

graphical and psychological" (158) is stimulating. The poem emerges from Colwell's reading as a unified and intricately structured work which explores terrain both historical and psychological. Colwell's conclusions are rarely surprising (*Alastor* holds no fire, no hope), but his explorations are always informed and informative.

Even more bracing is the style in which Colwell presents his arguments. He likes the evaluative line; speaking of Leigh Hunt's *The Nymphs*, Colwell notes that if Keats's poetry was writ in water, "then Hunt's cloud-nepheliad land is fashioned from blancmange" (107). His wit takes a more rhetorical turn in this learned passage: "Claims for the prototype of Xanadu's river have ranged from the Acadian Alpheus and the Blue Nile to Wookey Hole's Axe. The watersheds of the Nile and Alpheus lay beyond Coleridge's immediate experience, although not beyond the scope of his reading. He was probably aware that the limestone riverbeds of Greece, like those of Somerset, were known for their bewildering habit of swallowing and regurgitating their freight. The mysterious *katavothra* of the Peloponnese captured the imagination of the ancients and swelled rivers such as the Alpheus to mythic dimensions, while the swallets or sink-holes of Somerset snared only the occasional witless sheep" (87). In short, Colwell's prose is lively, at times bantering and at times intense, but always on course. He has written a book that does not confront recent passages in critical theorizing about the Romantics and their period, but he has written a work of deep fascination for anyone interested in the river and its source.

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- R. RAWDON WILSON. *In Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game, and Narrative Theory*. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1990, pp. 317. \$39.95.

In the penultimate paragraph of *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga concludes his thoughts on the play element in contemporary civilization with the following deceptively simple statement: "The human mind can only disengage itself from the magic circle of play by turning toward the ultimate" (212). Since the ultimate continues to elude us, in *In Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game, and*

Narrative Theory, R. Rawdon Wilson turns to the Greeks to engage us farther into the magic circle of play. Using Palamedes as an archetypal player whose shadow extends from the ancient war games of windy Troy all the way to the postmodern freeplay of Derridean linguistic deconstruction, he examines the vast playing field of language, literature, and culture from a focal perspective of narrative theory and discourse analysis.

As the prefatory remarks indicate (ix), Wilson has been playing with the subject of game-play and/in literature for a long time. In fact, here he pursues an idea he offered us about a decade ago to toy with. In his 1981 essay, aptly titled "Three Prolusions: Toward a Game Model in Literary Theory," in the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, he proposed that "if a genuine application of Game Theory to literary theory does exist, it will probably lie in the direction of reading theory," because games "bear a resemblance, though slight and paradigmatically attenuated, to the author-reader relationship across the text" (79). He suggested that the text might be considered as a board or playground in a stylized intellectual conflict. The two longest chapters in the book, "The Play of Carnival" (25-74) and "The Archetype of Bamboozlement: Godgames and Labyrinths" (105-66), focus intensely on these questions, and the book's chessboard cover design beautifully captures that lucid metaphor.

Several chapters of the book have appeared in different scholarly journals during the 1980s, but the book offers the added benefit to the reader of seeing these insights in sequence and in exploring the relevance of a broad variety of critical and philosophical premises to the analysis of ludic narratives. Wilson playfully proceeds through personal anecdotes, fictive narratives, journalistic reports, and fables; in the process, however, he draws on some of the major contemporary literary theorists, such as Bakhtin, Derrida, Barthes, and Gadamer, and on the major fiction writers, such as Borges, Robbe-Grillet, Fowles, Nabokov, Hesse, and Pynchon. The reader will find in the application of Bakhtin's carnival concepts to game-play (chapter 2) a fine example of Wilson's lucid analysis of a complex cultural metaphor in the use of a literary text. Equally enlightening is the chapter on "The Game/Text Analogy: Three Paradoxes" (which first appeared in the *South Central Review* in 1986), where Wilson offers a concise picture of the rules and conventions that inform and control the spheres of literary imagination and game-play. The bibliography (287-306) includes the most representative current research on game-play.

In view of the growing critical interest in a poetics of game-play in/and literature, evidenced by special issues on the subject by *Yale French Studies* (1968), *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* (1986), and *South Central Review* (1986), and by national and

regional conferences focusing on this theme, *In Palamedes' Shadow* provides a timely infusion of ideas to open new directions for the scholars on the subject. For those who have been in the playing field of the subject for some time, Wilson makes the game much easier by cataloguing the strategies and simplifying the moves.

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