

Nevertheless, the book's overall argument is seldom more than mediocre, largely because of Wollaeger's consistent failure to provide compelling analytic readings of individual texts. Granted, he talks at length about a variety of specific works, and even uses the phrase "detailed analyses" (p. 39), but typically does not generate the sort of evidence upon which persuasive discussions in matters of literary criticism depend. Too often plot summary, extended but unanalyzed quotation, or allusion to presumed authorial intention, take the place of the sort of rigorous discussion of text that finally must make or break an argument (see, e.g., pp. 39, 48-9, 139, 186). Moreover, the weakness of many of Wollaeger's readings is compounded by the inanity of his research into prior critical work on Conrad. He openly acknowledges that he prefers the perceptions of Conrad's work that he received from his mentors at Stanford (e.g., Ian Watt) to critical responses of the sort stimulated by the work of J. Hillis Miller. Fair enough. But preferences do not justify negligence, particularly when the material neglected frequently provides rigorously argued, alternate perspectives upon issues that Wollaeger himself apparently claims to resolve (i. e., the vexing questions of the genre of romance and the rhetoric of supernaturalism so prominent in Conrad's fiction).

It is to be regretted that so promising a book proves finally to be deficient in fundamentals of argument and scholarship. Readers seeking further to broaden their acquaintance with the philosophical contexts of skepticism may find this book rewarding. But readers looking for an argument presented within an inclusive, informed awareness of previous criticism, and founded upon illuminating textual analyses of Conrad's works, will probably be dissatisfied.

Charles Berryman

*Decade of Novels: Fiction of the 1970s: Form and Challenge*

Troy, NY: Whitston, 1990. Pp. 140. \$18.50

Reviewed by Axel Knoenagel

The title of Berryman's book makes the reader expect an account of the various forms of fiction that were published during a very productive decade. One then wonders how Berryman may have accomplished this feat on a mere 140 pages. Upon reading the book, one soon discovers that Berryman chose the wrong title. "Novels of a Decade: Some Selected Readings" would have been a more appropriate title and not led the reader to expect coherence. The ten chapters of the book examine ten different novels, and there is hardly any connection between the individual parts of the book.

Berryman works from the premise of "an intersection of history and fiction" (2) to which he wants to do justice by selecting one novel from each year of the 1970s and then discussing it in the contexts of the author's previous work, Shakespearean and modernist models and contemporary history. Berryman's approach raises a number of questions. The book is supposed to be a reply to a problem Berryman sees as a consequence of modern literary theory: "Reality

has fallen into the linguistic gap between the signifier and the signified. Where does that leave the contemporary novel?" (1). Berryman's position is clear: "The mixture of life and art cannot be undone" (1). Consequently, most of the individual interpretations in the book connect novelistic material with discourses such as mass media, visions of apocalypse, black feminism, and power politics. While Berryman's approach generates some interesting readings of individual works, the question has to be asked whether this traditional approach is appropriate for the fiction of a decade that abounds in fictional innovation and experimentation.

In the narrow context of Berryman's study, the selection of works is highly important. Berryman has chosen texts by Bellow, Updike, Atwood, Vonnegut, Morrison, Doctorow, Hawkes, Roth, Vidal, and Heller, and he explains his selection as follows: "The ten authors chosen to represent the decade are diverse, but all have made a significant contribution towards defining the form and challenge of contemporary fiction" (2). Readers of modern American literature will immediately see the serious omissions in Berryman's list. Certainly no study claiming to do justice to the decade's fiction could neglect Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. That work is infinitely more representative of the philosophical preoccupations of postmodernist fiction than Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*, Berryman's selection for 1973. Vonnegut's novel seems included because Berryman knows that he has to acknowledge, however grudgingly, the experiments with literary form that took place in the 1970s and have influenced the writing of fiction until today. A better example of these experiments would have been John Barth's *Letters*. But some remarks by Berryman throughout the text suggests that he dislikes Barth's ideas and that this dislike is strong enough to make Berryman avoid discussing Barth's novel and instead devote the chapter for 1979 to Joseph Heller's *Good as Gold*, a text that, as Berryman himself admits, comes close to "shallow farce" (133).

If one were to take *Decade of Novels* as a comprehensive account of the fiction of the 1970s, one would wonder what happened to the many postmodernist impulses of the preceding decade. The reason for this slant appears to be a dislike for modern literary theory and criticism in general. Berryman complains about "the debased currency of literary criticism" (126), approvingly quotes Toni Morrison's and Gore Vidal's critiques of Deconstruction, and concludes his book ironically, "the shifting critical fashions of the decade apparently have not distracted writers from the power inherent in the roots of narrative form" (138).

The many objections raised against the book so far make the book appear worse than it really is. While the book does not fulfill the expectations raised by title and subtitle, it nonetheless offers interesting readings of selected novels. Berryman's interpretation of Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* as a modern-day version of *King Lear* is as convincing as the demonstration that traditional myth criticism works very well for an interpretation of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. Berryman's overriding attempt to combine the discourses of fiction and historiography works best in his reading of *Ragtime* where "Doctorow allows history and fiction to mirror one another until the reflections become interchangeable" (84).

As long as one attempts to read *Decade of Novels* as a comprehensive or representative study of American fiction of the 1970s, one will necessarily be disappointed, in particular if one is not willing to discard the insights of modern literary theory. But if one considers the book simply as a collection of essays on fiction published in the 1970s and thus approach the book with different expectations, one will find several studies that are well worth considering.

Lois Marie Jaeck

*Marcel Proust and the Text as Macrometaphor*

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990

Luz Aurora Pimentel

*Metaphoric Narration: Paranarrative Dimensions in A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990

Reviewed by Anthony R. Pugh

This must be the first time that the University of Toronto Press has published two books on the same author as successive items in its prestigious Romance Series, where they are numbered 60 and 61. Not only are they both on Proust; they have very similar titles. The temptation to choose one over the other must have been great, but luckily the Press resisted it, as both studies are excellent, and despite the apparent overlap in subject, they are completely different from each other.

Dr. Jaeck takes as her text a famous remark of Proust in *Le Temps retrouvé* that truth comes when the writer "en rapprochant une qualité commune à deux sensations . . . dégagera leur essence commune en les réunissant l'une et l'autre pour les soustraire aux contingences du temps, dans une métaphore." She argues that the function Proust attributes to metaphor applies to the way the whole novel is structured; the text therefore becomes a "macro-metaphor." Explicitly or implicitly Proust is constantly drawing separate things into a close relationship, so that we are able to see what constitutes the essence of those things. The demonstration serves also to explicate a remark of Ricoeur, that literary texts function like metaphors.

Dr. Jaeck first explores fully the context in which the remark quoted above is made, that is, Proust's account of involuntary memory. Jaeck suggests that our reading of *La Recherche* follows the same path as the narrator's exploration and final understanding of this phenomenon. Then she goes back to the first part of the novel, *Du côté de chez Swann*, and shows how a careful reading should alert us to all manner of parallels and counterpoints which give us the thematic kernel of the whole novel. She compares this to the first stage of involuntary memory, when we are conscious of our joy, but cannot yet explain it. Then, in the longest portion of her study, she follows eleven pairs of themes through the entire novel, showing how the parallels made between disparate