

all, this much-discussed novel has not been exhausted by modern criticism. As one might expect, some of the material on the information revolution is only very obliquely related to Welsh's literary criticism; and his final chapters, in which he attempts to relate the information culture or revolution, modern psychology, and George Eliot's fiction, seem more suggestive than conclusive. Though Welsh's book is readable, at times (for instance, the chapter "Ideology in *Daniel Deronda*") it may lack conciseness and a clearly established progression toward definite conclusions. But the final note must be a positive one: obviously using terms quite unlike previous commentators, Welsh does offer further evidence of the continuity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and does reaffirm George Eliot's modernity.

John Freccero

DANTE: THE POETICS OF CONVERSION

ed. Rachel Jacoff

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. Pp. 328. \$25.00

Reviewed by Linda Hill

John Freccero's *Dante* is a collection of seventeen essays published from 1959 to 1983. Rachel Jacoff has contributed an introduction to Freccero's critical methodology and furnished translations of quotations in the text. In the notes, citations are left in the original languages, including medieval Latin. The book is intended as a companion to the *Comedy*; the essays appear in the same order as the passages from the *Comedy* on which Freccero comments. Two thirds of the book deal with the *Inferno*. As Jacoff notes (p. xv), the essays proceed from convincing exegesis to broader insights.

Invoking Lukács on the *Comedy* as the last epic and first novel (p. 138), Freccero offers a number of observations on narrative technique. He discusses the need for a perspective from the ending in fictitious autobiographies, which he calls "novels of the self" (p. 58), and touches on suspense and linearity (p. 138). The chapter "Infernal Irony: The Gates of Hell" (1983) analyzes the "mimesis with a vengeance" (p. 102) through which Dante damns souls by representing them as bodies, that is, by reducing the signified (soul) to the signifier (body). The stimulating final chapter, "The Significance of *Terza Rima*" (1983), examines the logic of forward progression and recapitulation underlying Dante's rhyme scheme, the narrative structure of the *Comedy*, and autobiography in general. The triple rhymes which point forward as well as backward require a double rhyme at the beginning and the end; otherwise there would be no opening or closure at all. Similarly, the pilgrim undergoes a spiritual death and conversion without which he could not develop into the poet of the conclusion. The transcendent closure in paradise harks back to the language of the beginning and is necessary for the starting point, the poet's record of the pilgrim's bewilderment. In autobiography the beginning requires the end as a precondition.

The understandable choice of thematic rather than chronological order sets up a few methodological jolts. While the early chapters combine medieval philology with New Criticism, the later chapters employ structuralist and deconstructionist arguments. For example, in "Pilgrim in a Gyre" (1961) Freccero states that "we must assume the existence of a coherent pattern and abandon our hypothesis only when our resources, or those of the poem, are exhausted" (p. 71). The semiotic analysis of "Infernal Irony" (1983) follows abruptly. Older methods reappear in the next chapter, "The Neutral Angels" (1960). This somewhat disconcerting arrangement has the advantage of documenting how drastically literary scholarship has changed over the last three decades.

Roman Struc and J. C. Yardley, eds.

FRANZ KAFKA (1883-1983): HIS CRAFT AND THOUGHT

Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986.

Pp. 157

Reviewed by Kurt J. Fickert

In his becomingly modest introduction to this selection of papers from those presented at the University of Calgary's centennial conference on Franz Kafka, Roman Struc characterizes them as conveying "imperfect insights" into the ambiguities of the Kafka canon, while affording at least "a more systematic perspective" (p. 1). The systematic aspect which relates