

fetched initially, Anderson is able to produce an impressive array of detail in support of his conception.

The Devils were given a mythical reading early, by Vyacheslav Ivanov in particular. This novel seems particularly suited to support Anderson's central thesis. His interpretation, subtitled "Duality as Daemon," is competent and features some interesting observations, but does not significantly add to what is commonly accepted with regard to this novel. But then the chapter on *The Brothers Karamazov* is richly rewarding. Anderson's interpretation of Father Zosima's faith as "mythic in origin" is supported by many details. A number of other themes in the novel are also given a plausible mythical interpretation.

Altogether, Professor Anderson's book is valuable in two basic ways: it offers intriguing interpretations of particular aspects, episodes, and details of Dostoevsky's novels, and it provides a solid body of evidence supporting the theory of the mythical core of all fiction.

Judi M. Roller

THE POLITICS OF THE FEMINIST NOVEL

Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986. Pp. 206, \$12.95

Reviewed by Mary Beth Pringle

Judi M. Roller's *The Politics of the Feminist Novel* demonstrates powerfully that a female writer's political attitudes are likely to influence her style as well as her choice of subject and material. In compact, yet stunningly comprehensive chapters, Roller shows that political novels by women share several characteristics: an anti-authoritarian perspective, a rejection of traditional sex roles, an end that involves death or escape, and similar symbolic patterns.

In Chapter 1, Roller defines categories in an intriguing, original reading of *The Awakening* that explains Edna Pontellier's suicide as underscoring "her sense of hopelessness and the mixture of passivity and daring that forms her personality" (p. 18). Chapter 2 examines women writers' use of the autobiographical, anti-authoritarian, first-person narrative form which, according to Roller, may be a "form of female authorial rebellion" (p. 36). She goes on to argue more generally that other decisions of narrative form may also be political acts. Roller's third chapter explores women writers' recognition that, given society as we know it, individual and social "fragmentation" are inevitable. Even so, says Roller, women writers of political novels don't expect in either area a "unity" impossible to achieve. As Roller writes, real "wholeness in the modern world implies an acceptance of disorder and a concomitant rejection of both the deceptive unity offered by roles and the destruction of the personality implicit in separation and fragmentation" (p. 68). In a fourth chapter, Roller suggests that female protagonists in political novels usually share some responsibility for the ending of their stories. Such novels often end in flight (escape) or death (literal or symbolic). In a small group of novels, she notes, however, that "heroines neither flee nor die. Instead, they fight back, and they all enjoy some measure of success" (p. 131). Finally, in Chapter 5, Roller traces symbol patterns common in women's political novels and shows them to be expressive of slavery vs. freedom.

The range of Dr. Roller's knowledge of both halves of her study—political criticism, feminist and otherwise, as well as women's fiction—is impressive. She moves easily from de Beauvoir to Howe, from Lessing to Jong. An intersection of these two bodies of information under Roller's astute guidance results in new insights for readers in either discipline. Along the way, Dr. Roller assigns political importance to a wide range of contemporary, popular

women's novels, while connecting these novels to others considered "more serious." This work, in itself, is a significant political act. In short, *The Politics of the Feminist Novel* is a "must read" for specialists in women's studies, for those who do social-political examinations of literature, and for others who, quite simply, like to think about women's lives.

Russell A. Berman

THE RISE OF THE MODERN GERMAN NOVEL: CRISIS AND CHARISMA

Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Pp. IX + 311, \$29.50

Reviewed by Josef Schmidt

This is a fascinating book, both for its qualities and its weaknesses, as Berman's analysis offers a comprehensive view of the development of the genre within a national literature/culture. It does so, however, in a jargonesque teutonic prose that is as pretentious as the title suggests. The rise of a hypothesis, namely that the genre reflects, in its historical development, the German societal reactions to modernism according to Max Weber's categories, unfortunately, has a corresponding "fall" in that behind the critical jargon lurks an extremely traditional concept of the history of literature (e.g. of "Nationalliteratur" without proper differentiation of national "German" literatures outside the German Reich!); and judging even by very traditional criteria, there are important conceptual and factual omissions.

The book opens with lucidity and clarity. "The question of modernist rupture" is analyzed employing a model treating the "rhetorical structures of the texts as aspects of a communicative strategy . . . responsive to the social crisis" (p. vi). Max Weber's category of charisma is carefully developed within its historical and religious contexts; the "solution to his categorical antinomies" (p. 51) in what he saw as a decisive cultural crisis evolved from the legal, traditional, and religious tensions he attributed to Wilhelminian liberalism. While there are inevitable generalizations on the part of Berman, the reader is truly enlightened. The ponderous phrases in which these thoughts are presented, however, are an enormous obstacle. E.g., on pp. 58-59, one of the central themes is stated thus: "The reification of realism, the loss of its communicative substance, consequently represents the literary-historical counterpart to the Weberian problem of bureaucratization. Just as bureaucracy extrapolates from the initial forms of legal rationality, while at the same time sequestering the subjectivity of rational individuality in the prison of the iron cage, a trivialized realism, which appears late on the scene but always was imminent in the realist paradigm, casts off earlier critical and emancipatory potential, offering instead the affirmation of a status quo: destiny and necessity are its fare, be it in the form of sentimentalized pseudotragedy or ineluctable happy endings."

Things get worse when, in the second part, Berman elucidates "crisis and charisma" by putting his concept to the test in applying it to the canon of "modern" German novels of high literature. Not only are names like C.F. Meyer missing altogether, but best-selling authors of enormous influence like Felix Dahn, Ida Gräfin Hahn-Hahn, or Berta Suttner are never mentioned. Instead, we are treated to yet another extensive restating of Thomas Mann's "The German Republic" while Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is dismissed with a few sentences, suggesting marginal status. On the conceptual side, Berman covers too much well-known ground while ignoring broader aspects of the history of reception. E.g., in chapter 7 on Georg Hermann's novels (i.e., *Jettchen Gebert*, 1906), the main thrust of Berman's argument is yet one more case of manipulated estrangement of the reader by being presented with a "reification of the literary detail;" but the critic fails to include the wider context of German-Jewish assimilation which would appear central to his basic theory. (Itta Shedletzky has provided a valuable insight into this question in her article on the popular Jewish "Zeitroman" from 1879-1900; *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 9, No. 3, [1982]). And another puzzling omission: Berman hardly ever refers to articles in journals as his secondary sources; his notes almost exclusively refer to books. And central articles like Fredric Jameson's "Postmodernism,