

Book Reviews

Jonathan Goldberg, *Voice Terminal Echo: Postmodernism and English Renaissance Texts*. New York and London: Methuen, 1986. pp. 194. \$14.95.

Jonathan Goldberg has become one of our most important critics of Renaissance literature, for because he has made it his special province to import current literary theory into Renaissance territory, he brings to the texts he examines fresh and often provocatively disturbing perspectives. Goldberg's *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (1981) used Barthesian, Lacanian, and Derridean analysis to deconstruct the legacy of Spenser criticism that sought to see *The Faerie Queene* as whole; that Spenser never brought his projected epic to completion is a symptom of a much more fundamental absence of closure within the poem. Goldberg's attention to the radically unfinished nature of the text — a work that is continually traversed by incompleteness and inconsistencies, disappearing and re-appearing characters, marriages that never take place, re-written endings that undo the closure of the original version, and Spenser's own re-writing of an unfinished Chaucerian text in Book IV — forced us to reassess our judgement of Spenser as an author who offers stability and satisfaction and see him instead as a poet who continually withholds that promise and resists the stabilizing pleasures of closure. Where *Endlesse Worke* was concerned primarily with authority as literary authority (the power a precursor exerts over his poetic successors), Goldberg's second book, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (1983) provided a brilliant Foucauldian analysis of authority and power in Jacobean society and literature, an inquiry that argued persuasively for the reciprocal (or mutually constitutive) relationship between the power of the monarchy and the discourse that creates and sustains that power. As a forceful example of the New Historicism that is currently transforming the study of Renaissance literature, *James I and the Politics of Literature* explored that complex boundary between the "inside" of a text and its "outside," or political and historical context, in a

way that both demonstrated the insufficiency of these distinctions and illuminated the importance of their interpretation in such areas as patronage, the political dimensions of theatricality, and the role of censorship in Jacobean society.

Voice Terminal Echo is allied more closely in its theoretical orientation with *Endlesse Worke* than *James I and the Politics of Literature* (several of the essays were, in fact, written before the later New Historicist project), for as in the Spenser book, Goldberg's primary focus is on textuality, the relationship between discourse and meaning, and like *Endlesse Worke*, *Voice Terminal Echo* draws heavily on the insights of Derrida and Lacan. As his title indicates, Goldberg's central (if his book can be seen to have a centre, a concept whose usefulness he would surely dispute) focus is on the problem of voice, specifically, the relationship of a voice to its referent. Goldberg's entrance into the problem is his discussion of Marvell's "The Nymph Complaining on the Death of her Faun," a text notorious for its resistance to determinate meaning. Although critics have continued to disagree about the proper interpretive framework (Christian, classical, Petrarchan, political) for understanding the poem, what has traditionally been taken for granted in the poem is that Marvell ventriloquistically assumes the voice of the nymph, a transposition both of gender and voice. But according to Goldberg, it is difficult to recognize the poet's voice in his texts, let alone discern the fiction of his created voices, so that rather than attempt to offer a key to the poem's meaning, he claims that the poem is itself about "its own deeply problematized voice" (15), the connections between loss and language. Crucial to Goldberg's exploration of the problem of voice is Derrida's deconstruction of phonocentrism, the belief (so prevalent in Western metaphysics) that the presence of the speaker (literally and figuratively) determines meaning. Goldberg's critique of phonocentrism is approached partly through his invocation of Echo, the embodiment — or disembodiment — of voice. The figure of Echo informs the book in a tropological, as well as mythical, sense because it suggests the condition of voice as repetition and it images the status of all texts, cut off as they are from their origins and capable simply of repeating fragments of what has already been said. The most satisfying sections of *Voice Terminal Echo* for me are the chapters on Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, where the relationship between political power and discourse is touched on briefly and tantalizingly within a discussion of Spenser's ownership of the voices he employs, the final chapter on Milton and Medusa, and most dazzlingly, the chapter in which Goldberg deconstructs the idea of a Shakespearian character, the notion that stability and identity can be conferred through language. Although he claims to eschew conventional argumentation, Goldberg's demon-

stration of the essentially textual interiority of the Shakespearian character as he ranges from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to *Titus Andronicus* and *Cymbeline*, the sonnets, and finally *Hamlet*, provides a compelling argument.

