynde, the more hygher and noble." From Christopher Newstead, she cites a syllogistic argument for women's intelligence: women eat less than men; "fat paunches make lean pates"; ergo, women are more intelligent than men. Furthermore, Woodbridge salts her own prose with witticisms: she refers, for instance, to a Petrarchan amorist's "fearing death by frowning." Partly because she does not resort to what one of her texts terms the "imperative mood" can she say near the end of her ambitious book, "Perish the man whose mind is backward now."

RONALD B. BOND

Howard Erskine-Hill. *The Augustan Idea in English Literature.* London: Edward Arnold, 1983. pp. xvi, 379. £33.50.

Since the concepts this exceptional book explores are very important, this review outlines its argument without discussing Mr. Erskine-Hill's continuously discriminating style. Recently scholars have refused to call eighteenth-century literature Augustan; Erskine-Hill rehabilitates the term by arguing that the figure of Augustus has acquired associations which, though variously emphasized, have existed continuously in English literature. Treating the reception of Rome's Augustan Age as a topic in comparative literature (x), he surveys European and Classical as well as English literature to prove that views of Augustus as tyrant, ideal monarch, and agent of providence are synchronous. In presenting Augustus's biography, Erskine-Hill puts Caesar's quest for military power in context, showing he was neither ruthless nor passionless and examining the propaganda against him in Virgil, Plutarch, and Shakespeare. After describing his reform of the Senate, restoration of the Republic, and *de facto* monarchical power, he explores Caesar's propagandistic reasons for encouraging architecture and poetry. He further associates propaganda with Caesar by describing how the Church Fathers endowed him with a providential role, viewing the peace he established as preparing Christ's way: Tertullian saw Augustus's rejection of title as an affirmation of faith in God, while Eusebius

and Origen held that his imperial power enabled the church to grow. Although Augustine revised this view after the sack of Rome, his pupil, Orosius, was responsible for it entering English literature through the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers. It was given new impetus by Dante, whose belief in monarchy led him to celebrate the imperial destiny of Caesar's Rome. In the Middle Ages, Augustus was a "vital point of reference in mapping human history" (42). A pagan tyrant in the Towneley Cycle, Augustus is a providential agent in the Chester Cycle.

In the Renaissance, opposing views of Caesar got stronger and more involved. While Petrarch regarded him as a glorious, if secular, figure, the discovery of texts by Tacitus and Dio made Augustus seem less a symbol than a confusing man. Prince literature discounted the providential view. Erasmus saw him as no more than a typical ruler. Secular interest in politics led Machiavelli to omit Augustus from *The Prince*. However, Sir Thomas Elyot in his *Boke Named the Governour* championed Augustus as the restorer of monarchy, expressing the providential view (55). In his political theory, Jean Bodin grappled with the mutability of political forms, seeing Augustus as a paradox because he was a republican and a *de facto* monarch. Hostile to the means by which Augustus got power, Bodin sympathized with his goals. Since, for Bodin, he exemplified the drift towards hereditary monarchy, Augustus was an agent of providence. The prince literature of Justus Lipsius proves how involved Augustan associations were. This editor of Tacitus adopted a favourable monarchist interpretation of Augustus.

Conscious Augustanism first took place in Elizabethan letters, as Erskine-Hill's subtle comparison of Donne's and Pope's versions of Horace's Ninth Satire of the First Book shows. Donne's is superior in expressing fear about the unjust operations of the state. Pope's is comic and shrewd; Donne's is more complex and human. Much of the formal satire written in the 1590's refused to parallel Augustus and Elizabeth because poets, alert to political danger, believed the Queen was far from an ideal patron. Although Ben Jonson applied Augustan parallels because of his moral independence, most satirists refused to employ them. Alert to the debate about Augustus, Jonson, in order to reorient English culture, chose to view him as an ideal ruler under whom the arts flourished. In devising one of the ceremonial arches for James I's entry into London, Jonson employed Augustan ideas because, along with others, he saw in the new king hope for peace, national expansion, and patronage. Shakespeare does not fit into discussion of the Augustan Idea because his dialectical method in *Julius Caesar* treats Augustus as an enigma rather than a king or tyrant. In *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare

concentrates not on republican ideas but on rivalry for the monarchy of the world. If Antony lacks princely virtue because of his intemperance, his magnificence, real by contrast with Coriolanus's, devalues Augustus's temperance. In *Cymbeline* the King submits to the Roman empire but the hint that Shakespeare holds to the Augustan Idea is remote.

