

Book Reviews

Leslie A. Adelson, *Making Bodies Making History: Feminism and German Identity*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993. Pp. 196.

Leslie A. Adelson has made a major contribution to the literature on feminism in her book on literature and identity formation. Her book stands in the rather good company of those of Bidy Martin and Sigrid Weigel who have the German tradition (not "PROBLEM") on constructing feminist identity. But Adelson's focus is slightly off-center and thus her work is in many ways more indicative of the specifically "German" tradition of women constructing and inscribing their identities through the act of writing.

Adelson begins her book with a long, detailed discussion of how identity is shaped by and through writing. Relying heavily on the work of Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, her psycho-social model works extremely well as the basis for a detailed reading of the positions permit, opened, and assumed by women in post World War II German society. Her focus in this chapter is a counter-reading to the pure relativism of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (a corrective now partially supported by Butler's most recent work). Construction of identity is not self-willed or imposed but is part of the material condition of the feminine. Thus Adelson stresses, as the red thread through her book, the construction of the body—not merely within the sense that the "tongue" speaking is the physical representation of the body, but that the corporeality of the feminine in German culture lies in the language used and formed by that culture.

The substance of Adelson's book lies in the detailed historical analysis of three books: Anne Duden's *Übergang*, TORKAN's *Tufan* and Jeanette Lander's *Ein Sommer in der Woche der Itke K*. Of the three, the first serves as an extended trope on Adelson's theoretical introduction, as Duden uses the image of the "mouth" (with a series of intricate plays on this image in German) as an emblem of the state of German women in West Germany after the war. Having established a "German-feminist" baseline, of greater importance to Adelson's overall thesis is what a Turko-German and a German-Jewish woman author makes of this. (The hyphens are part of the problematic of these

categories as Adelson makes clear.) *TORKAN*'s novel of Iranian Islamic culture and the problem of a young Islamic woman who "escapes" to Germany provides a perfect example of how social, cultural, and geo-historical position defines the material basis for identity. Jeanette Lander, like *TORKAN*, is a "foreigner" (she is an American Jew who emigrated to Berlin in 1960) who writes in German for a German reading audience. Lander's text is yet even more complicated as Lander's "foreignness" as a Jew/American/woman is literally inscribed in the language she chooses to employ. It is not only the theme of the text but its very substance, its language, that is "deformed." Adelson leads the reader in ever more difficult turns. She moves from the thematic complexity of *Duden* to the inscription of *TORKAN*'s "foreignness" in the themes of her book, to Lander's deformation of the German language. But of course, this is not a spiral at all—all of the writers (and by extension all woman writers in Germany) are confronted with the question of how or whether to use the language of the aggressors. It is not deformation at all in Lander's work but a reformation of language and culture. Here Adelson makes her most important point—the history of Germany, the Shoah, the division of post-war Germany, the tensions present in West (and by extension East) German society because of the material condition of the woman—all shape the discourse of woman writers who chose to see themselves as part of a German culture. It is unimportant whether they ate born into that culture (*Duden*), flee into it (*TORKAN*), or voluntarily enter it (Lander). In all cases the complexity of the culture is inscribed on their "tongues" and in their texts.

One "footnote" to Adelson's presentation might be in order. In her discussion of Lander (87) she notes that Lander's texts are little read and little discussed in German culture. One could say the same thing (to greater or lesser degrees) about the other two texts/writers presented by Adelson. One might note that few critics, even feminist critics in Germany, have paid the sort of rigorous attention to complex notions of difference as a category of feminist identity formation in German culture that American feminist critics have. Again, only Christina von Braun springs to mind as a German feminist critic who is as attuned to question of "race" as well as questions of "gender." But more important, like Adelson, understands that they can be absolutely linked. The popular and critical reception (or lack of reception) of these texts in Germany is an indication of how radical and important Adelson's book is.

This is the most recent title in the series "Modern German Culture and Literature" edited by Peter Hohendahl. The book is beautifully produced by University of Nebraska Press, a press that has come to the fore as the most adventurous critical press in Modern German Studies in the United States. One looks forward to more from Adelson and from the University of Nebraska Press.

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Barnaby B. Barrat, *Psychoanalysis and the Post-Modern Impulse: Knowing and Being Since Freud's Psychology*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993. Pp. 262 + xvi.

Psychoanalysis and the Post-Modern Impulse is an impressive addition to the growing library of recent writings that situate the analytic endeavor at the crossroads of philosophy, ideology and (post-) modernity. The reader will not find in Barrat's book a rehearsing of the history nor of the conflicting tendencies within the analytic community; there is no discussion of Kleinian, Freudian, object-relations theories, etc. that have enlivened and bedeviled psychoanalytic conferences almost from the very birth of the analytic movement. Rather than a narration of the internal squabbles and dissensions of the competing analytic schools, what the reader finds is a tightly argued philosophical citing of the analytic process and promise within the context of the West's (that is "Continental" Europe's) dominant, if not to say, hegemonic, episteme.

Barnaby Barrat, a practicing analyst, has the great merit of offering an interpretation of the radical "otherness" of the analytic process informed by a reading of the philosophical tradition (from Descartes to Heidegger). This reading of the dominant epistemic tradition encompasses an analysis not only of the major philosophical movements of modernity but, co-terminously, an attempt, (successful to my mind) at showing how this tradition also informs our sense of temporality and of semiosis. Thus Barrat sketches in broad strokes the parameters inside of which an ideology of the "self-same" and its dialectical opposition to what, in this epistemic tradition, becomes marked as its "other" (both an exterior and interior projection) is elaborated. It is inside of these parameters that Barrat places Freud's discovery of unconscious processes.

At the beginning of his book Barrat acknowledges his debt to the work of Jacques Derrida, a debt that informs his analysis throughout. Rather than talk of those specific texts where Derrida deals directly with psychoanalysis (his writing on Freud, on Lacan) Barrat can be said to adopt a deconstructive approach that enables him to situate the revolutionary aspects of psychoanalysis, as discourse and practice, within the overarching Western metaphysical tradition of "presence." Although much of Barrat's long and detailed discussion of this Western tradition will be familiar to students of European (particularly French) theories of structuralism, semiotics, philosophy—all those theories marked by the particularly Gallic twist given Hegel in the 1930s—Barrat's study is one of the first, to my knowledge, to explore the radical import of psychoanalysis in relation to this tradition, to see the analytic process as a part of, but also dialectically inimical to, the hegemonic drive of the West's "master discourse."

"Psychoanalysis is not to be mistaken for a narratological rearticulation of the self and its world in the interests of adaptation to a communally grounded sense of reality" (189). Barrat writes, and it seems to me that this sentence can be taken to sum up his dense articulation of the radical otherness of what he calls psychoanalysis in the opposition he establishes early in his book between it and "psychoanalysis" (the use of quotation marks marking off a practice, an institution, that is adaptive, conservative, recuperative: Everywhere 'psychoanalysis' . . . seems to uphold the ideological advances of monopolized capitalism, the hegemony of patriarchal or [phallo]logocentric thinking, the imperialism of the technological mentality and the managerial ethos, the elitist self-righteousness of phallogocratic privilege [6]). While "psychoanalysis" as recuperative institution is shown to play an adaptive role to the "metaphysics" of presence whose lineage and hold on Western notions of the "unitary-self," Barrat has rather exhaustively traced, psychoanalysis (without the double quotation marks) is described as an interpersonal discussive practice, most radically reduced to "free-associative discourse" ("a movement within consciousness and communication that subverts the very structurings of consciousness and communication in their presentness" [23]) that allows, (at times, haltingly, in spurts), the analysand's self-articulation to "coincide" with a desire that is always, according to Barrat an "otherwise otherness" (in a sense, the translation into terms of analysis and desire, of Derrida's "différance"): Thus does psychoanalysis make "revolutionary and inconvenient advances (Freud, 1918, 82) for its free-associative method exposes a relation between knowing and being that is inextricably polysemous and intrinsically contradictory, and this exposition initiates an epistemic revolution that will issue us into the postmodern era" (5).

It is obvious from the brief quotations I have cited that Barrat's book is infused with a rhetoric and a politics that is rarely associated with analytic discourse and practice—a discourse and practice that, at least since Freud, have been suspicious of "politics" and of emotional investments that cloak themselves in the rhetoric of revolution. Barrat does not share this timidity. His book and his conception of psychoanalysis, are clearly presented in the militant rhetoric of revolution: "The major purpose of this book is to further this aim by addressing the question: what might it imply to claim that Freud's method of discourse could overthrow an episteme?" (3). Psychoanalysis, in its radical otherness as outlined by Barrat, is seen as a major factor in the war against "patriarchy," "the metaphysics of presence," and "the analytico-referential episteme" the combination of which, Barrat tells us, leads to the exploitation of women, nature, minorities, etc. "The modern era unfolds as *man's* dominion over woman, over nature, and over subclasses or subcultures of other men" (3). Under Barrat's pen, this discourse of mastery becomes an apocalyptic saga leading to genocidal fury and annihilation.

