

Chapter 8 is devoted to *Portrait de l'artiste en jeune singe*, an unusual book set apart from the others and falling outside of the boundary of the three phases. With remarkable insight, she contends that the balance between the discipline and the indulgence of art is perfectly maintained in this ironic and cunning text which contains "all the earnestness of a religion and all the playfulness of a game" (p. 228). The final chapter, "Words and Images" discusses the three volumes of *Illustrations* and *Travaux d'approche*. Although Butor's purpose remains unchanged, he is an increasingly isolated craftsman viewed with suspicion by writers and critics alike. Advances in technique are based upon his conviction that interaction between language, the visual arts and music is essential to a fuller understanding of the world. Because Butor no longer provides detailed clues as to possible ways of reading him, many readers have accepted defeat, declaring the new works too difficult and obscure. But Butor devotes his life to writing, and if his readers reciprocate with a commensurate degree of loyalty and perseverance, they will be richly rewarded.

Apart from reservations about the early cut off date for the study (1973), and slight doubts about a format which allows no place for such an interesting text as *Le Genie du lieu*, I find the central argument of Professor Lydon's book both lucid and convincing. Throughout, a masterly balance is achieved between the continuity of Butor's themes and the originality of each individual work. In short, this is a solid analysis of Butor's experiments in form, and one which warns us that "failure to grasp the sense of Butor's effort is failure to seize our cultural context" (p. 256).

Barbara Mason

PATRICK RAFROIDI

Irish Literature in English: The Romantic Period

Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981. Pp. I. 364; II. 392.
\$67.50

The first of these two volumes is an essay in which Professor Rafroidi of the University of Lille (France) attempts to prove that Ireland had a literary Romantic Period from 1789 to 1850. It contains an introduction and three major divisions: the Prelude to Irish Romanticism; Nationalist Romanticism; the Impact of Irish Romanticism on Europe. The second volume is a bibliography with four divisions: a general bibliography of historical and critical studies, reference works, and anthologies; Irish authors and their works, criticism, and Rafroidi's biographical notes; Irish authors and their principal French translations; major Irish periodicals from 1789-1850.

The identification, description, and evaluation of a literary movement is a scholarly task saturated with difficulties and one need only consider the Renaissance and two of its major commentators, Walter Pater and John Addington Symonds, to discover the wide range of theories which a literary or cultural movement can generate. Though the methodology needed to comprehend any literary period is fearfully complex, I suggest that three requirements are fundamental. First, there must be an explanation of the intellectual bases to the period. This explanation must go beyond any particular manifestation of the movement (e.g., for the Romantic period an interest in the past or for the English Augustan period an emphasis on the couplet). The explanation must clarify the means by which men and women attempted to explain the world in which they lived. Professor Rafroidi does not do this. His explanation includes the usual characteristics of the English Romantic period: the search for the past, the triumph of the particular over the general, a concern for the "satanic and the horrific," an emphasis on patriotism, the presence of a unique dialect ("Irish-English"), the exploration of unique traits within the country researched, in this instance Ireland as an "uncontestably true" area for Romantic scenery and legendary tales. The characteristics are interesting and essential to the study but they do not adequately distin-

guish between a Romantic concept of reality and that of, let us say, a classical concept. They do not explain the Romantic world epistemologically. They do not explain, for example, the difference between a mythical and a metaphysical view of reality. At times, notably when he claims that the "mind loves to have the feelings aroused," Professor Rafroidi seems ready to project such an explanation but does not.

A second requirement is the application of a literary theory which when applied to the period will reveal its essentially literary characteristics *and* its essentially period characteristics, in this instance Romantic. Unfortunately, Professor Rafroidi does not assume any particular critical position but, rather, moves among several: aesthetic (formal), moral, historical, sociological. Therefore, we are not offered a consistent measure by which we can determine the *literary* quality of the period. Ironically, however, the multiplicity of positions works for Rafroidi, allowing him to include, surprisingly, such writers as novelists William Carleton and Maria Edgeworth and statesman-essayist Edmund Burke.

A third requirement is the presence of a sufficiently large and challenging body of literature to which the literary theory can be applied. Rafroidi struggles heroically here but his stress on Thomas Moore and James Clarence Mangan almost forces him to that apology often used by enthusiastic defenders of Irish history and culture, namely, that one should not wonder at the quantity of Irish literature but be awed that there should be any literature at all. In spite of his enthusiastic appraisal of the literature of Ireland's Romantic period, Professor Rafroidi occasionally slips into statements which suggest that his enthusiasm is, at times, forced. There is, for example, his tacit acceptance of Hippolyte Taine's now out-of-fashion theory of the relationship of race and literature, implying that whatever Ireland produced was in keeping with its racial characteristics. In addition, he sees literature in Ireland as a product of its attempt to compensate for its impoverished political and economic life, an observation which comes close to a Freudian view of literature as sublimation. These and other statements suggest that Professor Rafroidi's claims for Irish Romantic literature must be read in the context of a statement in the Preface, that there is much to be studied which goes "beyond the scope of the individual researcher who, in each and every field may lay himself open to the

reproaches of the specialist for his lack of knowledge, of the critic for his emphasis on history, and of the methodical analyst for his impressionistic conclusions."

Somewhat paradoxically, it is in the context of this quotation that Professor Rafroidi's work may have its greatest value. Through the very audacity of his claim that the politically undefined period (which included Edmund Burke) prior to the Emancipation is a prominent part of a Romantic period which stressed nationalism, he has established a goal at which other scholars of "Irish Literature in English" can take aim. Simultaneously, he offers the results of painstaking and sensitively intelligent bibliographical work which should provide those scholars with an excellent beginning. *These* contributions are of great significance.

Frank L. Ryan

JANE P. TOMPKINS, ED.
Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism
Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980. Pp. 275.
\$6.95.

Given the current importance of response-centered theory, Jane P. Tompkins's collection of essays by Walker Gibson, Gerald Prince, Michael Riffaterre, Georges Poulet, Wolfgang Iser, Stanley E. Fish, Jonathan Culler, Norman N. Holland, David Bleich, and Walter Benn Michaels is, indeed, timely and valuable. As Tompkins points out, although all the essays focus on the reader and the reading process, they "represent a variety of theoretical orientations: New Criticism, structuralism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction." But despite different allegiances, the essayists "are united in one thing: their opposition to the belief that meaning inheres completely and exclusively in the literary text." Tompkins also indicates that she has arranged the reprinted material in "roughly chronological order," an arrangement which allows one to perceive "coherent progression" or "the