

Sergeant's life as a volunteer in the Greek army: the "monotonous, sluggish, wearying [days]" (70) while the soldiers seek out distractions and await battle, "the irremovable shadow of death which weighs relentlessly upon [them]" (85). Instead of appealing to plot in the traditional sense, or appealing to the facile narrative cohesiveness that battlefield suspense would provide, Myrivilis chooses to grip his reader on a more profound level; beneath the many digressions flows a single, not always visible undercurrent: the inexorable progression of a human being towards the front, towards combat, towards death. It is only by revealing the everyday life of a soldier in this haphazardly anecdotic, or sometimes nearly ethnographic fashion that Myrivilis, through the Sergeant, can towards the end of the book convincingly ask this question: "How could the 'human being' inside me have disappeared so completely, leaving only the patrol-leader and warrior behind?" (257) *Life in the Tomb* is thus also the diary of a man, a volunteer, who loses his illusions while growing capable of the most penetrating self-observation.

It is a book which, focused well beyond ideological and nationalistic considerations, well beyond the historical realities of the war in question, the First World War, examines above all human behavior. The battlefield might have been any battlefield from the Troy of Homer to the Skra di Legen here depicted, the war any war of brutal carnage fought in "darkness . . . so that [that] probably even God himself was unable to witness it" (295). Soldiers, officers, friends, enemies, prisoners, mothers, children, loved ones are all portrayed in turn, with realism and with humanity, are stitched one by one into this Bayeux Tapestry *à la grecque*, of memorably epic proportions.

Park Honan

JANE AUSTEN: HER LIFE

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987. Pp. 408. \$24.95

Reviewed by Glenda A. Hudson

In his Preface to *Jane Austen: Her Life*, Park Honan explains that he has tried "to expand the usual viewpoint of the biographer." By providing new data about Austen's close circle of family and intimates, he seeks "to afford a more thorough examination of her own life and character." Honan's wide-ranging work offers plenty of illuminating insights into Austen's family and the setting of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. However, although his biography, like a panoramic stage production, impresses us with its rich backdrop and host of elaborately costumed performers, it fails to increase our understanding of the protagonist and her art.

Honan's claims are hyperbolic and unnecessary at times. In his opinion, no one (except him) has "seriously" tried to assimilate new data from research about Austen since Elizabeth Jenkins's biography in 1938. And surely Honan overreaches in his judgment at the beginning of the book about Frank Austen's influence on his novelist sister. "Prelude: Frank Austen's Ride" tells of an imaginary journey taken by the young naval cadet Frank Austen from

Portsmouth to the family abode in Hampshire. Honan graphically describes scenes that Frank would soon witness—the butchery in battle on board naval ships, horribly wounded men callously heaved overboard, hangings and hideous lashings for minor naval code infringements. But his claim that "sights such as these would have made Frank a realist, and his grasp of reality appealed to Jane Austen" (4) is tenuous and overblown. We do not find descriptions of disembowelments or of men flogging the exposed bones of sailors in Austen's fiction.

Following "Prelude," the rest of the book is organized in four parts, "Family in the Green," "Head and Heart," "War and the Wilderness," and "The Chawton Plan." Honan guides the reader chronologically through events in Austen's personal life in chapters such as "Lady from France" and "Dancing in Kent," and also through historical events in chapters such as "Nelson Relaxes" and "Trafalgar." Drawing on unpublished papers, Honan unearths fascinating new facts about Austen family members and stresses the importance of her brothers James and Henry in feeding her imagination and giving her "the incentive to polish, repolish, experiment, dare and attain to the finest results" (62). He also brings a number of Austen's relatives and friends more sharply into focus and reveals an excellent understanding of Austen's period. But a major problem with the book is that, at times, his historical accounts seem to have little to do with Austen's interests. The book would have been more appropriately titled "A Portrait of Jane Austen's Family and Her Age," since biographical details about the novelist and close discussion of the novels are submerged in the love affairs and battles of Nelson, King George III's insanity, and Beau Nash and the history of Bath.

Jane Austen: Her Life performs a valuable service in dramatizing Austen's world and adding more details to our knowledge of her contemporaries. For more critical depth and detailed analysis into the writer and her fiction, we must turn to another recent biography which Honan wrongly relegates to a brief mention in an appendix—John Halperin's *The Life of Jane Austen* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). Park Honan sets an impressive stage at the expense of providing insight into what is arguably the most significant facet of his main character—namely, Austen's life in books.

Thomas Moore

THE STYLE OF CONNECTEDNESS: GRAVITY'S RAINBOW AND THOMAS PYNCHON

Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987. Pp. 312

Reviewed by Mathew Winston

By Thomas Moore's count, ten books and four collections of essays about Pynchon were in print when Moore stopped writing. He missed a critical anthology in German (ed. Ickstadt), and in the intervening time at least three additional books have appeared (by Hume, Newman, and Seed). In the midst of such critical plenty, what warrants this volume is that Moore takes some paths