

science, but she does not show how, or indeed whether, it fails as fiction.

It might be best for those whose interest in the field compels them to read this study to begin at the end and work backwards, starting with the useful bibliography and the intriguing summary and simply abandoning it at the point where they feel worthwhile comment gives way to confused and ponderous theory. It is only fair to warn them first, however, of potential stumbling blocks like the unnecessary wrenching of syntax to make "metaphor" into a transitive verb (p. 223); inconsistencies in the use of key terms such as "robot" (pp. xvi and 11) and "android" (pp. xvi, 15); word substitutions such as "related" for "associated" (p. 53), "neuronal" for "neural" or "neuronic" (p. 75), and "graduations" for "gradations" (p. 78); a carelessness about detail that makes a single episode in Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* into the subject of the entire opera and distorts the names of L. Frank Baum's Tin Woodman and Tik-Tok the Clockwork Man (all on p. 34); and lengthy forays into the history of science, often of dubious relevance.

Brian Attebery

### RICHARD I. SMYER

*Primal Dream and Primal Crime: Orwell's Development as a Psychological Novelist*

Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1980. Pp. 187.

One of the convenient things about psychological criticism is that it licenses its practitioners to interpret everything within their range of subject matter in terms of metaphor. The most pedestrian details of daily life come alive with arcane significance, and, of course, works of art simply bulge with keys to the hidden inner rooms of experience. Once the assumption is granted that all human behavior, and most particularly the created fictions through which we attempt to order our understanding of the world, are ultimately nothing more than symbolic events in the unceasing

warfare among our secular trinity of id, ego and superego, then normal canons of evidence, by which we judge statements about the external world, can be set aside. Since we know that all novels are ultimately about sexual guilt, then all we have to do is search the text for the controlling allegorical patterns which demonstrate this and the task of analysis is completed. Meaning is fixed by the unchanging nature of the psychic drama. "Meaning," as that word is used to denote conscious intention, is almost irrelevant, since the wellsprings of intention are, almost by definition, unconscious. That way madness lies.

Which is not to argue that all psychological approaches to literature are invalid. The premises of Freud and Jung have hardly attained to the status of incontrovertible laws, but there is no a priori reason why they cannot generate interesting and useful readings if the critic does not assume that his case is proven in advance and exercises his ingenuity with a decent respect for ordinary standards of proof.

The problem with Mr. Smyer's book is that it operates under no such restraints. Having decided that the real theme of George Orwell's fiction is (who would have imagined it?) sexual guilt—and having neglected, apparently as irrelevant, any consideration of whether in this respect the author is operating according to some deliberate plan or is unconsciously prompted by conflicts submerged within his own nature—Mr. Smyer sets about forcing the novels into conformity with this assumption, relying on very slender lines of inference indeed.

A good case in point is his reading of *A Clergyman's Daughter*, in which, according to Mr. Smyer, the heroine Dorothy is propelled into a mental breakdown involving amnesia and flight from her father's parsonage by her "unconscious incest anxiety." Much is made of this "incest anxiety," and we are asked to credit its existence on the basis of nothing more substantial than the coincidence that Dorothy's sexual coldness stems in part from her having been frightened as a child by some engravings of satyrs with "lean, furry thighs" and that her father's surname is Hare. Surely this is a bit thin to provide the motivating drive for a whole novel. At the end of his discussion, Mr. Smyer suggests that, "in associating this covertly incestuous situation with the name *Hare*, Orwell may be expressing a vague, not fully conscious commitment to follow-

ing the spoor of guilt and anxiety back into a distant and idealized childhood, the world of Beatrix Potter.”

Some of the arguments in Mr. Smyer's book are actually rather interesting, but he continually prejudices his case with his own excessive cleverness—in the bomb-shattered house in *Coming Up for Air*, the lower rooms of which have sustained the most damage, “the wreckage below indicates that the unconscious mind, the soul, is already stricken”; and the “memory holes” at the Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen Eighty-four* hint “at the connection between the mother and destruction. Not only is *mem* an Indian corruption of ‘ma’am’ (which the Anglo-Indian Orwell would have known) but also it is linked to a cluster of childhood terms for mother (‘mum,’ ‘mummy,’ and so on). In addition, *memory* is phonetically connected to *mammary*.” If one does not share the disposition to see everything as a species of Freudian riddle, this sort of thing is difficult to take very seriously.

Nicholas Guild

## FREDRIC JAMESON

*Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist*  
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. Pp. 190.

The first thing to be said about Fredric Jameson's new book, *Fables of Aggression*, is that in two ways its title is misleading. First, Jameson's focus is on putting contemporary poststructuralism to use in practical criticism, with the novels of Wyndham Lewis as his field of operation. Lewis is not completely forgotten, but neither is he the center of our undivided attention. Second, Jameson backs away very quickly from the implications of his subtitle “the Modernist as Fascist.” In the Prologue he admits that his title was provocative and says that Lewis was not really a Fascist but a “protofascist.” In turn I must admit to being provoked, not because I think that the connections between Modernism and Fas-

cism are trivial or should be ignored, but because this important topic demands serious and responsible treatment, not the application of attention grabbing labels which the author himself admits cannot stick. To call Lewis a protofascist is to associate him indelibly with the entire complex of Fascism while excusing oneself from the task of seriously discussing the connection. Jameson distinguishes between two kinds of ideological analysis, the old crude Marxist labeling and the new more sophisticated concept of ideology advanced by Althusser. Jameson claims to use the latest model from Paris, which by and large he does, but only after this initial labeling.

Jameson's program of formal and ideological analysis is at the center of his study. I find it difficult to summarize; Jameson himself speaks of his “methodological eclecticism.” But briefly he is bringing together Marxist, Freudian, and structuralist methods of analysis, using formalist methods to advance ideological analysis, reinscribing the language and narrative of the text in its context in history and ideology. In the notes Jameson occasionally cites his forthcoming book, *The Political Unconscious*, and those interested in his theory might find it more profitable to consult that when it appears.

What I object to in this is his jargon ridden and almost unreadable prose. Let me quote one example: “Reification exasperates the relationship of desire to its objects to the point where the dialectic of representation discussed above knows a qualitative leap, and the first-order transcendent space of the death wish is driven into reflexivity, generating those historically new formal structures and second-degree textual solutions which are the various modernisms” (p. 171). The ponderous nature of this prose stems from the dominance of a closed set of nouns. Jameson's argument could be improved immensely by the incorporation of some of the process Marxists talk about so much in the form of a few active verbs.

But I admire the ambitious scope of his theoretical interests, the intelligence with which he harmonizes diverse theories, and most importantly his willingness to test his theories. Here is a theory-oriented critic applying his theories to literature, a rare event worth some attention. For this reason readers who are neither Marxist nor interested in Lewis should find *Fables of Aggression* of interest, though without a