

obstacle" to the prospective reader of volumes in this series; evidently, it is not normally consistent with "the methods associated with Cambridge" (v). As a consequence, perhaps, Berthoud's treatment of Conrad's notion of "the real" fails to do justice to the brilliant equivocations of his subject's intellect: "reality" is "not in the sphere of the inner and the private, but in that of the outer and the public" (p. 187). The disjunction is quite unlike Conrad, for reality, like comedy and tragedy in the Conradian universe, "is but a matter of the visual angle" ("The Tale," *Tales of Hearsay*, Dean Collected Edition, p. 62); and, like the word "Duty," reality "contains infinities" (p. 61). Seen from the point of vantage of Berthoud's disjunction, Marlow's observation that Jim's fate lends "little meaning" to distinctions between "truth" and "illusion" (*Lord Jim*, Dent Collected Edition, p. 222), for example, loses its precision and complexity of meaning. The conclusion of Berthoud's study, that Conrad is "a much more intellectually coherent figure than the one criticism has accustomed us to" (p. 186), follows from this careful scholar's evidence. One might wish that, in both matter and concept, the study had been more comprehensive and, therefore, more coherent in articulating this valid thesis.

Camille R. La Bossière

BERNARD F. RODGERS, JR.
Philip Roth
 Boston: Twayne, 1978. Pp. 188.

One hears from colleagues engaged in adding to the monumental output of the various Twayne Authors Series that steps are finally being taken to upgrade the quality of the whole enterprise. Certainly a new desire for academic respectability is reflected in the publication on the half-title page of Bernard Rodgers's *Philip Roth* of the name of the distinguished scholar, Warren French, as "Editor of this Volume." What has not changed, however, is the basic Twayne format and, however scrupulous editorial practices might have become, this seems likely, at least on the evidence of Rodgers's book, to continue to militate against creative criticism.

Bernard Rodgers is clearly an intelligent and sensible scholar and his goal is to cut through the critical nonsense that has for so long obscured the nature of Philip Roth's achievement. He rejects the persistent notion that Roth must be treated as a "Jewish" writer and instead approaches him through his use of realistic techniques. In tracing the ways in which Roth has gradually broadened his realistic base by introducing elements of ribald humor, pornography, and fantasy, Rodgers is able to deal with aspects of his work that the ethnic school of criticism finds embarrassing and subliterary. In that Rodgers integrates his study of Roth's technical evolution with an analysis of how he has developed the theme of the effect of contemporary American reality on the self's private life, his book amounts to an impressive attempt to deal with the totality of the author's oeuvre. Roth, a writer who has often appeared to readers to be repeatedly setting off in new and bizarre directions, is revealed, under Rodgers's guidance, to be evolving in a consistent and meaningful fashion.

Yet, for all Rodgers's intelligence, and the soundness of his approach, *Philip Roth* is not as successful as it might have been. The Twayne format—which demands from the critic a comprehensive survey of the author's works, stress on his place within literary history and genre, attention to biography, and coverage of his treatment by other critics—must be blamed for this. Rodgers does manage to escape from the biographical trap and refers to Roth's life only where it is relevant to autobiographical fictions like *The Professor of Desire*, and to his nonfictional writings only in so far as they illuminate (as they so often do) his fiction. However, he is very obviously caught in the stranglehold of the other aspects of the Twayne format.

Not all of Roth's books are equally important and Rodgers does not have interesting things to say about all of them. However, as a Twayne author, he is obliged to extend his study to include the minor fiction that appears in the *Goodbye Columbus* volume and is reduced to padding out some chapters—in particular, the one which deals with *Letting Go*—with plot summary. Not only does this mean that sections of the book are dull and uninformative, but that there is too little space left to discuss Roth's more complex works.

Lack of space alone, however, is not responsible for the failure of Rodgers's

discussions of *My Life as a Man* and *The Professor of Desire* which he considers to be Roth's most important novels. These analyses also suffer from the need to satisfy the Twayne requirement for categorizing. Hence, terms like realism, fantasy, Southwestern humor, local color, melodrama, and oral tradition are mulled over endlessly and repeated attempts are made to find Roth a place in literary history. Parts of this latter enterprise are essential in that Roth makes quite overt references to the work of other writers, and Rodgers's discussion of his relationship to Kafka is particularly illuminating. However, references to the early fiction as Salingeresque and to *Letting Go* as Jamesian are based on influences and similarities that are far too general to be of much value.

What is ultimately sacrificed to the need to conform to the Twayne format is detailed analysis of the literary text. Not only does Rodgers tend to proceed almost entirely through generalizations but, when he does try to prove a point, he frequently does so by reference to the opinion of another critic rather than to the text of Roth's novels. Thus, as a way of demonstrating that *Letting Go* "stands as a coherent whole" (p. 58), Rodgers offers quotations from Alfred Kazin and Scott Donaldson's analyses of the novel. The fact that he was allowed, or perhaps even encouraged, to engage in a procedure that one rarely finds outside of an undergraduate's first stumbling attempts to be scholarly indicates Twayne's continuing contempt for the notion that the text is the sine qua non of literary criticism.

What we are left with after reading *Philip Roth* is a sense that Bernard Rodgers knows his subject, has a good knowledge of the influences that formed Roth as a writer, and an understanding of the shape of his oeuvre, but we are offered little insight into the unique achievement of the individual novels. Rodgers supplies us with some essential tools for solving the many puzzles in Roth's work, but rarely solves them for us. If he is ever to do so, he must write his own book and not Twayne's.

David Monaghan

ROGER SALE
Fairy Tales and After: From Snow White to E. B. White
Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978. Pp. 280.
\$11.00.

Professor Sale likes most children's literature, though he is a bit hard, to my mind, on Hans Christian Andersen. A man at war with himself, is Sale's verdict, though I can see what he means. He is also less than just to A. A. Milne, whom he accuses of "shallow snobbery." But these controversial remarks are a small price to pay for a sensitive and thorough analysis of what makes children's literature special and different. He avoids all the heavy-handed nonsense one usually gets in studies of this kind, because he is unashamedly enthusiastic about the genre for its own sake. It is after all an extensive body of literature, and possibly the oldest, as well as the most neglected so far as critics of fiction are concerned.

Sale brings all the sophistication of an adult schooled in literary studies to bear on this topic, but he is never clumsy or portentous. He devotes single chapters to the major figures in the field—Carroll, Potter, Grahame, Kipling, and L. Frank Baum, and discusses many others in the course of his introductory chapters on "Fairy Tales," "Written Tales," and "Animals." He is particularly astute and perceptive about the oral tradition which flourished, he points out, before childhood, as one of the ages of man, was invented. Then was a time of innocence, it seems. "After childhood was invented," Sale comments, "adults inevitably began thinking about what language, what stance or tone, what materials were appropriate for children" (p. 64), and so we get a knowingness, a diffuse sense of superiority, from which the narrators of the oral tradition were quite free. What a pity. Still, we all have to grow up, literature included. So was it so very unreasonable, I wonder, for Milne through *Winnie-the-Pooh* to guide his son toward an acceptance of the loss of childhood?

John Fletcher