Although I found *Psychoanalysis and the Post-Modern Impulse* to be a consistently intelligent and challenging work, I was, at times, frustrated by

what could be perceived as a lack of "analytic" detail. We are presented with only two, very brief (comparative) case studies. In a more perfect work it would have been fascinating to have Barrat combine his intellectual skills and knowledge with a more detailed account of particular analytic cases. I would also like to see him tackle in more nuanced terms his quarrel with Lacan and Lacanians. The one thinker/analyst whom Barrat does seem to admire, although with qualifications, Julia Kristeva, also deserves a fuller treatment than the one accorded her here. Obviously it is always easier to criticize a work for what it does not do rather than to praise it for what it does do, and does well. Barrat's book is a passionately intelligent explication of the radical potential of psychoanalysis in a "post-modern" world, where politics, philosophy, and psychoanalysis are all shown to be working together for a more humane and liberatory appreciation of the human "desiring" subject. Desire places us in a contestatory position within an ideological framework that would define us in ways that prove not only inimical to the movement of desire, but as it turns out, according to Barrat's enchafed rhetoric, to our very survival in the world.

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Matei Calinescu, *Rereading*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993. Pp. 327.

Critical theory does not interpret texts: it invites us to reflect on them. Matei Calinescu's study reflects on such reflection. He opens up a neglected dimension of reader response theory: our choice of where to enter a text; how, where, when, and how often we return to it; and how our response changes through successive readings, losing some dimensions (e.g. surprise) and gaining others. In short, he examines the reader's role in constituting and elaborating fictional texts' hermeneutic code (everything they present concerning interpretive problems and the quest for their solutions). His key metaphor is haunting and the "revenant" (a Gallicism for "ghost" in its aspect of that which returns). We reread what haunts us, and in that process we discover not only earlier texts haunting later ones (intertextuality) but also later texts such as parodies haunting our experience of earlier ones. As rereaders, move over, we haunt the texts to which we return. A canon is what is reread (xi).

Calinescu begins his own main text ingeniously with a discussion of Jorge Luis Borges's "The Aleph," a sphere about an inch in diameter in which the viewer, by shifting position, can see everything in the universe. That object suggests a metaphor for a text as the generator of endless semiosis. A keen first reading of Borges's story could reveal Dante as the intertext, and rereading with this hypothesis in mind multiplies the connections, but

Borges's denial of them throws one into a cabalistic reading, and from there to a consideration of the story's chronotope (space-time structure) as a system where no detail has been left to chance. Faced with such richness, interpretation as opposed to rereading attempts to privilege one strand of meaning and then to defend its privileged nature.

Calinescu illustrates the process of rereading or reconsideration through-out by a paradoxical movement of thought which simultaneously undermines and reaffirms the distinctions it has previously been obliged to introduce. For example, "the distinction between reading and rereading, which seems empirically and pragmatically so obvious, is theoretically both untenable and unavoidable" (18). A first reading can be a double reading, especially when one encounters a new book by a familiar author. The artificial concept of a virginal first reading, as one finds it in Stanley Fish or Roman Ingarden, as opposed to Hans Robert Jauss, Michael Riffaterre, and Roland Barthes, cannot hold, if only because our choice of what to read is always already motivated at least by some prior, albeit "foggy, tantalizing, sometimes irritating, almost always misleading hearsay knowledge" (42).

Chapter six, "Modernity and Reading: An Overview," shows what can be at stake in reading and rereading. The Protestant Reformation initiated a movement toward mass reading; the Counter-reformation spearheaded by the council of Trent (1545-1563) banned all unapproved editions of the Bible and affirmed the supreme authority of the unreliable translation of the Vulgate (of which, incidentally, the King James Version is a charmingly awkward word-by-word rendition) as confirmed by Tradition. Even non-Calvinist Protestant regions (e.g. Henry VIII's England in 1543) forbade Bible reading to the lower classes, exhaustively defined. From the 16th through the 18th centuries, however, Protestant practice generally advocated the intensive rereading of a small number of books; at the end of the 18th century the habit of extensive linear reading developed, no longer dependent on the Church calendar. The implication is that rereading, like Protestantism, occupies an unstable, equivocal space between a restrictive authoritarianism (being told what to think) and an expansive individualism (a latitudinarian exploration without guidelines). Professor Calinescu, a secret opponent of the authoritarian Rumanian regime from 1958 (when he started to write) until 1973 (when he emigrated to the United States), brings to these reflections the keen authenticity of lived experience.

The most interesting section of his volume concerns Play (Part III, chapters 9-14). He begins by examining Vladimir Nabokov's games of hide and seek with his reader and makes any careful reading centrifugal. (My one very minor reservation concerning this volume was elicited by the inaccurate plot summary of *Le Rouge et le Noir* here, [132], used self-defeatingly to illustrate the point that in the realistic novel, fictional truth is self-evident; Stendhal's frequent parastories-hypothetical and "unrealized" situations—and his leitmotif of the character becoming caught up in his or her role

severely problematize the notion of "realism"; in other words, the putative counter-example actually reinforces the central thesis that reference is at best equivocal, and at worst a red herring for those trying to couple *Sinn* with *Bedeutung*.) Chapter 10 problematizes Johan Huizinga's and Roger Caillois's binary opposition of play and work, as well as Jacques Ehrmann's attempt to undermine it by presenting it as a symptom of a western bias in favor of "seriousness" and "usefulness." Chapter 11, on "Psychological Approaches," attacks Norman Holland as simplistic for equating form with defense and content with impulse. Certainly one must agree that such an equation cannot do justice to the typical twofold ending of fiction, one that (such as the Oedipus legend) satisfies in turn the id and then the superego of the implied author. "To grasp the complex relationship between play and literature," Calinescu concludes, "including literary (re)reading, we must look at both play and literature as structures within a communicational system and characterize the special place they occupy within it, a place . . . occupied by the notion of fictionality" (179). As one might have expected, given the consistent subtlety of Calinescu's thinking, he soon reaches in Chapter 12 (or had previously reached) the realization that "the fictional and the nonfictional often coincide in the 'as if' of the act of imaginative understanding" (183). And he adds the caveat that the "purely communicational model" of structuralism and other formalisms overlooks "the metacommunicative signals which frame playful behavior or modes of expression." Here I think one could extend Calinescu's investigations fruitfully in a direction he has not mentioned, the social interactionist approach illustrated by thinkers such as Seyla Benhabib (*Situating the Self*), George H. Mead (*Mind Self and Society*), and Jessica Benjamin (*The Bonds of Love*). He concludes this section with illustrative readings of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* and Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Les Gommages* and *Le Voyeur*, as well as an important reconsideration of Roland Barthes's five codes of fiction in *S/Z* and Frank Kermode's reframing of them in *Novel and Narrative* (211-14).

The final section (Part IV, Chapters 15-17) explores the ambiguous status of what I would call the opaque secret, a term referring both to information that is protected, and a disguise used to protect. In contrast, as Calinescu explains, what I would call the translucent secret can lend itself to interpretation by, and therefore constitute an invitation to, those potential sympathizers ready for initiation, and can also serve as a provocative summons intended to unmask previously concealed opposition to the powers that be. The epilogue is marked by a refreshing, lucid modesty: whether or not any worthwhile narrative somewhat partakes of the obliquity of allusion and disguise, as Frank Kermode claims in *the Genesis of Secrecy*, obliquity would become useless if we could devise fixed rules for interpreting it (269). But since all criticism presupposes rereading, Calinescu's goal is to make reading more self-conscious (277-78). The critic cannot formulate a definitive diagnosis, but rather mark one moment or several in an ongoing encounter.

This study combines a powerful organizational control with an impressive breadth and richness of reference. It offers us complication, not purgation, and leaves us with the rueful but salutary impression that criticism ordinarily exercises influence in direct proportion to its reductivity. We hope and expect that the present company will be excepted.

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Neil H. Donahue, Forms of Disruption: Abstraction in Modern German Prose. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993. Pp. 253.

This book examines a variety of German works and writers of the first half of the century: Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*; Hofmannsthal's *Chandos* letter; Musil's *Young Törless*; Simmel as an influence on Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge*; the aesthetics of Carl Einstein; a grouping of Expressionist writers (Döblin, Ehrenstein, Sternheim, Franz Jung, Hessel); Gottfried Benn's *Brains*, and—a daring and interesting leap in this context, although the discussion falls short—Mann's *Doctor Faustus*. There is also an appendix devoted to post-World War II criticism of Expressionist prose.

These works and figures are examined in several disparate ways. The author's goal is to re-situate German Expressionist prose within the canon of modern German literature and—a separate enterprise—within modernism generally. He wants to base this on a concept of abstraction and style derived from the art historian Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, and to show how that book functions as a somewhat neglected impetus behind Joseph Frank's notion of spatiality in literature. His chosen method is to focus on close reading of selected, sample texts.

Many of the insights in *Forms of Disruption* are thought-provoking, and weigh more with the reader than do the book's structural difficulties. While not original, the ideas are combined in interesting ways. The book is well written and very thoroughly researched. The notes, with their detail of critical summation and argument, are exemplary, and indicate a fuller theoretical and critical grasp than is evident in the text. The notes constitute almost a parallel book in themselves.

