

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 Sartorises, 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 Sartorises in earlier works. She characterizes Faulkner as a Christian humanist imbued with the existentialism of Camus. Arguing that Faulkner had a positive, Christian outlook,

Kerr is forced to overvalue *Intruder in the Dust* and *The Reivers*, which she calls a “‘valediction forbidding mourning.’” At the same time, darker yet artistically more significant texts such as *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* get undervalued. Before *The Reivers*, Kerr admits that “Yoknapatawpha so far is a moribund society,” yet she sees Faulkner’s novel as a “final affirmation” which tips the cosmic scales to the side of Christian optimism. While the most recent is not always the best or the most representative of an author’s work, Kerr’s philosophical outlook as well as her strategy of treating the Yoknapatawpha novels as a continuous chronicle forces her to take that uncomfortable position. All told, this leaves Kerr’s book with the same kind of problem that she attributes to Faulkner’s character Isaac McCaslin, who had so much trouble supporting with meaningful action his high ideals. While *William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha* provides a useful overview of a great deal of secondary material and a few warm personal anecdotes that show Professor Kerr’s reverence for her subject, the book does not make a strong original contribution to Faulkner studies.

Raymond Federman

SMILES ON WASHINGTON SQUARE

New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1985. Pp. 145. \$13.95

Reviewed by Melvin J. Friedman

Raymond Federman published his first book twenty years ago. It was a critical study of Samuel Beckett’s early fiction, *Journey to Chaos* (1965). While he has continued to be a devoted interpreter of Beckett’s work—he co-authored *Samuel Beckett: His Works and His Critics, An Essay in Bibliography* (1970) and co-edited the Cahier de l’Herne *Samuel Beckett* (1976) and *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage* (1979)—he has turned his talents in recent years to the writing of fiction. In the five novels he has produced to date (he has also published a French narrative *Amer Eldorado*, an early version of *Take It or Leave It*), he has acknowledged at every turn the extent of his indebtedness to Beckett. In *Take It or Leave It* (1976) he characteristically nods fondly to his mentor: “In complete LESSNESSness my friend Sam would say where nothing is even less than nothing.” *The Voice in the Closet* (1979) achieves a startling process of reduction which makes one think of Beckett’s recent texts, like *Company*, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, and *Worstward Ho*. Federman goes to Beckett’s *The Lost Ones* for the title of *The Twofold Vibration* (1982) and makes occasional reference to the Irish writer’s work, such as “. . . he sounded like old Winnie sinking into her mound of earth, you know in *Happy Days*, casually observing her own burial.”

Federman’s fifth novel, *Smiles on Washington Square*, is his most conventional thus far as it avoids many of the eccentricities of telling, typography, paragraphing, and punctuation of the earlier fiction. It offers a narrative which circles about an “initial encounter across a smile” between a man and a woman. This “almost” meeting between Moinous (a literary alter ego Federman has cultivated in his earlier fiction) and Sucette is precisely dated as occurring on March 15, 1954, during the McCarthy hearings. The rest of the text abounds in problematical turns, which feature words like should, would, could, perhaps, and if. The following sentence is fairly characteristic: “And if Moinous were familiar with Kafka’s work, which regrettably he is not at this time, he would perhaps remember this marvelous passage from *The Diaries*, and quote it to himself to justify his present confusion” (p. 49).

Federman flirts with the device of the novel-within-the-novel, somewhat in the manner of André Gide’s *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* and Claude Mauriac’s *La Marquise sortit à cinq heures*, when he has Sucette work on a short story which mirrors characters and events in *Smiles on Washington Square*. The narrative is cleverly made to exist on a variety of levels, with fiction triumphing over fact, imagination over reality. Moinous, the French immigrant, and Sucette, the Bostonian with the social conscience, have a life together only when their creator posits hypothetical situations: “It would probably be a good place in the love story of Moinous & Sucette for her to suggest that perhaps they should go to her apartment where Sucette could then read her story to Moinous” (p. 138).