

Book Reviews

Martin Stannard. *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years 1903-1939*. London: J. M. Dent; Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside. 1986. pp. xiv, 537. \$31.95.

More than 20 years after Evelyn Waugh's death in 1966, the explosion of biographical interest in him continues. Martin Stannard's tome, the first half of a projected two-volume biography, is the latest blockbuster, joining Christopher Sykes's authorized biography (1975), Waugh's *Diaries* (1976), his *Letters* (1980), his *Essays, Articles, and Reviews* (1983), not to mention several volumes of reminiscences and memoirs by Waugh's contemporaries. On bibliographical evidence alone it is clear that Waugh's personality had a force and fascination for those who knew him exceeded only by Samuel Johnson (and perhaps by Byron?) among English authors. Like Johnson and Byron, Waugh's real-life persona was an artistic creation as dramatic and as influential as his written works of art. And, like them, this persona teased his audience, speaking the blunt truth one moment and in the next transforming personal whim into Olympian pronouncement: many of both right and left are too disillusioned to vote in elections, but only Waugh could have said, "I do not aspire to advise my sovereign in her choice of servants."

All this confronts the biographer of Waugh with two requirements: his account must be comprehensive, a distillation of a vast body of Waughiana, and it must at the same time treat Waugh's personality with sophistication and insight. Stannard passes the first test, comprehensiveness, quite well, but is disappointing on the second count. Let us look at each issue more closely.

Stannard's achievement as a scholar is impressive. The story he has to tell is hardly new: Waugh's drunken tailspin at Oxford, his shock at being cuckolded by his first wife, his sudden success as a smart-set novelist, his conversion to Roman Catholicism, his hobnobbing with aristocrats, and his happy second marriage are almost as well known now as Johnson's infatuation with his Tetty or his

magnificent snub of Lord Chesterfield or his kicking the stone to refute Berkeley. Still, Stannard weaves together a tightly-controlled factual narrative which carries Waugh up to 1939, the midpoint of his adult years and the climacteric in his career. Stannard draws upon all the obvious sources and, as well, a good deal of new evidence unearthed by himself. For instance, he interviewed more than 20 of Waugh's closest associates (a disturbing number of whom are described as "the late"). He quotes frequently and abundantly from journalism not included in Donat Gallagher's edition of Waugh's *Essays, Articles, and Reviews*. We have a lively account of the one expedition as a professional travel writer that Waugh did not write a book about, his trip to northern Norway (evidently his imagination came to life only when faced with a contrast in cultures). Stannard is the first person to have examined the privately-owned manuscript of *Vile Bodies* (1930), and he shows that it dramatically reflects Waugh's sudden disillusionment and bitterness upon discovering, while in the middle of writing the novel, his wife's infidelity. The first version of *Vile Bodies* was much lighter and more genial in tone, as the original epigraph suggests: "BRIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE AND OTHERS KINDLY NOTE THAT ALL CHARACTERS ARE WHOLLY IMAGINARY (AND YOU GET FAR TOO MUCH PUBLICITY ALREADY WHOEVER YOU ARE)." Furthermore, Stannard is able to see that the emperor has no clothes: he gives full weight, for instance, to the shocking fact, buried in a diary entry for 1936 and ignored by Sykes and other commentators, that Waugh succeeded in getting the Italian government to pay for his trip to Ethiopia to research the Italian-Ethiopian war for his book, *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936).

Stannard is thus much more thorough (and more up-to-date) in marshalling the evidence than his precursor Sykes. Furthermore, his book, unlike Sykes's, has a complete index, and so becomes a valuable reference book. Still, Stannard is misleading when he claims, as he does in his Preface, "to set the record straight." For one thing, the factual corrections and amplifications are relatively minor. The record-straightening example Stannard cites in his Preface is his account of the breakdown of Waugh's first marriage. Surprisingly, Sykes did not consult Waugh's first wife, Evelyn Gardner ("She-Evelyn," now Mrs. Evelyn Nightingale); Stannard did. But Stannard's version of events is not really very different: Sykes says that a two-week attempt at reconciliation was temporarily successful, while Stannard, relying on Mrs. Nightingale, believes (more plausibly) that the attempted reunion was wretched and ended with Waugh's decision that they must divorce. Stannard also spells out, in his emperor's-new-clothes vein, something that was implicit in previous accounts: that she-Evelyn found the marriage sexually unsatisfying. In Mrs. Nightingale's words, "Evelyn was not an affectionate person.