The first chapter, on Worringer's concept of style and its application to literature, with reference to Lessing and Joseph Frank, is welcome in providing a valuable perspective on the ways in which Worringer stands behind the modern notion of spatiality in literature. Worringer grounded spatial form in psychology; he "reduces art to psychic principles in order to direct attention toward the serious aesthetic merit of primitive and modern abstractions" (24). These abstractions deny mimetic representation by withdrawing from a

painting the element of time, the element that establishes a reference point in historical time for the viewer. As a result, the viewer has to regard an abstract painting as a flat, two-dimensional object, not as the illusionist creation of a recognizable three-dimensionality which of necessity infers a historical reference. Following Worringer, Donahue associates time with anxiety in modern culture, hence the desire in abstract art to banish it; but he focusses on style as the dominant principle. Although he points out the psychological foundation of Worringer's argument he scants (except in the notes) the phenomenological element that also seems important in Worringer's conception of abstraction and spatiality. The "Empathy" in Worringer's title calls for fuller exploration. (And a strong, ineradicable temporal anxiety, not gone into here, is notably evident in at least the Hofmannsthal, Rilke, and Musil works discussed.)

The notion of abstract style derived from Worringer is presented as the chief characteristic of spatiality in modernist writing. The author suggests that in prose this is principally evident in parataxis, in which juxtaposition replaces sequence as the literary equivalent of non-representational painting's abandonment of mimetic representation. In the event, style provides an insufficient basis for the argument: the author does not go much beyond parataxis, and has frequent recourse to narrativity and representation. His initial argument about abstraction and style points to other writers and writings than the ones he focusses on, to radical stylistic experimenters like Hugo Ball and Gertrude Stein, and to Benn's poetry rather than his dreary prose.

This is a book many of whose parts are greater than their sum. The author is trying to do too many different things, a difficulty already evident in the Preface and Introduction. There is no center that holds his aims together, and a great many other aspects are mentioned but not gone into. It is hard to accept the argument that Hofmannsthal's *Chandos* letter or Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge* or Musil's *Young Törless* are not canonical works in modern German prose, or why Expressionist poetry—which would greatly buttress the argument of the Benn chapter—is excluded, or how Worringer's aesthetics or Frank's notion of spatiality apply to writers who use language not (or not only) as evidence of a crisis of aesthetics, but as a moral lever to change the world. (Musil, for instance, in *Törless* and elsewhere, is not out to demonstrate an aesthetic crisis but an ethical-psychological one.) The sections dealing with Worringer, Hofmannsthal's letter, Rilke's novel, and much of the Benn chapter are excellent; the emphasis on aesthetics in these works and writers makes Professor Donahue's arguments cohere in a way that other sections and the book as a whole do not. (One reason for this latter difficulty seems to be that many of the chapters were published separately as articles and are insufficiently integrated.)

A great deal else besides parataxis is involved in both style and literary modernism (as Astradur Eysteinnsson, for instance, details in *The Concept of*

Modernism), and one might argue, to pick up an old controversy, that as a sequential process of reading all prose fiction remains necessarily timebound in a way that a painting, which can be apprehended as a simultaneous whole, does not. The author seems to recognize this problem implicitly, as his discussions of individual works and authors frequently get into questions of motivation, character, and action. These are often interesting, but here his method of short chapters interferes in some cases with a meaningful exposition, and although he calls for greater explicative application of theoretical notions to close reading, his own readings tend to be summary, sometimes scattered, and not always accurate. The discussion of Musil's *Young Törless*, especially its link to the *Chandos* letter, is interesting, but marred by some inaccuracies: to say that Törless's parents are "scarcely present in the narrative" (58) is to underplay their pervasive importance in it; and the statement that "the character of Törless finds no 'certainty of development,' as in a *Bildungsroman*" (64) seems odd in two senses: the absence of certainty is precisely what this novel is about, and it is hard to think of a *Bildungsroman* that has certainty of development as its principle. The argument how, in *Doctor Faustus*, Mann combines the technique of montage ("hidden parataxis," according to the author) with traditional conventional narrative in the sense of abstract spatialized style is potentially interesting, but not well worked out.

The structural difficulties of *Forms of Disruption* are obvious, but this is a thoughtful and suggestive book that is well worth reading. It helps clarify notions of spatiality, and argues for the importance of re-thinking the traditional categories that have kept twentieth-century German literature, especially, trapped in inappropriate or inadequate categories.

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Jennifer Waelti-Walters and Steven C. Hause, Eds., *Feminisms of the Belle Epoque, A Historical and Literary Anthology*. Texts translated by Jette Kjaer, Lydia Willis, and Jennifer Waelti-Walters. London and Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. Pp. 337.

Like "love," the word "anthology" covers a very broad spectrum of endeavors. *Feminisms of the Belle Epoque* (henceforth FBE) is a guide, a handbook, and a fundamental collection of texts, speeches, articles, and excerpts from novels, all deftly introduced and generously annotated. The popular connotations of "La Belle Epoque" (roughly the quarter century which ended with World War I) never include the cynicism of Third Republic pro-natal policies or the entrenched male arrogance about women's suffrage. Historians and specialists of the period excepted, most readers will be stunned

by the current applicability of the materials selected, if not on the French scene, then still on the American scene (such as the right to safe legal abortion). Of all the struggles these feminists have sustained, only suffrage has truly been secured a century after the debates reflected in this book took place. Because of patriarchal censorship, lifted now in this collection, intellectual coziness and ignorance combined, current French sources still refer to women's suffrage as a "gift" of General de Gaulle to French women, as though it were not a national shame to have denied it to them for a century and a half.

With rare exceptions, the texts selected have not been reprinted in French; they have never been made available to the general French reading public nor to the granddaughters of Belle Epoque feminists who were often married and mothers. Indeed, it is the very status of marriage and sexuality which enables us best to measure the distance between Belle Epoque feminisms, ours, and our daughters' feminisms, on the eve of the 21st century. The book is organized by theme and diachronically, with documents that illustrate in turn the Situation of Women, Education, Work, Prostitution, Marriage, Maternity, and Political Rights.

Among the revelations made available by this book, an impeccable definition of feminism comes to us from Nelly Roussel who is probably the deserving "star" of this anthology on account of exceptional public speaking skills: feminism is "the doctrine of *natural equivalence* and *social equality* of the sexes" (FBE 20). Then, as Simone de Beauvoir would encapsulate the solution fifty years later, Harlor [pseud.], whose work is illustrated here through both creative and political writings, shows that: "The person who has to rely on another for his subsistence is in slavery. . . . We must therefore not only demand economic emancipation but also preach moral emancipation at the same time and with the same ardor." (FBE 79).

On the socio-pragmatic front of feminist activism rather than its psycho-ethical window, we (re)discover figures such as Louise-Marie Compain, Hubertine Auclert and Madeleine Pelletier. While Auclert clearly emerges as the foremost champion of women's suffrage, Compain strikes us as less notorious yet equally liberating and sensible. She caught a glimpse of the promises of technology for women: if you did not know it, she told us about electric appliances, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and other amenities that made it conceivable in 1913 to run a "middle-class" household without human [enslaved female] help (FBE 141). Compain actually advocated communal kitchens such as were eventually created in Israeli kibboutzim or are currently used for the improvement of senior citizens' life-styles in the USA (will French feeding standards ever accomodate such sensible solutions?).

As for Pelletier, FBE sends you wondering why no French language playwright ever fantasized her fate and brought it to the stage; why Simone de Beauvoir did not refer to herself in *The Second Sex* [probably barred as we have been from fundamental feminist sources]. De Beauvoir of course was not

"herself" in 1939, when Pelletier, half paralyzed, was committed to a mental ward largely on account of her stance on the necessity to legalize abortion. Though she was one of the very first female medical doctors in France, of humble origins and self-taught through the baccalauréat, Pelletier died miserably in 1939. A Madeleine Pelletier Foundation has yet to be instituted in France, and perhaps the so-called "Simone Veil 1974 law" for IVG (legalizing Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy in France) should be renamed the Pelletier-Veil Law . . . Pelletier often took the hard-line on girls' education, "femininity" found no space in her ad hoc political vision, and she persistently denounced the double standard on issues such as prostitution, parenting and marriage. Her most radical (but healthy) stance probably was to opt for celibacy as the hard path to true freedom for women (FBE 115).

As second or third wave feminists, some of us believed that *The Second Sex* had said it all, especially if we took into account de Beauvoir's revised views on socialism after 1968. Ignorant of history, we used to think that de Beauvoir, and then Betty Friedan (who did not credit de Beauvoir) had best articulated the necessary principles for the emancipation and the definitive empowerment of women. What *Feminisms of the Belle Epoque* reveals to us is that all had already been said by 1914; but the catastrophic military (his)story of Europe delayed French women's liberation for another half century. Thanks to Waelti-Walters' and Hause's superb labor of love through generous, impeccable scholarship—including appendices, bibliographies and index—academics can now instruct themselves and their students about the dark, seminal side of Belle Epoque women. This has, of course, not much to do with images of women as "cannonized" through the Arts; but it will help semiological decodings of such "images," for example the harrowed and harrowing expression of the cancan-girl, Jane Avril on the famous 1899 poster by Toulouse-Lautrec. Both FBE and its sibling, Waelti-Walters' *Feminist Novelists of the Belle Epoque*, illustrate that the debt of French feminists to American scholars seems unfathomable; I hope a French version of FBE is in the works for use in advanced French cultural and women's studies courses on this side of the Atlantic.

