

an epic of antiquity as a controlling metaphor, could be written" (205). In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold insisted "that the soul realizes itself only through operating in society among other souls" and presented "a theoretical model for the growth of culture in individuals and of individuals in culture" (197); his "conception of the unification of oppositions in the cultural progress of man's spirit was the modern British version of the soul's complex unity that Joyce chose to add to the classical, medieval, and renaissance formulations" (208).

Readers may be puzzled that this account of Joyce's intellectual grounding virtually ignores Thomas Aquinas, viewing him as no more than "an alumnus ... of the school of Aristotle" (24). They might assume that Theoharis believes that Joyce's repeatedly acknowledged debt can be taken for granted and has been treated fully by William T. Noon; but there is no reference (not even bibliographical) to *Joyce and Aquinas*. Thus they probably will conclude that this critic does not see the theologian's influence as in any way important and regard the omission as a serious limitation.

There are other problems. Some are minor--references to Bloom as "middle-aged" (126) and Stephen as jobless (127), for example--but baffling, given Theoharis's sturdy command of the text. Others, however, may lead readers to question the quality of the critic's interpretation. He maintains that Telemachus is "relieved from adolescent anguish" only by "the superior moral and intellectual power of his father" (154), ignoring the roles of Athene, Nestor, Menelaus, and Helen in the young man's education; he treats Odysseus almost as a modern, "an isolated hero with no confidants to aid or advise him in crisis" (182), misunderstanding the Homeric world, in which a hero is such because he is favored by the gods, whose aid is the sign of his stature.

Despite such limitations, this book is a major contribution to Joyce criticism. The analysis of the influences is systematic and disciplined; the readings of their informing presences in *Ulysses* are deft and thorough (if occasionally ingenious). Most important is the critic's insight into the quality of Joyce's vision and achievement. The creator of *Ulysses* was himself a complex unity of contradictions: ribald and religious, cruel and compassionate, disciplined and capricious, dogmatic and whimsical, obsessively pedantic yet rigorously eccentric, sternly tolerant yet just plain cantankerous--in short, like his father's fictional counterpart, "all too Irish." In spite of one's reservations, one closes the book with an increased awareness of the nature and range of Joyce's genius and gratitude to Theoharis for his acumen and sensitivity.

David G. Roskies, ed.

*THE LITERATURE OF DESTRUCTION; JEWISH RESPONSES TO CATASTROPHE*

Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1988.. Pp. 652

Reviewed by Mordecai Roshwald

Literature is a refined and distilled response of human spirit to human experience, or what is usually referred to as reality. The reality of collective and individual martyrdom--that is to say, experience which borders on the annihilation of experience, life which is overwhelmed by death, being which meets non-

being, *l'être* which reaches *le néant*—is a special kind of reality. It leaves but little space between a cry of anguish and the ultimate silence. It is, therefore, rather amazing to confront the abundance and the variety of literary response to the experience of Jewish suffering and martyrdom through the last two and a half millennia.

The literary reaction to such persecutions, which was selected for the present bulky volume, includes biblical passages, legends, rabbinical homiletic literature, liturgy, medieval chronicles, historical accounts, proclamations and pamphlets, imaginative stories, and, above all, poetry ranging from the Bible to mid-twentieth century. The material is translated from Hebrew and Yiddish.

While all this material is of primary historical significance, it is much more difficult to evaluate it from the literary standpoint—not least, because aesthetic yardsticks pale before this kind of suffering and horror. In the context of the experience, a Crusade Chronicle (74-82)—what might be seen as a factual report, though expressed in the idiom of religious belief and tradition—is as moving as a Greek tragedy. An attempt at objective reporting of the life in the Warsaw Ghetto—subjecting the account to modern scholarly discipline by the historian Emanuel Ringelblum (386-98)—becomes history in the making worthy of a Thucydides, who fortunately did not experience such depths of degradation and calamity. The short stories include some with naturalistic approach, such as Lamed Shapiro's "The Cross" (193-202), which almost makes Zola's *Germinal* read like an idyll, and, surprisingly, humorous accounts of Sholom Aleichem (189-93) where the tragedy lurks behind the laughter. Most impressive are the poetic responses from antiquity to date.