Erskine-Hill justifies parallels between James and Augustus because the King sponsored the Authorized Version of the Bible and acted as patron to Donne and Jonson. In writing Horatian odes, Jonson and his followers achieved a larger range of poetic expression than Pope, but they did not address their prince as politically as Horace did; their breadth of reference remained small until political events halted England's decline (183). During the Civil War, poets drew Augustan parallels, seeing in Cromwell the imperial conqueror and founder of peace. But the Roman parallels were not extensive, even though his career was similar to that of the Stuarts who were praised by the Augustan analogy. Despite growing attacks upon the analogy, it was used to celebrate the Restoration. Since Charles II failed to fulfil his promises about patronage, Dryden employed Augustan parallels ironically in his poems to satirize the King. However, in his "Epistle to Congreve" Dryden praises the poet as an Augustan, leaving the place of Augustus empty because of his refusal to swear allegiance to William and Mary (229). Dryden is Augustan because of the structural place of Caesar in his poems. But, using the figure of Caesar to defend the Stuart succession, Dryden forgot Augustus was, like William, a *de facto* monarch.

The complex persistence of the Augustan Idea is revealed in David Hume's conviction that George III's concern for learning and the arts would bring about an era of peace. Although Hume did not respect monarchy, Augustanism was for him an index of civilization. Throughout the eighteenth century, there were many prospective and retrospective uses of Augustanism. Writers commonly employed the idea to deny or assert former cultural achievements: Atterbury made Waller a symbol of Restoration achievement so that he could insult the reign of William and Mary, whereas Matthew Prior celebrated William, warning him to do better than Augustus. Between 1726 and 1756 views hostile to Augustus prevented the Age of Augustus from being a model of emulation (249). Thomas Blackwell's important *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus* was more interested in the literary activity of a heroic society than in monarchical patronage. He detached Augustan literary achievement from the reign of Augustus. Joseph Warton used the term Augustan to signify high literary and moral values in his dismissive account of the Restoration. The Augustan ideal did not wane in the later eighteenth cen-

tury, although it remained a very mixed one. Whereas historians usually held to the view of Tacitus, critics praised Dryden and Pope in terms of Augustanism, meaning by it clarity of design and naturalness of diction. Coleridge, opposed to the political values of Augustus, still appreciated the freedom of speech and writing under Augustus. In the eighteenth century there was no absolute change of opinion about Augustan Rome. Yet the period is remarkable for the energy with which it asserts and denies analogies between Rome and England.

In his final chapters, Erskine-Hill offers brilliant readings of Pope which show the poet exploiting the complexity of the Augustan Idea. Thus, *Epistle To Mr. Addison, Occasion'd by his Dialogues on Medals* manifests the Renaissance desire to transmit the spirit of Rome to posterity through collapsing Roman and present time while imposing the Renaissance upon antiquity. By treating medals as images recovering the past and bearing affinities to the literary and visual arts, Pope conveys the assumption that England is comparable to Rome. Yet in his imitations of Horace Pope differs from as well as identifies with the Roman poet. In *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated* Pope laughs at what for Horace had been serious, namely, the idea of poetry expressing esteem for the ruler. But Pope also imitates Horace's heroic attack and candid self-presentation. In the next imitation, Pope changes Horace's *sermo* into a dialogue with a simple autobiographical and domestic reference: he imitates Horace in talking about himself in a poem in which Horace does not talk about himself. *To Arbuthnot* shows Pope's keen understanding of Horace's autobiographical vein but extends it by giving his poem a definite thematic shape. In the Second Epistle of the Second Book Horace allows Pope to talk about his early life and persecution and to quote himself quite naturally. In his Epistle *To Augustus* Pope faced the problem of writing about Augustus when the Tory opposition was using the Tacitean view of him. Pope believed the positive idea of Augustus had enough basis in history and in his readers' minds to employ it with conviction. He addresses the modern Augustus in a way that implies the presence of the Roman Augustus, and his literary praise of contemporaries constantly turns into a political warning to George. Pope surpasses Horace by the way in which he combines a friendly tone with a sense of cultural crisis. With the irony of equivocation in the opening and closing sections, Pope is more exaggerated and unctuous than Horace. It is George's own failing rather than the poet's attack which constitutes the judgement. Pope takes Augustus as Horace did, a great prince who could be addressed as a fellow Roman. But Pope's idiom and greater complexity create a

