

of the novelistic genre. The confusion of level between the chapters reflects perhaps Stoltzfus's inability to decide at what level of reader his book is aimed. Given the scope of this volume and its title, (*Life, Work, and Criticism*), this fourth chapter seems to contain much extraneous material on the development of the novel as a genre, on philosophical ideas leading to the "Nouveau Roman," and on the general historical background.

There are criticisms to be levelled at this work but they arise mainly from the limited format. Ben Stoltzfus provides the reader with a great deal of insight offering the student a most valuable introduction to Alain Robbe-Grillet while suggesting the possibility of much more in-depth research.

Shirley Budhos

THE THEME OF ENCLOSURE IN SELECTED WORKS OF DORIS LESSING

Troy, NY: Whitson Publishing, 1987. Pp. 123. \$15.00

Reviewed by Katherine Fishburn

I regret to say that this study is a dissertation that should not have been published--at least as it now stands. Although it contains some provocative ideas about Lessing's fiction, this content is all but overwhelmed by the author's unfortunate style, which at times is virtually incomprehensible. Writing about *The Golden Notebook*, for example, Budhos states: "Lessing's persona in this novel is an author and character who also creates another character, Ella, and illustrates in an ongoing novel about her and another novel about two women friends who emerge as the 'free woman' how experience is transformed by the writer into art" (26). In other instances transition is the problem, for Budhos has the unsettling habit of using "however" when there is no apparent relationship between the ideas being compared. If these were occasional stylistic lapses, one might be able to overlook them. But the writing is so consistently bad, it serves to alienate rather than persuade the reader.

Further problems arise with Budhos's sloppy scholarship, which is bad enough to call her credibility into question. For example, she begins one sentence with the following distinction: "In the early books of *Children of Violence*, particularly *Martha Quest*, *A Proper Marriage*, *A Ripple from the Storm*, and *Landlocked* . . ." (30-31). As the series consists of only five novels, listing four in this context makes no sense. A more serious error is Budhos's claim that: "Throughout the first four books of the series, the Maynards participate in a competition with Maisie for the custody of the child . . ." (69). As careful readers will recall, Maisie doesn't even get pregnant until the third book. On what grounds does Budhos lay claim to critical authority when she cannot be trusted to remember the texts accurately? Further doubt is cast on her credibility--and thus her ideas--when, citing from Robert Ryf's essay "Beyond Ideology: Doris Lessing's Mature Vision," Budhos consistently misspells his name as "Ruff".

Although the copy editor can be held partially responsible for not correcting some of Budhos's stylistic weaknesses, the author herself must be held accountable for the book's content. Budhos therefore needs to be rebuked for her carelessness--and her publisher criticized for inadequate editing. As far as I was concerned, Budhos's awkward prose and bad scholarship proved fatal to the book's central arguments. In short, the way the book was written became the central issue with me. To be fair, I should also acknowledge at this point that I grow weary of thematic approaches to Doris Lessing.

What we need are studies that ask more demanding questions of this difficult novelist. Cannot we put aside for the moment questions of thematic patterns and concentrate instead on *how* Lessing does what she does? Nearly everyone who reads Lessing, for exam-

ple, agrees that she writes awkward and sometimes wretched prose, yet we continue to read her avidly, always eager to see what she will publish next. She writes disparagingly of Western values and customs, yet we Westerners seem to love her. Teachers and critics generously praise her work, but she has yet to return the favor. What is the source of this power we allow her to have over our lives? How does she retain our loyalty when she is so critical of us? Who are the readers her work engenders? Or, in the words of Walter J. Ong, how does she fictionalize her audience so successfully? More to the point, are we reviewers and critics the ideal readers she longs for, or are we, as she suspects, some poor substitute, thrusting ourselves between her and her true readers? These are the kinds of questions I would like to see addressed.

Budhos herself comes closest to asking new questions when she examines what she calls Lessing's narrative voice. How I wish she would have focused more on this complex issue and less on the more obvious theme of marriage as enclosure! I do not always agree with what she claims for this voice, but at least her opinions on this subject engage me intellectually. She argues, for example, that Lessing's "narrative voice . . . in itself . . . encloses and controls the body of work" (viii). In other words, she finds Lessing's narrative voice more often than not to be both restrictive and didactic. While I agree that Lessing wants to instruct her readers, I do not experience either the narrators or the text themselves as restrictive or didactic. Instead, I find her fiction to be remarkably liberating, urging readers out of narrowly conventional patterns of thought. This is a position also taken by Judith Stitzel in her important 1979 essay "Reading Doris Lessing"--an essay Budhos herself inexplicably fails to cite. While I do not mean to hold her to every book and essay published on Lessing since she completed her dissertation in 1980, I do think her thinking would have profited from some familiarity with more recent scholarship, especially that concerned with narrative technique and narrative voice. Certainly she could have used it to hone her argument more finely.

