J. E. DEARLOVE
Accommodating the Chaos: Samuel Beckett's Nonrelational Art
Durham: Duke University Press, 1982. Pp. 167. $16.75.

J. E. Dearlove has written a perceptive, detailed analysis of Beckett's fiction. The book's thesis, stated clearly in the preface, is that Beckett has unremittingly attempted "to find a literary shape for the proposition that perhaps no relationships exist between or among the artist, his art, and an external reality" (p. vii).

Dearlove traces Beckett's shifting attitudes towards the problems posed by the absence of relation through different periods of his writing. He finds that Beckett's earliest prose works "parody the traditions and conventions of relational art without proposing an alternate vision" (p. 13). *Murphy* represents a turning point in which Beckett "expands and distorts the assumptions beneath relational art until they explode into intentional ambiguity" (p. 14). The central section of Dearlove's book focuses on the fiction written between 1944 and 1950 in which Beckett's art takes on the shape of "fragmentation and tesselation" (p. 14; Dearlove does not define this latter term which is the act of fitting pieces together to form a mosaic). In a long chapter on *How It Is*, Dearlove demonstrates how Beckett "explores the possibilities of a voice unrelated to any world." The "residual fiction" which follow *How It Is* create "self-conscious and arbitrary" constructions as a response to the absence of order. And finally, in his most recent works, Beckett permits the elements of traditional narrative to coexist with those of a nonrelational narrative, thus reconciling "an impotent speaker with an unknowable world" (p. 14.).

The book is organized by the chronology of Beckett's fictional work. The central thesis shapes the analysis of each individual work. Despite touches of brilliance and originality, these discussions often seem diffuse. Paragraphs tend to drag on, conclusions become repetitious, and arguments lack sharpness and cohesiveness. Dearlove's relatively more succinct analyses of *Watt, Mercier and Camier, Lessness* and *The Lost Ones*, for example, are much more readable than his longer analyses of the trilogy and *How It Is*.

The book is also somewhat marred by occasional pretentiousness of language, by a tendency to make value judgments of Beckett's early fiction on the basis of its attempts to deal with the absence of relation, by occasional stretching of the central thesis to a degree of generality which makes it obvious, and by fragmented quotations which strung together out of context lose their intended significance (as on p. 102 where Dearlove feels we are allowed to "borrow Pim's images to develop a prose context for the narrator," and proceeds to link arbitrarily quotes and summaries which are deformed from their context).

These flaws should however be overlooked, for the book's thoroughness, intelligence, and deep understanding of Beckett's fictional universe constitute a significant contribution to Beckett studies.

Paul J. Schwartz

DONALD D. STONE
The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction
Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980. Pp. 396. $17.50.

Although there has been no full analysis of the Romantic impulse in Victorian fiction, the scope of Donald Stone's study makes not the scholarly gap, but his achievement in filling it, surprising. He proposes that Victorian novelists drew on their Romantic predecessors for themes, styles, and a new sense of authorial importance. This awareness of the author's powerful creative impulse, "as sage, as hero, as inspired genius, as magician" (p. 2), unites the novelists he discusses: Trollope, Disraeli, Charlotte Brontë, Eliot, Dickens, and Meredith.

These Victorian novelists were ambivalent toward the Romantic ideals they grew up with, and Mr. Stone does not oversimplify how each refined and redefined Romantic values. He is also aware of the slipperiness of the label Romantic, and much of his book is a careful delineation of the categories of Romanticism.