

tional art and also of music, which has traditionally existed on a non-referential plane.

Faced with a new and iconoclastic work in any of the three art forms, we need to develop a response that seems to require four stages, each successively more difficult than the preceding one. The first, and the most commonly accomplished in each of the individual fields of art, is a description of the work that includes, at least in broad outline, its surface structure. The second stage, placing the work in relation to other art works that are diachronically or synchronically analogous, although it requires a wide-ranging knowledge of previous and present works in all the arts, can still be reached on the basis of currently available methods. But what I see as the necessary third and fourth stages, which answer the questions of *how* a work has come into existence, and *why*, are rarely even attempted and even more rarely successfully accomplished.

Generative theory offers one of the better available approaches to the question of how these works are created and may, with continued exploration, begin to provide some answers to the question of why such works—in all the arts—have come into being in the twentieth century. Although probably not the only method of investigating these questions, generative theory, because of its potential in the development of critical postures valid for all the arts, deserves further study and dissemination. *Generative Literature and Generative Art* contributes to the growth of an important field.

Emma Kafalenos

J. M. COCKING

*Proust: Collected Essays on the
Writer and His Art*

Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1982. Pp. xxii
+ 307.

If the overworked word “distinguished” could be rested for a few years, one would still have to resurrect it to describe books of the quality of this one, which has true distinction of thought and mind, of feeling and sensibility, of style and expression. John Cocking, until his retirement Professor of French at King’s College London, had a

particular interest in a number of nineteenth and twentieth-century French writers, but none engaged him more than Proust. His inaugural lecture in 1953 was on English influences in Proust, and shortly afterwards he wrote a short and extremely concentrated “Introduction” to Proust, for the Cambridge Bowes and Bowes series (an introduction which made no concessions to the reader who was not already fairly familiar with at least *Du Côté de chez Swann*), and in the twenty years that followed, he gave a number of remarkable public lectures, and reviewed most of the significant studies on Proust as they were published. The volume under review simply reprints these texts, with minimal changes, omitting the inaugural lecture and some of the reviews, but giving the complete text of the “Introduction” and four major papers, together with an extended Preface in which Cocking reviews his own career as a Proust scholar. The Preface apart, none of these texts will be new to diligent Proustians, but their impact is greatly increased by their appearance in one cover, so well printed (I spotted only one misprint, page 158, though I did regret to see Cambridge University Press spelling analyse with a z). The editor of the Cambridge Studies in French, Malcolm Bowie, is to be commended for his initiative in commissioning this volume, despite the risks involved.

The risks are, of course, that there will be repetition, and that some of the ideas will seem dated. In the present instance, these risks are minimized partly by careful editing which discreetly updates statements that have to be qualified in the light of later knowledge (and these are surprisingly few, thanks to the sureness of Cocking’s insights), and largely because of the consistency of Cocking’s approach. His view of Proust is clearly stated in the “Introduction” and further explorations deepen and corroborate it with fresh and persuasive new evidence. The occasional repetitions serve to remind us of Cocking’s basic position, and they are welcome, not tedious.

Cocking’s essential point, following Curtius, is that Proust’s mature writing is a uniquely balanced combination of sensibility and intelligence, and his primary concern is to trace the different strands that make up this complex, and show how they gradually came together. Cocking develops this notion with rigor and understanding. His perspective is neither that of the pure source hunter, nor of the pure textual exegete, although he can take his place with

the best representatives of both camps: his discussion of the role Monet played in Proust's evocation of Combray is masterly, and his *explication* of the hawthorn episode is a model. It is because Cocking is on the one hand scrupulously precise, as well as uncommonly perceptive, in his handling of key moments in the genesis of the novel, and on the other hand responsive to Proust's text as imaginative literature, that one listens so respectfully to his dissection of the elements that made up Proust's literary sensibility and intelligence. This kind of analysis is not an easy thing to do; it is so tempting to ride a hobbyhorse, to exclude what does not appeal. To be able to write with such understanding about both music and painting is an achievement which is worth much more than double the merit of each of these excellent papers taken singly.

The review articles make interesting reading, as we see Cocking receiving the fruits of other scholars' reflections. He can be enthusiastic, he can be skeptical. He is always courteous, even when firm, as in his confrontation with Ricardou. Always he tests what he reads against his own point of view, modifying the latter when he needs to, though never having to revise it radically.

The only case where Cocking seems to have had second thoughts is in the paper on the coherence of *Le Temps retrouvé*. Cocking says frequently that Proust's attempts to reconcile his intelligence and his imagination are philosophically incoherent. Evidently he thought that he should examine these doubts critically, and the result, while it does not stand the original notion on its head, is more nuanced and less critical. But characteristically, he does not conceal his former misgivings.

The result is a truly humane piece of criticism, which sets up the critic not as a god or a judge, but as a responsible reader, scrupulously fair to the evidence, and interpreting it with wisdom and understanding. This rich and enriching book must henceforth occupy a central position on the shelves of every Proustian, but everyone interested, however remotely, in questions which are in some way connected with the study of an author like Proust, could read it with profit and delight.

Anthony R. Pugh

STANLEY S. ATHERTON

Alan Sillitoe: A Critical Assessment
London: W.H. Allen, 1979. Pp.
215. £7.50.

This "Critical Assessment" is the second full-length book on its subject. The first, Allen R. Penner's *Alan Sillitoe* (New York: Twayne, 1972), was a useful study. Unfortunately its handling of working-class sources and background—essential, given Sillitoe's preoccupations—had to be brief on account of the demands of the Twayne series format. That format, which almost exclusively is reserved for the academic reader, requires an emphasis on close reading of the text but satisfies very little of the general reader's curiosity about the origins of Sillitoe's art. Dr. Atherton does not attempt text-by-text analyses of stories and novels as an alternative to the readings made in the earlier study. Because his book concentrates on the origins and sources of Sillitoe's creativity, it complements rather than duplicates Penner's work.

Atherton's chapter on reviewer's reactions to Sillitoe's early work illustrates how widely that writer was regarded as an original talent when he began to be published. Many of the other chapters are designed to uncover the roots of this originality. Literary novelty in this case seems to owe much to the dearth of convincing working-class fiction before *Saturday Night* and *Sunday Morning* (1958), especially by writers from a thoroughly proletarian background. Through an examination of Sillitoe's origins—his childhood and family, his native place, class, and environment, his military and other maturing experiences, the literary influences that affected him, and the relationship of these sources to the earlier (pre-1968) novels and stories, which are here the main focus—a convincing case is made for the unprecedented vividness and accuracy of Sillitoe's portrayal of the British working-class experience. The key chapters (4, 5, and 6) are those where evidence of working-class conditions and attitudes inside and outside the fiction are compared. The strategy is not to read the fiction for the reader but to contextualize it for him.

It is quite appropriate that the longest chapter in this study is a survey of "The Literary Tradition of the Working-class Hero." This section deals with Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, Dickens, Mark Rutherford, Gissing, Morrison, and with Sillitoe's own hero, Robert Tressell, all in some detail. A discussion of three "between-the-wars" novels rounds out this succinct yet comprehensive