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Peter Hutchinson, *Stefan Heym: the Perpetual Dissident*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. Pp. 270.

The scholarship of East German literature has produced more than its share of books like this one: neither a biography, nor a bona fide critical analysis of collected works, it falls somewhere between the cracks. Typical of the genre, this study of Stefan Heym, one of the better known and more

vociferous of the GDR's authors, attempts (as described in the preface) "to trace Heym's career principally by reference to his novels, journalism, and political essays." The first problem with this popular approach is that it rarely leaves enough room between the life and the works considered for a truly critical examination. Hutchinson's treatment of Heym is a textbook example. We vault back and forth between the extraordinary and fascinating events of Heym's life (but with scant first-hand information) to brief plot summaries of his works. The conclusion is that Heym's works reflect his political opinions.

Also problematic is the tendency of this approach toward apotheosis. If a reader had not gleaned this from the title of Hutchinson's work, his preface gives it away:

Stefan Heym's uncompromising stance made him unpopular with a succession of political regimes. The National Socialists, the CIA, and the East German secret police all held files on him. He was Hitler's youngest literary exile; McCarthyism was to drive him from the USA and even in what appeared his natural home—the first socialist state on German soil—he was to become the country's leading dissident.

This passage captures the spirit of the next 225 pages. Heym, the hero, is praised on each page for his courage and his "uncompromising stance." Though we would not wish to deny Stefan Heym the recognition due him, we expect a sharper edge in a scholarly study from Cambridge University Press. The passage quoted above is both superficial and misleading for the realities of National Socialism, McCarthyism, and the Socialist Unity Party, while in some ways similar, were so complex and nuanced that to suggest parallels in such a lofty fashion borders on irresponsibility.

Proof of bias and hero worship lies in this book's odd and hasty end-run. The two and one half page conclusion reads like a book jacket itself. More importantly, the most significant period of Heym's career and of "Experiment GDR" from a contemporary point of view falls within the years 1989 to 1992. Heym's role in and response to the Peaceful Revolution is paramount to a full understanding of him. Yet Hutchinson treats this period in three and one half pages, which leads one to question the timeliness of this book. Was this section appended to an already finished manuscript? How else can we explain this brief dismissal of events that forced so many to face old, pernicious truths?

By treating the issue in such an off-hand manner, Hutchinson has overlooked weighty material and has ignored one of the central questions to emerge from that period, namely, what do Socialists really want now. When Heym wrote of his revulsion with the East German citizens who jubilantly crossed through to West Berlin, he was expressing an opinion held by the majority of old-guard socialist ideologues. This opinion, its history and its implications are critical to an understanding of the political forces that shaped

and honed the cultural-political atmosphere of the GDR that led to the revolution. The criticisms of Heym voiced by former GDR author, Monica Maron, go to the heart of the problems surrounding the *Wende*. But Hutchinson dismisses these criticisms in one sentence.

Hutchinson has not been able to distance himself from Heym partly due to his methodology: his is too narrowly focused on Heym and Heym's work. But more importantly, Hutchinson himself cannot face the *Wende* and the questions it raised because he apparently shares Heym's disappointment. How else are we to interpret statements like the following:

The GDR was indeed lost, and many of the ideals for which it had stood were quickly forgotten—even by some of its previously ardent supporters. In the belief that only within a united Germany was a truly prosperous future to be ensured, there was widespread rejection of the calls for an independent socialist state . . . and the determination to ensure an abundance of consumer goods then led to humiliating defeat for the reformed socialist parties in the free elections of March 1990. (224)

It is somewhat surprising to find this sort of editorializing in a work published by Cambridge University press. But then the back jacket of Hutchinson's work promotes a study of Christa Wolf with a title similar in spirit to Hutchinson's: *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision: from Marxism to Feminism*.

This study of Heym belongs to a genre rampant in the scholarship on East German literature. As such, it is worth a look. The scholar or graduate student would be better served by Heym's original works, memoirs, and interviews. Undergraduates would be better served by the more succinct and neutral summaries of the facts of Heym's life provided by the *KLG* or similar references.

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Eileen Julien, *African Novels and the Question of Orality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. Pp. 180.

One of the most redundant aspects of literary criticism on the works of African writers is the critics' obsessive treatment of these works as sociological documents. While there is no denying that this literature owes its vitality to its relevance to social issues, focusing almost exclusively on their political and social import is very reductive. Eileen Julien offers a refreshing departure from this trend in her recent book *African Novels and the Question of Orality*.

Julien's project could be described as a redefinition of the identity of the African novel traditionally perceived by many Western and African critics

alike as having a parasitic relationship with the rich oral traditions of the writers. Through a study of Ousmane Sembene's *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* (1960), Amadou Hampate Ba's *L'Etrange destin de Wangrin* (1974), Camara Laye's *Le regard du roi* (1954), Jean-Marie's Adiafi's *La carte d'identité* (1980), Sony Labou Tansi's *La vie et demie* (1979), and Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Devil on the Cross* (1982), she argues that the use of oral traditions by these writers and a host of others does not reflect a slavish adherence to the traditional forms in the name of continuity, but rather a careful adaptation of these forms to meet the needs of the author. The book is divided into two parts, which are in turn broken into chapters.

Part one is a survey of the literature on the subject of orality in the novel. In chapters one and two Julien argues that the interest in the linkage between African novels and orality is one prompted by the quest for "authenticity" and "continuity." Many Western and African critics, in their need to establish the identity of African literature as distinct from its European counterpart, easily detect elements of oral tradition in the works and rely almost exclusively on this aspect to characterize the African novel. She challenges this rather simplistic and anachronistic connection viewing it as a throw back to colonial stereotypes about Africa. No tradition, she points out, has the monopoly on orality. Elements of orality are embedded in every culture. Julien takes issue with critics like Mahamadou Kane, Alioune Tine and Janheinz Jan who see the originality of African novels primarily in the light of their relationship to forms of oral literature. Drawing on the Bakhtinian notion of dialogism, she posits that the presence of oral forms in the African novel should be explained more as a case of intertextuality or the dialogue between texts than as one of literary essentialism. According to Julien, neither the novel nor orality is particularly characteristic of any culture.

The second part of the book is a close study of the use of different genres of oral literature in the African novel. She analyzes the use of three genres—epic, initiation story, and fable. In chapters four and five Julien examines Ba's and Sembene's appropriation of the epic form to serve their ends. Here the notion of epic heroism is revised. Ba's and Sembene's heroes are ordinary people who are elevated to the level of epic heroes, underscoring the fact that heroes are made, not born. Julien demonstrates the authors' statement of the impossibility of heroism under colonialism as exemplified by Wangrin's curious story. The fourth chapter, which she aptly titles "The Democratization of the epic," discusses the epic stature of Sembene's novel and shows how he challenges the notion of individual heroism found in the epic to propose in its place an ethos of collective heroism.

Chapters six and seven deal with the use of the form of the initiation story in Laye's *Le Regard du roi* and Adiafi's *La Carte d'identité*. Julien points out that both novels are composite texts that defy pigeonholing into any specific genre. Both novels share characteristics of the initiation story such as didacticism, an elusive temporality, the journey motif and the quest for

knowledge. While Laye's text, she points out, is an enactment of the reversal of authority, Adiaffi's novel presents an African in search of meaning in a society invaded by alien values. As in the initiation story the theme of self-discovery is embedded in the narratives.

The eighth and ninth chapters are a study of Tansi's and Thiongo's use of the fable to address highly charged political issues in the post-independence context in *La Vie et demie* and *Devil on the Cross*. Although Tansi's novel is not peopled by animals as are traditional fables, the events and behavior of the characters have all the trappings of a fable. Its surrealistic presentation of the facts, for instance, distances the reader from the society that is described. Tansi's initial gesture of independence from the world offers him the liberty to carry the reader's imagination from the real world he is describing. *Devil* is suffused with dreams and visions which create the surrealistic atmosphere of the fable. It shares the same features of fantastic inhumanity with *La Vie*, reinforcing the idea of something happening in another world even though both novels are allegories of the futility and imbecility of post-colonial power wielders.

Julien's book is an incredibly rich work that shows that the author is intimately conversant with traditional as well as recent theory on the subject of orality. Her erudite handling of the subject is powerfully anchored in the theory of oral genres. Despite its focus on orality, Julien's book would make good reading for scholars and students from a vast variety of literary approaches. Drawing from the works of many influential theorists (Bakhtin, Derrida, Levi Strauss, etc.), she gives the reader a sound introduction to nature of orality and the theory of the African novel in general. Her analyses are steeped in the ideological ramifications of the authors' intentions, yet her forays into the sociological aspects of the novels do not cause her to stray from the subject of her study.

Written in a lucid and unpretentious prose, *African Novels and the Question of Orality* is an innovation in the theory of African literature. The author in many ways breaches the current framework of this literature by casting both the oral and written forms in new and refreshing perspectives. Julien, unlike many critics of African literature, does not impose theories on the novels she studies, but rather the theories emerge from her analyses. The book magnificently demonstrates the primacy of the writers' intent over the influence of tradition in literary production.

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Agota Kristof, *Le Troisième Mensonge*. Paris: Seuil, 1991. Pp. 187.

