

thought and ungracious concession to an alternate interpretation--a view held by the majority of critics-- she admits that, "At best, they [Yehoshua's women protagonists] serve as symbolic representations of a beloved but treacherous country, a land resistant to the desperate wooing of her sons and lovers" (56-57). And in connection with Yehoshua's two major novels, she concedes that "In *The Lover*, as well as in *Late Divorce*, Yehoshua does go beyond the stereotypic confines . . . and wrests his female characters from their previous marginality" (57).

If Yehoshua's females are marked by a lack of consciousness, Ms. Fuchs faults Oz for depriving them of a conscience. They are incapable "to distinguish right from wrong," (61) they serve as a complement of "the attempt of the external forces to intrude into the society and destroy it," (60) and they act as "direct or indirect cause of malaise in the civilized context" (60). In short, Ms. Fuchs indicts Oz of making his heroines the scapegoats for all the misfortunes of Israeli society--"the real "national and political" enemy" (24). This strident accusation is, nevertheless, punctured by flashes of common sense and moderation: "This is not to say that Oz's authorial irony spares . . . male counterparts of his destructive heroines . . .," (60). "It is possible to interpret Hana Gonen [the heroine of *My Michael*] as a symbolic representation of Israel" (85) and *Elsewhere Perhaps* has often been taken as a national allegory" (75). If the alternate views are valid, then, perhaps, Ms. Fuchs's arguments of the rampant misogyny in Israeli fiction are not, after all, all that unassailable.

Ms. Fuchs devotes a third of her book to the analysis and unstinting endorsement of Amalia Kahana-Carmon's literary contribution to Israeli letters--her unique, stylistic inventiveness, but primarily, her interest in the "female condition": "By restoring conscience and consciousness to the mimetic aspect of the female image and by studying its complexities, she is challenging the androcentric tendency to present woman as a void, a sexual object or a male adjunct . . . her gynographies create a plausible illusion of femaleness as Selfhood" (92).

Tony Tanner

JANE AUSTEN

Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986. Pp. ix + 291. \$20.00

Reviewed by Bruce Stovel

Tony Tanner's *Jane Austen* is both about and in a Great Tradition. Tanner sees Austen as a social and moral realist in the Great Tradition of English fiction; the index reveals that Tanner alludes most frequently to James, Eliot, Richardson, and Charlotte Bronte among English novelists (and mostly to Tolstoy among the non-English). Furthermore, the book is itself in a Dryden-Johnson-Coleridge-Arnold-Eliot-Leavis Great Tradition of English literary criticism. The critic in this tradition speaks, not as a scholar to other scholars, but as a specialist mediating to the non-specialist; he celebrates the value of literature by translating its fascinating but opaque particulars into terms the ordinary reader can grasp and apply to his or her own life. At its best, this kind of criticism, by recreating the elegance and eloquence of the literature it celebrates, raises the reader's imaginative awareness to something approaching that of the author being discussed; all too often, however, the original text is simplified and fitted into a tidy, socially useful thesis.

Tanner's book has both the virtues and defects of its critical pedigree. The common reader--someone reading Austen's novels for the first time, the typical undergraduate, for instance--will be greatly helped; the specialist, while admiring individual *aperçus*, will find the book much less useful.

To begin with the virtues, Tanner, trained at Cambridge (the university of Leavis and I.A. Richards) and currently Reader in English at Cambridge, demonstrates the value of

close reading. By attending carefully to the text, he can see what has rarely been noticed. Take, for instance, his remarks on the opening and closing of Austen's novels. He notes how significant it is, on reflection, that *Pride and Prejudice* should end with the words "uniting them," that *Emma* should begin with the words "Emma Woodhouse, . . ." as if to suggest that the last name may change, and that *Persuasion* opens with Sir Walter Elliot looking at a book, the Baronetage, in which he reads the same words as the novel begins with--"Elliot, of Kellynch-Hall." Tanner's sensitivity to implication is especially acute in detecting symbolism: no reader of his book could ever believe again that Austen is simply a faithful, literal realist. Of *Northanger Abbey*, for instance, he observes that during the novel the Gothic-sounding house loses its evil and the owner, General Tilney, gains it (and he notes the elegant irony in Catherine Morland's disappointment at finding the Abbey windows so un-Gothic, "so large, so clear, so light"). He points out how apt it is that Elinor, in *Sense and Sensibility*, should be adept at screen-painting. No one before Tanner seems to have noticed a striking fact: that the scene in *Persuasion* which reunites Anne and Wentworth turns upon Wentworth dropping his pen upon overhearing Anne's speech about women's fidelity--a speech in which she protests that books prove nothing, since they are all written by men: "the pen has been in their hands." Furthermore, Tanner's sentences often have the elegant conciseness of Jane Austen's own prose. Examples: Catherine Morland "wants to turn life into a prologed series of quotations" (45); "Jane Austen . . . has effectively removed the relationship between Fanny and Edmund as far from the realm of the sexual as is compatible with their getting married" (173); "Emma is a match-maker who meets her match--and, in a sense, her 'maker'" (176); the problem for Anne and Wentworth is "how do you ever manage to get intimate enough to be intimate?" (238). And, like his critical predecessors, Tanner's learning is used to bring his subject to life. The point about Elinor's "screen-making" is elaborated by a fascinating quotation from Virginia Woolf's diary, in which the term is coined to describe "a device for shutting people off from our sympathies"; he observes that the union of Anne and Wentworth does not found a new society, as does that of Darcy and Elizabeth--"To borrow that enigmatic and resonant phrase of Jay Gatsby's, it is 'just personal'" (245).