Even so, what Budhos has to say about Lessing's narrative voice is often illuminating. Budhos's paradigmatic--and most convincing--example is "To Room Nineteen". According to her, "Lessing used this story to demonstrate that intelligence not balanced with emotion is always inadequate in human relationships" (2). This value system is communicated to us primarily through the changing attitudes of the narrative voice. At the beginning of the story, when the Rawlings' overly rational approach to marriage is described, Lessing uses ironic distance to condemn such foolish behavior. But as Susan Rawlings begins her "descent into 'emptiness,'" the distance "diminishes until the narrator's view is eventually absorbed and reflected in Susan's recognition of her emerging ambivalent feelings toward her family and life" (6-7). As she nears death, "Susan, for the first time, can relinquish her hold on the carefully wrought edifice of logic" (10).

This interpretation of how the narrative voice functions in "To Room Nineteen" seems correct as far as it goes. But I do not agree with Budhos that "the story is enclosed by a beginning and ending which are . . . components of the traditional narrative" (10). In fact, as I argue elsewhere, I think this story is a classic example of the metafiction Lessing has been writing all her life. Rather than seeing the story's frame as traditional, therefore, I see it as an ironic commentary on the old scripts we are accustomed to writing for ourselves. Thus I would argue that the narrative voice is not only at odds with the Rawlings' smug perception of themselves but also with the old stories we have told ourselves about courtship and marriage. In short, I do not think, as Budhos apparently does, that we need to limit our search for Lessing's dissatisfaction with form to such obvious examples as *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *The Four-Gated City* (1969). I also do not find in Lessing's fiction sufficient evidence to suggest she is as thoroughgoing a determinist as Budhos seems to believe she is. I think even the apparently deterministic *The Grass is Singing* is textually and thematically open enough to cast doubt on the inevitability of Mary Turner's fate.

Despite the limitations of the thematic approach, I do find what Budhos says about the African veld to be quite provocative. In her second chapter, "Enclosure in the Veld," she argues that "the veld incorporates the symbol of enclosure when society invokes its code of behavior and customs" (29). Discussing the early books of *Children of Violence*

and several of Lessing's short stories, Budhos describes the damage inflicted on women by "the rigid boundaries erected by the farming community" and "the corrosive influence of the land" (36-37). Once again, I do not find the unremitting determinism in these texts that Budhos seems to, but I am struck by her perception that: "In every instance, Lessing points to a direct connection between the illusion of possibilities (expanses) and the actual limitations (enclosure) placed upon community and women" (43).

My disagreements with Budhos's interpretations of these texts notwithstanding, I regard her ideas about them to be compelling evidence that she has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of Doris Lessing. I am deeply disappointed that the textual weaknesses of this particular work were too significant to ignore--for both Lessing and Budhos herself deserve better than this example of inexperienced scholarship.

Alan Singer

A METAPHORICS OF FICTION: DISCONTINUITY AND DISCOURSE IN THE MODERN NOVEL

Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1984. Pp. 183, \$18.00

Reviewed by Jerry A. Varsava

A Metaphorics of Fiction considers the function of rhetorical patterning in the modern novel. Though something more than just a tropological study, *Metaphorics* has, at the same time, a self-proclaimed "formalist orientation" (42). Relying on a mostly discerning eclecticism, Singer identifies a key rhetorical device that orders twentieth-century experimental fiction. In his view, it is *catachresis*, "the renegade trope," that shapes the modern experimental tradition. Ignoring characterization and plot development, rejecting naive mimetic strategies, the catachrestic fiction emphasizes discontinuity through its manipulation of an autotelic language. Singer coins the term "metaphorics" (apparently on the model of "poetics") to describe a critical practice that maps and explains the tropic center of fiction. *Metaphorics* recalls at first Hayden White's tropological study of nineteenth-century historiography. However, in contrast to White's taxonomy of tropes, Singer restricts himself to a consideration of catachresis. After summarily outlining his theoretical interests in the two opening chapters, he goes on to apply his *metaphorics* to three experimental novels--Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, John Hawkes's *Second Skin*, and Beckett's *How It Is*.

Interestingly, the two theorists who have influenced Singer's thought the most--Derrida and Ricoeur--offer radically divergent theories of metaphor and it is precisely a theory of metaphor that must ground Singer's *metaphorics*. Singer uses Derrida's "White Mythology" essay to attack the substitution theory of trope. According to the substitution theory, language is transparent and instrumental. "White Mythology" promotes catachresis as the "archetlope of deconstruction." Catachresis is a destabilized trope "whose terms of resemblance," Singer notes, "strain the conceptual framework within which they are designated" (41).

Though adopting aspects of Derrida's theory of metaphor, Singer's debt to him is limited. Unlike Derrida, Singer wishes "to draw conclusions--specifically about the *kinds* rather than the *truthfulness* of knowledge made possible by destabilized trope" (43). However, given his acceptance of Ricoeur's theory of metaphor--based on a notion of *productive* not *re-productive*, mimesis--Singer's disagreements with Derrida would appear to be fundamental, rather than merely focal, as he seems to imply, and his selective appropriation of Derridean views in need of greater explanation. Singer appeals throughout *Metaphorics* to Ricoeur's theory of metaphor. Regrettably, he does not discuss Ricoeur in any detail until the last two chapters. As a consequence of this oversight, Singer's theory of metaphor remains inchoate for much of his study. In failing to contrast the positions