very un-Horatian tone. In the Epilogues to the satires Pope shows that he cannot follow Horace's increased closeness to the Roman court because of his greater estrangement from the Hanoverian court. He no longer imitates specific texts. The last three poems of the group suggest an embattled poet facing the world with all the personal subtlety expressed in the other imitations intact. Erskine-Hill closes his authoritative account of the Augustan Idea by having his epilogue powerfully suggest how much the legacy of Rome remains to be explored in later English literature and how much it is an unexhausted source for contemporary writers.

University of Alberta ROBERT JAMES MERRETT

Zdzislaw Najder, ed. *Conrad Under Familial Eyes.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983. pp. xxi, 282.

During Joseph Conrad's lifetime, when reviewers had difficulty accounting for the oddity of the novelist's style or tone, they often attributed it to his "Slavic temperament." This quality, which vaguely suggested an un-English moodiness or fatalism, they left undefined. Conrad vehemently rejected the term because it linked him to Russia, the country he despised. Since his death, the Polish side of Konrad Korzeniowski's life and work has received more and more attention as English and North American critics, who seldom can read Polish, have gradually gained access to documents about his family and background. The foremost editor and interpreter of these documents has been Zdzislaw Najder. In 1964 he published *Conrad's Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends,* and in 1983 a bulky and impressive biography, *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle. Conrad Under Familial Eyes* is a companion volume to the biography.

Conrad's most revealing letters, in which he complains of personal problems and expresses his ideas about life, literature and his own fiction, were written in English and French. The Polish letters in *Conrad's Polish Background* are usually less helpful. They are polite, formal, guarded, intended to please friends and relatives rather than to speak openly. Unfortunately, the letters to his Uncle, written in the 1880's and 1890's during Conrad's career as a sailor, disappeared in the Russian revolution. They would provide important information about his formative years and about the experiences which appear, suitably altered, in his novels. We are left, therefore, with a few official documents; the memoirs of Conrad's guardian, Tadeusz Bobrowski; letters by Conrad's parents; reminiscences by Polish acquaintances; and several interviews and articles. This col-

lection of "the most basic and typical texts," explains Najder, is "meant to serve as an assemblage beacon, illuminating and warning at the same time." It illuminates the intricacies of Conrad's Polish heritage; it warns against the clichés ("Slavic temperament") and simplifications which have been common in Conrad criticism. There should be few surprises for those who have followed the scholarship of the last few years, and no major revaluation of the fiction. However, this volume offers fascinating insight into Conrad's early years. It provides basic material for the endless debate over those necessary but indefinable concepts, "influence," "background," "personality," and "national character."

Conrad's childhood was overshadowed by a desperate political drama: the partition and oppression of Poland by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. As a result, this book is about Poland as much as it is about Conrad. Like Najder's biography, it is about Conrad's Polishness. It shows, for example, how subtly everyday life — addressing a letter, attending church, wearing black clothes — was politicized, because any action could express antagonism to the Russian authorities. Every event had political implications, a situation Conrad was to explore in *Nostromo.* In the households of the intelligentsia and gentry (*szlachta*, a title the young Conrad was taught to be proud of), patriotism and loyalty were prime virtues, while rebellion and despair, radicalism and resignation were common reactions to an apparently insoluble dilemma. Russia was considered the embodiment of bloody tyranny, a condition Conrad was to depict in his essay, "Autocracy and War." In his introduction and footnotes, Najder guides us through the twists of nineteenth-century Polish history and identifies the many people who appear in these pages. He even corrects their views, when necessary.

