

\*DENIS RENEVEY and CHRISTIANA WHITEHEAD, eds. *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Pp. xii + 270. Hardcover CAN \$68.00; paper CAN \$27.95.

In *Writing Religious Women: female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, Denis Renevey and Christiana Whitehead have compiled ten essays which address aspects of female spirituality in connection with vernacular theology in England. An extensive introduction describes the foundations of the project. According to Renevey, the concern with "vernacular theology" embraces a number of genres, including the didactic narratives and visionary writings which are of major interest in the essays in this volume. Renevey argues for the inclusion of "female vernacular theology" as a useful subcategory — again, a relatively broad label, encompassing texts written by women, texts written for women, and texts written about women.

This particular definition of the subcategory appears suspiciously convenient, as it provides a unifying principle for the discussion of some very different topics. It does, however, work surprisingly well in light of historical fact. According to Bella Millett in an essay entitled "*Ancrene Wisse* and the Book of Hours," the period saw an increase in the number of well-born women seeking to lead their lives under some sort of religious affiliation. A shortage of positions with "official" religious orders resulted in a proliferation of less formal arrangements. Women who became anchoresses or joined orders as lay members often lacked any extensive education in Latin, but could sometimes read or write (and, in any case, could always pray) in the vernacular. The emphasis on the pastoral which is characteristic of vernacular theology following the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) appears as an influence on works which mixed vernacular and Latin devotions like both the *Ancrene Wisse* and the Books of Hours which became popular from the thirteenth century. There is, then, a fundamental connection between women and vernacular texts, particularly when specific women are explicitly addressed as readers/recipients of the works.

Two further essays in the book discuss texts addressed to women, focusing particularly on evidence concerning the male authors' attitudes towards their female audience. In "Spirituality and Sex Change: *Horologium sapientiae* and *Speculum devotorum*" Rebecca Selman argues that the Middle English life of Christ, *Speculum devotorum*, alters its Latin source material to accommodate a female audience. This includes an explicit recognition of the presence of the female reader in the choice of pronouns, along with a consistent attempt to strengthen the empathic association between Mary and that reader. The reader is encouraged to think and imagine Mary's emotions and reactions to the Crucifixion, interpreting their significance through the intense sorrow of this personal mediator.

Anne McGovern-Mouron's essay, " 'Listen to me, daughter, listen to a faithful counsel': The *Liber de modo bene Vivendi ad sororem*" discusses a Latin devotional treatise and its Middle English translation. While much of the essay revolves around the bibliographical work so fundamental to medieval studies, McGovern-Mouron also pays attention to the influence of the intended audience, a female member of a religious order, on the work itself. The emphasis of the text is on the cultivation of spiritual virtues rather than on providing a concrete framework for devotion, and the images it uses are much more allegorical than those used in a practical manual like the *Ancrene Wisse*. Nonetheless, the text does not place high intellectual demands on the reader, emphasizing only that she should read works which will help her to lead a good life. Clues implicit in the text, like its use of relatively simple Latin, provide us with an idea of the original writer's attitude towards his reader.

It seems logical that this volume should include a discussion of works by female authors and their readers, as indeed it does. An essay by Marleen Cré, "Women in the Charterhouse? Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls* in British Library, MS Additional 37790," analyses an anthology of contemplative texts which appears to have been compiled and read by Carthusians, outlining the anthologies organizational principles. Cré is careful to make no claims which she cannot prove, but does advance some interesting hypotheses. Her findings emphasize that the texts written by female authors are in no way treated differently — either by the anthologist or by annotators — from the texts by male readers. The anthologist tends to emphasize the personal virtues of all of the authors, their holiness or piety, for example, rather than gender characteristics. Porete's text is included as an anonymous work, but the assumption seems to be that the author is male rather than female, again arguing against any

tendency to identify specific texts as fundamentally connected with "female" spirituality.

Cre's conclusion is extremely interesting from the point of view of this compilation of essays. Does the personal authority of Julian of Norwich as a holy woman and a visionary endow her with an equality in the eyes of her male readers which she would not otherwise possess? On the other hand, is it possible that some of the distinctions made in the essays in this volume are based on a false premise, an emphasis on gendering texts which simply did not exist during the late Middle Ages? Such questions may influence our response to the second half of Rebecca Selman's essay, which discusses the use of Bridget of Sweden's *Revelations* as one of the sources for the *Speculum*. It seems to me that a more detailed proof than a cursory reference to Suso's *Horologium* is needed for the basic argument of this section, the assertion that the use of source material from female writers indicates that the author "orientates his work towards woman as reader" (70). More thorough comparisons need to be made with works intended for male readers during the same time period, in order to discern whether an appreciable difference really exists in the recognition of Bridget's authority and the use of her visions.

The argument implied in the inclusion of works about women under the subcategory of "female vernacular theology" is discussed in essays by Christiana Whitehead and Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou, and relates to the discussion of women as readers of vernacular texts. Both essays focus on the depiction of Mary, of virginity, and, by association, of the female body in vernacular poetry. Close readings of Robert Grosseteste's *Chateau d'amour* and excerpts of religious lyrics reveal some of the tensions inherent in the depiction of bodies. In the allegorical description of Mary as a fortress, she paradoxically appears both impenetrable (a symbol of her virginity) and maternally protective. Conversely, as Boklund-Lagopoulou points out, descriptions of Christ's body also tend to emphasize maternity, in connection with the motifs of spiritual rebirth and nourishment. While Whitehead's essay is a solid example of literary analysis, Boklund-Lagopoulou bases her work on an assertion which remains unproven — and, quite possibly, unprovable. She clearly demonstrates that certain poems portray the body in specific, interesting ways. Without evidence from female readers of the poems, however, her assertion that "the ways of writing the body in the religious lyric offered the meditating woman readings which, though certainly constraining, seem to have been imaginatively powerful conceptual tools as well" (134) appears impossible to substantiate. The term "female vernacular theology"

should not encompass all literary and religious representations of gender, unless it also includes more thorough arguments about the relationship of these texts to female authors and/or readers.

Like any essay collection, the book suffers occasionally from discontinuity of content and discrepancies between the quality of individual essays. This is most clear in the section on Margery Kempe. When an individual author confines himself to analyzing the content of the text, as does Samuel Fanous in "Measuring the Pilgrim's Progress: Internal Emphases in *The Book of Margery Kempe*" the results are effective and informative. Fanous describes *The Book's* use of time and place, and compares it with the hagiographic conventions of the time. From this comparison, he creates a plausible (although, as he acknowledges, still arguable) hypothesis concerning the editing role of the second scribe of the text.

Regrettably, other essays in this section do not approach their material in the same thorough fashion. In Naoe Kukita Yoshikawa's "Veneration of Virgin Martyrs in Margery Kempe's Meditation: Influence of the Sarum Liturgy and Hagiography," the basic assertion that Kempe was influenced by the forms of the veneration of the saints common during her lifetime is so general as to be undeniable. It seems a reasonable starting point for an analysis of Kempe's narrative. Unfortunately, Yoshikawa ignores *The Book of Margery Kempe* in favor of a cursory look at liturgical history and the contents of the Sarum Missal. Passages from the Sarum Missal are described as possible influences on Kempe, although no proof is provided that Kempe was influenced by the Sarum Missal, as opposed to any other sources. Yoshikawa's research is simply not condensed, thorough, or systematic enough for a scholarly article.

The remaining essays on *The Book of Margery Kempe* fall somewhere between these two extremes. Denis Renevey's "Margery's Performing Body: The Translation of Late Medieval Discursive Practices" is part of a larger project. He describes the anchorite habit of physically reenacting elements of the Passion, as well as discussing the imaginative reenactment encouraged in Nicholas Love's life of Christ, and parallels the two with Kempe's visions and their often public, physical manifestations. The main body of the essay, which concentrates on the close reading of passages of text, is provocative. Unfortunately, other sections can be confusing. Renevey's broad definition of "translation" as a concept central to *The Book* is dependent on other work; comments in the introduction and the conclusion make incomplete and therefore puzzling references to the greater project.

Richard Lawes' "Psychological Disorder and the Autobiographical Impulse in Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Thomas Hoccleve" provides a psychiatric analysis of each of the three authors. For the non-medievalist reader, this essay, which explores the medieval sense of self, is probably the most interesting. Lawes does a good job of collecting evidence and making his diagnosis (he is, in fact, a registered psychiatrist). His central argument — that psychological disruption gives rise to tension related to the identity problem, which tension is then expressed in autobiography — is stronger in relation to Hoccleve and Kempe, who had demonstrable psychoses, than to Julian of Norwich, who was merely physically ill. Despite an occasional weak link, this type of diagnostic reading has potential for other religious autobiographies. It is a departure from the emphasis on female spirituality which pervades the rest of the volume, particularly in its reaction against the gendered "feminine hysteria" explanation for the women's symptoms. It provides a refreshing and relatively unusual perspective on these literary works, and leaves readers with the realization that the categories of "female spirituality" and "vernacular theology" do not explain everything about these texts. (JANET BERTSCH, UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE)

\*PAMELATHURSCHELL. *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*. Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. 208. Cloth US \$65.00; paper US \$32.99. \*ANDREW SMITH and JEFF WALLACE, eds. *Gothic Modernisms*. Palgrave, 2001. Pp. 248. Hardcover US \$105.00.