Despite its insight and persuasiveness, however, it is in "Shakespearian characters: the generation of Silvia" that the theoretical project of *Voice Terminal Echo* is most vulnerable to attack. That is, the mythical subtext in this chapter is the story of Philomela, significant for Goldberg because the voice (synecdochically excised when her tongue was cut off) is translated into the woven tapestry or text. What Goldberg does not take into account here, following as he does, in the footsteps of Geoffrey Hartman in "The Voice of the Shuttle" in *Beyond Formalism*, is the violation that produces this writing or weaving. Feminist critics (perhaps most notably Patricia Joplin in "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours")¹ have recognized what Hartman elides and subsequently romanticizes, that is, the rape and lingual mutilation of a woman that makes the creation of the tapestry or text not only possible but necessary. In his opening pages, Goldberg alludes to the "horror" of the "socially engaged" critic who would prefer to see poststructuralism as a new formalism rather than acknowledge its own "sentimentality" (ix), but surely Deconstruction as it is practised by the Yale school has also been in danger of mythologizing and institutionalizing its own subversive rhetoric. The issue of woman is the most problematic aspect of this often powerful book, for many of the myths Goldberg makes central to his analysis (and this book could be read as an exploration of Ovidian myth in the Renaissance) are myths about women: Echo, Philomela, Medusa, Alcestis, the Muses. The voices the male poets borrow are often feminine, a point Goldberg notes in his introductory chapter and returns to in his final chapter on Milton — where in a brilliant study of Medusa, the Muses, and Milton, he explores the nexus of petrification, literary monuments, Medusa, and Echo — but declines to confront the issue of gender squarely. This is a serious shortcoming in an otherwise compelling book.

This is also a book that many will put aside immediately because of the difficult style in which it is written. That is, Goldberg adopts a pseudo-Derridean manner, a style built on puns and echoes, that often declines to follow the prescribed rules of syntax or the conventions of scholarly argumentation. This style is itself a polemic against the teleological methods of conventional academic discourse: the search for stable meaning, for answers, for the identity of the voice. Goldberg refuses to furnish his readers with any of these satisfactions, proffering instead the less immediately gratifying pleasures of allusion, echo, and provocative readings that entice without

¹ *Stanford Literature Review*, 1 (Spring 1984, pp. 25-53).

completely fulfilling. Although this kind of poststructuralist analysis is tremendously helpful for upsetting conventional readings and regenerating the possibility of textual meaning, what postmodern criticism has also demonstrated is that both speaking and understanding always take place within an ideological context. Texts are not infinitely plural, but are always governed in their creation and in their reception by socially constructed presuppositions (sometimes so deeply held that they seem to be invisible). This is an important book that furnishes us with a warning about the complacency of our certainties and about their attendant difficulties for our critical practice. But this message, too, can be accused of sentimentality, as in Goldberg's claim that "every page trembles, vulnerable to manifold incursions" (7); in celebrating the openness of the text, there is always the danger that "endless" meaning will itself become stabilized and reified as a concept, revealing itself finally as just as subject to the contingencies of history as the traditional humanistic criticism from which it seeks to free itself.

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ELIZABETH D. HARVEY

Bruce Steele, ed., *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985. pp. liv, 321. \$42.50. Jagdish Chandra Dave, *The Human Predicament in Hardy's Novels*. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1985. pp. xii, 216. \$29.95.

A publishing coincidence, which might have delighted Hardy but would have been disregarded by D. H. Lawrence, brought about in the same year the appearance of two volumes, in many ways dissimilar, yet each having unexpected factors of comparability. Jagdish Chandra Dave in *The Human Predicament* and Lawrence in *Study of Thomas Hardy* are both, to reduce matters to almost absurd simplicities, engrossed by Hardy's fictions of love and metaphysic. Dave, a new scholar in the Hardy business, is not helped by the doubtless well-meaning but exaggerated claims of Lance St. John Butler in his single page foreword. As when Jude Fawley, with his head full of the New Testament, was struck by the notorious barrow pig's penis, Butler, on first reading Dave's book, suddenly realized that he, "with many Hardy critics," had been "lacking the correct habit of thought." It requires, he writes, "an oriental cast of mind, eastern habits of thought and a good knowledge of the philosophies of both west and east to see clearly the deepest structures of Hardy's work" (ix). Lawrence's study, originally entitled *Le Gai Savaire* and begun in 1914, "out of sheer rage" at the "colossal idiocy" of World War I, has long been a fertile source of excitement and mystification for the unorientalized Hardy scholar.

But at this happy juncture of publishers it is worth reminding ourselves of some of the less obscure points of Lawrence's main thesis.