I was." (We might recall the narrator's comment in *Vile Bodies*: "The truth is that like so many people of their age and class, Adam and Nina were suffering from being sophisticated about sex before they were at all widely experienced.")

But Stannard's claim to set the record straight is also unsatisfying in a much more elementary sense, and here we come to the Waugh biographer's other requirement — sophistication and insight. Stannard's conscientious literal-mindedness is a great handicap. Sykes had the advantages of being Waugh's friend and, like Waugh, an Oxonian, a Roman Catholic, an officer in World War Two, and a man of letters. He understood that Waugh's personality, like his fiction, appeals by implication and nuance. Stannard, by contrast, if also British, comes to his task as, in Waugh's phrase, "a state-trained literary critic." He sees nothing that is not there, but in doing so reduces what he does see to next to nothing. He has little curiosity about the details he presents: about, for instance, Waugh's clubs — what they were, what they meant to him — or about Waugh's fascination with Winston Churchill and vice-versa or about what Waugh found so contemptible in C. R. M. F. Cruttwell, his history tutor at Oxford: Waugh ridiculed Cruttwell viciously by name in each of his first five novels, and so it is hardly helpful to be told that "to Waugh and his new set of friends he was a nonentity" (especially when Waugh devotes three pages to Cruttwell's personality and mannerisms in his autobiography, *A Little Learning*). Stannard thus shows little intricacy or depth in handling Waugh's psychology, the connections between his experience and his fiction, and his artistic development. As for psychology, he mentions Waugh's thoughts of suicide as a 17-year-old schoolboy, but does not cite the revealing "last letter" Waugh copied into his diary. His account of Waugh's attempted suicide at age 21 is similarly limited: Waugh kept a full diary at this time, but made no mention in it of this comical episode (he swam out to sea and was forced to return when he encountered a school of jellyfish) — an omission that is hardly explained by Stannard's words, "He could not bear to record such ostentatious stupidity." In fact, an index of Stannard's superficiality on the connections between life and art is that he does not notice, as several other writers on Waugh have (Ian Littlewood, most notably), that Waugh's attempted suicide-by-drowning is echoed, detail for detail, by Grimes's fake suicide in *Decline and Fall*. And Stannard similarly fails to explore Waugh's artistic development: he does not take, for instance, the road pointed out by Waugh himself in his autobiography, where he describes one of his undergraduate efforts as "a quite funny short story in which an earnest student might find hints of my first novel" (the story, by the way, is clearly "Edward, Of Uncertain Achievement," and the hints are indeed striking). Stannard's tunnel-

vision also means that we hear little of Waugh's literary environment, that Stannard makes no use of recent Waugh criticism (Robert Davis's book, *Evelyn Waugh, Writer*, a thorough and accurate account of Waugh's revisions during composition of the novels, could have been adduced helpfully at many points), and that essential issues are often not confronted — for instance, did Waugh's shock in 1929 at his wife's betrayal lead directly to his conversion to Roman Catholicism or not? Waugh's brother Alec, most of Waugh's friends, and Michael Davie, editor of the *Diaries*, say yes; Sykes, Mark Amory, editor of the *Letters*, and Father Martin D'Arcy, Waugh's spiritual director, say no. The question does not exist for Stannard.