Critics and historians of Modernism have only recently begun to engage with the forms of the occult permeating the era. These manifested themselves in a surprising variety of Modernist-identified artists and avant-garde movements, and yet occultism has generally been safely fenced off in the *Yeats Annual* as a decidedly specialist interest, or limited, say, to a passing acknowledgement of the indebtedness of Surrealism to the methods of the mediumistic trance-state. On the whole, critics have concurred with Adorno's comment that occultism was the "metaphysic of dunces," tinged with a latent mysticism that could easily tip into fascism. Even without this stern ideological judgement, the formal conservatism of the spiritualist tract or ponderous message from the dead (so brilliantly parodied by Joyce in *Ulysses*) always

carried a whiff of Victorianism about it: it could only be an anachronistic, counter-modern survival in the twentieth century.

Pamela Thurschwell and the contributors to *Gothic Modernisms* provide numerous routes for re-assessing this view, suggesting ways in which many notions central to narratives of Modernism — ideas of selfhood, intersubjectivity and relation, memory, and even modes of formal experimentation — are genealogically related to conceptions previously dismissed as occult. In unearthing these debts, they begin the process of enriching and complicating our understanding of Modernism.

Thurschwell's book excavates a key source for the emergence of dynamic models of the psyche so integral to the English Modernist context: the Society for Psychical Research. Founded in 1882, and populated by an impressive array of *savants*, the early work of the Society was dedicated to theorising "telepathy" and attempting to capture the transfer of thought in quasi-laboratory settings. As a paradoxical "distant intimacy," the conception of telepathy was inextricably linked to the concurrent rise communication technologies — the telephone and final completion of the global circuit of telegraphic lines. As electrical technologies beamed communications beyond the range of the empiricist eye, so telepathy could be the "extraordinary" science of this new modernity. Telepathic transfers became the basis for explaining a range of phenomena from ghosts (projections of psychic energy) to the apparent community of thought and feeling between the hypnotist and his patient. The Society was in fact the principal means for securing hypnotic and other trance conditions as objective states, worthy of medical and psychological discussion. It also clearly impacted on turn-of-the-century philosophical and literary reflections on the bounds of self and the bonds of community. And as Thurschwell further explains, these investigations were one of the immediate contexts for the emergence of psychoanalysis. Frederic Myers, the man who coined the term telepathy, worked closely with continental psychologists such as Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot and Henri Bergson, and first introduced the work of Freud to English-speaking audiences in the 1890s. Thurschwell's last chapter details the curious dalliance of Freud with psychical research: public rejections, yet private belief; theoretical and practical objections to the use of hypnotism, yet the return of occulted transmissions in the elaboration of "transference"; Freud's encouragement of occult investigations by Carl Jung and Sandor Ferenczi, yet their suppression from psychoanalytic history on the grounds of their wild beliefs. This tracking of the emergence of telepathy in 1882 to Ferenczi's

"Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child" in 1932 is an important and useful genealogy. In particular, the reading of Ferenczi's work around ideas of "magical thinking" gives a new coherence to his strange but compelling oeuvre.

The literary impacts of this transformation of intimacy and relation are explored in Thurschwell's three middle chapters. One focuses on Oscar Wilde and the "hypnotic aesthete" of the 1890s, the other two on different moments in the late work of Henry James. The emphasis throughout these chapters is on the way in which "theories of occult and technological transmission subtend the psychic and social construction of transgressive sexual desires." Wilde's trials in 1895 were principally contesting the nature of his *influence*, Thurschwell suggests. Literary or cultural influence shaded into a mesmeric control and perversion of younger minds, an occulted or "unnameable" relation that was insistently sexualised. The cultural obsession with mesmeric sexual control in the 1890s has been exhaustively treated in Daniel Pick's *Svengali's Web*, but here this material is refracted through queer theory. The clinching discovery is MacLaren Cobban's 1890 novel *Master of His Fate*, in which Wilde appears thinly disguised as the vampiric mesmerist and aesthete, lording it over his adoring circle at the Hyacinth Club. The abjection of Wilde's nascent sexual identity acquires another rich set of sources here. Henry James's shamed and closeted sexuality is posited as the motor for his passionate own-identification with British nationhood during the First World War. In a startling and original reading that connects James's work on the unfinished ghost novel *The Sense of the Past* with his war-time propaganda, Thurschwell argues that James is negotiating modalities of intimacy across these texts — from community with the past, to homosexual desire and homosocial fraternal or national identification. The reading of "In the Cage," meanwhile, links James's tale of telegraphic intimacy to his peculiar relation to his last secretary, Theodora Bosanquet. The typewriter for his last dictated works, Bosanquet was also an active psychical researcher and automatist. In the 1930s she engaged in a dialogue with the spirit of Henry James regarding her possible re-engagement as secretary. The transcripts evoke a fascinating (and very funny) allegorical commentary on the anxiety of influence.

These inventive connections clearly respond to the kind of cross-fertilisations the concept of telepathy itself invokes. Yet despite the rich overdetermination of ideas of intimacy and inter-connection in the book, my principal reservation would be a sense in which the chapters remain too discrete. There is very little stitching together of the argument between

chapters, and this leaves some structural decisions opaque. Why treat the James of 1914-15 only then to reverse back in the following chapter to the James of 1898? The status of psychical research shifted significantly between these dates, yet this historical passage is instantly erased by this decision. I also wondered whether Thurschwell didn't wish slightly too hard that occult transmissions often tended towards undoing "patriarchal models of inheritance and community." This seems to align occultism and same-sex desire because they share a marginal or fugitive status, but this elision (which downplays plenty of heterosexualised valences of occult intimacy — often in the work of Henry James himself) is surely not as progressive or subversive as Thurschwell always wants to claim.

*Gothic Modernisms*, a collection of twelve essays, has inevitably less cohesion than Thurschwell's monograph, but also less evidence of originality in its sources and range of reference. The editors claim (rightly) that the Gothic genre and the Modernist text have been kept apart in literary criticism, the lowly kinetic pleasures of popular fiction quarantined from the lofty cosmopolitan cultures of the avant-garde. Even so, the texts chosen and the treatments adopted tend to have a markedly familiar ring: Woolf's ghostly subjectivities and spectralised theory of memory; Eliot's spooky associations in *The Waste Land*; the Gothicised "monstrosities" of Djuna Barnes' work (to which two essays are dedicated). At least David Seed and David Glover confirm the sense that May Sinclair's under-rated *Uncanny Stories* (written and published mostly in the *English Review* around 1910) is an important nexus for the interplay of supernaturalism, psychical research and Modernism, and is a text that deserves a reissue. David Glover uses her work as a springboard for the most inventive essay in the collection, a reading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the Conrad/Ford collaboration *The Inheritors*, each offering a fractured modernity where uncanny presences leak from the future as much as the primitive past. An effort is made here towards thinking through questions of genre in relation to modernism and modernity. Nigel Morris, too, provides a detailed reading of Lang's *Metropolis* and goes some way to defining what a visual aesthetic of "Modernist Gothic" might look like. Other essays tend to glide past. David Punter offers an elegant set of disruptive and gothicised "third terms" in Modernist fictions, but this works largely through associative links and the argument feels frustratingly under-developed. Kelly Hurley extends her work on William Hope Hodgson from her 1996 monograph *The Gothic Body*, but makes only the most cursory attempts to link Hodgson to Modernism: the conceptual framework here remains decidedly fin

de siècle. Julian Wolfreys performs his agile spectralised mode of deconstruction on *Sunset Boulevard* without really challenging or extending his range.

The Gothic has accrued a standard critical language of transgression, abjection and excess. The risk is that in revelling in the Gothic's messy collapse of discrimination critics lose the subtle distinctions made in the early twentieth century between supernaturalism, theosophy, psychism, spiritualism, vitalism and mysticism. Individual Modernists made their own carefully shaded judgments on the relative merits of these movements. All too often a generic language of speciality obscures this in *Gothic Modernisms*. For the discerning reader Thurschwell's careful combination of theoretical and historical work has more to recommend it. (ROGER LUCKHURST, BIRKBECK COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON)

\*JACK ZIPES. *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*. New York and London: Routledge, 2001. Pp. 213. Cloth £ 22.99; paper £ 14.99.