Conrad's life was also directed by two strong, opposing masculine characters: his father, Apollo Korzeniowski, and his Uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski. Najder's first book has already shown us a great deal of the latter, his practicality, conservatism, moralizing, and family pride. But we have seen Apollo mostly through the critical eyes of his brother-in-law. Now we hear his own voice, and discover a man more complex, intelligent, passionate, and interesting than we had suspected. Apollo dominates *Conrad Under Familial Eyes* through letters which chronicle his political activism, imprisonment, exile and death. His style is in turn lively, witty, sardonic, grand, poignant, mystical. For example, he writes of Vologda, his place of exile "behind the Bug [River]": "Take an hour-glass where scrofula runs instead of sand; throw over it something coloured, set it on two abominable tortoises wrapped in filthy rags and let it waddle along; fasten to each wrist a badly baked brick to which five rotten carrots

are attached — and there you have a Vologda woman with arms and legs. . . . And besides, the local males and females in their moral aspect remind one of uncorked bottles. Sometimes, in conversation, a drop of thought will leak out, but then something inside will block its way again, and I know not what should be done to pour out a sentence." Apollo also provides glimpses — though no more — of his young son, who was sickly, clever, solitary, a great reader, and a great dreamer. "He likes to criticize everything from a sympathetic viewpoint," notes his father, a judgement which future critics were to share. Apollo then adds, "He is also tender and good beyond words."

The other major subject of this book is Conrad's attitude toward Poland, and the attitude of Poles toward their famous expatriate. Adam Gillon has traced this topic in *Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration* (London: Macmillan, 1976), and the selections provided here fill in some of the details. Did he desert his native land in its time of need? What does he owe to his family background? In what sense is his writing "fruit of the Polish spirit, different from the spirit of other nations"? These questions have preoccupied Polish critics. Two articles of 1899 entitled "The Emigration of Talent" began the long dispute about loyalty and betrayal, themes from Conrad's novels that have been applied to his own life. On one hand are articles which chastize him for deserting Poland and, as Witold Gombrowicz notes, see in his work "the tragedy of a nation systematically betrayed by its best representatives." On the other hand are scholars who wish to reclaim Conrad as their own, and "doggedly look for a sign of Polishness in his every sneeze." Najder provides examples of both opinions, which tend toward the extremes of either scorn or reverence, as well as more balanced views.

JON KERTZER

Anne M. McCulloch. *A Tragic Vision: The Novels of Patrick White*. New York: U of Queensland P, 1983. pp. 206. $32.50.

The central thesis of McCulloch's book is that White was strongly influenced by Nietzsche in his endeavours to create a new tragic vision. (She theorizes that White's view of life is tragic, not merely serious like that of most writers.) She acknowledges that White may not have read Nietzsche — a wise reservation indeed, since White never refers to Nietzsche or quotes from Nietzsche in any of the various epigraphs to his novels — but claims that "it is evident that his religious sense, his despair at the loss of tragedy in a modern

world, his belief in an innate Divine potential in man, his belief in the 'infinity' of the natural world and his conviction that all must be affirmed in life resemble a Nietzschean world view" (18). Why, though, did she not take the trouble to check with White, who is an approachable man, whether or not he had actually read Nietzsche? The fact that she did not engenders the suspicion that she feared a negative answer would have weakened considerably the impact of the thesis to which she was wedded. It is quite reasonable to maintain that White absorbed Nietzschean influence indirectly through the intellectual culture that we have all inherited, but that is a much less striking thesis to base a book upon.

