

the criticism, and what survives as valuable. Even the best essays cannot eliminate a certain sameness to the collection that might have been reduced at least somewhat had some of the assignments been offered to younger critics, for whom the books under consideration come from a more distant past and more remote critical assumptions than they do for the authors in the book. But if *Re-Viewing Classics of Joyce Criticism* has to some extent missed a chance to present as lively a critical and theoretical engagement between the present and the past as it might have, it nevertheless offers a valuable guide to the Joycean critical past for both newcomers and jaded veterans.

Susan J. Napier

Escape from the Wasteland: Romanticism and Realism in the Fiction of Mishima Yukio and Oe Kenzaburo

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. Pp. 258. \$28.00

Reviewed by Daniel L. Wright

Prior to World War II, two literary traditions could hardly be more distinctive for their differences than those of Japan and the Western world. The postwar world, however, has seen a remarkable convergence of the two in terms of style as well as substance. Each has underscored themes of personal alienation, cultural transformation and loss, and apprehension about the future. Each is remarkable for its more-than-occasional indulgence of semi-pornographic strains of erotica and romantic wistfulness for bygone times. And each is notable for its almost uniform commitment to a realistic style that only recently has begun to be eclipsed by more imaginative and innovative narrative forms. Susan Napier's new book offers a lucid, eloquent, and insightful analysis of all of these features in an invigorating excursion through the works of two of Japan's most distinguished postwar writers.

Escape from the Wasteland: Romanticism and Realism in the Fiction of Mishima Yukio and Oe Kenzaburo is a refreshingly articulate study of high scholarship. One always is impressed with prose so carefully considered and refined as this; unfortunately, in an academic publishing world dominated by euphuistic rhetoric and arcane jargon, the occasion for such pleasure is rare. There is much more than mere style to commend Napier's work, however. Napier's book offers a penetrating and convincing analysis of points of convergence in Oe and Mishima and is especially illuminating in the demonstration of the association of Oe and Mishima with the Decadent tradition in Japanese literature such as is particularly well represented by another prominent postwar writer, Sakaguchi Anko, or perhaps Ishikawa Jun. Mishima and Oe, however, may not be as closely linked to Decadent tradition, though, as to the tradition of authoritarian fiction such as is represented by writers of the ideological novel or *roman à thèse*, for both Oe and Mishima generate their work with eyes focused on political concerns and cultural crisis. As Napier attests, "Obviously, the writings of Oe and Mishima are far more complex than a simple ideological novel; but they do contain a message that can be reduced to two basic components: The first is that

contemporary Japan is, if not evil, at least disappointing; the second, corollary point is that this lamentable state of affairs can be avoided" (15).

The author's summaries and commentary on the various works by Oe and Mishima which best illustrate her thesis are intelligent and well considered. Her remarks on Mishima's infamous tetralogy, *The Sea of Fertility*, are especially worthy. To those who seek a single-volume introduction to the literature of these postwar Japanese artists, no book could be more valuable than *Escape from the Wasteland*, if but for this commentary alone. However, given the scope of Napier's study and scrutiny of Oe and Mishima, long-established scholars of the modern Japanese literary tradition will also be well pleased with the excellence and thoroughness of this work.

Theresia Quigley

The Child Hero in the Canadian Novel

Toronto: NC Press, 1991. Pp. 183. \$17.95

Reviewed by A. Knoenagel

The Child Hero in the Canadian Novel takes as its origin an observation Ronald Sutherland made twenty years ago in *Second Image*: Canadian novels hardly ever present children as happy human beings. Quigley sets out to demonstrate the truth of Sutherland's statement by examining English-Canadian and Quebecois novels of the past four decades. The novels in question are explicitly not children's books but novels for adults which feature children as main protagonists (this is meant by the somewhat unusual term "child hero" in the book's title). It is, of course, impossible to give a comprehensive account of all texts that might be studied in this framework, but Quigley's approach raises some doubts. She "attempted to choose representative works which exemplify the prevailing attitude of the decade" (4). Unfortunately, the reader does not receive any information why the particular books were selected, and why others were rejected. As is the case with every thematic study (and *The Child Hero in the Canadian Novel* very clearly identifies itself as one), the question whether the selected material supports the book's basic statement or not remains in the reader's mind throughout the book.

Quigley selected 18 texts—equally divided between English-Canadian and Quebecois—which range from W.O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* to Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* and examines them in six chapters that take up 134 pages. Possibly to pad up the rather slim book, Quigley included plot summaries of the books she discusses. Comparing these summaries to the various chapters, one discovers numerous identical passages. Quite often, for example in the cases of *Cat's Eye* and Louis Caron's *Le bonhomme sept-heures*, the critical discussion is little more than an extended plot summary. Quigley's plot summaries alert the reader also to another problem. Particularly Robertson Davies's *What's Bred in the Bone* and Yves Beauchemin's *Le Matou* do not focus on the child protagonist as Quigley's reading suggests, and make one wonder if Quigley does the texts proper justice.