To address the thematic side, the reaction to collective affliction first follows a certain theological-philosophical pattern, which is revealed in the stern passages of Deuteronomy (16-18): If Israel sins, God's terrible punishment will follow. Thus, suffering being the consequence of sin, morality and divinity remain intact, even if Israel is tormented. Eventually, as Israel mended its ways, and still was persecuted—whether by the Romans, or Crusaders, or Cossacks, etc.—the moral-theological formula came under strain, and outcries against the divine silence or even iniquity made their appearance. While these can be found even in the Bible (though not in the selection in the present volume), they become more prominent in rabbinical literature and quite emphatic in some of the modern letters. Indeed, the original philosophy is often discarded as an empty shell.

When this happens, the reaction to suffering is broken up into several variants. One, the most heroic, asserts commitment to Judaism as a way of life and a code of moral conduct, come what may. Thus, in a story of Ibn Verga, an exile from Spain, afflicted with the loss of his entire family, exclaims to God that all He did will not deter His victim from remaining a Jew (98). Another reaction is simply asserting the suffering—with anguish and despair—without any recourse to consolation or self-assertion. There is an abundance of it in the literature of the Holocaust. Still another response is the suggestion of a total demoralization involved in cruel persecution, when the martyr becomes a monster like his persecutor, as in the story of Lamed Shapiro mentioned above. Another reaction is a call to resistance as a way to salvation and redemption, at least in the national-collective sense. This stance blends with and is implicit in

modern political Zionism, and resounds in some of the poetry written in the Vilna and Warsaw ghettos (483-90). Thus, man looks for a ray of hope in the valley of the shadow of death.

The editor of the present volume, Professor David Roskies, has not merely selected and collected the material, but annotated it with references to early sources—a significant help to the student of this literature. He also provided introductions to the twenty chapters into which this book is divided.

The present reviewer does not always agree with the tenor of Professor Roskies's comments, such as his implicit criticism of the reluctance of the Talmudic rabbis to promote the martyrological tradition. It rather indicates that they were concerned with promoting the sane aspects of reality, above and beyond preoccupation with suffering and the mental and literary response to it.

Camille R. LaBossière

*THE VICTORIAN "FOL SAGE"*

Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1989. Pp. 101

Reviewed by Edwin Barton

Camille La Bossière's *The Victorian "Fol Sage": Comparative Readings on Carlyle, Emerson, Melville, and Conrad* offers an inspired grouping of writers. In his admirable preface, La Bossière asserts that his "comparative reading of four rhetorical responses to the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* aims to contribute to the history of wisdom's decline as a principle of knowledge and certainty in the nineteenth century" (9).

The first chapter, "Carlyle and Montaigne: Their Silent Conversation," proves to be the most formidable of the four, owing largely to its specific density. The welter of quotations, many in untranslated French, makes the section difficult to read. Indeed, the defects have much to do with La Bossière's desire to propose a sphere of thought whose gravitational pull will keep the minds of Emerson, Melville, and Conrad in orbit; for the planet around which he sets the others to revolve is not so much Carlyle's as Montaigne's. He begins by pointing to Carlyle's accustomed response in his correspondence with Emerson of falling into meaningful silence whenever the subject of Montaigne arose. In spite of his refusal to broach the subject in conversation, Carlyle's writings betray a profound awareness of the challenges Montaigne's skepticism presented. In the end, the "Carlylean dialectic, too, leads to a suspension between contraries; and, like Montaigne's thought, suicidal in its practice of contradiction, it must allow the equal truth or falsehood of its antithesis, of a positive philosophy grounded in the principle of noncontradiction" (35).

The second chapter, "Emerson's Divine Comedy," is far less grim. For Emerson, the marriage of opposites was a consummation devoutly to be wished. Whereas Carlyle resisted Montaigne, Emerson rather blithely gave up the role of sage for that of a poet who "ministers . . . to a humanity sick with discord. A turning of hell's roundabout logic against itself, his synthetic art provides a mirror in which to read the way to health and joy" (49). Indeed, Emer-