In this depressing book, Jack Zipes declares that children's literature — just about all of it, not just almost every children's book ever written but the entire enterprise of adults presuming to write, publish and make books available for children — is evil. It's a plot to imprison our young in dehumanizing and repressive values, just another of the many ways in which the greedy fat-cat capitalists who run the world keep us firmly in their grasp. Furthermore, people like me who purport to be scholars of this corrosive slime so deceptively called children's literature are unthinking fellow travelers, deeply complicit in the enterprise of depriving children of their freedom. Depressing, indeed — but what is especially depressing about *Sticks and Stones* is just how very persuasive it is.

According to Zipes, the way we socialize children "is nothing short of barbaric" (x). "No matter how different and free our children seem to be," he says, "their actions, thoughts, and sensibilities are governed by an intricate market system that has pervaded if not invaded families and all our cultural institutions" (20). Those institutions include popular entertainments, schools, sports — and children's literature, which has, in the last few decades, become increasingly pernicious: "Gradually, books began to be produced basically to sell and resell themselves and make readers into consumers of brand names"

(6). That's why, as Zipes's subtitle suggests, the success of children's literature is "troublesome" — it works to deprive children of their freedom to be themselves.

It often — far too often — does. It's important to realize that, to be depressed by it, and to pay careful attention to how it happens as a way towards trying to make the situation less depressing. But much as I agree with many of Zipes's assertions—indeed, exactly because I do agree with them — I'm distressed by his presentation of them here. There's more than a whiff of paranoia in *Sticks and Stones*, more than a little hysteria — and quite a lot of the kind of overstatement that is likely to leave previously uncommitted readers unconvinced.

It's true, for instance, that a lot of children these days don't read much and are more influenced by TV and movies than by books. But Zipes surely exaggerates when he says, "My guess is that the largest reading audience of children's books in the United States and England is constituted by those students at the college and university level who take courses in children's literature along with teachers, librarians, and writers, who eagerly and discriminatingly read vast numbers of books for children" (54). It's true, also, that people who write children's books, now as in the past, must be aware of a range of adults' needs and market forces in order to have successful careers. But I am astonished by Zipes's sneering assertion that people who want to make money writing children's books "do not take their putative profession seriously" (45). In Zipes's view, it seems, wishing to have an income and learning to do a job well enough to make an income are signs of frivolity. Overstatements like this undermine the important truths about the effect of market forces on children's literature that Zipes wants to get at here. Worse, such statements are likely to alienate anyone even moderately implicated in the current economy, i.e., anyone who has a job and is not totally self-loathing as a result of it. That's the very audience that might not already share Zipes's counter-cultural point of view and that, surely, he might most want to persuade.

In these overstated forms, furthermore, Zipes's ideas seem to contradict each other. On the one hand, he says, "We do not know our desires. They are packaged for us and induced" (xi). On the other hand, however, he insists that children and others can and do sometimes escape the packaging. Indeed, he must insist on it, for if we were all merely and always enslaved in false consciousness, Zipes himself could not develop enough awareness of the enslavement to preach against it, and there would be no one with the potential

to understand and benefit from the sermon. As Zipes asserts a number of times, the main reason we need to become aware of that which would enslave us is that awareness does in fact at least allow for resistance. He does eventually make it clear that his apparently contradictory statements on these matters do in fact qualify each other — but exactly how, readers of *Sticks and Stones* must work out for themselves.

Similarly, Zipes asserts that children's literature has never been anything but repressive, that as numerous scholars before him (including me) have pointed out, children's literature has always been centrally an adult activity. It is produced, sold and bought by adults, and has the purpose of turning child readers into the children, and eventually, therefore, the adults, that adults want them to be. And as Zipes says,

Both within literature and films for children, the figures of the young and childhood are constructed ideologically and aesthetically to explore the creators' own views, needs and desires. There is no negotiation with the child because fiction and film are projections if not impositions that the young readers/viewers encounter and deal with in their own way, a way that is often already conditioned by the society and culture in which they live. (92-93)

On the other hand, however, children's literature has totally changed recently, and "has an entirely different function from only a few decades ago" (47).

In a sense, both these contradictory statements are true. Children's literature has always suited adult needs for children, and these needs have recently become more single-mindedly economic — although I do have to insist that children's literature, which came into existence along with a mercantile middle class, has always had the central purpose of turning children into good consumers. Zipes acknowledges this when it suits his purpose, and ignores it when it doesn't.

Other contradictions involve children as readers. Zipes wants to argue both that children's literature deeply damages children and that, because children don't actually read it, it has no effect on them whatsoever. He also tends to get angry at adult critics for making evaluations of children's books without consulting children about their tastes and interests, and on the other hand, to be dismissive of books like the *Goosebumps* or *Harry Potter* series — the literature that most children do in fact most enjoy.

Zipes's unwillingness to view children's enjoyment of such books as anything but a harmful co-option of their desires by corporate powers reveals what strikes me as a central blindness in his book. He is too busy pointing out

dangers to acknowledge or even to notice the real pleasures texts like these do really offer their readers. Indeed, there is little sense here that children's literature can ever actually be enjoyable in any way other than as something a reader refuses to be co-opted by, or ever be safely enjoyed except by being seen through. A more convincing argument would acknowledge the pleasures of texts as a key (and worthwhile) reason for their existence and explore strategies to help both writers and readers to separate the pleasures from the corporate influences that do in fact often currently co-opt them.

Similarly, Zipes's inflamed rhetoric seems to imply that *any* effort of adults to educate children is repressive — except, apparently, adult efforts to construct the kind of childhood Zipes himself approves, an exception which, tellingly, he never acknowledges as such. A more convincing argument would concede that, in any vision of the social world but total anarchy, adults can and must work to shape children, and literature for children must play some part in the shaping. The argument would then focus on offering ways of distinguishing between productive and counter-productive, freeing and non-freeing, shapes.

For anyone unfamiliar with developments in children's literature and children's literature criticism in recent decades, *Sticks and Stones* offers a useful introduction. It makes some important arguments about the part literature and other media texts play in commodifying children, and it makes those arguments with great passion. Unfortunately, the passion interferes with the logic and weakens the arguments. Worse, Zipes's anger triumphs over any hope he occasionally offers that anyone might ever actually do anything to change things. The book does less for its cause — and for the welfare of children — than it could have and than it surely ought to have. I find that more depressing than anything else about it. (PERRY NODELMAN, THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG)

\*ANNE T. SALVATORE, ed. *Anais Nin's Narratives*. University Press of Florida, 2001. Cloth US \$59.95.

It was of great interest to me to learn that the works of Anais Nin are receiving renewed scholarly attention, and I was eager to review this book. Much of the earlier criticism was either dismissive of Nin's writing as self-indulgent and intellectually vacuous in relation to her literary contemporaries, or it smacked of titillation at what was perceived of as her poetic pornography

while ignoring the remainder of her writings. The latter "scholarship" often resorted to equating Anais Nin with her speaker(s), largely with the purpose of extrapolating telling details about her personal interactions with various canonized male authority figures like Otto Rank, Lawrence Durrell, and Henry Miller, who tried to control her development as an artist. Such reductive biographical readings are familiar to readers of early criticism on Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and Anne Sexton, among others. It was not until Evelyn Hinz's critical study of Nin in 1973 that more serious attention was paid to her work. As newer critics have now overhauled the reputation of the confessionalists like Plath, who was at first more renowned for putting her head in the oven than for producing some of the finest modern American poetry, so too is it necessary to reevaluate Anais Nin's literary contribution in articulating American women's voices.

While it is true that Nin's most commercially successful books, *Delta of Venus* (1977) and *Little Birds* (1979) were erotica commissioned in the 1940's by a patron of Henry Miller's, Nin was ashamed of their publication and scornful that *The Diary of Anais Nin*, six volumes of which had already been published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, should be tainted and compromised by the publication of the erotica. In a sense, she was right, in terms of her popular image following their publication until the time of her death. In retrospect, however, Anais Nin was simply ahead of her time, and it is essential that we now take a closer look at the problematics of female desire and the complexities of Nin's writing strategies.

I was also curious to reassess Nin's work in order to confront my own contradictory responses to her journals and fiction: I had always been drawn to her surrealistic and poetic style while occasionally appalled by what I perceived as her narcissism, her elitism, and an anti-feminist, apolitical voice, particularly in her descriptions of her experiences of incest and its echoes throughout her life. I was likewise puzzled by repeated, seemingly illogical, shifts in narrative perspective throughout the stories. And so it was with anticipation and trepidation that I turned to Anne Salvatore's new edition of critical essays, *Anais Nin's Narratives*. I wanted to be convinced that there was greater depth to Nin's work that I had previously been able to unearth. And, to the degree that I have changed my mind in favour of Nin's lasting literary value, this is a very rewarding and timely book.