Dave's and Lawrence's temporal place in the history of Hardy criticism and the often most interesting facts of their touching and crossing purposes reinforce, if anything, a historical impression of a haphazard, repetitious, circular series of forays against the strongholds of Hardy's fiction (like the vast majority of Hardy critics neither Dave nor Lawrence are much concerned with the poetry) rather than a march of discernible progress. Hardy got off to a bad start with a scolding review in the *Spectator* in 1871 ("no assumption of a nom-de-plume, which might, at some future time, disgrace the family name, and still more the Christian name, of a repentant and remorseful novelist") and ended with a bad finish with a moral tirade from an American lady in *The World* in 1895 ("Perhaps, as the novel has been primarily destined for an American audience, all this talk of chitterlings and 'innerds' was meant as a deliberate compliment to the inhabitants of Porkopolis, Ohio"). In that same year, however, Lionel Johnson's eulogistic book appeared but without a word on *Tess* or *Jude* and he was followed by the so-called "post-Victorian realists" such as Lascelles Abercrombie (1912), H. C. Duffin (1916) and Samuel C. Chew (1928). Lawrence's *Study of Thomas Hardy* lies between Abercrombie and Duffin and his unexpected esteem for Abercrombie is evident from the fact of his borrowing and re-reading *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study* before starting his own. It may be that Albert J. Guerard, C. J. Weber and H. C. Webster initiated in the late 1940's the academic industry in Hardy criticism, especially in America, and of course there has been since, up to the point of Dave, massive commentary both within and outside the strictures of a number of theoretical surges. Dave appears to be unscathed by the latter unless we consider his eastern habit of thought to be part of a new wave.

Because they force the argument into jerkiness and fragmentation, the ordering and presentation of *The Human Predicament* impede the flow and sustenance of logical eloquence, a progress presumably vital to a study primarily concerned with fugitive philosophies, with a pursuit of "systematized" thought. There is nothing wrong with the fact that the book is, as we learn from the cataloguing data, "a revision and abridgement of thesis (Ph.D.) Guyerat University 1981," but its origin and process of revision may account for the sudden stops and starts in the rhetoric, the lacunae in lines of persuasion and the short chapters with catchy titles in bold print: "Was Hardy a Philosopher?" — which we all know is not so naive as it looks; "Schopenhauer and Hardy: Sex, Love and Marriage"; and "Hardy and Gautama Buddha: A Brief Comparative Study." It may

account too for the immediate and perhaps too cavalier judgements when, for example, Schopenhauer and Buddha are dealt with in seven pages each. The thesis appears to have been sliced into what are intended to be appetizing pieces and thus the book is divided into four parts and nineteen chapters in which the pretension of the titles is not always matched by the quality or stamina of the content: "The Nature of Hardy's Thought," "The Establishment of Harmony: Hardy's Ethical Resolution of the Metaphysical Absurd," and so on. And although Dave informs us in his Preface that his purpose is "to systematize Hardy's thought as it issues from the novels," only six of the fourteen novels are examined with anything resembling sustained deliberation. This, in a volume of promise and enterprise, may account for Dave's extraordinary comment: "The novels which seem little more than plain narrative are omitted" (xii). But for all these carping negatives *The Human Predicament* holds a power of stimulation for the Hardy student. It often surprises in its re-minting of old ideas and in its proposing of new conjunctions. It has a freshness of attitude, at times quite endearing, and if it occasionally stumbles, it is always written with a passionate integrity.

One of the fresh conjunctions lies in the "metaphysical" linkage with the Buddha and especially if we do not see it as a Casaubonian key it affords speculative parallels. In his search for Hardyian verities which ends with an absolution from "the charge of pessimism," Dave penultimately compares Hardy's fundamental thinking and feeling with the doctrine of the Buddha. "There is no fire like passion, no ill like hatred, there is no sorrow like this physical existence . . . there is no happiness higher than tranquility," he quotes from *The Dhammapada* (186). We see much of the point but may wonder ruefully where stand all those Wessex ironies in this. With engaging certainty Dave refutes all interpretations of Hardy as an evolutionary idealist, a heretic, a determinist, as well of course as a pessimist. If, for all its sincerity, some of this compounding is too loosely put together, there are particular elements of the most interesting division, Part III, ("Deliverance from Passion") which, though not new, are neatly and contextually forcible and take us back dramatically to some primitive Lawrence. Part III starts off with a sequence of unexceptional and clearly expressed generalities: "Sexual desire, according to Hardy, is the elemental force of Nature that irresistibly drives the sexes closer to each other for procreation. There is nothing of sin or vice about it. But he did not, therefore, plead for permissive licence . . . On the contrary . . . he sought deliverance from the passion of love as from all the other less powerful desires that conflict with the universe and spell the absurd" (87); and "He never questioned the sanctity of marriage