McCulloch approaches White as if he were a philosopher primarily and a creative writer hardly at all. While it may not mean much that White has disclaimed being an intellectual, especially since he is one of the greatest of twentieth-century novelists, his disclaimer should at least have prompted her to remember that his novels begin in his own experiences and take their creative impulse from his emotional and imaginative life. McCulloch lacks an understanding of the creative process: she sees novels as beginning in philosophical ideas detached from a writer's personal life and emotional makeup. But many of the circumstances of Elizabeth Hunter's life in *The Eye of the Storm*, to take one instance from White's novels, closely parallel those of Patrick White's own mother; and one needs to know that in order to understand why he elevates Elizabeth to such a height among his visionaries, an elevation that is otherwise surprising. McCulloch never refers to any circumstances in White's life, which she has ignored in the interest of her thesis.

McCulloch's opening chapter is devoted to a discussion of White's first six novels, from *Happy Valley* through *Riders in the Chariot*; the later novels, with the exception of *A Fringe of Leaves*, are each accorded a chapter. The book is therefore essentially a discussion of White's later novels, though McCulloch never acknowledges this. It is a pity that the first six novels receive such a restricted discussion, for they form the bulk of White's major work, while the later and lesser novels receive such detailed analysis. Among the earlier novels are the three great works *The Aunt's Story*, *The Tree of Man*, and *Voss*, and the flawed but impressive *Riders in the Chariot*; only *The Eye of the Storm* could be considered a great work among the later novels. *The Solid Mandala* and *The Vivisector* are rather laboured and uninvolving, and *The Twyborn Affair* is distinctly bizarre. McCulloch writes with some acuteness on *The Solid Mandala* and *The Vivisector*, although her theory of Nietzschean influence on *The Solid Mandala* can be removed from that chapter without harm to the main argument, while Nietzsche's name is hardly mentioned

in the chapter on *The Vivisector.* To keep *The Solid Mandala* in the Nietzschean camp, McCulloch has to posit inspiration from Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* rather than from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as in the other novels; but that would make of White a a very dedicated Nietzschean in *The Solid Mandala* and a non-Nietzschean in *The Vivisector.* In neither of these chapters (and they are the best in the book) is McCulloch's theory of Nietzschean influence on White necessary or convincing.

As she traces the Nietzschean elements she discerns in White's novels, McCulloch does not question the legitimacy of White's values. Always careful to define her own terms (like "romantic" and "classical" [3]), she is surprisingly uncritical of White's usage: she does not ask, for instance, whether his notion of suffering is clearly defined. The experience of suffering is essential to qualifying White's elect for redemption or creativity, yet White by no means makes clear to us that their suffering is notably different from that of his nonelect (or indeed from that undergone by most of us as part of living). It is highly dubious that the emotionally restrained Stan Parker suffers as intensely and as enduringly as his wife Amy, but Stan is endowed with a visionary sense while Amy is dismissed as shallow. A number of White's elect may seem, like Laura Trevelyan, to lead a life that is more sheltered than afflcted; if Laura is isolated it is surely of her own doing. While it is true that McCulloch's approach to White is exegetical and not evaluative, she does need to consider whether his elect are different enough from his nonelect to be worthy of the vision he bestows upon them. Are his "living," that is, easily distinguishable from his "dead"? Does he satisfactorily establish his own claim that Elizabeth Hunter has lived life to the full while those around her lead timid, circumscribed existences? — certainly her experience of sexuality and love is very limited. Her life as the wife of a pastoralist, too, is not notably fuller than that of Marcia Lushington, another pastoralist's wife (in *The Twyborn Affair*); but Elizabeth is one of White's elect and Marcia is not. What really sets Elizabeth apart is her control of others, not her vitality. Constantly one stumbles against the arbitrariness of White's judgements. There is a certain domineering quality in the fact that White takes so little trouble to establish a sound base for his distribution of redemption and damnation; and it is this domineering and arbitrary quality that makes it especially difficult to accept a theory that, like McCulloch's, depends upon a consistency underlying White's tragic vision.