Salvatore states in her introduction that the collection "aims to advance the task of examining Nin's work through the complex lens of contemporary narratology" (1). It is indeed complex, as the variety of approaches in the

essays demonstrates. Salvatore begins with a variety of definitions of narrative, arguing that most critics ascribe a linear progression to narrative, while Nin's writing embraces not only linearity and "takes from the teleological construct whatever she finds suitable, while simultaneously stretching beyond its boundaries to experiment for sometimes lengthy passages" (3). Kristeva makes this point when she says that women writers use time differently, with a "monumental temporality that includes 'repetition' as well as 'eternity'" (Kristeva 16). Using Gerard Genette's concept of narrative "stasis," Salvatore suggests that Nin manipulates time and disrupts linearity to create shifting mental states and to give the resulting sense of indeterminacy thematic status. In the opening essay, Diane Richard-Allerdyce provides close readings of several of the erotica to show how the desiring male gaze perpetuates society's acceptance of sexual exploitation — a point first raised by John Berger in *Ways of Seeing*, although he is not credited here. She asserts, rather convincingly, that Nin in fact subverts this objectifying gaze that manifests her patron's desire by developing narrative strategies to ridicule this gaze and by revealing the social tragedy and estrangement that result from such exploitation. This thereby creates self-questioning in the reader that can lead to social action, a theme Nin promoted in her lectures, but a connection I had never made with the erotica, even though I had been disturbed by the narrative shifts and Nin's refusal of closure. The author's claim makes sense of these, saying that such shifts encourage readers to become aware of how they are themselves manipulated by pornography in particular, and patriarchal culture in general. She claims that the stories demonstrate that "love is possible only between two subjectively realized human beings and argue for the need for tolerance of the Other" (19). While I would accept this perspective, and while the examples from the half dozen stories are persuasive, I still feel uneasy, as if Nin gets to have her cake and eat it too. To me, the erotica are far more complex than even such an elaborate analysis implies, and convey Nin's own subject/object confusion, which haunts the journals in her lifelong struggle with the trauma of incest. Richard-Allerdyce comes close to conceding this when she declares that

Whether her intention was unconscious ... Nin created in the erotica ... a model of socially relevant theory ... [and] was able to achieve some distance from her tendency to act out her need for approval in the gaze of numerous "fathers" and to loosen herself, at least somewhat, from her tendency to remain complicit in her subjugation through attachment to an unconscious masochism. In the erotica, she parodies that tendency. (18)

Following the lead of Teresa de Lauretis, who suggests that the female spectator's position vacillates between subject and object positions, an earlier critic named Karen Brennan supports the notion that Nin's point of view thereby allows for multiple identifications among reader, narrator, voyeur, object, author, and critic. The present author takes this argument one step further when she writes that Nin uses this multiplicity of perspectives to thematize looking itself. In some of the stories, this constant shifting prevents the one in the patron's position to enjoy the show, as it were, subverting the structure of voyeuristic privilege by sabotaging erotic expectation.

Next follows an essay by Marion Fay called "Anais Nin's Narrative Dilemma: the Artist as Social Conscience," which appeals to the reader to reinterpret what is meant by social activism and thus include Nin among its proponents. Nin writes in *The Novel of the Future* of "an inner life, cultivated, nourished [that is] ... a well of strength ... we need to resist outer catastrophes and errors and injustices." Considering Nin's ideology as expressed in the Diary, Fay compares Nin's contradictions regarding the artist's public role and identifies some possible causes for her eschewing of social realism, even while some of the stories in *Under a Glass Bell* convey her compassion for victims of social injustice and valorize humanitarianism. Fay concludes by allowing Nin's belief that the artist's main responsibility is to propose an aesthetic alternative to social tragedy. I am not as convinced by this reasoning, but that likely says more about my own prejudices in defining social activism. Nin was raised with the Catholic emphasis upon female acquiescence, sheltered from the outside world, and it was only late in her life, in response to criticism that her work was not socially engaged, that her defense of the artist's inner life emerged; hence it seems belated and feeble to me, as does her rejection of all political ideologies. Fay does an admirable job of tracing Nin's ambivalence about the personal/public role of the artist and her dawning recognition that "human cruelty is the work of psychologically damaged individuals and [that the] ... cause of social injustice is human cruelty, not political systems" (56).

The other essay in this volume which tries to situate Nin's writing politically is Mai Al-Nakib's "Anais Nin's Rhizomatic *Diary*" wherein she employs Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's term "rhizome" to show Nin's repeated and intentional politicization in the diary. This essay contradicts many of the others in the book in that it refutes Nin's espousal of traditional psychoanalysis, stating that such refusal is consistent with Nin's rejection of the limitations of conventional forms. And I very much liked the piece by Phillipa Christmass, which claims that Anais Nin was creating her own kind

of modernism, not recognized as part of canonical modernism, in which Nin anticipated *écriture féminine* by focussing of subjectivity, fluidity, ambiguity, rhythm, and corporeality. Likewise another writer, Maxie Wells, considers Nin's work within the context of modernism and considers it a distinctive brand of modernism in that it explores such marginalized genres as the poetic novel, the prose poem, the diary, and the essay, and proposes an alternative to the T.S. Eliot model of artist-as-priest by elevating the figure of artist-as-healer, the seeker who craves integrity through union of mind, body, and emotion. It is a large claim for the new position of Anais Nin among the moderns.

The bulk of this critical work explores patriarchal exploitation through an examination of the paternal figures in Nin's work. This is the core of feminist revaluations of her oeuvre. Suzette Henke uses Freudian analytic theory to dissect the character of Sabina in *A Spy in the House of Love*, equating her with the erotic and libidinal id that struggles against the superego of the patriarch, personified by the Lie Detector. In response to being erotically objectified, Sabina's fantasy world is subject to her guilty fear of discovery by this Lie Detector. Hence Sabina's various relationships with male authority figures are analyzed in light of the disparity between a displayed confident ego and an actual vulnerability, leading to the fragmentation of Sabina's personality; Henke shows how this is reflected in the Diaries and leads in both cases to what she terms "abortive relationships" (69). She concludes by proposing that a unified personality is itself illusory, and that coherent identity is impossible, thereby rendering the Freudian assumption of potential integration one of psychology's fantasies. Or, as Sabina learns when begging the Lie Detector "to free her from a long history of deception,... no one else is capable of implementing such psychological transformation" (71). Henke also believes that Nin's novels, never as popular as her Diary, therefore "fall between the cracks of modernist fiction and postmodern experimentation" and that "Anais Nin was writing women's liberation novels long before the second wave of the feminist movement rendered them stylish" (61).

In "Sex with Father: The Incest Metaphor in Anais Nin," Ellen Friedman looks at incest as a trope for the barriers created by patriarchal authority for all female artists, demonstrating how such control mechanisms stifle and paralyze the development of the creative woman artist. She considers numerous examples from most of Nin's fiction, but perhaps the most illuminating aspect of her essay is the connection she makes between these fictional accounts and Nin's own personal involvement with the men who

controlled her artistic life — namely Otto Rank, Lawrence Durrell, and Henry Miller. Friedman proves how the fictional women attempt *écriture féminine* as a means of releasing themselves from such bondage. Likewise a second essay by Diane Richard-Allerdyce compares Nin's and her fictional narrators' therapeutic confrontations with father figures by using Lacanian theory to study the "hysterical" discourses of both. Thomas March argues that the discourse in Nin's *Collages* is neither singular nor reliant upon external authority but instead presents its own mythmaking mechanism that is subject to the interpretation of the reader through the narrator's presentation of the mythological nature of experience itself.

Sharon Spencer's discussion of the mutual father-daughter seduction in Nin's "Winter of Artifice" leads to her fascinating exploration of the way that Nin parallels this through her seduction of the reader into a romanticization of the incest through what she terms Nin's "musicalization" of the prose, in the forms of assonance, alliteration, stylistic repetition and other poetic devices. Spencer shows how the daughter figure in this story, unlike the one in *House of Incest*, finally abandons this "*musique anrienne*" in favour of the emergence of her own music to articulate her subjectivity. Anne Salvatore's own essay on mothering "scripts" in the diaries and *Cities of the Inferior* also suggests that Nin develops a "psychoanalytic counternarrative" that exposes the -damaging effects of these maternal blueprints on various female characters. Both writers hint that Nin was moving toward the development of a more authentic female voice to challenge the insistent presence of social models that dominate women's lives.

