

The last section offers three surveys of Joyce's importance, as revealed through his influence on native writers, translations of his works, and criticism and scholarship, in non-English-speaking countries. Paul van Caspel writes about the Netherlands, Paul F. Botheroyd and Sylvia Botheroyd about Germany and Switzerland, and Suheil Badi Bushrui about the Arab world (including a checklist in both English and Arabic of translations of Joyce's works into Arabic, original Arabic studies of Joyce, and translations of American and European criticism of Joyce and modern literature). Finally, Thomas F. Staley's "Following Ariadne's String: Tracing Joyce Scholarship into the Eighties" discusses studies that appeared between 1974 and mid-1981; the essay continues Staley's earlier survey that was published in *Anglo-Irish Literature: A Review of Research* in 1976. Staley provides invaluable capsule summaries of the criticism and scholarship that was published in the mid- and late 1970s, and he discusses the studies in terms of such general directions and trends as textual studies, "the broadening of the critical outlook and theoretical approach in Joyce studies" (p. 250), and the continued strong presence of traditional scholarly and critical approaches. There are perhaps too many brief, unsupported assessments of studies as "sound," "thorough," or "rigorous," and given Staley's tendency to find something positive to say about almost every item, his one unqualified rejection of a recent book seems almost irrational in its extreme negativity. But anyone facing the bewildering array of studies that appeared between 1974 and 1980 (especially now that the 1982 wave has arrived) will appreciate Staley's efforts in sorting out and describing this criticism.

James Joyce: An International Perspective also contains a biographical introduction (attributed to both editors but reading much like Bushrui's essay in the volume) and a chronology of Joyce's life compiled by Bushrui. Prefatory materials include a two-page foreword by Richard Ellmann; a tribute to Sir Desmond Cochrane, Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Ireland in Lebanon, who died in 1979 and in whose honor the essays are published; and a facsimile reproduction of a brief, moving message from Samuel Beckett, dated 29 September 1980: "I welcome this occasion to bow once again, before I go, deep down, before his heroic work, heroic being."

Max Frisch
BLAUBART

Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982. Pp. 172
Reviewed by David Myers

Both Frisch and Dürrenmatt, the terrible Swiss twins of moralistic postwar drama, have shown themselves fascinated over the last forty years with the tragicomic analysis of evaded ethical responsibility. The guilt of their protagonists has commonly had allegorical overtones for the whole of Western civilization. These male protagonists are violently expelled from the ostensible harmony of their cowardly lives. They are forced into tragic introspection that reveals they are *en mauvais foi* with themselves. Their lives culminate in the moving confession of guilt and failure. This is so with Dürrenmatt's Ill in *Der Besuch der alten Dame* and with Trapp in *Die Panne*, just as it is with Frisch's teacher in *Andorra*. Frisch's *Biedermann und die Brandstifter* is a farcical but still allegorical variation on this theme.

Frisch's latest novel *Blaubart* reads like an absurd inversion of these plays in a minor domestic key. The main character Felix Schaad does not achieve tragic stature through his obsession with a guilt that he has largely invented. He simply renders himself neurotically ineffectual, paranoid, and suicidal. The fact is that he is no more guilty of the ultimate sin of lovelessness than his seven egoistic wives.

In the original seventeenth-century legend, Bluebeard is a comic hyperbole of bloodthirstiness and perverted lust. Frisch parodistically inverts this legend, mocking its psychological superficiality. This is the same technique that he used in his play *Don Juan oder die Liebe zur Geometrie*. At the end of his tragic farce, condemned to obscure monogamy in a monastery, Don Juan says: "Im Ernst, mein Unwille gegen die Schöpfung, die uns gespalten hat in Mann and Weib, ist lebhafter als je. ... Welche Ungeheuerlichkeit, dass der Mensch nicht das

Ganze ist! Und je grösser seine Sehnsucht ist, ein Ganzes zu sein, um so verfluchter steht er da, bis zum Verbluten ausgesetzt dem anderen Geschlecht." Felix Schaad, like Frisch's Don Juan, is the unhappy victim of twentieth-century woman's social and sexual liberation. Felix is in fact a frustrated romantic monogamist who overloads the marital sexual union with almost mystic significance. He thereby makes prosaic marriage so overtense that it becomes hellish. His seven wives betray and exploit him until he is left a quivering wreck.

