

*Feminism Without Women* would serve to provoke lively and productive discussions in both women's studies and gender studies courses alike. No doubt, such discussions would point out some of the problems with the text. For example, feminist students might object to the reduction of the work of Elaine Showalter and other prominent feminist critics to their points of complicity with the patriarchal label "postfeminist," without acknowledgement of their more positive accomplishments. Gender studies groups might explore the potential for conflation of "homosocial" and "homoeerotic" in a critique of homophobic Western culture (in the discussion of the film *Dead Poets Society*), or may wish to examine the implications of Modleski's position on anti-essentialist arguments to the study of gender constructions. The chapter on pornography is bound to incite lively discussion from all quarters.

*Feminism Without Women* admits to a tone of "worry" (22) about the direction of recent academic and cultural responses to feminist thought. The text offers a warning against abandoning the potential contributions of feminist theory and practice at such an early moment in the exploration of what may be achieved. Certainly, it is beholden upon scholars in the fields of women's studies and gender studies to address the questions outlined by this text, and for the academic community to hold itself critically accountable to the concerns raised.

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Charles A. Hallett and Elaine S. Hallett. *Analyzing Shakespeare's Action: Scene Versus Sequence*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. pp. xi, 230. £27.95.

As a performance-theory text, this book will appeal primarily to readers directly involved with the production and performance of Shakespeare's plays. The authors of *Analyzing Shakespeare's Action* assume some familiarity on the part of their readers with the subject and its terminology; however, the clarity of their argument and discussion makes this a very readable book, accessible also to the non-specialist. A particularly apt quotation from Henry Fielding prefaces the volume: "It becomes an author generally to divide a book, as it does a butcher to joint his meat, for such assistance is of great help to both the reader and the carver." *Analyzing Shakespeare's Action* is concerned with the division of the acts and scenes of Shakespeare's plays into smaller dramatic units, and the division and organization of the contents of the book itself are exemplary and of great help to the reader.

Theatre practitioners and literary scholars alike generally consider the scene to be the smallest unit of a play. But the Halletts identify, within both acts and scenes, still smaller units of action which they call the beat, the sequence, and the frame. Chapter I re-examines the scene to question "the widespread assumption that to analyze a *designated scene* is to analyze an *action*" (1), and finds that while the scene is not always a

unit of action, one of its smaller components, the sequence, is. The sequence is defined as "that unit of action in which Shakespeare raises a single dramatic question and answers it" (7). Whereas, for the Halletts, the scene is essentially a unit of place, "the sequence, not the scene, is the unit that contains the dramatic structure" (8). In scene analysis, therefore, it is essential to make the distinction between these two units and the different purposes they serve within the larger structure of a play.

Six chapters explain the nature and function of the sequence through a detailed examination of its parts and characteristics. The sequence is constructed of beats; indeed each stage of action in a sequence is a beat, which "differs from the sequence in that [it] completes only a *portion* of the action to which it contributes" (11). The beat is also defined as a unit of motivation and there are as many kinds of beats as there are motives for actions: introductory, intensifying, sustaining, and concluding beats are some examples of the kinds described. Another five chapters discuss the different kinds of sequences identified by the Halletts, leading to a final chapter which shows how several sequences combine to form a frame. The frame is "'a designed group of consecutive sequences' . . . an action constructed of already complete actions . . . which tell a specific segment of the story, its boundaries being largely determined by the fact that the story it is telling has a readily detectable start and finish" (188). The frame, then, is a unit of both plot and action. The structure of the frame depends on the kind of sequences it contains, while the structure of each sequence is determined by its beats; ultimately, all depends on the dramatic question (a subject to which a full chapter is devoted) and the motivation behind the action.

The Halletts claim that understanding the sequence will result in the fuller realization of a play's emotional and dramatic rhythms in performance, as well as in the fuller experience of these rhythms for both reader and viewer (9). Their theory is well argued and convincing, and one of the book's strengths is the application of the theory to many closely-examined passages from at least twenty of Shakespeare's plays. Occasionally, however, the Halletts appear to rely too heavily on the structure of beats and sequences in the text, and although the "skill of the staging and the ingenuities of the actor" (108) are acknowledged, they are not always given enough importance as crucial elements in the conveyance of meaning and emotion to an audience. Some readers, too, may find that the reduction of a play into ever smaller units leaves them with little sense of the wholeness of the play, and it is possible that the isolation of tiny portions of text, while shedding light on their content, structure, and texture, may simultaneously hinder the understanding of the same passage in its immediate and larger contexts, that is, in the act and in the entire play.

Given the specialized nature of the book, it is worth noting the presence of two features helpful to both the theatre practitioner and the non-specialist. The endnotes are a mine of useful information and references which serve especially to place this book in the context of performance-theory literature. And a concise glossary defines, and sometimes redefines, performance-theory terminology as it is used in the specific context of the Halletts' theory.

Indeed it could be said that the best feature of this book is also its only real weakness: *Analyzing Shakespeare's Action* focuses a little too exclusively on its subject, leaving a number of unanswered questions. The most obvious: is the Halletts' system of beat, sequence, and frame applicable only to Shakespeare's plays? Certainly he is the only dramatist they mention. And no explanation is offered for the fact that the majority of the plays referred to in the course of the book are histories and tragedies. Finally, it might also have been useful to consider how the Halletts' theory might have to be modified for adapted and cut versions of Shakespeare's texts as well as for filmscripts.

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Bruce Bennett. *An Australian Compass: Essays on Place and Direction in Australian Literature*. South Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1991. pp. 271. \$24.95 pb.

As a critic, I now expect books with a national circumference to recognize their agendas and even (especially given the self-deprecation available to the Australian variety) to be able to ironize those agendas. In this respect, Bennett's essays on place and direction in Australian literature are disappointingly straight: they play directly into the grubby palms of the canonization act and its desperate need to validate and validate again. Still, these essays do succeed in their tantalizing sweep of direction, a charting by the Southern Cross. Bennett negotiates some important aspects of the typical concerns of a postcolonial literary culture: the attempt to connect with the universal, the friction between a literature and its place of origin, the centre/periphery tensions of a large country, and the question of what is archetypally Australian. These are intriguing and important if familiar questions, and they maintain their value despite the ubiquitous question of identity (although Bennett is suitably ironic about it) that keeps raising its hoary interrogative head. Identity dogs the footsteps of the literature of settler postcolonial countries in ways that are beginning to seem depressingly impossible to evade. The internationalist bias that Bennett actually decries in this text nevertheless informs his critical positioning. Here we see a critic both creating and questioning his civilization and its discontents, with all the unproblematized loading of value that such concepts carry with them.

Bennett's essays are diverse in their content, ranging from a comparative discussion of the poets Les Murray and Peter Porter ("Patriot and