I can do little service to the depth of the articles included in this volume is such a short review, but I can recommend it as challenging reading for anyone with an interest in Anais Nin. The rich variety of opinion and approaches included in the book suggests that a reassessment of her work is creating new excitement in literary scholarship. (LIZA POTVIN, MALASPINA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE)

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\*MARISABORTOLUSSI and PETER DIXON. *For the Empirical Study of Literary Response*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. xiii + 304. Cloth £ 50.00; paper £ 18.95.

As its subtitle indicates, the study lays out the groundwork for a scientific investigation of the cognitive processes that underlie readers' interaction with literary narratives. In the name of a fully assumed interdisciplinary spirit, Bortolussi and Dixon explore issues previously overlooked in literary scholarship, be it formalist or reader-centered, and focus on the complex psychological mechanisms that take place at intersection between mind and text. Psychonarratology, a term coined by Bortolussi and Dixon, employs methods and findings traditionally associated with several disciplines, ranging from literary studies (that is, narratology and reader response theory) to cognitive psychology (discourse processing) and linguistics, in a theoretical amalgam whose main goal is to facilitate a better understanding of how real readers process narrative. As in the case of every new theory, psychonarratology is born from a desire to surpass the unresolved tensions of the preceding models. Thus, Bortolussi and Dixon carefully delineate the boundaries of their framework by reviewing the epistemological and methodological shortcomings of all these related fields. What distinguishes psychonarratology from previous scholarship is its emphasis on empirical validation of theoretical intuitions, which, as a result, subjects any speculative drive to the severity of science. In addition, unlike most other reader-oriented theories, psychonarratology escapes the trap of the circular logic that binds the concept of the reader to the premises of its own theory and then confirms the soundness of the former on the basis of the latter and vice versa. Terminological vagueness that afflicts virtually all reader-oriented studies, according to Bortolussi and Dixon, is another reason for concern, and therefore psychonarratology seeks to avoid it. Finally, because of their inability to distinguish between individual and collective reading experience, these theories depend completely on a standardized model of reader, which cannot render the disparities inherent in real-life situations. Bortolussi and Dixon solve this difficult problem by incorporating in their analysis the notion of statistical reader.

Two fundamental assumptions lie at the heart of the study and configure its theoretical framework: (i) the necessity of discriminating textual features from reader constructions, or, in Bortolussi and Dixon's more apt formulation "anything in the text that can be objectively identified" (28), from "mental

representations of various sorts, changes in readers' attitude or beliefs, and affective reactions" (28). The latter, as Bortolussi and Dixon contend, can only be substantiated empirically, (ii) Readers process narrative *as if* the narrator were a conversational participant. The study is meticulously organized: in Chapter 2 Bortolussi and Dixon outline their terminology and methodology, while in the subsequent chapters (three to seven) they put psychonarratology to work, investigating the way readers deal with the main categories of textual features: the narrator, events and plots, characters and characterization, perception and focalization, represented speech and thought. An entire chapter (namely, eight) is devoted both to those aspects that, according to Bortolussi and Dixon need further development (Memory and Attention, Reading Context, Extratextual Information, Interactions, Consistency) and to the domains where psychonarratology may provide assistance (Individual Differences, Literariness, Genre) or for which it may have some implications (Nonnarrative Discourse, Film Narrative, Narrative Writing). At the end of the book, the authors have added an *Appendix*, which acquaints the reader with the technical vocabulary of textual experiments as well as with the mathematical language employed in the assessment of the results of such experiments. An outstanding systematization operates both at the level of the entire book and at that of individual chapters. For example, chapters three to seven are organized according to a similar structure: first, Bortolussi and Dixon review the previous scholarship in that specific area and, with a healthy polemical disposition reveal its weaknesses; then they hypothesize their solution to the problem and, eventually, subject it to empirical verification. In what follows, I will summarize the chief arguments played out in Bortolussi and Dixon's study, with a greater emphasis on chapters two and three, and then point to a few problematical aspects that their approach may entail.

Since the distinction between textual features (TF), such as narration styles, speech styles, aspects of characterization, and reader constructions (RC) turns out to be crucial in avoiding theoretical confusions, Bortolussi and Dixon elaborate on the nature of textual features identifying the four criteria that make them "valuable" (38). These are *objectivity*, *precision*, *stability*, and *tractability*. Similarly, Bortolussi and Dixon name three criteria that characterize the measurement of reader constructions: *directness*, *replicability*, and *conciseness*. The concept of statistical reader, previously developed by Dixon et. al., allows Bortolussi and Dixon to transcend the conflicting beliefs concerning the nature of reader's response: while some scholars contend that it is "not homogenous within any group of readers" (43), others deem it as "not entirely

idiosyncratic" and therefore "amenable to scientific investigation" (43). The concept of statistical reader functions in conjunction with two other concepts, that is, population and measurement distribution, as follows: "Populations of readers must be explicitly identified and sampled, and the characteristics of the measurement distribution must be calculated on the basis of the sample" (59). At the core of Bortolussi and Dixon's empirical analysis lies the notion of causal explanations, that is, the way in which a certain textual feature is perceived as inducing a certain reaction from the part of the reader. In order to isolate accurately a causal relationship that links two variables (TF and RC), Bortolussi and Dixon have devised textual experiments whose features are systematically manipulated so that the interference of a third variable, the so-called confounding variable, is excluded.

Once all these conceptual and methodological issues are clarified, Bortolussi and Dixon proceed with a thorough examination of how readers represent several specific textual features. In chapter three, they tackle the issue of the representation of the narrator. Bortolussi and Dixon's critical synopsis of the preceding research in narratology advances on two main lines: the nature of the narrator and its communicative function. According to Bortolussi and Dixon, the former has exclusively been defined in terms of the Aristotelian opposition: *mimesis* vs. *diegesis*, that is, as a consequence of the relationship of the narrator to the story world (with degrees ranging from extradiegetic to intradiegetic). Not a word has been said about "how textual clues interact with reader's goals, experience, expectations...in constructing representations of the narrator" (66). For Bortolussi and Dixon, the narrator is a "mental representation in the mind of the reader" constructed on the basis of "identifiable features in the text" (72). These are: explicit attributions (when the qualities pertaining to the narrator are stated explicitly in the text) and inference invitations ("signs and signals" (81) that encourage the reader to make conjectures about the narrator even in the absence of explicit attributions). Bortolussi and Dixon also simplify the conventional six-level model of narrative communication (Author-Implied Author-Narrator-Narratee-Implied Reader-Reader) reducing it to a more immediate one, which emphasizes the conversational vicinity of the reader and the narrator. This simplification carries with it a certain number of consequences, the most important being the fact that, envisaging the narrator as a conversational participant readers are able to draw narratorial implicatures, that is "inferences licensed by the assumption that the narrator is cooperative" (73). According to Bortolussi and Dixon, these implicatures bring about readers' identification

with the narrator as they lead readers to attribute "their own knowledge and experience to the narrator" (85).

In chapter four, Bortolussi and Dixon discuss the limitations of the two main (narratological) approaches that situate the plot either in the discourse or in the events of the story, thus disregarding almost totally the way readers experience the plot. Bortolussi and Dixon amend these views by underlining the collaborative nature of the plot: "what readers understand about the sequence of events is not what is implied by the text, but what the narrator invites the reader to infer" (119), that is, with few exceptions, "what the narrator implies is important or interesting about what happens" (125). In other words, plot *takes place*, at the point of intersection between the labor of the narrator and the mind of the reader, rather than *resides*, as an identifiable unit at the level of the text or story. An outline of how readers treat fictional characters may be found in chapter five. Employing methods and findings from social psychology, Bortolussi and Dixon propose a solution to the ongoing debate that could not decide whether literary characters are to be dealt with as real people or as mere aggregates of textual signs. Since research in social psychology supports the opinion that literary characters and real people are processed identically, Bortolussi and Dixon conclude that: "readers attribute traits to characters on the basis of their behavior in the story world, just as they might for individuals in the world" (149). Rather than rejecting entirely either one of these two divergent perspectives, Bortolussi and Dixon choose to integrate them in a "synthesis" (164), which deems character to be a combination of textual features *and* reader representation "based on the same processes that are used for real people" (165).

The category of narrative focalization provides yet another example of the blind alleys into which narratology has been taken by the reluctance of its practitioners to distinguish clearly the (objective) features of the text from the (subjective) reader constructions. In chapter six, Bortolussi and Dixon examine the inherent shortcomings of an approach that has struggled to clarify the question of narrative focalization exclusively on the basis of the relation between the narrator and the characters. Their (psychonarratological) solution draws on research in discourse processing and explains how "readers construct representations pertaining to the perceptual information in the text" (184). First, Bortolussi and Dixon detect the textual features responsible for these representations then they discuss the nature and the use of such constructions, observing that readers "imbue narrators with the perceptual knowledge that would result *if they were* a part of that world" (192). Finally,

chapter seven is reserved for an investigation of the manner in which readers process speech and thought in narrative. Faithful to the central thesis of their study, Bortolussi and Dixon segregate the textual features of speech and thought from what readers infer based on these features. Their analysis of free-indirect speech reveals how, because of their difficulty in identifying whose voice and point of view they encounter in a narrative, readers, who treat the narrator as a conversational participant, conflate the narrator and the character "so that ... the properties of the narrator are attributed to the character and vice versa" (236).