In genre, Frisch's *Blaubart* is an uneasy mating of a mystery whodunnit with a pessimistic quest for existential meaning. In this respect, it is very much a pale sequel to Frisch's earlier novel *Stiller* (1954). *Stiller* also suffers from identity crisis, marital breakdown, and the threatening investigation of the public prosecutor concerning unsolved murders. In *Blaubart* the whodunnit aspect accentuates not only the mystery of who did murder Felix's sixth wife, the happy hooker Rosalinde, but also the mystery of Felix's elusive character. Frisch endeavors to keep the reader guessing on both issues until the very end and beyond.

Most of the novel takes the form of a legalistic cross-examination of witnesses. At times this technique becomes circumspect, repetitive, and even trivial. Each cross-examination is like a fragment of a jigsaw puzzle that is never really put together. The reality of actual courtroom scenes is freely interspersed with surreal fantasy as Felix Schaad's overdeveloped conscience cross-examines what is left of his libido and sublimation mechanism. This application of dry legalistic jargon to Felix's dreams and his libido should have produced more humor that it does in this somewhat self-important novel. Frisch's analysis of Felix's sexual problems owes a great deal to Sigmund Freud just as his analysis of Felix's guilt obsession shows the influence of Franz Kafka's *Der Prozess*. In the end, *Blaubart* can best be seen as a fairly poker-faced farce on bourgeois sexual neuroses in the 1980s. Marital and sexual malfunctions are seen by Frisch as the symptoms of a society that is narcissistically frigid and without direction or idealistic commitment. The comic dupe is Bluebeard himself, Felix Schaad as the oversensitive male seeking his elusive salvation in self-inflicted guilt. In fact he saves no one, least of all himself.

William Walsh

R. K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation

Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982. Pp. 169

Reviewed by: Cynthia vanden Driesen

Professor Walsh's contribution to the somewhat inchoate field of "Commonwealth Literature," and towards the stimulation of a wider interest in the work of the Indian novelist R. K. Narayan is well known. In 1964, Walsh's essay on Narayan ("Sweet Mangoes and Malt Vinegar," in *A Human Idiom*) noted some of the distinctive features of Narayan's art: the "pure and limpid English," the inimitable flavor of his Indian locale, the advantage of his concentration on the Indian middle class, his preoccupation with the theme of spiritual maturity, and his ability to combine moral analysis with a gentle ironic comic sense. Walsh's *Commonwealth Literature* (1973) and *Readings in Commonwealth Literature* (ed. W. Walsh, 1974) contained an abbreviated version of this same essay. In 1970, Walsh had supplemented his work on Narayan with a detailed analysis of two novels, *The Man-Eater of Malgrudi* and *The Sweet Vendor* in his chapter on Narayan in *A Manifold Voice* (1970). The dustjacket of his latest book promises a further contribution: the author is to "weigh and evaluate" the entire canon of Narayan's work; and "events which have shaped his life...[are to be] discussed alongside his development as a writer."

The fulfillment of the latter part of this promise is confined mostly to the opening chapter. This consists of a biographical outline based, as Walsh admits, "pretty well exclusively" (p. 6) on Narayan's *My Days* (1974). Its value is dubious; a reading of the original autobiographical sketch might at least have conveyed more directly the flavor of the author's personality. Beyond the repetition of Narayan's own admission of the connection between his own experience of widowerhood and the events of *The English Teacher*, the relationship between the writer's life and his work is hardly explored.