as such" (87); and "Beauty dies. Service of man is Hardy's highest ideal in social ethics even as harmony with the world is the summum bonum in metaphysical ethics" (88). Dave works such genial aphorisms into his criticism of the novels with a disarming verve. One particular analysis which strikes a responsive chord and which concerns the tyranny of passion, or its absence, lies in his assessment of Marty South in *The Woodlanders*. He quotes the well-thumbed passage, ineffably tormenting, where Marty whispers to her dead love by Giles's graveside and judges her "the most perfect mystic of love in Hardy's novels" (98). Here Dave gets near, closer than Lawrence, to Hardy's ambiguities concerning what the novelist calls the "epicene" which we see variously demonstrated in some of his heroes but particularly in Sue Bridehead. In his emotional ardour and spiritual discovery, however, Dave tends to over-simplify and over-sentimentalize and he does not possess Hardy's insulation of irony to protect himself from sceptical countercheck.

As we were reminded by Robert Langbaum in a stimulating essay, "Hardy and Lawrence," (*Thomas Hardy Annual*, No. 3, ed. Norman Page), also in 1985, Lawrence's *Study of Thomas Hardy* is still, at a distance of seventy years, blowing through the accumulated critical myths of decades, provocative and refreshing. Even though only chapters III, V, and IX deal "directly with Hardy," Langbaum argues that "the *Study* does hang together, that the metaphysic no less than the criticism derives from Lawrence's understanding of Hardy's novels" (16). Remedial as it may be, it is not my purpose here to rehearse too closely familiar Lawrentian opinion. His criticism is established, as is the fact of Hardy's influence on Lawrence, of Lawrence's poor opinion of Hardy as a "metaphysician" ("He does it extremely badly . . . execrable in the extreme") but above all the fact of his profound admiration for Hardy: "His feeling, his instinct, his sensuous understanding is, however, apart from his metaphysic, very great and deep, deeper than that perhaps of any other English novelist" (93).

It is not until Chapter III, "Containing Six Novels and the Real Tragedy" that Lawrence closes specifically with Hardy's novels and in the second paragraph he sets out his main premise. Hardy's heroes and heroines care little for money or "immediate self-preservation" but they are struggling to come into being: "What exactly the struggle into being consists in, is the question. But most obviously, from the Wessex novels, the first and chiefest factor is the struggle into love and the struggle with love; by love meaning the love of man for a woman and a woman for a man. The via media to being, for man or woman, is love and love alone. Having achieved and accomplished love, then the man passes into the unknown. He has become himself, his tale is told. Of anything that is

complete there is nothing more to tell. The tale is about becoming complete, or about the failure to become complete" (20). How nearly this relates to *The Dhammapada* is a matter for individual judgement, but perhaps, in either case, we are still left worrying about the dimension of Wessex ironies and epicene inscrutabilities. Fancy Day, driving off with Dick Dewy in "the excellent new spring-cart," thinks when she hears a nightingale of "a secret she would never tell" and Spirit of the Years describes the Immanent Will: "It works unconsciously, as heretofore, / Eternal artistries in Circumstance." Such are not easily accommodated by theories.

Leaving aside, however, comparative Hardy criticism, I should like now to welcome, as will surely all Lawrentian students, the new Cambridge edition of Lawrence's works of which this volume, edited with admirable scruple by Bruce Steele, is the fifth to be issued. Besides *Study of Thomas Hardy* it includes other essays from 1908 to 1927, some on "Art" but most on the novel. The text is solidly established with fifty-odd pages of scholarly introduction, four appendices of early drafts of essays, explanatory notes and textual apparatus. All is unfussily, pleasingly assembled as a physical book and the print lies quiet and easy on the page. Even the non-expert among Lawrence enthusiasts were aware of much textual corruption in his publications but few, I suspect, knew the full extent of it. The factors contributing to the mess are detailed in the Preface of the General Editors (James T. Boulton and Warren Roberts), and, as they claim, "can derive from every stage of composition and publication." Lawrence revised extensively but never compared one draft with the others, he missed typists' errors, he was subject to his printers' stringent house-style "which overrode his punctuation and even his sentence structure and paragraphing." As with Hardy, Mrs. Grundy was still a force to be reckoned with and this led to "bowdlerisation and censorship from the very beginning of his career." The list goes on, including "extraordinary lapses like the occasion when a compositor turned over two pages of MS at once and the result happened to make sense." The editors of the Cambridge edition claim to have remedied all this by a "rigorous collation of extant manuscripts, typescripts, proofs and early printed versions," and by restoration of "the words, sentences, even whole pages omitted or falsified by editors and compositors" (vii). This sort of conscientious labour has been consummately carried out by Steele in this volume. Of persuasive interest in his scholarly introduction is the section on "The text and its transmission" where he argues his case for basing *The Study* on Koteliansky's typescript. "Explanatory Notes," literary and historical as opposed to "Textual Apparatus" vary in degrees of eclecticism. The note on "The Ant and the Grasshopper" in William R. Titterton's *Studies in Solitary*

