

act of reading but, in fact, suspend our awareness of the fact that such a suspension has occurred (p. 89).

To illustrate and support his theoretical claims, Pavel draws widely from the classics of Western literature, particularly from Greek and Renaissance tragedy. For this broad, traditional canon he successfully establishes a theoretical justification for claiming referentiality. However, for such upstart, noncanonical genres as surrealism and contemporary metafiction, Pavel denies referentiality, suggesting that such literature is purely autotelic (pp. 84-85). In this latter regard, he falls victim to a conventional bias against experimental literature that proposes for it existential irrelevance and purposelessness. Yet, is there not at the heart of many experimental fictions a considered critique of how and why we construct particular world views? Do not Borges and Calvino address epistemological issues in many of their short fiction fantasies? Metafictions are clearly about literature but they are also about the "conventionality" of human discourse and understanding. Consequently, it remains an important task to postulate for their "secondary universes," as well as for those of surrealism (for different reasons), identity and difference vis-à-vis the reader's own "primary universe." Certainly the vigor and persuasiveness of Pavel's theorizing in *Fictional Worlds* would seem to both authorize and encourage such projects.

E. P. Walkiewicz

*JOHN BARTH*

Boston: Twayne, 1986. Pp. 170.

Reviewed by Robert F. Kiernan

Who has persuaded editors of the Twayne series that their readers need the stimulus of an intertextual headline every three pages? Those with which Walkiewicz's *John Barth* have been peppered include a whimsical "My Maryland," a redoubtable "Menippean Satire and Monomyth," and a prosaic "Relationships to *Tristram Shandy*." Clarity is not the purpose of such headlines: "Relationships to *Tristram Shandy*" introduces a single, unimportant paragraph while standing guard over more than three pages of text. Nor are they deployed consistently: some chapters use the names of Barth's fictions to break the tedium of standard print, while other chapters are punctuated with enigmatic quotations, and still others proceed without interruption. It is a tribute to the general intelligence of Walkiewicz's text that one guesses the heavy hand of an editor.

Indeed, Walkiewicz has written a scholarly treatise of some academical distinction—a much more sober work than the intertextual headlines signify. He has read the novels and short stories with careful attention to their rhetoric, discovering order in their whirligig metaphysics. Not one to be distracted by the incidental felicity, he focuses resolutely upon significant aspects of technique and structure and explicates them along orthodox, somewhat familiar lines. Barth's essays "The Literature of Exhaustion" and "The Literature of Replenishment" inform his considerations deeply. If on no other basis, this viewing of the oeuvre through Barth's pronouncements is justified by Walkiewicz's contention that the fictions echo the famous essays in their cyclic process of replenishment-exhaustion-replenishment.

But the proportions of Walkiewicz's study misrepresent Barth's oeuvre. *The Floating Opera* and *The End of the Road* are accorded separate chapters of sixteen and twelve pages respectively—a generous allotment for these short, minor, and relatively easy novels. Inexplicably, the 781-page *LETTERS* and the recent *Sabbatical* are treated together in a single chapter that accords them only thirteen and six pages respectively, despite *LETTERS* offering major problems of explication and *Sabbatical* deserving more than breezy dismissal. A similar distortion of the oeuvre results from Walkiewicz's preoccupation with the theories of Joseph Campbell and Northrop Frye in his effort to conceptualize what Harry Levin used to call an overplot. So high-minded and abstract is this level of argument in Walkiewicz's book that the humor of Barth's fiction is lost in the process—its grammatical quirkiness, for instance; its exuberant allegiance to Demos; its rendering of mythos as fabliau.

The audience for which Walkiewicz has written is difficult to identify. A student is not apt to grasp the modest directive when asked to consider the relationship of the famous essays to "the ontogeny of Barth's corpus" and to view that relationship as "metaphoric rather than strictly exegetic or completely correlative." Instructed that ontogeny recapitulating cosmogeny is "of course" (!) the governing principle of *Finnegans Wake*, even professors of literature will find themselves daunted. What audience that requires those goosy headlines is properly addressed in such a manner? The irony is that Walkiewicz deserves an audience for this otherwise careful and generally successful book.

Peter J. Conradi

*IRIS MURDOCH: THE SAINT AND THE ARTIST*

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. Pp. xvi + 304

Reviewed by Amin Malak

With the publication of her twenty-second novel, *The Good Apprentice*, Iris Murdoch proves once again to her critics and admirers alike that hers are a talent and an energy that deserve close and alert scrutiny. Peter Conradi's *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist* represents a welcome addition to the now established and steadily growing Murdoch criticism. Interestingly, Conradi's book combines mainstream Murdoch scholarship, which usually follows a predictable pattern of examining her novels within the context of her critical and philosophical pronouncements, with original insights based on sympathetic, clear-headed reading of Murdoch's fiction.

Avoiding a chronological survey of Murdoch's work, Conradi divides his book into three parts based on three rather vaguely defined conceptual perspectives. The first, entitled "A Kind of Moral Psychology," deals with *Under the Net*, *An Accidental Man*, *A Severed Head*, *Bruno's Dream*. Unlike many Murdoch specialists who see her fiction as an illustration of her lucidly articulated moral philosophy, Conradi, who interprets her philosophy as "anti-philosophy," finds the term "moral psychology" a more cogent definition of whatever concepts operate within the novel's dynamics. The second part, "Open and Closed," covers *The Bell*, *The Unicorn*, *The Time of the Angels*, and *The Nice and the Good*. Like many other critics, Conradi affirms that Murdoch's novels of the 1957-68 period alternate between "open" and "closed" novels. (The terms are Murdoch's coinage.) The "closed" novels employ moral psychology for didactic and poetic effects, revealing in the process intense formal tightness and atmospheric impact. The "open" novels, conversely, are superficially more realistic, and spatially more expansive.

The third and most illuminating part, revealingly entitled "The Closest Compression of Form with the Widest Expansion of Meaning . . ." analyzes seven novels from the late period, starting with *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), which signals, according to Conradi, the beginning of a progressively maturing period. Evolving from earlier merits, this maturity, so argues Conradi, marries myth to psychology; pursues Shakespearean convention; gives, in a deep and dark comedic manner, equal insight to the structure of Murdoch's work and the characters. The later works are thus artistically and conceptually cued to the earlier ones: Murdoch's earlier fiction should be read *through* the later works.

Conradi's method of analysis involves exploring the prevalent Platonic imagery of the cave, the fire, and the sun, and highlighting the twin ideas of Eros and the Sublime as major preoccupations arising from the duality of Murdoch's imagination: to him, Murdoch is both traditional and postmodern, serious and playful, moral and permissive, existentialist and mystic. He gives consistent and persuasive interpretations of Murdoch's ability to solidify abstract concepts into believable situations.

To Conradi, Murdoch's mastery of her craft can be attributed to numerous virtues: an intense visual imagination, an ability to create spell-binding stories, empirical curiosity, moral energy, and a control over dense evocative prose. Her best work is, as he puts it, "quiveringly real/unreal" in its texture, blending fantasy with meticulously rendered realistic detail. The