Agota Kristof's latest novel offers new insight on the treachery of ideas in the communication game. In a compelling story of fragility and strength, the runnerup for the 1991 Prix Médicis, *Le Troisième Mensonge*, moves skillfully through present, past and narrative dream to undermine its own story line while raising questions about identity, interpretation, and the ability of language to lie.

Following *La Preuve* (1986) and *Le grand cahier* (1986), *Le Troisième Mensonge* continues with themes of twins, foreignness, and exile in an exploration of events surrounding the collapse of an unidentified European country and the memories of a disrupted, disconnected childhood.

Fictional elements play in the processing of historical truth as the protagonist returns to his divided, postwar homeland after fifty years of exile to research and to rework the facts for his manuscript, the artifact of five journals on which connections with the past, reconciliation and authentication depend. This is a story of a personal mission: to find his twin brother, to give him the manuscript to finish, and to die in his homeland. The process of the mission reveals a painful discovery that his beliefs, his "believed" story, history (and thus his manuscript) have been based on fabrication and are false: his father was not a war hero, his childhood infirmity was not due to polio, his grandmother was not his grandmother, and he will never know the twin brother, who at the tense and emotional reunion create a false identity.

As the title suggests, the theme is not only the "lie," but "the third lie" and not coincidentally, Kristof's third novel. The doubling effect of the lie reflects through theme and structure of this text which is divided in two parts (that are really one) and a protagonist set of twins (who *may* be two halves of one). The first half of the novel is narrated by a "stateless," "nameless," "ageless," Klaus or Lucas, recognizable as the aged war-orphaned, crippled child of *Le grand cahier* who escaped the mine field while crossing the frontier zone.

The second half of the novel "appears" to be told by the twin who stayed behind. At the reunion with his brother, he painfully denies his identity and their kinship. He knows, but will not reveal what he knows, even to himself.

Throughout the story, untrue declarations and false documentation in journals, letters, visas, diaries, and archives pose a predicament not only for the protagonist attempting to unravel his past, but also for the reader led into the traps of untrue declarations and the deceitful authority of the written word.

The twinning of the characters, the structure, and the writer/reader relationship all focus on the central project and process of the protagonist's manuscript, a revealing "mise-en-abîme" reflecting all aspects of the novel in its totality. The author's author cannot resist the imaginative pull to rearrange and reprocess documentation of fact in a fictional revision of the "real":

“Alors, j’embellis tout et je décris les choses non comme elles se sont passées, mais comme j’aurais voulu qu’elles se soient passées” (14).

Le Troisième Mensonge is the story of the return and the impossibility of returning due to unclear storylines. The images become fuzzy as the reader’s attention is averted from the present to the past, from the novel to “the manuscript,” and left alone to reconstruct another “real” story of the story. This novel search for truth questions the process itself to ask: “Is it a researchable question?” Who is Klaus T., Claus T., Claus Lucas, and Lucas Claus? Which is which? Did they ever exist even as characters? and does it matter in the creative process?

In a clever postmodern subversion of the ideological values inscribed by her art, Kristof parodies her own work, her previous novels and the genre itself. Her calculated language and thought patterns challenge the reader to engage and maneuver through a crafted blend of documentation, reportage and imagination that is as illusive and real as life itself.

Indications are that the third lie, this third novel, will not be the last. After all, Lucas had five journals in his manuscript. Or, did he?

Agota Kristof’s *Le Troisième Mensonge*, was runner-up for the 1991 Prix Médicis. “The interest of the story lies in the reader’s uncertainty concerning the extent to which the political event is actually relevant to the personal one.”

“... parallels an unidentified Eastern European nation’s collapse with the breakup of a family within it.” (959)

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Michel Laronde. *Autour du roman beur; immigration et identité*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 1993. Pp. 240.

This book examines a corpus of roughly twenty-five novels published during the 1980s. As the title of Laronde’s analysis indicates, all these books share an interest in a cultural and historical reality more or less adequately described by the category “beur.” The author insists that he has no intention of abiding by a narrow definition of the word “beur” (children of immigrants of North African origin, usually living in urban suburbs) and that he has adopted an inclusionary approach. He intends to draw our attention to a certain type of “beur” mentality instead of selecting his corpus according to strictly biological or strictly nationalistic criteria. For example, novels by Leïla Sebbar or even Michel Tournier are considered “textes beurs” even if neither author is beur. Laronde’s study follows two explicit paths: on the one

hand, the author would like to “contribute to the current research on Immigration in general that talks about the role of the Stranger in the Modern World” (7), and on the other hand, he would like to listen to the voices of the people from the Maghreb who speak from within metropolitan France.

Unlike other scholars interested in the beur generation, such as Alec Hargreaves or Maxi Silverman, who have chosen to enlarge the field of their research to include many different forms of cultural productions (historical and political discourses, TV shows, the press and the media in general), Laronde focuses primarily on literature, and more specifically, on novels. However, even if Laronde warns the reader that he did not want to write yet another “socio-historical analysis of Maghrebian immigration in France” (7), the author’s approach to texts is obviously influenced by the discipline of sociology (key-words include the definition of nationality, immigration, “métissage,” identity, the role of the foreigner, the rise of the far-right, etc.). He is interested in the cultural phenomena that explain why the beur identity is “une identité en creux” ‘a hollowed out identity’ (28) or a “double appartenance” ‘a double belonging’ (202), a “ni . . . ni . . .” ‘double negation’ principle [64]).

Theoretically speaking, Laronde is mainly indebted to Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. The third chapter, entitled “enfermement et identité” ‘confinement and identity’ tests the relevance of the hypotheses explored in *Discipline and Punish* within a beur context: Laronde uses the model of the panopticon and studies its implications for the situation of (children of) immigrants, those eternally “les Surveillés” ‘surveilled individuals’ who are the prisoners of what Laronde calls the “les anneaux” ‘rings’ of the system (97). He also invokes the Barthes of *Mythologies*, *Le Système de la Mode*, *L’Empire des signes*, and of *L’Aventure sémiologique* but the reader may also be reminded of *S/Z*, especially when the analysis follows several distinct yet simultaneous “codes” as Barthes does in the work on *Sarrazine*. For example, in Akli Tadjer’s novel, *Les ANI du “Tassili,”* Laronde uncovers what he calls the “genetic code” and the “political code” (70). In the same manner, *S/Z* comes to mind when Laronde comes back to the same passage from Sebbar’s *Le Chinois vert d’Afrique* (the quotation in question explains the hero’s nickname) from many different angles in several successive chapters.

Generally speaking, the author stays away from close readings but he cleverly directs our own interpretive energy towards other possible associations and future reflections. He implicitly invites us to create bridges with other cultures (Maghrebian literature in French for example or other *Littératures de l’exigüité* as François Paré calls them) or with other theories (Pierre-André Taguieff’s work on racism and prejudice). Laronde proceeds through a series of delicate and impressionistic touches, skipping lightly from one aspect of a text to another, from one issue to the next, theorizing this practice, in the conclusion of the book, as a desire to avoid ideological closure and an attempt

at taking into account the possibly transitory and temporary nature of this beur generation.

The book is divided into easily recognizable units thanks to a series of sub-parts and sub-titles, and readers will appreciate its clarity and methodical composition. If, like me, they are not familiar with the terminology of structural linguistics, a few passages may sound a little technical (the developments on "matrices titrales" for example), but the most interesting aspect of Laronde's writing is that it generates a whole network of fruitful associations. The pages on the "non-lieu identitaire des beurs" (86-88) which insists on the role of the Mediterranean sea or on the importance of the ship between Marseille et Alger could not but remind me of another sort of "passage" that perhaps should be analyzed in conjunction with the experience of Maghrebian immigrants: as long as we avoid incongruous amalgams, it would be interesting to establish critical and theoretical links with the Middle Passage that haunts Caribbean and North American literatures. We could wonder for example why the immigrants of Maghrebian origin are still primarily metaphorized as people who travel by boat instead of by plane (as some "objective" reality would seem to suggest they do). After all, Dadié's *Un Nègre à Paris* (1959) already talked about the hero's problems with plane tickets and the misunderstandings they provoked. Reading Michel Serres's recent book on "angels," those figures of ideal communication which the philosopher imagines as employees in an international airport, it occurred to me that it is perhaps not by chance that "beurs" seem to have a metaphorical predilection for old boats like the "tassili."

The concepts of "exile" or "roots" appear to have lost some of their relevance when one talks about the beur generation. Neither eternal wanderers nor typical travelers (unless we think of what Edward Said calls the "voyage in"), the beurs described by Laronde are adequately represented by an aesthetics of the "around." And the same symbolic force that constantly pushes them out towards the "rings" of the suburbs is also what gives a multi-layered quality to the "autour" of the title of Laronde's book.

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Angela Livingstone, *Art in the Light of Conscience. Eight Essays on Poetry by Marina Tsvetaeva*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992. Pp. 214.

