

The specific works analyzed at length include *Typee*, *Mardi*, *Redburn*, *White-Jacket*, *Moby Dick*, and *Pierre*. Tolchin's thesis is most instrumentally useful in the discussion of *Redburn* and *Pierre*, both of which focus on a young protagonist whose idealized father had died in ignoble circumstances. With most of the other books the critic must strain to make peripheral reference to mourning into central significance. In this regard Tolchin might have produced a better book, certainly a more subtle one, by claiming less. His somewhat obsessive wielding of his thesis is an unfortunate carryover from the academic style of a doctoral dissertation and could have been remedied by more effective editing. The extensive and distinctly subdivided bibliography, however, is a more fortunate carryover, and Tolchin might have had to resist editorial efforts to trim and condense his listing of (1) pertinent Melville scholarship and criticism; (2) primary and secondary sources on mourning; (3) relevant works on cultural and social history; and (4) selected works of literary and of psychoanalytic theory.

Kathryn Hume

PYNCHON'S MYTHOGRAPHY; AN APPROACH TO GRAVITY'S RAINBOW

Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987. Pp. 262, \$19.95

Reviewed by Charles Clerc

My first encounter with the work of Kathryn Hume on Pynchon's fiction came in an essay she had done on "Orpheus and the Orphic Voice in *Gravity's Rainbow*." (The piece, coauthored with Thomas J. Knight, appeared in *Philological Quarterly* 3 [1985].) At the time I had no idea she was working on a book on Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, but I remember thinking how thoughtful and perceptive and graceful that essay turned out to be.

Those same qualities—but this time swept along by a vastly larger philosophical/critical position—distinguish her new book on Pynchon's mythography. The standard view of *Gravity's Rainbow* is that it is a postmodernist work: deconstructive, fragmentary, chaotic, inconsistent. Hume does not deny the novel's bent toward destabilization and disorientation, but at the same time she accepts the challenge of interpreting the novel by way of stabilizing mythographical schema. "The reader must learn to maintain simultaneously perspectives that at first seem contradictory—the postmodernist and the mythological—and must learn to integrate them" she says. Her approach accentuates the orderly, the structural, the patterned, the intelligible, and it emphasizes value and meaning. It underscores in an affirmative way the novel's traditional structures. It insists that sanity has as much place as paranoia. Thus, metaphorically speaking, it is akin to what a therapist does for a psychiatric patient. Finally, as she says, "myth turns chaos to cosmos" (xviii).

The method used by Hume is not unlike James Gleik's in his seminal *Chaos: Making a New Science* (Viking Press, 1987). Need we be reminded, Pynchon's advances in fiction are roughly analogous to the third great revolution in the physical sciences (after relativity and quantum theory): "Chaos

eliminates the Laplacian fantasy of deterministic predictability" (6). Hume as a critic imposes order upon a seemingly chaotic book in the way that Gleik imposes order upon the whole scientific field of chaos.

After separating cosmos from chaos in the first chapter, Hume goes on in Chapter 2 to identify the cosmos as "mythological" in that "it is measured in human terms; it presents us with nonempirical realities; it is ultimately serious; and it relies on traditional archetypes" (37). She works through Pynchon's physical world, nonphysical realities, being, and positive and negative values. In Chapter 3 she takes up "Mythological Actions" that involved histories of Western culture, Tyron Slothrop, the V-2, and technology in general. She also works through repetitions or doublings and binary oppositions. In her fourth chapter, she shows how Pynchon opposes the universal-hero-monomyth and "offers us a new pattern for the individual, one compatible with his nonlinear cosmos" (136). While presenting Faustian, Wagnerian, juvenile, and Orphic archetypes, she demonstrates how Pynchon's recasting of the hero pattern is original. In her last chapter, she argues that in integrating contradictory postmodernist and mythological perceptions, we exercise creativity. I am reminded of F. Scott Fitzgerald's comment that "the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." We must go through that process all the time with Pynchon, and Hume makes a strong case for it. Also apt in the last chapter is her persuasive argument that as Pynchon himself has reshaped literature so the reader must reshape himself to be interactive and flexible with *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Hume's task is formidable. If she does not always succeed, she nevertheless is to be commended for her keenness of intelligence, her sweep of vision, her powers of organization and research, and her mastery of the novel's details. The problem is that once in a while a knobby Pynchon limb pokes out from the Procrustean bed covers of "mythography." The result is inevitable when trying to fit a writer as elusive as Pynchon into such a bed. Nevertheless I very much admire her accomplishment. It's a fine book by a fine critic and deserves a wide audience.

Phillip F. Herring

JOYCE'S UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987. Pp. 226

Reviewed by James L. McDonald

This interesting, thoughtful book rests on the belief that James Joyce offers the reader "mysteries, which are to be experienced," rather than "problems, for which one may hope to find solutions" (187). Professor Phillip F. Herring, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, after "twenty-four years of nearly continuous study," has concluded that "every interesting question of interpretation" about Joyce's works involves "essentially a mystery" (ix). Unfortunately, this strong insight is not argued convincingly, and it is applied only partially and, it sometimes seems, arbitrarily.