I wish now to indicate several aspects in Bortolussi and Dixon that seem problematic to me. They do not diminish in any way Bortolussi and Dixon's seminal contribution but only generate some questions that need to be addressed in a further elaboration of this study so rich in insights. First, psychonarratology retains the narratological legacy of focusing on minimal units under ideal, a-historical circumstances. Bortolussi and Dixon themselves are aware that reading is more complex than their textual experiments may indicate (cf. 245). Unlike the artificially created reading sessions, real life situations oblige readers to operate simultaneously with *all* the textual categories that Bortolussi and Dixon examine individually. While simplicity is always desirable in any kind of experiment, it is not clear whether the manifestation of this complex interaction affects the soundness of the findings based on minimal units or not. Secondly, reading rarely takes place in the seclusion that is specific for the carefully designed environment of textual experiments. Bortolussi and Dixon's experiments are devised as if readers would process narrative in an epistemological and social void. Moreover, although Bortolussi and Dixon admit that extratextual information (that is, about the work or the author) is important for how readers draw inferences about the author (cf. 245), their experiments ignore it completely. Thirdly, Bortolussi and Dixon's approach rests on a fixed, unitary notion of text, which has been questioned lately by scholars in textual studies such as Jerome J. McGann. It is reasonable to hypothesize that textual variability influences reading in ways that need to be assessed empirically. Overall, Bortolussi and Dixon's study is remarkable and their solutions forceful. Future scholarship in literary studies and discourse processing will not afford to ignore its illuminating breakthroughs. (SORIN TOMUTA, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

\*E. D. BLODGETT. *Five Part Invention. A History of Literary History in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. Pp. 400. Cloth CAN \$68.00; paper CAN \$27.95.

Même s'il est aussi connu comme poète et essayiste, E.D. Blodgett est d'abord et avant tout historien. Historien littéraire, au sens strict du terme, et comparatiste des littératures, européennes, américaines et canadiennes. Il est un voyageur instruit des régions qu'il parcourt, mais aussi curieux de ce qui se cache dans des zones que les touristes ne visitent pas, qu'ils ignorent par attrait du connu, par crainte de l'inédit, par besoin de confort. Blodgett ne s'est jamais satisfait d'approximations, de lieux communs, de positions sûres, de certitudes. Il cherche la confrontation, car elle donne lieu à des découvertes, à soulever un peu le voile qui couvre toutes choses, surtout celles de l'esprit. Le terme " Configuration" qui titrait l'un de ses livres sur le comparatisme littéraire canadien, est significatif. Comparer les littératures canadiennes, c'est d'abord se mettre en face de parties, souvent adverses, qu'il faut assembler selon des dispositions à trouver, selon des figures à inventer. Il s'agit donc d'une œuvre d'imagination, autant que d'organisation comme telle. Ainsi, son ouvrage est-il dans son essence, proche de la "gestalt psychology," qui considère les éléments de la personnalité humaine, non pas comme séparés, mais en interrelation étroite les uns avec les autres et dont l'intégration est le produit de leur fonctionnement, de leur figuration/configuration.

*Five Part Invention* participe de cette méthode dans la présentation d'une synthèse de l'histoire de l'histoire littéraire au Canada, de ses débuts jusqu'à nos jours, en même temps que d'une illustration de l'historiographie littéraire comme telle. En premier lieu, Blodgett veut envisager tous les points de vue d'observation du phénomène, tous les aspects de cette histoire, qui comporte de nombreux lieux d'approche et non pas quelques-uns seulement. Le lecteur reconnaît ici l'historien de *Configuration*, qui ne s'arrête pas aux deux seules littératures, canadienne et québécoise, mais prend en compte les autres littératures, amérindienne, néo-canadiennes, qui composent désormais le panorama complet de la scène littéraire du pays. Si Ton peut encore parler de "triangulation," le troisième terme est cet "Autre," à la fois étranger, différent, multiple ("several selves"), qui forment tous ensemble une sorte d'altérité en quête d'identités.

C'est sur ce sujet que repose la partie la plus originale de cet ouvrage, entre autres les chapitres 7, 8 et 9. La question de l'altérité, que soulève Blodgett, selon la périodisation de son livre, de 1968 à 1993, met en scène

diverses recherches d'identité canadienne à partir de la question de Northrop Frye: "Where is here?" (211), liée à une correspondante juive: "Where was there?" qui ouvre un espace entre "here and now and the past." Une première histoire, *History of Ukrainian Literature in Canada* (1968) commence avec son passe en Ukraine et se donne une orientation commémorative. Elle sera suivie par d'autres, hongroise par exemple (*Hungarian-Canadian Literature*, 1987), qui tentent de transplanter une nation, passée et lointaine, dans une autre, présente et problématique. L'histoire de la littérature inuite de Robin McGrath, *Canadian Inuit Literature. The Development of a Tradition* (1984) marque une nécessité, celle de l'écriture de l'Histoire qui lui donne vie. L'argument de l'auteur est le suivant: " alterity came as a function of literacy: it was the cultural act that had the most radical of effects " (217). Toutes les autres Histoires de cette période vont dans le sens de découpage ou de dissémination et débouchent sur diverses alternatives, dont celle de *La vie littéraire au Québec* de Maurice Lemire et Denis Saint-Jacques, de *l'Histoire de la littérature amérindienne au Québec* (1993) de Diane Boudreau. Des histoires de diverses littératures, on passe à une seule littérature, mais qui situe son objet dans et en marge de l'institution, d'où elles acquièrent leur autonomisation.

Les historiens canadiens ont trouvé chez leurs homologues européens, anglophones ou francophones, des sources d'interprétations, de même que des modèles d'organisation. Mais aussi, en contrepartie, des formes d'invention historique, faites de tensions et d'oppositions. Les deux littératures, de langue anglaise et de langue française, déploient leur modes d'appropriation selon des différences qui leur sont propres. L'Europe est un miroir qui renvoie diverses figures, sous forme de théories ou de méthodes, permettant de modeler et remodeler les Histoires. Mais les Européennes se fabriquent aussi une série d'images du Canada qui influencent également les perspectives et changent souvent, d'époque en époque, les visions des historiens. Ces interrelations intercontinentales sont autant de facteurs déterminants pour la conception du passé national de l'Histoire littéraire canadienne, autonome ou non, de ses modèles et des possibilités toujours présentes qui s'offrent à elle. L'Histoire n'est jamais finie, comme n'est jamais terminée la connaissance de l'Autre. Comme il existe plusieurs histoires concurrentes et interalliées, il y a plusieurs mémoires en action qui s'interpellent et s'interposent.

Qui s'intéresse aux concepts et aux pratiques de l'histoire littéraire au Canada, anglais et français, trouvera dans cet ouvrage une documentation exhaustive sur plus d'un siècle de production et une synthèse éclairante de ce sujet à la fois complexe et multiple. Sans s'enfermer dans un classement par

périodes étanches, aux limites trop strictes, Blodgett invente une périodisation éclatée qui permet de voir une évolution des faits et des données dont la fin, déjà inscrite au début ("Writing Borders"), pose la question de l'altérité dans les histoires elles-mêmes et dans les visions qu'elles suscitent en Europe et au Canada. Les frontières sont partout et la tâche de l'historien est de les approcher et de voir où se font les passages, les ruptures, du début jusqu'à la fin de l'Histoire. "Border" est une métaphore qui convient à la fois à l'histoire littéraire du Canada mais aussi

for the sense of Canada that urges itself upon the reader of the texts of this period (1874-1920). Constructing borders as a necessary first step in defining positions in Canada appears as the first order of business. The border is at once a site of geographical and geopolitical significance. It is an outer as well as an inner border that is designed to respond to the questions, where is Canada and what is a Canadian? The response from Quebec is predictable: language forms a boundary that permits another culture to develop beside a culture dominated by the British and United Empire descent (...) Another border is erected through the ordering of historical events by which a people is empowered (...) A further border is carefully erected between Quebec and France that both separates and joins. (52)

Le geste de l'histoire érige d'autres frontières, entre et avec les récits historiques des autres littératures, amérindienne, néo-canadiennes, qui partagent le champ littéraire du Canada.