A Tragic Vision is from McCulloch's Master's thesis. It is of a standard much above that normally required for that degree, but shows its origins in its opiniatedness and in its cerebral style. The

author quotes other critics usually to disagree with them, sometimes in peremptory fashion: "On the contrary . . . ," "A is mistaken that . . . , "B fails to realize that . . .". Her style is at times leaden with abstractions:

> The symbolic language and structure of the *EOS* cannot be exclusively identified as a science of the experimental order or that of the experienced order. The novel hovers uncertainly between these alternatives, becoming neither one more than the other. As a metaphor, in itself, the work captures the gulf between art and life, between the stance of the artist as spectator and as participant, and that between an order perceived and an order dramatized. The novel has an internal source of motion that hinges on White's exploration and questions. These questions become imbedded in the formal structure of the work at both the symbolic and literal level. The order of reality that White must confront, which involves an acceptance of artistic failure, necessitates a presentation of characters who have lost touch with a unified world. The organic unity achieved in the novel is communicated within an intellectual inner form. That is, the symbolic structure reflects the process of failure experienced by a symbolist searching for a modern tragic form. (p. 110)

This cerebral kind of writing is especially hard to take when one encounters basic errors in English syntax in it — false correlatives ("Just as . . . nor can" [57, 182]), a misattached participle (109), wrong tense sequence (184), use of *as* as a preposition (111), lack of an antecedent (121), lack of agreement between subject and verb (67, 151), or noun and pronoun (151, 161).

Instead of publishing her thesis as a book, McCulloch would have done well to extract her chapters on *The Solid Manadala* and *The Vivisector* as two separate articles, and perhaps develop her preliminary chapter as an article on Nietzschean elements in White.

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M. J. Daymond, J. U. Jacobs, and Margaret Lenta, eds. *Momentum.* Pietermaritzburg: U of Natal P, 1984. pp. 320. R 18.00 (paper).

Although South African literature continues to be discussed in terms of various racial rubrics ("white literature in English," "white literature in Afrikaans," "black literature in English," and "black literature in the vernacular"), recently there have been attempts by literary critics and scholars inside the country to bring some of these literatures together for purposes of both conference and publication. These attempts seem to have been most successful in the fields of criticism where writings by both blacks and whites have been either discussed or printed side by side. The outcome has been the emergence of an instructive and analytical series of works, in-

cluding both original material and manifesto. One of the seminal works of this nature is Michael Chapman's *Soweto Poetry*. Stephen Gray's *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* also belongs to this category but its criticism is based on original material alone.

Momentum is the latest publication in this genre and perhaps the most ambitious and comprehensive in terms of the length and analytical nature of some of its articles. The book itself has three parts. The first (Voices From South Africa) and last (South African Voices From Abroad) sections comprise statements (thirty-seven in all) in which both black and white writers discuss their styles of writing and what they deem to be the relationship between literature and society in South Africa. The manifestos range from direct, prosaic statements through interviews to poetry. The middle section of the book contains twelve critical essays on contemporary prose writings, theatre, and poetry. Like the first and last sections, this section of the book focusses on "the way writers are seen as responding (or not) to crises in South African affairs" (iii).

One of the strengths of *Momentum* is its deliberate exposure of the sharp divergences among black and white writers in the manner they handle the conflict between literary values and political goals. This divergence is prompted by the fact that the socio-political circumstances of those writers writing inside South Africa vary significantly. Even more important is the fact that some of the writers are in exile. As the statements in the first and last sections demonstrate, for most black writers (whether inside the country or in exile), literature portraying the South African society must always be politically committed.

Exploring the ideological development of his own writings, Mbulelo Mzamane ends his statement by giving the firm caveat that, the situation in South Africa "allows for no prevarication, no literary quislings" (304). Mafika Gwala, tracing the trajectory of militant black politics in the 1950's, asserts that "black writing cannot be divorced from the struggle for a free South Africa" (53). For Essop Patel, black poetry "must embody both commitment and affirmation" (87-88). Daniel P. Kunene argues that for literature to be an effective "instrument of persuasion," it "must be clear and unambiguous" (291). James Matthews aggressively dismisses the standards of critics who label his prose writings and poetry propaganda. His argument is that his priority is not to write stories or poetry but to protest against "the vileness of oppression" (74).

