

drama of the reader's emergence into critical prominence." Actually, Tompkins makes the progression seem a little more systematic than publication dates allow (first reprinted essay, 1950; second, 1973; third, 1966, and so on). Of course, all the material is not of equal value: since subjectivism is now admissible, I suggest that Prince's "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee" is pedantic; Poulet's "Criticism and the Experience of Interiority," repetitious; and Bleich's "Epistemological Assumptions in the Study of Response," a review of scholarship, provokingly tedious. On the other hand, the essays by Iser, Fish (both "Affective Stylistics," no model of economy, and "Interpreting the *Variorum*"), Culler, and Holland merit contemplation. Holland's "Unity Identity Text Self" is especially readable. Though Iser's "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," the final chapter in *The Implied Reader* (1972) and the chapter reprinted by Tompkins, is representative and does look forward to Iser's *The Act of Reading* (1976), Tompkins's collection would have been a degree or two more valuable if she had managed to extract crucial sections from the later and, I assume, more influential work. But these are relatively minor demurrers.

Even for those already acquainted with the reprinted material, *Reader-Response Criticism* should be a welcome book. Tompkins opens and closes with lucid essays and appends an excellent annotated bibliography (pp. 233-72), divided into "Theoretical" and "Applied" categories. In her "Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism" she offers a helpful preview of the essays to come; and in "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response" (pp. 201-32) she presents a survey of the different effects that different ages have thought poetry to achieve (fiction is ignored). In describing periods before the transitional nineteenth century, Tompkins uses such words as "power," "utility," "instruction," "influence," and "weapon." Her concluding pages, a subsection entitled "Formalism and Beyond: The Triumph of Interpretation," are intensely interesting. She reflects on the different ways New Criticism and reader-response criticism have been or are related to language and science, and she insists that, despite major differences (objectivity vs. subjectivity), New Criticism and reader-response criticism both "assume that to specify meaning is criticism's ultimate goal." "What is most striking about reader-response criticism

and its close relative, deconstructive criticism, is their failure to break out of the mold into which critical writing was cast by the formalist identification of criticism with explication. Interpretation reigns supreme both in teaching and in publication just as it did when New Criticism was in its heyday in the 1940s and 1950s." Why? The answer is not as clear as one would like, but Tompkins suggests that "interpretation" has become a part of the educational establishment. But are all serious students of literature, formalists or otherwise (for instance, Iser), as preoccupied with "interpretation" as Tompkins believes? Her concluding paragraphs are in the prophetic mode: ". . . if, as the post-structuralists claim, reality itself is language-based," we may be returning to the ancient belief in "language as a form of power."

In short, *Reader-Response Criticism* is a considerably better-than-average anthology.

Daniel P. Deneau

SIGBRIT SWAHN

Proust dans la Recherche littéraire. Problèmes, méthodes, approches nouvelles.

Études romanes de Lund 27. Lund: CWK Gleerup (Liber-Läromedel), 1979. Pp. 168.

There are many positive things to be said about this study. Sigbrit Swahn has had the commendable idea of taking an overall view of Proust criticism, discerning the key issues, diagnosing the differences of approach, suggesting ways in which the differences might be reconciled. The range of her reading, in general theory as well as within the field of Proust criticism, is impressive. Several of her insights are sharp, and several of her individual points are very well taken.

One's enthusiasm is nevertheless tempered by several factors. On the purely material level, the book is not very easy to

read, because titles are recorded with neither italics nor quotation marks. This is presumably the publisher's decision, and he should also be blamed for the inefficient footnoting system. Bibliographical details, crucial in an enterprise such as this, are inadequate. With good advice, several awkward points of style could have been corrected. Paragraphing is not skillful, and the argument gets bogged down in detail.

More importantly, one suspects that Ms. Swahn is too intent on scoring over her predecessors, and she does not seem to discriminate between minor debating points and important contributions to the debate. She prepares to assault molehills as if she is about to scale a mountain. She accuses other critics of being confused, yet is no less confused herself, magnifying differences in order to reconcile them by recourse to critical theory. In many instances I felt that a bit of common sense would have obliterated the imagined differences more effectively.

All this is a great pity, because this book has much to offer. Many of the ideas which Ms. Swahn throws out are very suggestive, in a way that better presented arguments sometimes fail to be. She is very good on the countermovement in *Le Temps retrouvé* which downgrades the artists. She has excellent observations on the structure of the novel, open-ended as much as it is closed like a buckle.

There is not space to give a detailed critique of each chapter, but I would like to make some remarks about the first one, on the genesis of the novel. Ms. Swahn discusses the work of six scholars: Feuillerat, Vigneron, and Fallois representing the work of previous generations, and Kolb, Bonnet, and Clarac representing recent research. Views on the relation of Proust's Sainte-Beuve project with the beginnings of *La Recherche* have often differed sharply, and Ms. Swahn is determined to link these differences to different theoretical positions on the nature of creation. She spoils her case by overstating it. She more or less accuses Philip Kolb of suppressing evidence which goes against his theory, yet admits elsewhere that the evidence in question does not change the picture one scrap. Yet, as always, she makes us think. I believe that had she looked at the facts more dispassionately, she would have seen that the "distortions" come with evidence which is either ambiguous or lacking, and that as more evidence comes to light, and more of

the picture comes into focus, the room for speculation and for error becomes less. Of the scholars she discusses, Clarac is the only one who has adopted a position which obliges him to exclude some of the evidence, by his refusal to associate pages of fiction with Proust's critical essay on Sainte-Beuve. Ms. Swahn does mention Claudine Quémard's refutation of Clarac. But she thinks Mme Quémard mistaken, because she bases her theory (sic) on "un projet si peu évolué que le 'Sainte-Beuve-Récit.'" She continues: "Selon nous, la théorie de Clarac . . . reste sinon la plus vraie au moins la plus vraisemblable." The only possible comment on that remark is Proust's own (which Ms. Swahn cites in another context): "Le vraisemblable, malgré l'idée que se fait le menteur, n'est pas du tout le vrai." Ms. Swahn's conclusion on genesis, that there would be no problem if only Proust scholars explored more his literary sources, solves nothing. It is all very well to say that "L'histoire de la genèse de son grand roman ne perdra rien le jour où elle se démythifiera"; it is not Kolb (except perhaps in his vague use of the word "illumination"), and certainly not Quémard who are perpetuating myths. Quémard's admirable work on the *cahiers* merited much more than one short mention. When Ms. Swahn climbs down from her pedestal and looks at the facts herself, she makes some very helpful remarks: I particularly like the arguments she has found for supporting Vigneron's unsubstantiated claim that a letter to Montesquiou about the "novel," usually dated July 1908, really belongs eighteen months later, and I like her explanation for Proust's continued use of the title Sainte-Beuve in his letters to Georges de Lauris.

This is wholly typical. One ends up writing a severe review, when one had started out feeling grateful for all the ideas which the book had provoked. I do not know if this study began life as a doctoral thesis. It certainly gives that impression. I feel that if Ms. Swahn had bided her time, and come back to it when she no longer felt that she had to prove herself, and when she could distinguish more clearly the forest from the trees, we would have had not just an interesting book, but a seminal one.

Anthony R. Pugh