Sur bien d'autres points, c'est également un ouvrage fondamental, définitif et essentiel pour la connaissance et la compréhension des enjeux nationaux qui se déploient dans tous les sens, à l'intérieur de chaque Canada, de l'un, français, par rapport à l'autre, anglais, ainsi que des deux face à l'Europe, qui leur propose des modèles historiographiques et des études de leurs littératures. Sans oublier les autres membres de ce corps littéraire multiple, que l'on vient de nommer. Si les histoires littéraires canadiennes dans les deux langues ont une originalité, c'est qu'elles posent à travers les diverses mémoires évoquées par l'historien, la question de l'identité, différemment pour chaque groupe concerné, mais semblable par une relation inverse aux autres, les premières nations et les Inuits, et, plus récemment, les immigrants ou migrants. Cette problématique est au cœur de l'ouvrage de Blodgett et lui donne sa spécificité. (CLEMENT MOISAN, L'UNIVERSITE LAVAL)

\*ELIZABETH DAHAB, ed. *Voices in the Desert: An Anthology of Arabic-Canadian Women Writers*. Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2002. Pp. 135. US\$ 15.00 paper.

In their new anthology, *literatures of the Middle East* (2003) editors Tony and Willis Barnstone lament how little was known or read of non-Western writers until only a few years ago. "Particularly in our multicultural society, with peoples of every background, it is vital to read the great traditions of the Middle East, to do so in fresh, excellent literary translations"(1). Elizabeth Dahab's *Voices in the Desert* is one answer to this call for more knowledge about Arabic writing, in this instance Arabic-Canadian women writers. Following the tradition of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari Elizabeth Dahab explores the nature of minority literature by focusing on the work of nine women authors. When Dahab began her project in 1994 she found more than thirty writers of Arabic background publishing in Canada. This new literature existed in three languages: French, English and Arabic, and reflected a diversity of national cultures and backgrounds:

thereby fulfilling twice over the definition given by Deleuze and Guattari to minor literatures. It bears the indelible mark of exile, and can presently join ranks with "other solitudes" Canada has come to acknowledge, admit and embrace. (8)

Dahab points out that 60% of Arabic-Canadian writers publish in French. This leads to the thorny question of the minority status of this literature within Quebec even though it is in French. It is perceived as a literature twice removed from the dominant systems of the French and English literary institutions. One degree of removal would be the political alienation of French Quebec from the rest of Canada as a minority within a majority. Another degree of removal for the foreign writer is precisely her otherness as she hovers on the periphery of the major cultural systems regardless of whether she writes in one of the majority languages or in Arabic. And this raises the question about the status of an Arabic writer who works in French for the larger international context of *la francophonie*? Dahab finds that though these authors may opt for French as a means of integration into Canadian society they still infuse their writing with a sense of alienation, and homelessness. It seems they still use a language of exile, one in search of form and which often tries to rewrite syntax.

Do they choose their language or does it choose them? Some Arabic-Canadian writers grew up in countries of origin where French language and culture had a strong presence among some of the educated classes. So when families emigrated they chose to settle in Quebec. Anne-Marie Alonzo expresses this involuntary choice: "C'est une langue que j'aime. Mes parents sont venus s'établir au Québec parce qu'on y parlait français. Pour moi la langue française est la plus belle" (10). The beauty of the French is difficult to sense in the English translation of Alonzo's long poem, "Lead Blues." It becomes an English love poem. So it is necessary to read Alonzo in her original French. And maybe this anthology is an invitation to do so since all the authors have their own books listed in the short biographical profiles at the end of the volume. Alonzo's profile list nineteen titles including the English translation, *Lead Blues*, published by Guernica Editions.

From a very diverse group of writers Dahab chose nine women authors who are representative of the many issues explored in this literature, a literature caught between different cultures. Whether they write in French or English Dahab sees the role of each writer as one of mediator between the cultures of the East and those of the West. We can see this when we read the work of individual authors. And we must remember that we are reading English translations of work originally composed in French by Arabic women. Rubba Nadda, who lives in Toronto, is the only English language author in the collection. Dahab has worked with translation before as she produced the English version of Yves Chevrel's *Comparative Literature Today: Methods and Perspectives* (1995). Her training in Comparative Literature is evident in this anthology since Dahab has chosen particular works which capture the border experience where two cultures meet. This anthology would be very suitable for courses in Comparative Literature, Canadian literature, ethnic studies, Canadian Studies and post-colonial literature. Each writer raises questions about the nature of literature in a world of continuous migrations.

In her short story "Spring Can Wait" Andree Dahan captures the alienation and disorientation of an immigrant woman who struggles as a substitute teacher in a Montreal school. As an escape she repeatedly retreats into memories and images from her homeland, Egypt. How do we reconcile the different languages and cultures which meet in the captive confines of the classroom? It seems easier for children to cope with this diversity than for adults. Born in Algeria, Nadia Ghalem in "Blue Night" explores the strange love affair between a woman lawyer living in Montreal and an Italian man in Rome. The story shows us how travel makes us want to question the reality

of perception from the jet-lag of international flights to walks along the Roman forum. Time and place seem relative in this experience of nomadism. The story becomes a metaphor for the condition of the expatriate: never grounded in a familiar reality and always searching for the next new experience.

In "The Double Tale of Exile" Mona Latif Ghattas combines the stories of two women in the Montreal of exiles and immigrants. The two women turn out to be the same person in this surreal tale of love and seasonal change. This poetic narrative takes on symbolic dimensions for the uprooted person. We are invited to read Ghattas' *Le Double conte de exil* (1990).

Probably the most difficult works to translate are French poems which are also capturing the nuances of another culture. The poetry of Yamina Mouhoub combines images of Algeria and Quebec. We feel the desert heat and the winter cold in the same paradoxical poem. In "The Metamorphoses of Ishtar" Nadine Ltaif combines images of Cairo and Montreal in each of her poems. The mythology of Egypt is always present in the street scenes of Quebec cities, a phenomenon we also find in her book, *Entre les fleuves* (Guernica, 1991).

We meet a prosaic older woman in Abla Farhoud's narrative, "Dounia-A-World." She speaks to us about her six adult children in Canada. They are her only wealth and what makes Canada home for her. This illiterate and inarticulate woman is quite expressive as she re-examines her life in Lebanon and two emigrations to Canada; the last one forced by war. She gives us a sense of the alienation and rootlessness of Arab immigrants. As an old woman she recalls the physical abuse of her husband, even in front of her father. She was trapped by her culture and could not correct the situation or leave. Would her daughters accept such mistreatment passively? We know one daughter is divorced and likes her freedom. In this contrast of generations we get a sense of the changes that are taking place in Arabic communities in Canada.

In the story, "Daughter of Palestine" by Rubba Nadda we meet a veiled woman in an Ontario art gallery who goes there ostensibly to view the artistic works. As she observes the other patrons she realizes more and more that she is tired of the restrictive life with her traditional husband who does not want her to go anywhere alone. Her one act of rebellion is to go to the art gallery. We sense her alienation from her own culture and her attraction to western culture. And yet there is resistance to change her life. She feels that as an immigrant she is homeless and now behind the veil she is disembodied. Daughter of Palestine comes to mean that she is without a country and

without a home. She is free but she is also restricted by the past. The story ends ambiguously: will she leave her husband, or is this just a wishful dream? Nadda, whose parents are from Syria, is the only author in the anthology born in Canada and we get a sense of how Western values have influenced her perspective in this story of personal rebellion, or wishful illusion.

The most interesting piece in this collection is the essay by Yoland Geadah, "Veiled Women, Unveiled Fundamentalism," which presents a critique of the practice of Moslem girls and women wearing the veil (hijab). This is the shawl to cover the hair on the head, and not to be confused with the burkha, the body hood worn by some women in Afganistan. In English for the first time, this essay explores the many complex factors which have seen more and more women both in Moslem countries and in the West adopt the veil. Geadah weighs all the arguments surrounding the discourse over the wearing of the veil and concludes that the veil is ultimately a symbol of religious totalitarianism, "the veil is part and parcel of a totalitarian system and ideology that tend to deny basic freedoms" (79).

Many Arabs contend that the veil represents traditional society which offers women protection and respect. To this Geadah asks,

What is the value of respectability and the protection bestowed on women, without the recognition of their full rights and freedoms? Is the "protection" bestowed by a male in a patriarchal system preferable to that which can be offered by a democratic, secular and rightful society? Those women who pass for being "protected" in a traditional family system are treated as second-class citizens and their most elementary human rights are often denied. (81)

This short excerpt makes us want to read Geadah's book, *Femmes voiles, Intégrismes démasqués* (1996), which was nominated for a Governor General's Award. And it also demonstrates the growing diversity of writing in Quebec.