Stannard's very earnestness is thus his greatest deficiency. Waugh loved anecdotes, both enacting and recounting them. Stannard does not add one new anecdote to the Waugh-hoard and leaves out hundreds of wonderful moments in Sykes and other sources. In Stannard the young Cyril Connolly does *not* encounter a drunken Waugh making a great racket outside the gates of Balliol College and ask him, "Why do you have to make such a noise wherever you are?", receiving the reply, "Because I'm poor." Waugh does *not* explain magisterially how he could make Basil Seal of *Black Mischief* an unmistakable portrait of Nancy Mitford's husband, Peter Rodd: "You can draw any character as near to life as you want, and no offence will be taken provided you say that he is attractive to women." Not only are the dimensions of Waugh and his world shrunk thereby; even more important, Stannard misses the essential Waugh by missing the self-aware, self-parodying element in Waugh's personality (symptomatically, Stannard makes no use of published reminiscences of Waugh by those who emphasize his role-playing, his persona: Frances Donaldson, Claud Cockburn, Ann Fleming, Nancy Mitford). The Waugh we are left with is a parvenu, a snob, an arriviste — and a failed parvenu at that: in Stannard's tired phrasing, "The sad truth was that in cultivating those who were unrepentant elitists, Waugh himself fell foul of their snobbery." The result is that Stannard continually falsifies the record in Gradgrind-like attempts to correct it. One instance must suffice. In February, 1927, aged 23, Waugh seemed unable to find a niche in life or even an identity; the day after he lost his job as a schoolmaster for a drunken assault on the school matron, he wrote in his diary, "It seems to me the time has arrived to set about being a man of letters." Stannard cites the entry and adds, "But he was not serious." Wasn't he? His words are magnificently theatrical, and certainly not earnest — but within the next 14 months Waugh would write his scholarly biography of Rossetti and his first novel, *Decline and Fall*. Stannard similarly misses the humour of the novels: Margot's smart-set house party in *Decline and Fall* is simply "padding" to him; he finds in *Scoop* a "clinical objec-

tivity which cools his humour and leaves the reader unmoved by the tragic implications" — adding, perhaps in some perplexity, "It remains, however, one of his most popular books."

Sykes began his biography with an acute observation: his book is subtitled *A Biography* because, given Waugh's personality and the wealth of Waughiana, "other biographical studies could and perhaps should be written." Some 11 years later, Stannard's biography shows that Sykes was prescient — and offers little reason for revising Sykes's dictum.

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BRUCE STOVEL

W. R. Martin, *Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel*, Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1987, pp. xiv, 235. \$25.00; \$14.95 pb.

While the most reliable sign of Alice Munro's success is her large and ever-increasing international readership, a satisfying measure of her achievement is the fact that, in recent years, critical responses to her fiction have become genuinely exploratory and analytical rather than blindly appreciative or narrowly evaluative. This positive critical reorientation was signalled in 1983 by Louis B. MacKendrick, who emphasized that Munro's fiction is a construction rather than a transcription of reality: "These worlds are made, rather than rendered, made, not begotten, created rather than recreated." MacKendrick's clear articulation of a central paradox of contemporary realism — that "Munro's stories retain probability and authenticity, while they also delight the attentive reader with their fictionality"¹ — usefully informs the premises of W. R. Martin's *Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel*.

Professor Martin's chronological survey of Alice Munro's artistic evolution — from her uncollected stories of the 1950s to those included in *The Progress of Love* — is, paradoxically, comprehensive and limited. Martin promises to "discuss the development of Alice Munro's narrative techniques, her mastery of language, and the themes and patterns which dramatize [her] vision" (xii) in a manner "designed to be useful to the common reader" (xi). This promise is more or less kept in seven decidedly and self-acknowledged "old-fashioned" (xi) chapters, each of which examines a collection of Munro's stories; these are framed by general and summary discussions of technique and emerging structural pattern. While Martin's discourse is often stimulating and perceptive, his determination to treat nearly *all* of Munro's stories as pieces in the critical puzzle results in the kind of limitation that besets many surveys of the "reader's guide" variety: the excesses of plot summary and the often simplistic

treatment of theme are of little use to the reader who *knows* Munro's fiction, and are an inadequate substitute to the reader who *doesn't*. In other words, the critical net that Martin casts is often of a coarse weave, and the more interesting and subtle of Munro's small fry swim complacently away.

I believe that *Paradox and Parallel* would have been a more helpful book if Professor Martin had organized his areas of critical inquiry — on narrative technique, characterization, closure, enigma, influences and antecedents — into discrete chapters, rather than spread these investigations rather thinly through his chronological survey. This would have sharpened the focus and enabled finer discriminations, which tend to become blurred or repetitive as the reader is forced to wade through pages of rather tedious summary before returning to pieces of the larger paradigms.

By far the most compelling figure that Martin traces in the Munro-vian carpet is the peculiar affinity between the structures of experience in Alice Munro's fiction and the dialectics of the Romantic imagination. Indeed, although Martin posits no theoretical or conceptual framework for his discussion ("because . . . adherence to an *a priori* theory tends to bias or hamper the practice of criticism" xi), he returns almost obsessively to this fruitful avenue of inquiry; and it is in this pattern of affinity, I think, that Martin most insightfully locates and defines the paradoxes inherent in not only Munro's fiction, but also in many fictions that we loosely call "realist." In exploring Munro's gradual refinement of retrospective narration — whereby a mature narrator attempts to reconstruct how her younger self perceived the hazardous world of appearances — Martin detects dual impulses, divided allegiances, and "a paradoxical double vision [in Munro's] presentation of the mysterious complexity of the world" (39). In her narrators' remembrances of things past, Martin cogently argues, Munro, "like Coleridge, . . . makes the strange familiar, and, like Wordsworth, she makes the familiar wonderful" (1). Applying Blakean dialectics to Munro's narrative acts, Martin traces "oppositions, contraries, tensions, inconsistencies, and then sometimes failures, but more often resolutions, implied or achieved; . . . the oppositions produce ironies or paradoxes, but also moments of vision in which the oppositions are reconciled or are seen as parallel . . ." (13). In perceptive analogies that include not only the Romantics but also realists like Austen and James, Martin constructs the paradigm of an experiential spiral by which Munro's narrators work through a dialectical pattern to arrive at a perspective of "organized innocence" (47). Martin's detection of these macrostructures arises from his valid conviction that "at its deepest level, Alice Munro's fiction is about . . . the morally instructive function of the intelligent imagination" (121).

The limitation of *Paradox and Parallel*, then, is not Professor Martin's larger explanatory gestures, but his intermittent application of the paradigms to the analysis of specific stories. While he often precisely locates important technical innovations — for example, Munro's break with "straightforward linear chronology" (77) in *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* — specific commentary on narrative design, symbolic structures, or Munro's rendering of perception is often inadequate. An instance of this unsettling absence of application is Martin's discussion of "Simon's Luck," a story in *Who Do You Think You Are?*, which Martin believes to be "as bold in conception and as rich with meaning, complexity, irony, enigma and mystery as any story in . . . the canon" (119), yet which is given only a cursory plot summary. Martin recounts Rose's attempt to escape the frustration of thwarted love in her westward drive across the prairies, where "in a cafe she at last saw 'the usual things there are behind cafe counters' in a way 'that wouldn't be possible to a person in any stage of love'" (118). Martin's simplistic net misses both the texture and the implications of Rose's epiphany, her sudden realization, as she sat looking at "the thick glass dishes they put ice cream or jello in," whose "solidity" she felt "with convalescent gratitude," that "love removes the world for you, and just as surely when it's going well as when it's going badly."² Rose's response to these commonplace glass dishes endows them with a significance that is at once solid and ephemeral; here, to use Munro's own terms, the author "makes the 'mysterious touchable' and the 'touchable mysterious'" (1). This passage is an important example of a recurring paradox in Munro's fiction that fascinates Martin — "the mystery [that] haunts about the shapes she so realistically creates" (61). To miss such an opportunity to supplement general concepts or ideas with particular analysis strikes me as unfortunate.

Paradox and Parallel, with its helpful if intermittent gestures of illumination, succeeds in "[promoting] Alice Munro studies, whether by discovery or by provocation" (xiii), but fails as a comprehensive, integrated survey of Munro's evolving techniques and themes. Professor Martin's exploration of Munro's romantic mode of casting the structures of experience is a real contribution to scholarship, but the reader must be prepared to sift through a great deal of chaff to find the grain. Finally, I think it is fair to observe that Alice Munro, despite her notorious dislike of interviews, remains the most astute analyst of the recurring structures and motifs in her stories. When asked in a recent interview if her narrators end in wisdom, she responded with engaging simplicity, "No. I don't know if there could ever be wisdom. . . . I was going to say, 'Well, I would hope so' but I don't know if that is true. I don't know if I do. If, by wisdom, you mean looking at something and thinking you see more about it now

than you did then, sure. You usually see more about things. But you might not be right."³ Criticism of Alice Munro, while it too might not always be right, is at least making gradual advances.

NOTES

- ¹ Louis B. MacKendrick, ed. *Probable Fictions: Alice Munro's Narrative Acts* (Downsview, Ont.: ECW Press, 1983) 1.
- ² Alice Munro, "Simon's Luck" in *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978, rpt. Toronto: Signet, 1979) 174-75.
- ³ *Canadian Writers at Work: Interviews with Geoff Hancock* (Toronto: OUP, 1987) 202.

ERIC SAVOY

Terry Whalen, *Philip Larkin and English Poetry*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1986. pp. 164. \$18.95.

There are two main reasons why this book disappoints. Firstly, it is a series of articles cobbled together by an introduction and some sandpapering of transitions, and it reads like it. Secondly, it runs squarely into the inherent difficulties of writing about Larkin, and, in its attempts to overcome these difficulties, moves through the provocative and hyperbolic into downright excessive and unconvincing interpretation.

All this is a pity because Professor Whalen clearly loves Larkin's poetry and says some penetrating and illuminating things before he rushes headlong up seductive paths into sterile critical wildernesses. The book starts well, in fact — apart from the self-serving introduction which I guess was written last — and it is difficult to imagine a better location of Larkin's predominant tone than in Professor Whalen's words:

Larkin appreciates the emotion of sadness as the basic emotion which connects us compassionately with other human beings. For Larkin, to know sadness is to realise one's humanity and the humanity of others in the midst of a highly limited human condition, a condition which strong judgement shows to be enormously brutal.

This is orthodox, but fine, and subsequent analyses of poems like "Home Is So Sad," "The Large Cool Store," "Essential Beauty," "Sunny Prestatyn" and "The Explosion" are as good as anything which has been previously done on them and provide evidence of a responsive and sensible critical intelligence, making us hope for equally helpful and sound material in the rest of the book. But, alas, it is not to be. Larkin is, as we know, difficult to deal with, as his

poems, few in number, clear, honest, direct and traditional, leave very limited room for critical manoeuvre and alternative interpretation. They reveal much of their surface meaning, without the "mystification and outrage" which Larkin hated in modern art, at first reading, leaving behind those magical but undiscussable things, like the way the cadences, the images, the odd line linger and tease and taunt the memory long after reading. How the poet can move almost imperceptibly from muttered chat to a huge image of opening-out. How the people who populate his poems come to populate our minds and feelings so comprehensively. The poems are memorable, then, but because metre, rhyme, syntax, image and tone enmesh so perfectly with astonishingly deep feeling, leaving them well-nigh impervious to any unorthodox critical approaches.

And this is where Professor Whalen's impatience gets the better of him. In his over-strenuous efforts to give us a "new" Larkin, he forces the poetry into conjunctions which do not, nor could ever, fully convince us, and once started, it seems he just can't stop.

Larkin, he argues, has close affinities with D. H. Lawrence, with the Imagists, with Samuel Johnson, with Ted Hughes, Thom Gunn and R. S. Thomas. And for his next trick . . . well the book *does* end, but can Ginsberg and Rimbaud be far behind? Pope? Chaucer? The author does, of course, tip his hat to the real influences and affinities — Hardy and the poets of the native tradition — and his list comes after that, but it clearly moves into unacceptable comparison. We could play this game with any poet on the sort of evidence offered here.

We are to believe, for instance, that because there are epiphanies in Larkin, and a "religious" element, he must be Lawrentian. Statements like "Larkin and Lawrence are poets of both theme and epiphany" could as well be applied to Whitman and Emily Dickinson, Pound and Betjeman, Irving Layton and Ralph Gustafson. All Professor Whalen seems to need are a few similar images, references or settings, and he's off up the trail: "Lawrence's poem ['Tommies In The Train'] is specifically like 'The Whitsun Weddings' on a series of counts: both poems are set on a train; the sun is evoked at the beginning. . . ." And so on. This kind of thing just won't do, especially when the poems are so tonally different.

Larkin is an Imagist because of "the visual sense process of looking, noticing, gazing, even staring, at the world . . ."; he is Johnsonian because of "formal traditionalism" and "conservative nostalgia"; he is Hughesian because both poets invite the reader "to participate in the living moment of the universe"; like R. S. Thomas because neither has "discovered a meaning in reality which does not easily lead him to absolutes. . . ."

And so on. Couldn't, we ask, any poet be equated with any other in this way? And especially as such arguments often omit the centrality of Larkin's unique feel, tone, attitude? Every poet has elements in his/her work which may well remind us fleetingly of poems by others, but to devote much of a book to what a poet clearly is not, centrally, all about, is to do damage to the work by sheer misrepresentation.

If only Professor Whalen had been less deceived. If only he had been content to leave Larkin's work there, on the page, sour, grouchy, slangy, funny, morbid, compassionate and deeply moving, giving us his responses to the essential humanity and brilliant craft of the poems, then he would have published a book worthy of one of our century's important poets. As it is, in spite of his obvious ability, range of reference and love of Larkin, and on the evidence of the exaggerated claims, the desperate desire to remake and improve the existing Larkin, to bend obvious conditions of tone and meaning, I'm afraid I would not buy a used poem from him.

CHRISTOPHER WISEMAN

Peter Hinchcliffe and Ed Jewinski, eds. *Magic Realism and Canadian Literature: Essays and Stories*. Waterloo: U of Waterloo P, 1986. pp. 126. \$10.00.

Consisting of the proceedings of a conference on magic realist writing held in Waterloo in 1985, this volume serves as a useful introduction to an aesthetic that has received increasing attention in Canada during the past two decades. Not that the term "magic realism" is all that new: it was first used with respect to certain aspects of German Expressionist art as early as 1923, and since the 1950s has been widely applied to the literature of Latin America. The five essays and six stories contained here, along with reproductions of paintings by Alex Colville and Mary Pratt, and a concluding panel discussion, help us to decide how applicable this term is to Canadian literature and art, and how it in a broader sense constitutes one of the many revolts against realism that have characterized the literary scene in the last half century.

For we are in the first instance attracted to the term because of its paradoxical implications: the very word "realism" in ordinary usage would seem to deny everything that is implied by the word "magic," and that it is not merely a synonym for "surrealism" suggests it has some validity of its own. It is true that there was a branch of the surrealist art during the 1920s and 1930s that utilized some of the characteristics of magic realism, but where such surrealists as Dali

or Magritte deliberately distorted objects of the ordinary world to emphasize the dimensions of fantasy and the unreal, magic realists simply saw in ordinary reality the elements of the strange and the magical, and did not distort these objects in their processes of art. There is nothing "unreal," as it were, in the world of magic realists, but it is the "real" objects that contain the marvellous.

If magic realism has a guru in Canada, that role belongs to Geoff Hancock, whose essay "Magic or Realism: The Marvellous in Canadian Fiction" is one of many he has written on this topic over the past few years. It is a lively piece, as one might expect from someone who admits being drawn to sorcery, black magic, Taoist meditation and the like, but I have some trouble with the subjective or even solipsistic nature of its verifications. Can one really use eccentric personal experiences (living close to a graveyard, a penitentiary, an asylum, or weird neighbours) to verify the appropriateness of magic realism in one's home province? There is a certain romanticism or self-aggrandizement involved in linking one's memory or one's recollection of hometown history to writers and artists like Julio Cortazar or Mungo Martin; a statement like "there was no difference between the Colombia of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and the British Columbia of my own experience" becomes downright silly.

Hancock is on more solid and productive ground when he examines the characteristics of magic realism as found in the various literatures of the world: exaggerated comic effects, absurd re-creations of history, metafictional intrusions, folkloric interests, and exploitations of the elements of ritual and religion, for here one can make sensible and relevant comments on the relationships between some of Canada's fiction and that of Latin America. Hancock's discussions here help the reader with such works as Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* or Bowering's *Burning Water*, novels that use "realistic" phenomena like landscape or history to reveal other dimensions of reality that lie attached to them. Our memories, our official histories, our interpretations are to various degrees unreliable, and in convincing us that this is so, magic realism constitutes an opposition to ordinary literary realism, which counts on our authority of recognition to verify the author's.

Stanley McMullin applies a kind of political formula to his essay, "Magic Realism as Hinterland Experience," arguing that "the western novelist has become the hinterland historian," who uses magic realism as a technique to respond to heartland historians who have incomplete ideas about hinterland realities and experiences. (Case in point: during the discussions of the closing panel, centralist Gerald Noonan's comment that the prairie environment cannot really be seen in terms of the "marvellous" undoubtedly reflects the kind of blindness that helps give rise to novels like *What the Crow Said*.)