Finally, Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941) is achieving an international reputation as a major twentieth-century poet, largely thanks to the recent appearance in English of Viktoria Schweitzer's fine biography (*Tsvetaeva*,

Harper Collins, 1992). It took a biography to make this happen because the formal brilliance of Tsvetaeva's poetry binds it to her native Russian, making it extraordinarily difficult to translate (Elaine Feinstein makes the best effort in *Selected Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva*, Dutton, 1987). But her prose travels better and will justify her reputation for the non-Russian reader. Thankfully, most of her essays are now available in strong translation. Janet King's collection primarily of Tsvetaeva's biographical writings, which has been out of print for some time, has recently been reissued (*A Captive Spirit: Selected Prose*, Ardis, 1993). And Tsvetaeva's most important critical essays have been collected and translated for the first time by Angela Livingstone in *Art in the Light of Conscience. Eight Essays on Poetry by Marina Tsvetaeva*, the volume under review which includes twelve poems in translation. Livingstone gives an excellent characterization of Tsvetaeva's style and method in her introduction, but both here and in the footnotes she provides minimal contextual information about the essays, for which readers are advised to consult Schweitzer's book.

Tsvetaeva's reflections on poetry are themselves centrally engaged with the problem of reaching an audience. when Tsvetaeva left Russia in 1922, she was a poet of considerable reputation, acquired years earlier on the strength of her accomplished juvenile poetry. She published almost nothing in the interim but underwent several creative transformations, the most important of which took place during her difficult but immensely productive years in post-revolutionary Moscow. Most of this work was published around the time of Tsvetaeva's emigration and should have guaranteed her success, but the émigré literary establishment was hostile to her new avant-garde sensibility and remained so for the seventeen years she was to spend in the West. Tsvetaeva responded by affirming her creative affinity with "Soviet" poets Pasternak and Mayakovsky, most eloquently in "Epic and Lyric of Contemporary Russia" (1932/3). Her tribute is not simply a gesture of defiance but a principled response that finds its explication in "The Poet and Time" (1932), which deserves to be recognized as an important modernist manifesto. Tsvetaeva argues that major poetry is always contemporaneous, always one with the *Zeitgeist*, and that for a Russian poet this means "hearing" the revolution, growing to match its "scale and tempo." Tsvetaeva urgently formulated these and other convictions about the nature of her art in response to her émigré audience. She writes this prose "in defense of poetry," a phrase that could well serve as the volume's subtitle.

All of the essays here published are lessons on the right relation to poetry. Sometimes Tsvetaeva teaches through negative example, as in the refreshingly blunt "The Poet on the Critic" (1926), where she shows how critical opinions are ill-formed where they are ill-willed. Criticism, she argues, is not a matter of judging but of relating: "To have an opinion of a thing, you must live in that thing and love it." Those best qualified to evaluate poetry are either very good people or very good poets. Tsvetaeva thus makes an early and

radical challenge to standards of distance and objectivity in critical writing, most powerfully through her own example. Her essay on Pasternak, "Downpour of Light" (1922), is an ecstatic record of her first encounter with his verse, rendered as a total physical and emotional event. The function of such writing about poetry is to urge the work upon us, with a gift-giving gesture repeatedly imaged in her verse.

But these gifts of poetry carry large responsibilities for poet and reader, as Tsvetaeva claims in "Art in the Light of Conscience" (1932) her most comprehensive statement on creativity. Tsvetaeva is writing within a Russian tradition of viewing art in relation to truth, a tradition she invokes with references to Gogol, Tolstoy and the nineteenth-century "utilitarians," all of whom sought to place art in the service of moral truth. With typically paradoxical reasoning, Tsvetaeva commends their truth-seeking while insisting they look elsewhere: "Her the law of art is exactly the reverse of the moral law." With her vision of the poet "possessed" by a demonic, elemental force, Tsvetaeva proclaims a formulaic romanticism, but also expresses a sense of real dangers for both poet and reader. Like H len  Cixous, an admirer of Tsvetaeva whose prose has a comparable urgency, Tsvetaeva experiences writing as an illicit act, one which involves the very highest stakes. She articulates a relation between desire and writing that should hold particular interest for contemporary feminist readers. This is nowhere more suggestively developed than in Tsvetaeva's two essays on Pushkin, "My Pushkin" (1937) and "Pushkin and Pugachev" (1937), both of which Livingstone strangely excludes without mention (they can be found in King's collection). But even with these omissions, *Art in the Light of Conscience* provides a rare opportunity to hear a woman modernist speak with passion and authority about her poetic vocation.

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Beatriz Sarlo, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*. London: Verso, 1993. Pp. 148.

Without rejecting the many readings of Borges as a "universal cosmopolitan writer" whose "reputation in the world has cleansed him of nationality," Beatriz Sarlo focuses in this book on Borges as a writer "who is also explained by (and explains) Argentine culture, and particularly the culture of Buenos Aires." Sarlo returns Borges to his time and place describing him as part of the literary avant-garde of Buenos Aires preoccupied with defining an Argentina which in the 1920s and 1930s was struggling to assimilate the tens of thousands of immigrants while the intellectuals set themselves apart and advanced the patrician notion of "criollismo" in part by defining landscapes

that preserved their old world free from these new neighbors who were contaminating their culture and language. This place in Borges's work is "las orillas"—the "edge" of Sarlo's title—a literary landscape that is neither city nor suburb. "Las orillas" is a space created by nostalgia yet lacking the idealized folkloric elements Borges rejected much as, in contrast to his contemporaries Arlt and Girondo, he rejected the urban modernization of a society in transformation.

This collection of eight essays grew out of a series of four lectures Beatriz Sarlo gave at Cambridge University in 1992. Chapters two through six were written in English to be delivered orally. Without sacrificing the complexity of her argument, these chapters preserve a certain oral tone which give the text a clarity that many of us accustomed to reading literary criticism appreciate. The first chapter is an amended translation by Jorge Myers, and the last two were translated by the volume's editor, John King. Both do an excellent job of preserving the tone of the chapters originally written in Spanish.

The essays are framed by three more general chapters, the first and the last two, that describe this particularly Argentine physical and intellectual landscape, "las orillas" that shaped, and was shaped by, Borges's literary generation in the 1920s and 1930s. They provide the reader a context in which to study Borges as an Argentine rather than a universal writer. The central chapters focus more specifically on detailed readings of stories and poems Borges wrote in the twenties and thirties. The main focus is on the intertextuality not with the great writers of the European tradition, but primarily with the Argentine writers with whom he engaged in literary polemics, especially Leopoldo Lugones and José Hernández.

According to Sarlo, for Borges, "Modernity is a stage for restorative fantasies but also for loss, which brings with it feelings of nostalgia." The restorative fantasies, located in "las orillas," Borges created in his first three books of poetry are filled with "cultural mixing." The tenets of this mythical place, the semi-rural/semi-urban "orilleros," preserved the customs of the pampas while inhabiting the modern city. Borges allots them a heroic status for belonging to the criollo, pre-immigrant tradition. These characters are a temporal displacement belonging more to the last decades of the nineteenth century than to the decades in which Borges situates his works. Sarlo argues that Borges's work was never completely distanced from the ideologeme of these earlier works even as he rejected "the baroque profusion" of "cuchilleros" (colorful orilleros) in his future work.

The "orilla" becomes a metaphor for literature produced in the margins, in Argentina. But being on the margins accords one the privilege of accepting all "influences." Through detailed analysis of short stories (chapters 2-6) Sarlo shows how Borges can borrow from Kafka and Stevenson as he rewrites Lugones and Hernández. "The tension created by this double origin is at the heart of Argentine literature." Sarlo poses the questions, "What

are the elements that make up Argentine literature, and how is Argentine literature related to world literature?"

The first question is probed through a comparison of different readings by Borges and Lugones of José Hernández's *Martín Fierro*. While Lugones considered the nineteenth century gauchesque poem a national epic, Sarlo argues that in his essays and stories such as "The End" Borges freed the poem "from the dead weight of Lugones's epic and hyperbolic criticism and re-installed it in a tradition that could prove productive to current literature." In "The End" Borges picks up the plot where Hernández leaves off, writing *Martín Fierro* as an old man about to die. By killing *Martín Fierro*, Borges answers the question, "What should an avant-garde writer do with tradition?" Through his incorporation of the literary past, Borges ends the gauchesque literary cycle. He then goes on to write such stories as "The South" and "Story of the Warrior and the Captive" which Sarlo reads as examples of "cross-cultural blending" because of their characters who simultaneously belong to the world of *Martín Fierro* and the European tradition. Through her analysis of these tales Sarlo proposes a theoretical pattern for reading Argentine culture. "Borges's pattern for Argentine literature could be described as the European ordering of an American heritage rather than the predominance of local traits over European of imported culture." This blending leads not to a happy ending, but to the conflict of a literature that takes place on the insecure margins between two worlds.

Chapters three through six are dedicated to Borges's fantastic short stories "in terms of what, very generally, might be called contemporary history." Beginning with philosophical and aesthetic readings, and the study of intertextualities with Kafka, Kipling, Stevenson, etc., Sarlo goes on to propose original historical readings of Borges's fictions in order to "shed new light on the roles of Borges himself as an intellectual, and not just as a writer." Sarlo presents a Borges writing in response to multilingualism, social unrest, and the immigration that threatened to end criollo hegemony. Borges is also shown responding to the dramatic international events such as the rise of fascism and anti-semitism. Sarlo reads stories such as "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," "The Library of Babel," and "The Lottery of Babylon" as the "literary rendering of a reality which was liable to become unbearable," although the new order created in the text was often nightmarish. Sarlo argues effectively for these readings even as she points out that Borges himself would object to these ideological accounts of his stories.