Not all black writers in *Momentum* espouse overt commitment. In a manner similar to that of W. H. Auden's post-1930's conviction that poetry makes nothing happen, Es'kia Mphahlele argues that "it is an exaggerated claim for literature that it can spark a revolution"

(82). While the political effectiveness of the poetry and drama of the 1970's may prove Mphahlele wrong, he is probably right in seeking to avoid undue earnestness and over-didacticism. He makes the reasonably limited claim that "literature may record, replay, inspire an on-going process" but wish to "conscientize" people in order to spur them into political action.

While Nadine Gordimer and Stephen Gray espouse commitment (although not as overtly as black writers do) in their interview and statement respectively, most of the white writers eschew earnest political engagement in writing. Although Lionel Abrahams is not totally opposed to political commitment, he puts a higher premium on the relationship between form and content: "My deepest quarrel is with the doctrine that literary values like subtlety, complexity, disinterested verisimilitude, individual imaginativeness, and general human appeal are bourgeois and Western prerequisites and hence not African" (4). Douglas Reid Skinner's argument is reminiscent of Lewis Nkosi's early attack on "the journalistic fact parading outrageously as imaginative literature" (*Home and Exile* 126). Like Nkosi, Skinner is predominantly concerned with "how" to write rather than "what" to write about. For Wessel Ebersohn, writing is something personal and individual. Like I. A. Richards, Ebersohn does not "consciously engage in a communicative endeavour" (*Principles of Literary Criticism* 26) when he sets out to write. Karel Schoeman's beliefs in favour of non-committed writing verge on reaction. Schoeman finds the "word 'engagement' rather modish and something of a misfit in a literary context" (99). He goes on to argue that any writing that consciously sets out to protest or to attack is "propaganda" (99). Other white writers (inside the country and abroad) like Sheila Fugard and Sheila Roberts refrain from discussing the question of commitment and merely write about less controversial issues such as their "sense of rootlessness" (30) and the development of their writings in relation to the rigors of exile.

What the statements demonstrate, therefore, is that, where political commitment is concerned, black and white writers are generally at opposite ends. Some of the black writers could be accused of being too didactic and doctrinaire much as some of the white writers could be accused of being aesthetically aloof and apolitical.

The critical essays in the middle section of *Momentum* give an extensive exegesis of the way literature and politics merge in South Africa. The concerns deal with South African versions of colonial exploitation up to Soweto 1976 and its aftermath. J. M. Coetzee's preoccupation with colonial consciousness is thoroughly explored in the essays of Joan Gillimer and W. T. Wood. In Rob Amato's

article, "Fugard's Confessional Analysis: *'Master Harold' . . . and the boys*," the reader is taken back to the 1950's with their tenuous multiracialism. The possibility of a genuine relationship between a white boy and two black adults is hinted at, destroyed, and left an unrealized possibility at the end of the play. Margaret Lenta's "A Break in the Silence: *The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena*" is a moving analysis of the psychological and physical impact of apartheid on black women. The essays of M. J. Daymond and Dorian Barboure trace the theme of revolution, prior to Soweto 1976 and after. The changing ethos of revolutionary opposition is underlined, and Barboure's essay analyzes Mongane Serote's portrayal of the actual revolutionary struggle in his novel, *To Every Birth Its Blood*. Ian Steadman's article on black South African theatre is among the most insightful and enlightening essays in *Momentum*. Like Barboure's essay, it incisively analyzes the political mood of the 1970's. It then demonstrates the role played by drama in influencing political thought and action.

Given the ever-growing complexity of the South African political landscape, *Momentum* is certain to appeal to a wide readership. The book's broad range of articles and its controversial and topical focus make it invaluable to literary students, scholars, and critics.

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