The heartland, McMullin argues, stresses tradition, structure, and rationality, while the hinterland seeks out process and revision, a rationale that helps to explain the fictional approaches of writers like Lowry, Harlow or Hodgins, concerned as they are with re-discoveries, inventions, and re-namings of their worlds.

The most theoretical essay of the five is Robert Wilson's "Metamorphosis of Space: Magic Realism," a title which to some extent anticipates its inevitable obliqueness. By structuring his arguments around various parables, Wilson achieves the indirections and ambiguities — and sometimes the confusions — of that form, abetted by his fondness for terms like "deictics," "world-interpenetrations," or "spatiality of space." References to other critics — "Dolezel's analysis," "in Ortega's words," "in Seymour Chatman's term" — may remind us that meta-critical as well as meta-fictional intrusions are part of the machinery of magic realism, but they don't necessarily help the reader see the point, and violate the notion that clarity and precision should be high priorities for the critic. I really do not know what the following sentence means: "the world-interpenetration that distinguishes magic realism from both axiomatic fantasy and from canonical realism suggests a model for textuality itself," and the specific definition he gives to magic realism — "the name that one currently gives to the fictional space created by the dual inscriptions of incompatible geometries" — is only a little more solvable.

The volume's other essays, Nancy-Lou Patterson's "Magic Realism in Art" and Amaryll Chanady's "Origins and Development of Magic Realism in Latin American Fiction," the only two not tied to the conference's concern with Canadian literature, are clearly delineated and useful. Chanady's is particularly convincing on the European backgrounds of magic realism and on the reasons why it found fertile ground in Latin America, while Patterson goes back in history further than the other critics, discovering some antecedents of magic realism as far back as the Renaissance. Her comments on Colville and Pratt are instructive, though I have difficulty in seeing her example from Pratt, "A Child with Two Adults" as a good example of magic realism, compared, for example, to Colville's "Hound in the Field."

A somewhat similar problem obtains with some of the stories included: if they were not in a volume clearly marked "Magic Realism," how easily could we associate them with that aesthetic? Part of the difficulty may lie in the fact that three of these (by Keith Maillard, Ken Ledbetter, and Jane Urquhart) are excerpts from longer works, and therefore it may not be legitimate to be too concerned about their insubstantiality and forced situations. One of the strongest stories for me, George Elliot's "Side Trip" (which for some strange reason the editors say is set in Canada: all the action takes place on the eastern seaboard of the United States), is the one that

comes closest to ordinary realism in its form and content, and only one, Eric McCormack's "Sad Stories in Patagonia," reflects quite convincingly the characteristics of magic realism that we saw spelled out in Hancock's and Chanady's essays.

We are warned in the editors' introduction that because of the nature of magic realism, its critics often "teeter on the verge of inconsistency, juxtaposition, and even contradiction," and we are not surprised, therefore, to discover a wide range of opinions in the "Concluding Panel." There is virtually nothing even of tangential relevance that is not discussed here: modernism and post-modernism, Dreiser and Kafka, magic and religion, the implied reader and the selfconscious writer, superstition and myth, the Gothic and the Sublime, hyper-realism and super-realism, sex and dreams. What we do not get is either a definition of magic realism, or a firm resolution of its significance, and that, as Ian MacLaren suggested, is probably one of the proofs that the Conference was a reasonable success.

HALLVARD DAHLIE

Books Received

- BISHOP, RAND. *African Literature, African Critics: The Forming of Critical Standards, 1947-1966*. Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies, Number 115. New York: Greenwood, 1988. pp. xiv, 215. \$37.95.
- BOWERING, ANGELA. *Figures Cut in Sacred Ground: Illuminati in "The Double Hook"*. Edmonton: NeWest, 1988. Volume VIII: *Western Canadian Literary Documents Series*. pp. 135. \$22.95; \$12.95 pb.
- BRITTON, DEREK. *Lady Chatterley: The Making of the Novel*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988. pp. xviii, 300. \$44.95.
- CROSSLEY, ROBERT, ed. *Talking Across the World: The Love Letters of Olaf Stapeldon and Agnes Miller, 1913-1919*. Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1987. pp. xlii, 382. \$27.95.
- FRYE, NORTHPROP. *On Education*. Markham, Ont.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1988. pp. iv, 211. \$24.95.
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