This critical essay anchors all the other creative pieces in the anthology and gives us a sense of the various social, political, religious and cultural contexts that are reflected in each contribution. In Canada these women writers are free to explore these issues of personal freedom and to criticize political conditions in some\* Arab countries. One wonders if these writers would have the freedom to voice these views in some countries of the Middle East?

The points of view expressed by these Arabic-Canadian women have been influenced by the Western feminist movement. However Geadah points to some failures in social reform such as those in Iran where Western

feminists who supported Iranian women who resisted the imposition of the veil were accused of outside intrusion.

Those accusations succeeded in eroding the efforts of international solidarity which otherwise would have been threatening to the patriarchal power. This missed historical rendez-vous has disappointed many progressive Westerners who, today, no longer dare speak against the veil for fear of being accused of racism or cultural colonialism. (78)

This essay is a response to this silence on the part of both Western women and Arabic writers. It is a call for more discussion of these issues in terms of the human rights of women and the relations between the West and the Islamic world. Dahab's anthology is itself a demonstration of the need to re-examine Western attitudes towards Arabs in North America. The literary works in this collection move us in that direction and we are encouraged to use the methods from Comparative Literature to explore cultural relations between the West and the Middle East. Elizabeth Dahab is to be congratulated on this valuable contribution to the multicultural literature of North America, and we look forward to her next work in this area. (JOSEPH PIVATO, ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY)

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\*ANTHONY O'BRIEN. *Against Normalisation: Writing Radical Democracy in South Africa*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2001. Pp. 352. Cloth US \$79.95; paper US \$22.95.

*Against Normalisation* was composed between 1992 - 98, in part in response to the rapid transition South Africa was undergoing after the demise of institutional apartheid. Some of it was written as a retrospective on the cultural and artistic experiments of the 1980s, an era of popular and grassroots activism which impacted noticeably on the literary arts; while the rest argues strongly for the continuing relevance of such artistic practice in a post-

apartheid future. Essential to its logic is the suggestion that critical and creative tendencies initiated during the previous era of popular struggle opened up a matrix of possibility which can be extended and widened in the now-evolving society, and thus may serve as a counteractive force to the neo-colonial trends already becoming apparent by the middle of the 1990s.

South Africa, it must be remembered, remains an extremely hierarchical society with vast disparities in wealth, privilege and (closer to his subject) cultural access and resources. The focus on these sites of potential, which have so far only been fleetingly apparent in ghostly, paradoxical and contradictory ways, is therefore as much a plea for the broadening of democratic expression and culture as it is an examination of literature *per se*. The site of potential which O'Brien concentrates most consistently on is that which relates to gender and feminism: he considers the possibility of women writers' emergence out of the margins into gaining a full participatory voice and presence: and his discussions in this area have a force of conviction and unremitting focus that is unusual and heartening.

O'Brien's commitment to the continuation of a radical democratic tradition, in literature as much as everyday life and socio-political practice, is the most positive aspect of this book. He courageously goes against received wisdom about what the change from a politically-charged to a 'normal' society has meant for the direction and priorities of South African literature. In the face of a normalizing regimen dictated by government and big business, he insists on the virtues of critical perspectives and writing practices which maintain faith in the principles underlying the cultural impetus and anti-establishment experiments of the prior decade. Moreover, his intention has been

as much as possible, to extend this question and this argument beyond South Africa itself ... I do not mean that South African writers fit in any simple way into the by now thoroughly vexed category of the postcolonial ... but it is true that black South African literature, though much studied by Africanists, has not been much included in postcolonial studies, and its inclusion tends to change the look of that field and the-questions animating its theory. (3)

The author is aware — even as he pleads for a particular, increasingly marginalized version of the South African literary story to be brought back into focus — that he himself, an academic at C.U.N.Y., is situated at a distance to the environment in which critical debates and literary production of both

decades took place. This book, then, "is ... the record of one reader's engagement with the literary South Africa that emerged for cultural critics steeped in the antiapartheid movement of the North" (2). He is thus the first to highlight that this is not meant to be a comprehensive survey: many figures well known in the metropole (such as Brink, Coetzee, Serote, Fugard and Breytenbach) are left out.

The book's insistence that the debates and activity around South African culture during the final years of the anti-apartheid struggle have an international cogency that is in danger of being ignored, is well argued. It is also refreshing to read a literary critic who is prepared to go beyond the canonical names and texts and delve deeper into the less known sites of cultural and literary expression in the country. It could, however, be suggested that O'Brien could go a lot further in this direction: of the authors he scrutinizes, only two — Ingrid de Kok and Nise Malange — have not as yet had their share of international fame: the work of Bessie Head, Maishe Maponya and others has perhaps had a greater degree of exposure than he makes apparent.

While the above points are a persuasive reason for buying this book, the manner in which they are articulated is open to question. There is a tendency towards a lack of depth, both in the way in which analysis of authors and their texts are conducted and in some of the underlying assumptions, which progressively weakens the tenor of the principal line of argument. In his discussion of individual authors and critics, the author's characteristic mode of operation is to work through specific texts in thematic terms, then use a smattering of references to international authors who, in his view, follow similar ideological impulses or articulate similar themes. This then is taken to affirm whatever theoretical point it is that he happens to be making at the time, or the judgment he makes on the South African authors concerned. There is thus a inclination for analysis to become curiously descriptive - a passage through disparate connections to global texts and impulses, marshalled principally to display an ideological message which, in almost every case, we find the author favours.

A really useful examination of future possibilities would require a scrutiny of the disjunctures in the ways in which the democratic impulse in South Africa has been artistically expressed or culturally organized. What emerges instead is an overwhelmingly positive perspective on certain selected South African writers and critics; who, it becomes clear, are used *emblematically*, in order to confirm certain trends and outcomes the author desires. Little

attention paid to contradictory or dissonant aspects of anyone's output. Even when he acknowledges the ideologically problematic nature of some figures — Maponya is a case to point — the author does this almost apologetically, and never follows such discussion through. At worst, the final effect is a kind of allegorical reading of "third world" literature which, clever as it sometimes may be, effectively subsumes the actual literature being studied into an ambience of hope and conjecture that assists in highlighting the author's own social and political wishes for the country — an agenda of social upliftment, democratic transparency and good government which (speaking four years after the book was finished) seems, sadly, ever more remote. Such a trend is noticeable as a minor, implicit presence in the early chapters of the book: but here, possibly because there has been a great deal of published debate around the critical interventions of the interventions of Sachs and Ndebele, O'Brien is forced to confront the differences in evaluation which have accompanied these. Thereafter, for all the varieties of text and genre considered, there is a reading of, and extrapolation from, the selected material which is oddly repetitive in tone and summation.

On the one hand, what appears to be missing is any detailed sense of wider political, economic or structural underpinning. While these are mentioned in passing, and while the generalized political points derived from South Africa's "resistant integration into a global cultural economy" (104) are largely accurate, nowhere does the book attempt (for instance) a sustained analysis and critique of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy (G.E.A.R.) so crucial to any understanding of the shifts of the South African State after 1996; or a scrutiny of the waning of an "alternative" 1980s civil society which would be essential to any comprehension of the future potential of grassroots cultural organization. On the other, despite a continual use of the term "aesthetic," this aspect is investigated so generally that it blurs almost seamlessly into the terrain of the ideological: an investigation of the mobilization of style by any of the authors concerned is fleeting at best. Thus, it can be suggested that O'Brien adapts a reflectionist notion of the literature, despite the deftness he displays in more explicitly theoretical discussion.

It also becomes apparent that O'Brien, despite his being aware of the complexity of difference in South Africa (he is particularly attuned to the overwhelming presence of patriarchal relations) desires to read black society, and a putative future national community, in terms which downplay the existence of inflexible and enduring social schisms. It is not an overstatement to remark that his assumptions of community veer towards the romanticized

and additive, rather than acknowledging contradiction. Nowhere is this more clear than in the hopes he has, and terms he uses to describe for feminist practice in the country: notions of (for example) "gendered togetherness" (15) are perhaps more useful in constructing a new mythology — a "different myth" in O'Brien's words (155), than for any sustained critical perspective. Arguably, the commendable humanist confidence of such a position transmutes, in a fraught and implacable situation such as South Africa, into the merely ameliorative — a fate I suspect the author would not wish for his book.

The last two chapters of the work seem to be somewhat an afterthought, not running completely congruently to the previous logic of argument. Oddly enough, however, they contain some of the most insightful vignettes of the book. The reading of Dambudzo Marechera in terms of language choice is little short of masterly; the examination of the film *of Fools vis-a-vis the* original novella and even the film script opens up a number of fascinating issues; and it is shown that Bessie Head's letters merit much more attention than they are getting. In the face of this, it is a pity that O'Brien's more general urge towards understanding a complex and unfolding scenario delivers rather less than it promises. (KELWYN SOLE, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN)