

of plain and systematic instruction. If the articulation of *Paradox and Polarity in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad* occasionally suffers from a want of nimbleness—the first chapter, for example, hardly opens before a four-page summary of Wagner's *Ring* is introduced—the thesis it articulates leaves little room for misapprehension.

Paradoxically, though, as Dr. Land remarks of a number of Conrad's protagonists, strengths can be weaknesses. If repetition is the mother of learning, she can also generate a certain ennui. The Lingard of *An Outcast of the Islands*, for instance, is described as "the prototypical Conradian nemesis" (p. 37); Donkin, in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* is "the prototypical Conradian malcontent" (p. 55); *Heart of Darkness* presents "the prototypical Conradian situation" (p. 64); Karain is "the typical Conradian hero" (p. 65); Charles Gould embodies "the typical Conradian hero" (p. 111) in *Nostromo*, a work revealing "a network of typical Conradian ironies" (p. 137); *The Secret Agent* has "a plot of the familiar Conradian type" (p. 149), "the usual Conradian fictional pattern" (p. 153), "the usual Conradian pattern" (p. 155), a syntax it shares with *Under Western Eyes*, constructed according to "the usual Conradian fictional pattern" (p. 165); and Heyst, in *Victory*, illustrates "the archetypical Conradian hero" (p. 196). The association of "pale and stereotypical" (p. 293) in Dr. Land's retrospective assessment of the early Conrad heroines suggests the enfeeblement which can come with a vigorous questing after a fundamental constant in the form of a type.

This is not to suggest, however, that *Paradox and Polarity* shows no signs of the spirit of adventure. In *Lord Jim*, the context of paradox is said to be "merely geographical and not significantly philosophical" (p. 86). This is certainly provocative, in view of Stein's extended pronouncements on cosmology at the literal center of the novel. The description of MacWhirr as a hero "incapable of any great reach of imaginative self-deception," "who is never guilty of moral failure" (p. 130), is similarly daring. As Conrad makes plain in *Typhoon*, MacWhirr's duty was to avoid the storm (Dent Collected Edition, p. 20); the captain of the *Nan-Shan* is to be numbered among those whose "uninteresting lives . . . so entirely given to the actuality of the bare existence [,] have their mysterious side" (Dent Collected Edition, p. 4). Paradoxically, like his first mate deficient in self-possession, the man of logic and facts is also the man of imagination.

Beryl Schlossman

JOYCE'S CATHOLIC COMEDY OF LANGUAGE

Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. Pp. 243.

\$25.00

Reviewed by James L. McDonald

This book is for the deep readers of the world. First written "as a *doctorat de troisième cycle* at the *Université de Paris VIII* under the direction of Julia Kristeva" (p. vii), now revised and published with the "enthusiastic support" of David Hayman (p. vii), *Joyce's Catholic Comedy of Language* persistently exhibits the critical stance of one who, in Saul Bellow's words, "falls wildly on any particle of philosophy or religion and blows it up bigger than the Graf Zeppelin" ("Deep Readers of the World, Beware!" *New York Times Book Review*, 15 Feb. 1959, p. 1).

Beryl Schlossman is truly a deep reader. In analyzing Joyce's fiction, she applies her interpretations of (to name a few) Thomas d'Aquin, Augustine, Dante, Freud, Jacques Lacan; and she proclaims her discoveries of deep meanings: "filiation," "Tetragrammaton," "the Trinitarian knot," "the triadic configuration of the Borromean knot" (p. 16)—just a few Concorde airliners, bigger than the Graf Zeppelin.

Deep reading necessitates a pretentious critical vocabulary and an overbearing, prolix style. Plain English simply is not good enough to express solemnities, thundering profundities. Accordingly, one learns of "trajectories": "Joycean," "Trinitarian," "Judeo-Christian," "the scriptural trajectory of Dante" (p. 61). One is confronted with the "terrain of sexuality." Stephen Dedalus's *non serviam* is a "denegation." Symbolism becomes "symbolicity." Above all, there is *jouissance*: "symbolic," "potential," "musical," "divine," "transsubstantiation."