But *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge* is much more than just a book about Borges. Sarlo expands greatly on her presentation in the first chapter of the literary scene of Buenos Aires in the twenties and thirties in Part Two of the book, the last two chapters entitled "The Avant-Garde, Buenos Aires and Modernity." This section is primarily a study of the three major avant-garde literary magazines of the 1920s, *Prisma*, *Proa*, and especially *Martín Fierro*. Sarlo asks the question, "What can be said to define an

Argentine avant-garde in which Borges played such an important role?" Unlike the European avant-garde with its "passion for dangerous experimentation" the "martinfierristas" worked for a reform of cultural institutions. They attacked the tastes of the bourgeoisie, called for economic protection of artists, and for fairness in awarding literary prizes. The Argentine avant-garde was greatly concerned with issues of criollismo and national identity, what in reference to Borges's work Sarlo calls "avant-garde urban criollismo." They waged war on modernismo and the writers of the generation of the Centenario. Their reforms in the literary system rescued such writers as Macedonio Fernández and Ricardo Güiraldes. Throughout the period of their publication, these magazines debate what Sarlo considers to be a constant in twentieth-century Argentine culture: the tension between criollismo and modernity.

Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge is a text that is useful both to a wide audience, and to the specialist on Borges. Students of Argentine literature can profit greatly from the overview of the Buenos Aires literary scene in the twenties and thirties that Sarlo provides throughout the entire text, even as she gives original readings of stories that other critics often distance from their original Argentine context.

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P. Adams Sitney, *Modernist Montage*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. Pp.

P. Adams Sitney's subtitle, *The Obscurity of Vision in Cinema and Literature*, establishes the clarity of his book's purpose: to demonstrate the self-allegorizing of (post)modern film and literature, where language and image meet and merge on both sides of the Atlantic using a broad interdisciplinary spectrum of texts and films, from Mallarmé to George Landow. Not only have all the chosen authors and directors written theoretical texts, but they also tend to inscribe a variety of critical *mises-en-abyme* into the fabric of the creative works analyzed here. According to Sitney, "These works bear signs of rupture" (1) and, at the same time, "they reinstate one of modernism's grand oxymorons: a secular theology" (3). Geographically and historically, Sitney shifts from Mallarmé and Balzac's nineteenth-century France to the revival of Emersonian values in twentieth-century America, the link being, of course, Gertrude Stein.

The inscription of absence of negation, as well as the blurring of boundaries between meta-text, text and image, begins with Mallarmé, whose concept of "the internal mirage of the words themselves" (7, 11) "transforms visual imagery into an abstraction of poetic form" (11). Sitney reinforces his argument by referring to Sidney Peterson's 1948 experimental film *Mr.*

Frenhofer and the Minotaur, which uses Freud's dreamwork to allegorize visual and literary abstraction "by collapsing Picasso's imagery on top of Balzac's" (15). Neither Mallarmé nor Peterson entirely succeeded in abolishing representation.

Following this provocative introduction, the ten chapters further examine the problems it raises and the 'degree zero' it points to, in a series of interrelated readings.

First, Sitney analyzes two 1920s Surrealist films, Duchamp's *Anémic cinéma* and Man Ray and Desnos's *L'Etoile de mer*, where the use of puns and adaptation of a poem through intertitles both "foreground(s) the use of language" (17) and refuse traditional film narrative techniques such as shot-countershot, creating a radical, self-conscious, interdisciplinary cinema.

In dealing with early Soviet film, Sitney contrasts Vertov and Eisenstein's use of montage and intertitles, before giving detailed attention to Dovshenko's first feature film *Zvenigora* (1938) and Eisenstein's contemporary *The Old and the New*, in which Eisenstein's mythologized modernism and Vertov's futurism meet. Sitney concludes that these various forms of "auto-critical," didactic Soviet cinema "did not serve the quickening of poetic power for the filmmaker" (52), a fundamental difference with early surrealist film, even if they share various subversive techniques.

Chapters three and four address films by Dreyer and Bresson respectively. Sitney describes Dreyer's modernity as "anachronistic," partly because it embodies the transition from silent to sound cinema, from *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* to *Ordet* and *Gertrud*. These films, based on plays, incarnate a formal transition from one genre to the other and gradually establish cinematic autonomy, by ". . . invent(ing) a synthetic space through reverse angle cutting" and restore-shot countershot as a stylistic device to convey a dramatic catharsis, as each film concludes (78-80).

Probably influenced by Dreyer, Bresson also turned literary texts, by Bernanos, Dostoievski, et al., into very visual films, using shot-countershot to convey emotions and create an illusionary space. Sitney chose *Mouchette* and *Pickpocket* for his analysis. He reads Bresson's stylized cinematography as "the art of making connections (*liens*) or montage" (87) and pinpoints the imposition of *figurative approach*, through repetition and crucial separation of sound from image, similar to the use of tropes in writing.

the pivotal middle chapter, on Blanchot's short story *Au Moment voulu*, introduces the autobiographical element. Like Mallarmé's poetry and Giacometti's sculpture, Blanchot's "stories about the nature of story telling" are "brought to an extreme of reduction" (104). Form, words used, intertextual references and content, combined or in conflict, create a reich palimpsestic, self-dissolving narrative. Sitney quotes Benjamin, for whom the modern disintegration of storytelling may be "making it possible to see a new beauty in what is vanishing" (123).

The next chapter moves back to film with Bergman's *Persona*, which, like Blanchot's text, uses two often interchangeable female protagonists to express "nothing" and self-reflexively "affirms the fragility of cinematic illusion" (126). The new component is the allegory of psychoanalysis: "Everything in *Persona* reflects the perspective of the patient" (129), "the dramatic events . . . can be seen as representative of the stages of the psychoanalysis" (131) and the spectator becomes an analyst watching both a cultural and a personal primal scene.

The next two sections keep the autobiographical common denominator and further connect Stein's "autobiographies" with Olson's poems: "A poetics centered on the ambiguity of the pun is common to Charles Olson and Gertrude Stein" (146). Sitney sees them both as products of the "Emersonian heritage." For her displaced autobiographies, Stein put entity before identity and used "the mechanical principle of cinematic illusion as an analogy for her writing" (149). In turn, Olson "was testing the limits of repetition and the powers of transformation" (166). As well as Olson's language games ("Topos, typos, tropos"), Sitney highlights his interest in dreams, his broad intertextual scope and his recourse to the mediation of visual arts, such as sculpture.

The final two chapters concentrate on recent experimental film. In the first, Brakhage's *Blue Moses* (1962) and Straub/Huillet's *Moses and Aaron* are introduced by preliminary considerations of texts from *Genesis*, Blanchot's criticism and a poem by Olson. Paradigms of allegory and "secular theology," both films scrupulously avoid shot-countershot. Brakhage responds to Deren and parodies European 1960s films by undercutting the narrative model; Straub-Huillet, in their screen adaptation of Schoenberg's opera, "take Moses and Aaron as figures for the image and sound division of cinema" (210). Before his concluding remarks on "Landow's Wit," Sitney alludes to Bruce Baillie's film *All My Life* for its "Emersonian circle" (210). Finally, Landow whittles film down to a system of substanceless puns about the behavior of language.

The brilliance of Sitney's book arises from its self-reflexive form as a critical modernist montage of specular readings, oscillating between the verbal and the visual.

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Antoloy Vishevsky, *Soviet Literary Culture of the 1970s: The Politics of Irony*. Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1993. Pp. 336.

In the West, we usually have a very restricted knowledge of contemporary Soviet literature. The literature that emerged during the Perestroika period made a lot of noise and attracted the attention of the general public; it

was the "return" of dissident and emigré writers, of the "oppressed" writers of the 1920s and 1930s (Zamyatin, Platonov, Bulgakov); manuscripts on the atrocities of the past (such as Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat*) crept out of the drawers where they had been furtively stashed by their prudent authors. The general impression was that finally, with the suppression of censorship, Russians had direct access to *real* culture, free from the control of state ideology. But we tend to forget that even during the gloomy "stagnation" period, many interesting works still appeared regularly in official publications. Most of these works were written in the ironic mode. Irony was perceived by many writers as an alternative to dissidence, emigration or silence; through irony, it was possible to express the despair and desolation of an entire generation of intellectuals without necessarily raising forbidden topics.

In his book, *Soviet Literary Culture of the 1970s: The Politics of Irony*, Anatoly Vishevsky introduces the Western reader to this crucial aspect of contemporary Russian culture. His book is divided into two parts. In Part 1, he analyzes various forms of irony in Soviet culture in the 1970s. Part 2 consists of an anthology of ironic short stories, never published before in English.

The irony that is predominant in Soviet culture of the 1970s is a specific type of irony: Vishevsky calls it *Weltanschauung* irony, as opposed to *stylistic* irony and *structural* irony. *Weltanschauung* irony represents a particular attitude towards life and the world: a blend of scepticism, despair, and revolt. This ironic "point of view" expresses "the vision of a lonely person in a hostile and alienating environment" (16), his desire to escape reality ("escapist philosophy"), nostalgia for a better world. The writer-ironist, however, is conscious of the futility of action, and of his own uselessness and mediocrity; he is "a detached narrator who understands the paradoxes and absurdities of existence and humanity but can only muse ironically on them, for he himself is human and knowledge is the only power he has" (13). The writer-ironist never judges or condemns his anti-heroes; he simply describes their downfall with a slight, melancholic smile.

Vishevsky sees that type of irony as the common dominator of various forms of Soviet culture in the 1970s. He analyzes not only literary prose, but also other mediums: Georgian film, stand-up comedy, songs of the "bards" (Okudzhava, Galich, Vysotsky), radio and TV shows. Vishevsky provides a good historical background for the emergence and evolution of each form, and enumerates individual works, explaining how they treat various existential problems. Since he has been himself involved in the cultural scene of that period (one of his stories is included in the anthology of ironic stories), Vishevsky has access to precious information unknown to most scholars. From a purely theoretical point of view, however, his book might sometimes appear too superficial; very often Vishevsky simply contents himself with paraphrasing the plots of films, stories, gags and songs.

The most important section of Part I is devoted to an analysis of the thematic and stylistic particularities of a critically neglected minor genre: ironic miniature stories that appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the humor pages of Soviet periodicals. The humor section was a neutral ground where editors did not have to follow the party line strictly; in short narrative texts writers could treat such “unorthodox” (and not very humorous) topics as the absurdity of existence, the dull and routine character of human life, incommunicability, solitude, loss of identity. This genre was intended for specific readers—Soviet urban intellectuals—with whom it created a special bond. Therefore, as Vishevsky explains, “[t]o become part of this relationship one has to follow in the footsteps of a Soviet intellectual: read the same book, listen to the same records, and laugh at the same jokes. Such a relationship is based on a cultural text that is found behind the literary and that is known to all the participants in the relationship” (75). We might then wonder if it is possible for the non-Soviet reader to participate in this cultural experience. Do the stories lose all their effectiveness outside a relatively limited social and historical context?

The anthology of Part 2 (according to Vishevsky, “the first of its kind either in Russian or in English”) gives us the opportunity to answer this question. It contains a wide selection of ironic miniature stories (translated by Vishevsky, in collaboration with Michael Biggins), from 40 different authors; it also provides useful biographical and bibliographical information on each author. One is immediately impressed by the high literary quality of these texts. As Vishevsky remarks in Part I, “[t]he schematic nature of the stories forces the writers to put great emphasis on formal features. Experimentation in style are common, and the stories abound in such elements as ruptured casual relationships, mixing of first- and third-person narration in the same story, tautology, and, most often, actualization of metaphor as a plot device” (78). Some stories remind us of Donald Barthelme’s experiments, Kafka’s miniatures, or even (in the case Arkady Arkanov) Raymond Carver’s minimalist prose. On a purely thematic level most of the texts will reach any reader. A few allusions to very specific political and social problems might be missed, but on the whole, despair, disillusionment, and solitude are experiences everybody shares with the average intellectual *homo sovieticus*.

In conclusion, Vishevsky certainly deserves much praise for his attempt to resurrect this fascinating subgenre. His book might serve as an excellent textbook for students of Russian literature.

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David Der-wei Wang, *Fictional Realism in Twentieth-Century China: Mao Dun, Lao She, Shen Congwen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Pp. 367.

The discourse of realism is a topic that has received much critical attention in the study of modern Chinese literature, which is generally said to have begun with the New Culture movement in the late 1910s. The reason for such interest is obvious: not only was "realist literature" the very first battle cry and self-definition of a new literary production on the threshold of this century, but "critical" or "progressive" realism also quickly became a preferred mode of writing, only to be officially sanctioned by the rising communist ideology and hegemony. Chinese proponents of realism, influenced by Soviet Zhdanovism and in accordance with a world-wide radicalism among intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s, embraced realist writing more often out of axiological commitment than with epistemological concerns. Yet essentially an individualistic understanding of reality and its representability, realism could hardly be co-opted by a collectivist cause or movement. In a brilliant study of the limits of realism in revolutionary China, the late Marston Anderson underscores this paradoxical situation and observes that "critical realism, which had been adopted in China as a tool of revolution, became suspect precisely for its failure to advance the communal ends of that revolution."¹ Indeed, the fate of realism has always been tied to the course of modern Chinese literature and in retracing the development of realism we inevitably confront twentieth-century Chinese history, political as well as cultural.

David Der-wei Wang's book on different formations and strategies of realist fiction in twentieth-century China is therefore a timely intervention. Offering a comprehensive introduction to the writings of Mao Dun, Lao She, and Shen Congwen, Wang contributes to a general discussion by further exploring the complexity of the discourse of realism. The three writers give abundant evidence to the vitality as well as the problematic of realism in the first half of the century.

The starting point for Wang's account of what he calls "fictional realism" in twentieth-century China is already an epigonic moment of "after Lu Xun" (1881-1936), the great writer who most poignantly articulated a crisis of reality at the outset of modern Chinese literature. Wang duly focuses on Lu Xun's first short story written in vernacular Chinese "Diary of a Madman," and attributes to it much paradigmatic value for the subsequent development of realism. His central thesis is that Mao Dun, Lao She, and Shen Congwen have enriched the realist tradition not so much by writing *against* or *according to* as *instead of* the progenitor of modern Chinese orthodox literary realism. The two chapters on Mao Dun (1896-1981) examine extensively the logic and politics of his historical novel, bringing together a wide range of topics and discursive levels. In his novelistic employment of history, Mao Dun is

revealed to have combined Zola's naturalist determinism and Tolstoy's religiosity to project a dialectical vision of historical inevitability and human will power. This tentative, if not residual, moment of comparative literature may still have its institutional resonances, but Wang's discussion of the writer's "politics of gender" and "politics of betrayal" seems both more fruitful and provocative. In describing a "politics of betrayal" in Mao Dun's writing as well as political practice, Wang directs our attention back to an essential difficulty in the discourse of realism, namely that the efficacy a realist desires is also the very limitation of his/her own writing. In this light, Mao Dun the author appears to be a doomed failure, an individual hopelessly tormented by bad faith.

If a writer's direct interest and engagement in politics demands that the critic adopt a heavily sociology-oriented approach, Lao She (1899-1966), focusing on much more mundane urban life, presents a different case. According to David Wang, farce and melodrama, not unlike the burlesque Dickensian laugh at human folly as well as suffering, distinguish Lao She from his contemporaries and predecessors. The "melancholy laughter" that he inspires with his sordid and desperate characters amounts to an effective transgression, "a critical mockery, rather than a mimesis, of the real" (120). By showing that all of Lao She's major novels subscribe to "farcical and melodramatic discourses," the critic implies that Lao She's fiction expresses an uneasiness with modern city life, a life form in which both the absolute and the permanent are challenged, if not already displaced. This anxiety over an absent foundational value apparently underlies Lao She's patriotism as well. The problematic of patriotism certainly deserves careful examination, especially in the case of a metropolitan writer such as Lao She, but in order to grasp the cultural and historical enormity of the issue, one may have to move into the terrain of intellectual history. Wang in this chapter tries to treat Lao She both as a patriot and a patriotic writer, occasionally playing one off against the other, and the previously well-developed theme of farce and melodrama gets lost sight of.

Curiously, the backdrop to most of Lao She's fictional world—the city—stops short of becoming a valid object of study for the critic, but the rural and distant landscape that Shen Congwen (1902-1988) portrays in his "native-soil" writings speaks volumes to David Wang. The two chapters on Shen yield a much more sophisticated reading than those of Mao Dun and Lao She. Two separate processes of interpretation are involved here: on the one hand, Shen's mode of writing is defined as a "critical lyricism," a concept that goes back to Jaroslav Prusek's pioneering work on modern Chinese literature and aptly encapsulates the native-soil fiction writer's political ideology; on the other hand, the poetics of Shen's fiction is described as an "imaginary nostalgia" in that a nostalgic impulse is purposely intertwined with desire and even anticipation. By suggesting that an imaginary nostalgia forms both the energy and tension of native-soil fiction, Wang suggests that this longing for the rural

and the authentic may indicate a profound cultural/historical transformation accompanied by the disappearance of a certain mode of existence.

At one point David Wang invokes Bakhtin's concept of "chronotope" to describe the time/space totality embraced in Shen Congwen's fiction (250). He refers to the same notion when mentioning the three localities depicted in Mao Dun's writings: rural, urban, and metropolitan (50). Evidently all three realist writers have created a series of different chronotopes, and to trace the movement among these various time/space constructions may lead to a more cohesive historical narrative, not only of the development of literary realism, but also, more interestingly to my mind, of the cultural logic of twentieth-century China. Yet, because the larger historical situation is presented mostly in fragments, the book now appears random in its choice of writers, even though the author tries, in the conclusion, to give the whole project some coherence by highlighting the lasting paradigmatic influence of Mao Dun, Lao She, and Shen Congwen on contemporary Chinese literature.

Finally, a large portion of the argument seems to be directed against a generation of critics from mainland China. This both gives the project some historical specificity and imposes a severe limitation. For those who prefer a more rigorous and accurate theoretical language, the undefined notion of "the real" and the prevalence of "discourse" may be bothersome, but, fortunately, the context always helps.

1. *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, 74.

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