Life (1908), is engagingly informative but I wonder whether we need a gloss on "the Parable of the Sower," "Sairey Gamp" or "Mr. Worldly Wiseman." Perhaps these days we do. But these are unimportant niggings, hardly to be mentioned against a general enthusiasm which must greet this new edition.

GEORGE WING

Saad El-Gabalawy, trans., *Three Pioneering Egyptian Novels: The Maiden of Dinshway* (1906), *Eve without Adam* (1934), and *Ulysses's Hallucinations or the Like* (1985). With a Critical Int. Fredericton: York Press, 1986. pp. 120. \$12.95.

A linguistic theory of translation does not seem to exist. It is generally understood, however, that a literary translation must render both meaning and significance. The rendering of meaning may be assessed by a comparison of the translation with the original, but significance, or what the meaning implies, often calls for a historical context and is more prone than the rendering of meaning to the various distorting forces in translation of interpretation, clarification, paraphrase, expansion of the original, and idealization or vulgarization.

El-Gabalawy manages to avoid many of these pitfalls as he treads the tightrope of rendering into English not only the meaning and significance of the three novels he selects but also some of the syntax and idiosyncracies of the original texts. His translation of *The Maiden of Dinshway* can only be described as a *tour de force*. The literary style of the original is heavy, ponderous, ornate, and richly decorative, and the conversations of the peasants are, by contrast, in colloquial Arabic and depend for effect on local colour and idiom. *Eve without Adam* is more straightforward and less demanding in translation, but *Ulysses's Hallucinations* provides the challenge of rendering into another language the "stream of consciousness" with its associations, allusions, rhythm and timing. In the *Hallucinations* the translation should have indicated the few instances where the expressions were originally in English or German. Moreover, he does not signal to the reader the switch from the classical to the colloquial. Sometimes, El-Gabalawy stimulates the reader's imagination by his close translation; e.g., "the eyes of the envious are full of spite" (100). But he also takes certain liberties; e.g., "area of drug pushers" is a periphrase of "Batenia" and "Are you bald?" (113) is a far cry from the original. El-Gabalawy's commendable attempt to retain many of the idiosyncracies of the original text leads to some awkwardness; e.g., "straw basket of flour" (18), "the fur" (53) for sheepskin or rug, and "blew up and died"

(119). But this is merely pecking at an accurate translation that reads, on the whole, smoothly.

Enough said about translation. What is noteworthy about this volume is the selection of these pieces, trendsetting in the growth of the Egyptian novel. Though one may demur at the use of "novel" to describe a piece like *The Maiden of Dinshway*, these writers are certainly "pioneering." Not only do these authors, as the blurb on the back cover points out, "represent new departures," but they also give a "sense of continuity" to the development of the Egyptian novel, which has matured rapidly over the past seventy years. During that period, the novel replaced poetry as the major literary form, especially after Egyptian writers looked to the literature of the Western world for models and inspiration. It is interesting to note that *The Maiden of Dinshway* was translated into French after its serial publication in the now defunct *Minbar*. One may question El-Gabalawy's preference of Haqqi over M. Hussein Heikal when it comes to the birth of the Egyptian novel, but his choice of Lashin and al-Khadim is sound. Lashin, also remembered for his short stories, stresses the internal conflict of the sensitive and socially conscious Eve as she struggles to fulfill her aspirations, which are forever frustrated by her poverty and drab circumstances. And al-Khadim, for the first time to my knowledge, brings the interior monologue to the Egyptian novel, laying bare, with a fine sensitivity, the innermost thoughts of the wandering displaced Egyptian in our contemporary world.

The critical introduction to the volume is indispensable to the appreciation of the three works. In it El-Gabalawy accounts for his selection of the three authors and places each work in its social and political context. Without this context, *The Maiden of Dinshway* would seem an unrealistic melodrama and *Eve without Adam* a romantic tale of unrequited love, and many of the implicit references in the *Hallucinations* would be lost on the reader. El-Gabalawy's critical appraisal of the work highlights their literary merits with a sensitivity born from a deep understanding of and a passionate love for Arabic literature. Whether it is the attention to realistic detail and the emotional energy released by dialogue in *The Maiden of Dinshway*, the fluctuation of Eve's emotions and her predicament, or the "intricate web of adumbrated multiple relationships" in the *Hallucinations*, El-Gabalawy carefully analyses and explains them to the discerning reader, discussing their significance for the student of literature. El-Gabalawy tends to disregard the flaws in these works, though he underlines the defective plot and the sentimentality and political propaganda in *The Maiden of Dinshway*. His enthusiasm for al-Khadim's work, easily discernible from the Introduction, is infectious, yet one must caution against a

sweeping assertion like "*Ulysses* marks a profound change in the aesthetic attitudes of Egyptian fiction" or his use of "dramatic monologue," "soliloquy" and "system of free association" as interchangeable terms for al-Khadim's technique. However, El-Gabalawy makes up for such slips or oversights by his confident analysis and perceptive appreciation of the works, as well as his informative comments.

This volume is a welcome addition to the body of literature in translation and complements El-Gabalawy's earlier translations, *Modern Egyptian Stories* (1977) and *Three Contemporary Egyptian Novels* (1979). Together, these three translations provide the student of world literature and the general reader with a valuable introduction to modern Egyptian prose fiction.

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A. F. CASSIS

Charles Strickland, *Victorian Domesticity: Families in the Life and Art of Louisa May Alcott*. Fwd. Robert Coles. University: U of Alabama P, 1985. pp. xv, 198. \$24.50.

Robert Coles, in his Foreword to *Victorian Domesticity*, characterizes the author as "a historian, with no small gifts as a literary critic and social observer. . . . His 'methodology,' as we put it, has been that of the persistent and resourceful social historian — an examination of texts." Dominick La Capra, author of *Rethinking Intellectual History* (1983), would approve of Strickland's methodology, for he defines the task of the intellectual historian as that of "reading and interpreting complex texts . . . and formulating the problem of relating these texts to their various pertinent contexts." However, La Capra would probably find Strickland less gifted as a reader than does Coles, for Strickland tends to regard Alcott's texts as historical documents and to ignore what La Capra calls their "worklike" aspects, those aspects that supplement, modify, contest, or subvert the information about and image of empirical reality that the texts as documents convey.

Strickland, like Sarah Elbert in *A Hunger for Home* (1984) and Joy A. Marsella in *The Promise of Destiny* (1983), examines the Alcott canon in order to determine Alcott's relationship to the dominant ideology of her day, the sentimental cult of domesticity. This cult, as described by Nancy Cott, Barbara Welter, and others, supplanted the old-fashioned patriarchal family by dictating a strict separation of spheres for men and women. Although it isolated women in the home, the cult, by exalting the role of motherhood and household management, contributed to women's sense of self-worth and thus, according to some, provided a base for feminist

politics. Strickland does not acknowledge the work of Elbert and Marsella, whose dissertations if not their published books would have been available to him, but arrives at much the same conclusion: that Alcott was a domestic feminist, one who believed in expanded opportunities for women but who accepted the prevailing view that it was as wives and mothers that they could effect "the moral regeneration of society." Unlike Elbert, though, Strickland underestimates the radical potential of domestic feminism, for he wonders how "Growing up in a domestic utopia of warmth and affection" could equip one "for doing battle in the competitive world of the marketplace." Strickland seems unfamiliar with Jane Tompkins' thesis in regard to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which he discusses as the "Apogee of the Sentimental Revolution": that Stowe was calling for a transformation not only of the home but of the marketplace on the model of the home (*Glyph* 1981).

Like Elbert, Strickland devotes several chapters to Alcott's family and the contradictions she experienced within it while growing up (in a note Strickland acknowledges his indebtedness to Madeleine Stern's 1949 biography *Louisa May Alcott* but does not refer to Madelon Bedell's more recent and relevant work, *The Alcotts: Biography of a Family* [1980]). He speculates that Bronson Alcott's failure as a breadwinner both provided Alcott with a theme — that of the young girl who must struggle to support herself — and with a justification of her own literary ambition — that of her duty to support her family. In the remaining chapters Strickland examines Alcott's fiction to determine the extent to which she accepted, modified, or departed from the three sentimental cults he identifies in his opening chapter: the cults of romantic love, domesticity, and motherhood/childhood. He concludes that the heroines of her "literary fiction," i.e. her domestic fiction for adults, subscribe to the sentimental stereotype whereas the heroines of her sensation fiction "declared her independence of sentimental traditions" and enabled her to "vent her own rage at the humiliations that marked her adolescence." Interestingly, Strickland finds the heroines of Alcott's juvenile fiction her most complex: Jo March, for example, "could dream of vengeance" like a sensation heroine but "could feel the pain of conscience" like a sentimental one.

While it is gratifying to see the complexity of Alcott's juvenile fiction recognized, Strickland's reading of it, as well as of the "literary fiction," suffers from an inattention to "worklike" aspects and to "pertinent contexts." For example, he tempers his praise of *Little Women* by saying that Jo's "humanity survives even her author's moralizing." Had he made the basic distinction between narrator and author, he might have detected just how unsentimental *Little Women* and its sequels actually are. And rather than inter-

preting the intricate system of metaphor and allusion in the adult novel *Moods*, Strickland by merely summarizing, reduces it to the sentimental text that Alfred Habegger has mistakenly decried (*Massachusetts Review* 1985). As though to account for the weakness of the book, Strickland mentions that Alcott was forced by her publisher to delete ten chapters from the 1865 edition. He does not mention, however, that this material was restored in the 1882 edition and that the ending of the novel was substantially revised.

Strickland similarly slants his argument in favour of the juvenile fiction when discussing Alcott's feminism in *Work* and *An Old-Fashioned Girl*. Without alluding to earlier analyses of *Work* such as Elizabeth Langland's (*The Voyage In* 1983), Strickland criticizes the "vagueness" of the heroine's feminist program and asserts that *An Old-Fashioned Girl* embodies a "more sophisticated and elaborate treatment of feminist issues" and "the most vigorous assault on the sentimental image of women to appear to [sic] her published work" (87). But to support this large claim, Strickland offers only two brief paragraphs devoted to a single, albeit significant, scene — the debate over Becky's sculpture. By dealing only with scenes in which feminist programs are explicitly discussed, Christie's speech at the end of *Work* and the debate in *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, Strickland treats the texts primarily as documents. Were he more interested in the texts as works he would see that nearly every episode of *Work* subtly contests the prevailing sentimental ideology.

Strickland's emphasis on the surface texture of Alcott's fiction enables him to conclude that she reserved her most "scathing judgments" not for the sentimental family or the traditional family but for the "family of fashion," a conclusion that mitigates the radical force of her critique. Thus he reads the sensation story "A Whisper in the Dark" as an attack on the fashionable family when in fact it constitutes a critique of patriarchy no less sweeping than Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria or the Wrongs of Woman*. Whereas Judith Fetterley argues for the radicalism of *Behind a Mask* (*Women's Studies* 1983), Strickland attributes the heroine's ruthlessness to "the corrupting influence of fashion." Strickland's tendency to domesticate Alcott's sensation fiction persists in his discussion of *A Modern Mephistopheles* (which is not, as Strickland assumes, a revision of an earlier manuscript by that title). His thesis, that Alcott's own bisexual feelings enabled her to "penetrate the wall that sentimentality had erected between the genders" and thus argue for a greater "flexibility of sex roles" within "companionate marriage," is tenable, though once again he has been anticipated by Sarah Elbert. But the "worklike" so dominate the documentary aspects of the novel that to read it as a brief for companionate marriage seems almost ludicrous.

Robert Coles claims that through Strickland's book "we get to know the Alcotts, we come closer not only to their struggles, aspirations, disappointments, but our own, too. When such an outcome takes place, one is in the presence of the transforming power of art." Yet Strickland's reading of Alcott's texts is very far from the "virtuoso performance in reading" that La Capra calls for, and Alcott's own art is reduced to a simple matter of plots and themes. Strickland not only duplicates the work of other scholars on Alcott; he duplicates their tendency to treat the stories "secondarily as works of art" (Marsella). As Jane Tompkins has written, those who deal with what has been termed sentimental fiction "apologize for the poor literary quality of the novels in a concessive clause," then "assert that these texts are valuable on historical grounds." Strickland's book is full of apologies for implausible events and stereotypical characters, especially Alcott's "stereotypical approach to men." He finally accuses her of contributing to the "privatization of utopia" by "pinning her hopes on the nuclear family." But by adopting the documentary approach to her fiction, by looking for what La Capra calls "central arguments, core meanings, dominant themes, prevalent codes, world views, and deep structures" to the exclusion of what appears "marginal" or "uncanny or disorienting," Strickland is as insular and obsessed with order as any utopian — or as the Victorian family itself.

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Rubin Rabinovitz, *The Development of Samuel Beckett's Fiction*. Urbana/Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1984. pp. x, 231. \$17.50.

This book is concerned with Beckett's early fiction — the short stories and novels he completed between 1929 and about 1945, before starting to write in French. In chapters one to four, Rabinovitz examines Beckett's early efforts to free himself from the influence of Joyce, illustrating his discussion with reference to Beckett's first short story, "Assumption" (1929) and his first, as yet unpublished novel, "Dream of Fair to Middling Women" (1932). Behind Beckett's unconventional narrative techniques he finds not only a desire to establish a uniquely individual style, but a pervading epistemological skepticism. "His refusal to [provide conventional] characterizations," Rabinovitz comments, "is based on the idea that factual descriptions falsely suggest that one can depict the essential self of another person. But figurative characterizations — like the following one — hint at these essential qualities without suggesting that they can be defined or circumscribed: 'The Syra-Cusa: her body more perfect than dream creek, amaranth lagoon. She

flowed along in a nervous swagger, swinging a thin arm amply. The sinewy fetlock sprang, Brancusi bird, from the shod foot, blue arch of veins and small bones, rose like a Lied to the firm wrist of the reins, the Bilitis breasts' " ("Dream," p. 29). How Beckett developed and refined such descriptions as this one becomes the topic of chapter five, which deals with *More Pricks Than Kicks*, the collection of short stories which arose from "Dream" when Beckett decided to abandon his efforts to publish it as a novel.

In chapter six Rabinovitz deals with another unpublished text, "Echo's Bones," which to date has attracted very little critical attention. The latter was to have been the concluding story to *More Pricks Than Kicks*, but was excised from the collection at the insistence of Beckett's publisher. Rabinovitz's commentary on "Echo's Bones" and the story Beckett wrote immediately after it, "A Case in a Thousand" — the subject of chapter seven — is, like the rest of the book, astute, thoroughly scholarly and altogether fascinating.

The two chapters that follow, on *Murphy* (1938), expose as misleading Beckett's comment that this is his "easiest" book. In the first of these Rabinovitz examines the uses of repetition in the novel, and in the second focuses on the narrator's unreliability. His comment that "The [novel's] symmetry reflects the mind's tendency to impose orderly patterns on whatever it perceives; [its] asymmetry is a reflection of the world's [complexity]" (p. 89) reminds us that in their rage for order, critics tend to overlook whatever fails to fit into the puzzle that is a complex modern or postmodern text.

Two chapters on *Watt* follow Rabinovitz's discussion of *Murphy*. These are invaluable for their scholarly information about the philosophical content of another very difficult novel. Like the preceding chapters, they are genuine contributions to knowledge, well worth reading for their explicatory footnotes alone. Superbly written, scholarly, perceptive and interesting, *The Development of Samuel Beckett's Fiction* cannot be recommended too highly to anyone seriously interested in Beckett.

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Books Received

- BEDIENT, CALVIN, *In the Heart's Last Kingdom: Robert Penn Warren's Major Poetry*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1984. pp. 250. \$7.95 pb.
- DAVIDSON, H. R. ELLIS, *Katherine Briggs: Story-Teller*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1986. pp. xi, 209. £12.95.
- FAULKNER, PETER, ed., *The English Modernist Reader, 1910-1930*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1986. pp. 171. \$19.95.
- GASCHE, RODOLPHE, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1986. pp. x, 348. \$25.00.
- GRAPTON, ANTHONY and LISA JARDINE, *From Humanism to the Humanities*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1986. pp. xvi, 224. \$27.50.
- HAFFENDEN, JOHN, ed., *Novelists in Interview*. London: Methuen, 1985. pp. xx, 328. \$14.95 pb.
- HARRIS, CLAIRE, *Travelling to Find a Remedy*. Fredericton: Goose Lane, 1986. pp. 71. Unpriced.
- HJARTARSON, PAUL, *A Stranger to My Time: Essays by and about Frederick Philip Grove*. Edmonton: NeWest, 1986. pp. xii, 356. \$11.95 pb.
- HOWELLS, CORAL ANN, *Private and Fictional Worlds: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s*. London: Methuen, 1987. pp. x, 229. £6.95.
- JEFFARES, DERRY, *Brought Up in Dublin*. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987. pp. 108. £6.95.
- MILLER, CRISTANNE, *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1987. pp. 212. \$20.00.
- PERKINS, DAVID, *A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1987. pp. xiv, 694. \$25.00.
- STUMMER, PETER O., *The Story Must Be Told: Short Narrative Prose in the New English Literatures*. Würzburg: Konighausen und Neumann, 1986. pp. 198. DM 38 pb.
- VENDLER, HELEN, *Wallace Stevens: Words Chosen Out of Desire*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1986. pp. viii, 86. \$8.95.