

The central relationships of the book are illuminated in an excellent analysis by Janet Altman of "addressed and undressed language," that is, of the fluctuations in style between a discourse carefully created with the receiver in mind, and one which betrays the writer's real self in spite of his self-consciousness. She argues that Merteuil's moments of vulnerability are perfectly deliberate. The danger in the system is that sometimes the letters are read by the wrong audience. Roseann Runte in the shortest but by no means the least substantial paper, argues that the "actors" are also "authors" who choose their own role, and hence are guilty of manipulating. Merteuil is the arch manipulator, but even she ends by becoming a character in a novel written by Valmont. Keith Palka stresses the importance of chance in *LD*. The libertines are opportunists, not artists, because they have to work with material which is often outside their control. The only artist is the author, Laclos, who is responsible for the total pattern, including the incidents of chance, which he is obliged to include in order to make his tale plausible. The longest essay is by Lester Crocker, who considers the modes of evil in the novel, arguing that in human experience, evil is inevitable and inevitably destructive; there is no need to invoke "divine justice."

An indication of the contents of a collection such as this is bound to stress the framework of each essay. For a reader, however—provided he has time to weigh up and absorb them—the value of the book comes just as much from the perceptions the different critics have of incidents and phrases found in the novel, and these perceptions abound. The subtlety of the internal echoes, the shifting points of view, and the ambiguities which operate on so many different levels simultaneously, offer a rich quarrying-ground, and even the most fundamental issues have not yet, it appears, yielded all their secrets.

Many of the contributors to this volume, including the editor in his introductory "Profile," discuss the denouement. This particular knot will not be untied unless one adopts a perspective curiously absent from this volume (although it is implied by Palka, and by Runte's last sentence): that of our connivance, cunningly engineered by Laclos. We share the ironic vision with Valmont and Merteuil for three-quarters of the volume, but at the end irony overtakes them, and our detach-

ment from them is paralleled by a reduction of the ironic distance which had separated us from Mme de Tourvel. Pointers to this reading were given by Jean Rousset in an important chapter of his *Forme et Signification* (1962); in his quick initial rundown of the history of Laclos criticism Free does not even mention this study.

This brings us to our one major criticism of the volume: editorial indecisiveness. Bearing the title *Critical Approaches*, opening with a survey of the novel's changing fortunes over the years, which is followed by pages by LeBreton, Bourget, and Malraux, the book has the initial appearance of a collection of representative criticism. But after the Malraux we have, as has been said, seven brand new essays which do not seem to have been chosen to illustrate the diversity of current critical approaches, and which leave the period between Malraux (1939) and the 1970s uncharted. In addition, the bibliographical references are handled in a slipshod and arbitrary manner. The seven-page bibliography does not list the three introductory essays, whose source is not adequately given anywhere in the book; it omits Baudelaire, Fauchery, and Thody's *MLR* article (all cited by contributors), as well as Coulet, Doumic, Le Hir, Mistler, Toplak, Trahard (all of whom are important); a reference to one of Free's other articles (correctly listed in the bibliography) is elsewhere quoted as if it is unpublished; and information as to the edition used throughout the volume is repeated in the notes to the essays by Rabkin and Rosbottom.

Anthony R. Pugh

BARBARA HILL RIGNEY
Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Brönte, Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood
 Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978. Pp. 148.
 \$15.00

Barbara Hill Rigney's excellent book "attempts to reconcile feminism and psychology in the area of literary criticism" (p. 3). Working from Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre*, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Lessing's

The Four-Gated City, and Atwood's *Surfacing*, Rigney shows in separate chapters how women's madness in literature is frequently a response to repressive social conditions. The book's fertile introduction provides a brief but rich overview of theories about mental illness among women. In it Rigney reminds us that from Freud onward behavior "which is considered normal and desirable . . . for men is thought to be neurotic or even psychotic for women" (p. 3). Culminating with R. D. Laing's remarks on madness, Rigney notes comments made by others on the topic: Germaine Greer ("Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. It had no mother"), Phyllis Chesler (our society's view of the ideal woman is the passive housewife with "limited authenticity"), Karen Horney (her refutation of Freud's penis envy theories is a classic on the topic), Clara Thompson, Ruth Moulton, Alexandra Symonds, Jean Baker Miller, Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Betty Friedan, Kate Millet, Adrienne Rich, and Juliet Mitchell. Rigney sees Laing's theories as applicable to feminist issues, especially his most well-known that psychosis may be a "sane" response to an insane society.

In her examination of each novel, Rigney uses Laing's theories as her critical focus. Chapter 1, "The Frenzied Moment Sex and Insanity in *Jane Eyre*," discusses Bertha, a character typically described as "the mad woman [who] represents the evil in Rochester's soul" (p. 15) or as the "evil-mother figure who prevents Jane's sexual union with the fatherlike Rochester," (p. 16). Echoing Laing's view of social madness, Rigney describes Bertha as embodying "the moral example which is the core of Bronte's novel—in a society which itself exhibits a form of psychosis in its oppression of women" (p. 16). In Chapter 2, "The 'Sane and the Insane': Psychosis and Mysticism in *Mrs. Dalloway*," Rigney shows that the line separating sanity and insanity is most delicately drawn. According to Rigney, *Mrs. Dalloway* confirms Laing's statement in *The Politics of Experience* that society is composed of "sane-schizoids," people alienated from their own inner selves and therefore isolated from each other as well" (p. 42). In the novel sane and insane are juxtaposed; Clarissa Dalloway representing the former, Septimus Smith the latter. Gradually, however, the lines that separate the two blur and fade, each character becoming a part of, a mirror image of

the other. Chapter 3, "'A Rehearsal for Madness': Hysteria as Sanity in *The Four-Gated City*," illustrates Laing's remark in *The Politics of Experience* that "only by the most outrageous violation of ourselves have we achieved our capacity to live in relative adjustment to a civilization apparently driven to its own destruction" (p. 69). Martha Quest in Lessing's novel learns that to adjust to society one must become alienated, disjointed: schizophrenic. In her fourth chapter, "'After the Failure of Logic': Descent and Return in *Surfacing*," Rigney notes that Atwood's narrator describes herself as cut apart, fragmented, much as do Laing's patients in *The Divided Self*. *Surfacing* presents its narrator's attempts to journey home, "beyond logic" (p. 93), to put herself together again. The society that has caused her fragmentation seems momentarily far away as she crawls about her childhood, island home.

The protagonists whom Rigney describes in her book manage to survive in worlds where women are often cast as "victims and lunatics" (p. 119)—beyond the pale of power. As survivors these characters provide role models for readers who seek psychological growth and wholeness. Barbara Hill Rigney skillfully leads her readers on this literary journey toward women's spiritual health. At journey's end, readers, like the novels' protagonists, can affirm "a superior sanity based on personal order and the discovery of at least the potential for an authentic and integrated self" (p. 127).

ANDREW FIELD
Nabokov: His Life in Part
 Penguin Books, 1978 (originally published 1977). Pp. 285.

Although Nabokov supervised the writing of this book, we are warned that it comes without his recommendation. Nabokov called biographies "psychoplagiarisms" and approved of them—or so he told Andrew Field—only for their documentation. As an example of "the sort of biography Nabokov much favors," Field gives us this tidbit: ". . . on June 3,