

interpretation of Virginia Woolf's problems is a convincing one. It is one that has long been implicit in biographies and literary criticism of Woolf, but never expressed so baldly as in this book. It is also one that seems somehow familiar to the reader of Woolf's novels, in which male characters (like Hirst, Richard Dalloway, Mr. Ramsay, or Bart Oliver) are in some ways unsympathetic or insensitive to their female companions and counterparts. If, indeed, as Poole suggests, Virginia Woolf was "a proud spirit," who did not like defeat, we can now understand her suicide. As Poole writes, "The water would receive her with the dignity that she felt she needed, and indeed, deserved" (p. 279).

Margaret Church

CAMILLE R. LA BOSSIÈRE
Joseph Conrad and the Science of Unknowing
 Fredericton, N.B.: York Press,
 1979. Pp. 110.

For nearly a decade Conrad scholarship has been punctuated by assertions that Conrad criticism is "at the end of the tether" and that Conrad is "a writer about whom very little new remains to be said" (see John Feaster, "Conrad and Ford: Criticism at the End of the Tether," *Journal of Modern Literature*, 2 [1972], 417-21; Frederick R. Karl, "Conrad Studies," *Studies in the Novel*, 9 [1977], 326). There is indeed little need for further critical studies that, mechanically and abruptly, chapter by leaden chapter, offer platitudinous readings of the major novels. Yet there is a very serious need for work to be done by versatile scholars who can provide a more thorough comprehension of the phenomenology of Conrad's philosophical outlook and of the substantial portion of Conrad's work that has been neglected due to the imperceptiveness and partiality of previous studies. The author of the volume under present consideration addresses his work to this need as he demonstrates a command of Conrad's works that can be equalled by few scholars and uses this command to articulate a

synthetic presentation of the Conradian metaphysics that may well prove to be definitive.

Past criticism of Conrad's novels has too often wallowed in the platitudes of the Protestant work ethic, affirming comfortingly that Conrad is an "intellectually simple" man who "didn't theorize . . . because his mind was not equipped to do so," that Conrad's talent lies in "reducing the complex to the simple," and that consequently his primary ethical concern is the discovery of "whether or not [a character] is faithful to the community" in order to demonstrate that "Humanity is important; fidelity is the highest virtue," that, indeed, there is "a victory of human solidarity" (see M. C. Bradbrook, *Joseph Conrad: Poland's English Genius* [Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1941], p. 67; Thomas Moser, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957], p. 14; Samuel Hynes, "Two Rye Revolutionaries," *Sewanee Review*, 73 [1965], 152; Lee M. Whitehead, "'An Island Is But The Top of a Mountain': Isolation and Solidarity in Conrad's Victory," *L'Epoque Conradianne* [February, 1980], p. 106). A glance at the dates in the above parenthetical note shows that such superficial nonsense continues to be printed right up to the present moment in Conrad studies. And only Conrad himself, commenting to Edward Garnett regarding readers' appreciation of "The End of the Tether," can provide an appropriately informal response: "Touching, tender, noble, moving. . . . Let us spit!" (Letter of 22 December, 1902).

Prof. La Bossière's book takes its place (along with, e.g., E. W. Said's *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* and the opening chapter of J. Hillis Miller's *Poets of Reality*) among the few studies of Conrad's work upon which Conrad would not expectorate. Prof. La Bossière is one of a minority of critics willing to bring to bear upon Conrad's fiction a rigorous understanding of the post-Kantian philosophical context in terms of which Conrad thought and wrote, and which dictates that "Extremes touch" (*A Personal Record*, p. 132), that "facts appraised by reason [have] a mysterious complexity and a dual character" (*Suspense*, p. 38), and that consequently the very men who supposedly are redemptive exemplars (according to the cuspidor mode of critical discourse) in fact are defined by Conrad as hopelessly inadequate: those whose "steadfastness of

purpose" allows them to trudge along "the road of life" with "firmness" are "invariably stupid" (*An Outcast of the Islands*, p. 197). As Prof. La Bossière summarizes the issue, "Conrad, like Cusa and baroque and romantic writers variously echoing the fifteenth-century voice of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, found traditional formal logic a blind guide in the exploration of the truth underlying existence" (p. 23).

