

Anglo-Irish background whose careers have been completed," would seem to call for an inclusion of fiction writers as well as dramatists. A student of modern Anglo-Irish fiction can only wish that the editor had deemed it appropriate to include the following: (1) Those fiction writers whose careers were terminated though their lives had not (2) Those whose careers and lives have been terminated (3) the contemporary fiction writers. In the first case such prolific and influential writers as Liam O'Flaherty and Kate O'Brien would have been included. In the second case some consideration would have been accorded Brinsley MacNamara whose early (c. 1915) realistic novels (e.g., *The Valley of Squinting Windows*, *The Clanking of Chains*) were intensely influential, and Frank O'Connor whose brilliant fiction illuminated Anglo-Irish literature for thirty years. In the last instance an essay similar to that on modern drama could have been of great value with bibliographical references to such writers as Brian Moore, Edna O'Brien, Michael McLaverty, Mary Lavin, Benedict Kiely.

Those scholars of Anglo-Irish literature who do turn to the volume for its relevance to fiction will find the essay on James Joyce to be the most recent and most inclusive to date. It includes primary bibliographies, secondary bibliographies, and surveys of criticism, manuscript holdings and catalogs, editions, concordances, textual studies, biography, memoirs by contemporaries, background and milieu studies, and finally, bibliographies relevant to individual works, all of it both descriptive and evaluative.

In summary, the student of Anglo-Irish fiction must await other descriptive and evaluative bibliographical efforts which may explore immediate and perplexing problems. Conspicuous among these problems are the comparative merits of a multitude of the century's writers of fiction (O'Faolain, O'Flaherty, Colum, Purcell, Kate O'Brien, Austin Clarke, MacNamara, and so forth) and such issues as the absence of an Irish critical atmosphere, the presence of a "Catholic" critical atmosphere, self-exile of Irish fiction writers, censorship, problems of publication, and the identification of an Anglo-Irish writer. Perhaps this volume will be an encouragement to that effort.

Frank L. Ryan

JANE RULE

The Young in One Another's Arms

New York: Doubleday, 1977. Pp. 204. \$6.95.

Jane Rule's latest book, *The Young in One Another's Arms*, concerns the relationship of Ruth Wheeler, a boardinghouse keeper in Vancouver, with her "family," which consists of her boarders, her mother-in-law Clara, and her usually absent husband Hal. The group gains and loses members but finally consolidates into a cohesive unit knit by mutual affection and shared experience. When the boardinghouse ceases to be, this group moves to Galiano Island to operate a small café and generally do good deeds for the local population and thus overcome the general antipathy to "hippies" which their mode of living originally occasioned.

As the title suggests, this novel "is no country for old men"; there is altogether too much turbulence for those seeking solutions rather than problems, peace rather than strife; it is overgenerously peopled with stereotypical representatives of contemporary life: the high-minded American deserter from the Vietnam situation (Arthur and Tom); a foul-mouthed, socially conscious, sexy, cop-hating, warm-hearted female radical (Gladys); an intellectual (Ph.D. in English; reads Dickens) who has to discover whether she prefers men or women in bed (Mavis); a super-affectionate, super-efficient, super-intelligent, super-sensitive, scintillating black homosexual on the run from the American police (Boy); a dope addict who turns into a law student and establishment man (Stew); police officers who threaten the "family," and disrupt it by "kidnapping" and "murder"; a silent creature devoted to a trivial routine, who cracks when confronted with change (Willard); the old lady invalid who bird-watches and appears wise (Clara); a short little tough guy who bullies his women (Hal, Clara's son and Ruth's husband); and finally, the mothering and devoted landlady, Ruth, brooding over them all.

With such a cast, the action cannot avoid being melodramatic, and is unlikely to teach soul to "clap its hands and sing." The catalog of disasters that occur in the novel creates a perversely unbalanced view of life. These violent "accidents" characterize human experience as it is in

the novel's present, and also as it was in the past through Ruth's ruminations about her younger days. They are intended no doubt to keep the stage busy and particularly to emphasize the assimilative, buoyant spirit of Ruth who when the novel opens is already coping admirably with the loss of an arm, a daughter and, effectively, a husband, and who continues to absorb punishment like a sponge.

Her new boarder, Arthur, an American deserter, only just recovering from his trauma by means of Gladys's generous sexual ministrations, is seized by the "pigs" and unceremoniously turned over to the U. S. authorities at the border. Ruth's house, victim of villainous developers, is to be torn down, and the "family" is threatened with dissolution. Willard mans the ramparts, defying bulldozers and police with a gun. When Tom attempts to fetch him out he gets a bullet in the shoulder for his pains; Willard is shot down by the police. Ruth's shocked agony, as she cradles Tom's broken body, is splashed across the pages of the newspapers. An unwanted pregnancy allows us to confront the issue of abortion, which is resolved on the side of "life"; the result is the birth of twins, one of whom strangles in its umbilical cord. This, in turn, leads to the father's (Tom) breakdown; he attempts to rape his wife's (Gladys) lesbian girlfriend (Mavis) who succeeds in laying him out with a brandy bottle. Boy is wrenched out of the "family" when the police get on his track and he is forced to go into hiding. Ruth's father (in a flashback) is killed by a falling tree; her husband, crushed by one of the huge road-building machines he operates, dies of a heart attack on the operating table.

Characters are not developed in depth. Of them all, we know Ruth best; she is sensitive and understanding, practical and unworldly. But she is a victim rather than a heroine. She is exploited by her own tolerance; she has no dignity, only, we are led to understand, an unreasoning and unreasonable love. Ruth is sympathetically drawn, and because on occasion we are permitted glimpses of her inner reactions to the events that crash upon her so persistently, we can sometimes respond positively to her. None of the remaining characters is capable of eliciting the reader's sympathy.

The novel is written in a bright, brittle style which frequently displays the economy and impact of aphorism, and occasionally,

a brilliant blossom of imagery. The language of conversation varies from the exaggerated crudity of Gladys, and the self-parodying negro's patois of Boy, to the elliptical, sometimes enigmatic and affected expression of the other characters who seem to speak with an understanding of what the others are thinking, an insight perhaps shared by Jane Rule but not always by the reader.

In spite of the extravagances of events, characters, and style, the novel is eminently readable. The reader is given no time to be bored as might be the case with *Desert of the Heart*; there is a continuous flow through and past elements of interest and suspense. The principal defects of the novel are the failure to individualize and develop the characters and the excessive introduction of disaster. Consequently, we are not adequately engaged by the characters and disaster becomes so commonplace, that the human spirit of the reader is dulled into insensitivity. Rule's attempts in her own interpretation of events (through Ruth) to jerk the reader into a compassionate view of affairs seem consequently sentimental.

J. deBruyn

JACQUES LEENHARDT
Lecture politique du roman: La Jalousie d'Alain Robbe-Grillet
Paris: Les Editions de Minuit,
1973. Pp. 280.

The novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet have, because of their innovative form, consistently forced critics to deal with the problematic relationship between aesthetic construction and human experience. Roland Barthes has praised what he perceived to be the impersonal dominance and nonsignificance of the external world in Robbe-Grillet's first four novels, of which *La Jalousie* is the third. In Barthes's view, Robbe-Grillet's objects portray man's physical world but break with the literary convention of revealing man's metaphysical vision of the world, of serving as anthropomorphic metaphors. This "déception du sens" or "silence de la signification" has