So far, so good: the specialist can rejoice with the non-specialist. But at this point the defects of the genre obtrude. What do all the individual perceptions and elegances amount to? Nothing very new, for one thing. In the literal sense, this is true, since the long chapters on three of Austen's six novels are simply reprints, with a page or two added in each case, of Tanner's introductions to Penguin editions of the novels-- *Mansfield Park* (1966), *Sense and Sensibility* (1969) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1972)--and the gist of the two concluding chapters, those on *Persuasion* and *Sanditon*, appear in Tanner's contribution to *Jane Austen in a Social Context*, ed. David Monaghan (1981). In a more general sense, as well, much that Tanner says is dependent upon (often unacknowledged) earlier criticism: for instance, his view of the marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth as a union of "regulation" and "playfulness" owes much to A. Walton Litz's chapter on the novel in his *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development* (1965). Furthermore, in his synthesizing, celebratory tradition, Tanner has little concern for scholarly precision: the book has no footnotes and an inadequate bibliography; it is clear from his comments at several points (e.g., that "amiable" in Jane Austen's usage has no pronounced ethical connotations, 114) as well as from the bibliography that he has not taken into account the most searching book on Jane Austen's novels, Stuart Tave's *Some Words of Jane Austen* (1973).

But the great defect of the book is that it lacks a coherent and persuasive argument. [Tanner rarely discusses the structure of the novels, though he has some excellent points to make when he does--as when he remarks that the plot of *Persuasion* is marked by more sudden changes and abrupt transitions than those of the other novels (219).] Instead, Tanner's discussion is unified by a continuing concern with three topics: Austen's views on society, on education, and on language. However, Tanner has very little, in fact, to say on education in the novels, and at the base of his comments on Austen and language is the view that preservation of a "true propriety of language" is important to Jane Austen because the continuation of the social order depended on it (20). Thus three concerns collapse into one proposition: that Austen's novels defend a threatened, traditional social order. All of Tanner's fine insights are put at the service of this tidy, trivializing thesis.

Trivializing because Jane Austen is not original or subtle as a social thinker: many years ago, when the stream of consciousness was in its heyday as a critical term, Wayne Booth obdurately notes, "Jane Austen goes relatively deep morally, but scarcely skims the surface psychologically" (*Rhetoric of Fiction*, 163), and the same judgment applies to Austen the social thinker. Trivializing because such an approach fails to distinguish Austen's novels from the scores of more earnest and less sophisticated fictional defences of the social order of her day. Trivializing because it simplifies the actual fictional moment in order to find concealed general messages: Tanner, for instance, finds a new pessimism about society in the "want of union," "the principle of separation," that emerges in the Box Hill outing in *Emma* (193-94)--without ever acknowledging the quarrel between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax which is the cause of the Box Hill discord. Trivializing because it makes Jane Austen seem primarily valuable as a concealed prophet of modern alienation (221), the decline of the family (228), and assorted other social ills. Trivializing, finally, because ingenious attempts to find allusions to the slave trade in *Mansfield Park* (149), to the government's use of informers in *Northanger Abbey's* "voluntary spies" (69-70), to Mrs. Clay as suffering from syphilis in *Persuasion* (237), and the like, all make the novels socially relevant at the cost of showing them to be inept: if such charged issues are truly Austen's concern, why didn't she present them more directly and dramatically? As a Great Tradition critic, Tanner can make Jane Austen's readers understand that she and they are contemporaries, inhabitants of a timeless human realm; it is unfortunate that in doing so he feels obliged to evoke that portentous banality, Jane Austen, Our Contemporary.

Ben Stoltzfus

ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET: LIFE, WORK, AND CRITICISM

Fredericton: York Press, 1987.

Reviewed by V.H. Harger-Grinling

Ben Stoltzfus is a well-known critic and is also well established as an authoritative voice in Robbe-Grillet criticism. This slim volume is part of a series of publications on important writers by recognized authorities. Within the confines of the format, Stoltzfus offers the student and reader a valuable research tool.

As is suggested by the title, Stoltzfus begins with Robbe-Grillet's biography, presenting a rather perfunctory outline of the author's life. He dwells somewhat more on Robbe-Grillet's background and the idiosyncrasies of his parents than on his adult life, describing events Freud would have relished. Throughout this chapter the reader is titillated by biographical incidents recounted with a black humor worthy of Robbe-Grillet himself.

The third chapter is comprised of a fairly detailed summarization of the novels, films, and works of Robbe-Grillet. In this chapter he changes his own pronominal reference. In the first chapter he is "Ben Stoltzfus" and in chapter three the third person narrative has shifted to the "I" and "we" of the first person in true "Nouveau Roman" fashion. His blanket statements regarding meaning and content are not always acceptable to a critic well-acquainted with Alain Robbe-Grillet's writings, and contain certain inaccuracies. For example, the two versions of *Djinn* (1981), known as *Djinn* in the French edition and as *Le rendez-vous* in the American version, are not, as Stoltzfus claims, "the same text" (18), nor are they "identical" (27). The French version contains a prologue and epilogue which are missing in the American counterpart, components which can be crucial in any comparative criticism of the two texts.

This useful but at times oversimplified recounting of the works is followed by a densely packed chapter evaluating Robbe-Grillet's work as a whole and within the context