Because this book fairly blisters with confirmatory evidence gleaned from Conrad's letters and fiction, and because its breadth of reference encompasses post-Renaissance philosophy and literature both in English and a variety of European languages, it is quite difficult to do justice in general terms to the book's thesis. Perhaps the summary quoted just above could be taken as a specification of the direction taken by Prof. La Bossière's inquiry, an inquiry that reveals convincingly the dominant extent to which metaphors of dreaming, stage acting, and disorienting inverse reflections form the imagistic and rhetorical basis of Conrad's irrational, amoral, fictional world, an extension necessarily of Conrad's perceptions of the world of his own experience that caused him to exclaim "I feel more than ever that *la vida es sueno*" (Aubry, *Life and Letters*, II, 286). Prof. La Bossière's book is clearly written and a pleasure to read in spite of its rather complex subject matter. It should take its place as a useful and important articulation of the phenomenology of Conrad's world-view that should serve to refute the insipid sentimentalities published by so many Conrad critics in the past, and that should be required reading for all students of Conrad's fiction.

William W. Bonney

**MARSHALL B. TYMN and
ROGER C. SCHLOBIN, EDS.**
*The Year's Scholarship in Science
Fiction and Fantasy: 1972-1975*
Kent, Ohio: Kent State University
Press, 1979. Pp. xvi + 222, fore-
word, preface, author and title
indexes. \$12.00.

Science fiction bibliography, like science fiction criticism, is just emerging from a protracted infancy. Researchers seeking

primary materials were for many years limited to such works as Eric Bleiler's *The Checklist of Fantastic Literature* (1948), which is eccentric in its choices and confusing in its failure to categorize. Scholars who wished to know what their colleagues were doing were required to conduct their own surveys, a job that was not so demanding when the body of criticism was small but that has grown yearly more formidable. Selected bibliographies of individual authors have appeared from time to time in *Extrapolation*, *Science-Fiction Studies*, or *Riverside Quarterly*, the primary journals in the field, but these were generally no more than checklists of the author's work. The annual *MLA International Bibliography* lists articles from the above journals but buries them among pages of entries on "Prose Fiction" or sends one hunting out particular authors by century and nationality. Browsing is, of course, impossible. Fantasy criticism has fared somewhat worse: the *MLA Bibliography* considers fantasy as "Other Form," and even science fiction critics frequently give it their reluctant attention as a sort of aberrant science fiction.

This neglect is beginning to be remedied. Annotated bibliographies like Roger Schlobin's *The Literature of Fantasy* (1979) and Marshall Tymn's *American Fantasy and Science Fiction* (1979) provide information on primary sources, and The Kent State University Press has launched a series of useful guides to secondary materials. The volume at hand, Tymn and Schlobin's *The Year's Scholarship in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, is a cumulation of a series of articles that appeared in *Extrapolation* under the titles "A Checklist of American Critical Works on SF: 1972-73" and "The Year's Scholarship in Science Fiction and Fantasy: 1974-." The entries take up where Thomas Clareson's *Science Fiction Criticism: An Annotated Checklist* (The Kent State University Press, 1972) left off. Tymn and Schlobin are continuing with their yearly listings, and additional cumulative volumes are planned at four-year intervals.

The book is arranged in four sections: general studies, bibliography and reference, author studies and bibliographies, and teaching and visual aids. Each section includes articles, theses, dissertations, and books; the fourth section also lists published cassettes, filmstrips, and films. The largest category is the "author studies" portion of section three: eighty pages arranged alphabetically by subject, from Rosny Aine to