Jouissance can be "rhythmic, pluralized, serial" (p. 51); it can be the "artistic fruition of the symbolic structure of the Trinity" (p. 14); it can even be "illicit . . . at the heart of the radiant, eucharistic sublimation of writing" (p. xv). Applied to Bloom, it is less titanic: "Bloomian *jouissance*, eliding 'natural' sexuality, takes place primarily on writing paper, or stationery" (p. 47).

Readers not easily bamboozled will be bemused by this pseudo-literary jargon: "While marking a pulverization (a catastrophe or 'collapsus') of individual identity, of which the polysemic aspect is at the heart of writing, the multiplication of images of the Judeo-Christian star indicates a path through symbolic discourse toward the Word; and the demoniacal trial is summed up in the Fall" (pp. 39-40). Or they may view it as bearing the marks of bad Symbolist verse: "The topography of the Joycean borderline marks the passionate attainment (half engendering, half incarnation) of flight in the letter. This flight at the edge of the sea produces *wavespeech*; the breaking of waves on the sand speaks for the *entre-corps*, the eroticism of margins" (p. 48).

They will recognize impressionism camouflaged as solemn scholarly discourse: "Joyce saves (himself) from death with his Word of love" (p. 57); "By contrast, sin turns into *jouissance*, simultaneously eternal and punctual, rhythmically scanned by repetitions of Yes, in Molly's monologue, the counter-signature of Joyce's passport to eternity—in the form of the permutated *felix culpa* of *Finnegans Wake*" (p. 60). Unless everyone is mistaken, Joyce died on January 13, 1941. And no one needs a "passport" to eternity.

Elizabeth M. Kerr

WILLIAM FAULKNER'S YOKNAPATAWPHA: "A KIND OF KEYSTONE IN THE UNIVERSE"

New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1983. Pp. 438.

Reviewed by Roy K. Bird

In her first study of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction, *Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner's "Little Postage Stamp of Native Soil"*, Elizabeth M. Kerr discussed Faulkner's realism in crafting a series of novels set in his mythical county in Mississippi. Her present book, a companion analysis which also takes its subtitle from a famous comment Faulkner made in an interview with Jean Stein, sets out to trace "Faulkner's progress from the provincial to the universal." Underlying her study is the notion that "The Yoknapatawpha chronicles constitute a whole that cannot be sliced up without destroying the continuity of existence in the world Faulkner created." This idea proves to be both the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of the book.

The first section, "Themes and Thematic Symbols," traces in tedious detail different types of symbolism in the Yoknapatawpha fiction. Outside of a few perceptive flashes, this section is a stodgy compendium of articles, books, and dissertations that exemplifies the kind of literary analysis Faulkner did not like. While Professor Kerr shows a broad acquaintance with Faulkner scholarship, she does little to earn a place for her own ideas. Throughout the book, she settles for echoing or quibbling with other critics instead of giving readers a lively view of her own vision of Faulkner's fictional cosmos.

The second section of the book, "Mythology," continues the Jungian archetypal analysis begun in the first section. By tracing the ruin of the Sartoris, the Compsons, and the Sutpens, Kerr shows quite convincingly that Faulkner takes an ironic view of the traditional myth of the South. Her discussion of Faulkner's demythification relies heavily on Northrop Frye's concept of mythic displacement into the ironic mode. Ms. Kerr could have benefitted greatly from a review of more recent theorists such as René Girard.

The third section, "Quest for Freedom," clarifies the reasons for Kerr's curious insistence that Faulkner's own family life more closely resembled that of the Priests in *The Reivers* than the Sartoris in earlier works. She characterizes Faulkner as a Christian humanist imbued with the existentialism of Camus. Arguing that Faulkner had a positive, Christian outlook,