

Howards End; *Tono-Bungay*; and *The Man of Property* are especially telling—illustrate the partial successes and failures in Edwardian attempts to grapple, to come to terms, with the recognition of a society in deep transition. As Trodd suggests, the modernist aesthetic embodied in *The Prussian Officer* and *Dubliners* (both published in 1914) represents an exfoliation out of those unresolving travails.

A Reader's Guide to Edwardian Literature is well worth the candle for the discriminating attention it pays to individual cases. Trodd's commentary, for example, on *The Secret Agent* in the light of the Aliens Act of 1904-1905 is genuinely instructive, as is the corrective she offers to the contextualizing of Conrad in Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*: "Critically accepted as part of the avant-garde of consciously aesthetic fiction," Conrad's tales "still sought to recreate a more traditional and popular story-telling situation" (109). The reading of *Heart of Darkness* as a "narrative of imperialism . . . told within an English context" (22) yet uncertain of its public nicely prepares an analysis of Woolf's *The Voyage Out* as an "attack on the contemporary male as enlightened colonist" (78). Students of Forster are likewise well served. His attempt in *Howards End* "to invoke a community distinct from the gendered exclusiveness of imperialism," as Trodd responsibly suggests, "founders on the uncertainties of the nature of his audience" (36). Like Galsworthy and Bennett, the Forster of *Howards End* is "restless within the confines of [Victorian] realism, but unable to abandon it" (57). In short, there is food for thought in *A Reader's Guide to Edwardian Literature*, which is not for tyros only.

Bernth Lindfors, ed.

Approaches to Teaching Achebe's Things Fall Apart

New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1991. Pp. 145. \$15.00

Reviewed by Christopher Metress

This collection of essays is the thirty-seventh volume in the Modern Language Association's "Approaches to Teaching World Literature Series." Edited by Bernth Lindfors, who has written five studies on Black African and Nigerian literature, the collection is divided into two sections. The first section, which takes up the first ten pages, is written by Lindfors himself and contains a valuable listing of reference works, background studies, critical commentaries, and other aids to teaching the novel (including a listing of film versions of *Things Fall Apart* and videotaped interviews with Achebe). The second section begins with an original essay by Achebe, "Teaching *Things Fall Apart*," in which Achebe discusses how readers have responded to his novel in the last thirty years. At the end of his brief essay, Achebe notes that the intention of his novel is best summarized not by himself but by the American scholar Jules Chametzky. "Obviously," Chametzky writes of *Things Fall Apart*, the novel "forces us to confront the 'Rashomon' aspect of experience—that things look different to different observers, and that one's very perceptions are shaped by the social and cultural context out of which one operates" (23-24). According to Achebe, "That about sums up the mission of *Things Fall Apart*, if a novel could be said to have a mission" (24).

The rest of Section Two contains sixteen original essays which bear testament to Chametzky's assertion that this novel will look different to different observers. Lindfors has divided these essays into six subsections: "Teaching the Author," "Teaching Context," "Teaching Texture," "Traditional Paradigms and Modern Intertextuality," "Challenging Approaches," and "Specific Courses." While each essay contains valuable insights into teaching the novel and constantly challenges us to re-perceive the social and cultural contexts of out which *Things Fall Apart* operates (providing, for instance, information about Achebe's "authorial intentions," Nigerian folklore and ritual, the colonial history of Western Africa, and the literary tradition of the African and European novel), certain essays stand out as especially informative.

In "*Things Fall Apart* in Its Time and Place," Robert Wren reminds us that the novel cannot be properly taught or understood unless students and teachers have an understanding of the European "scramble for Africa." Furthermore, Wren notes that actual historical events inform the novel: for instance, the November 1905 massacre of J.F. Stewart in the village of Ahiara closely resembles Oberika's account of the retribution the British colonials seek after the murder of a white man in the village of Abame.

In another essay focusing on historical context, Dan Izevbaye supplements Wren's observations by discussing the manner in which the British administered their colonial rule, especially the way in which the British, despite intelligence reports which "brought out the broad differences in the histories and social institutions of the ethnic communities occupying the [colonial] territories," "found it more convenient . . . to govern the whole area as a single administrative unit treated as a cultural entity" (46). From his understanding of the fallacies underlying British colonial rule, Izevbaye reaches a profoundly sensitive conclusion about Achebe's attack on European civilization: "Although the story shows how the religious and economic activities of the Europeans changed the culture of Umuofia, the narrative concludes with a comment—the District Commissioner's book title—directed not at the Europeans' culture but at their limited understanding of those they describe as the primitive tribes of the lower Niger" (45-46). This distinction between European culture and European colonial administration is often overlooked by those who want Achebe's novel to be an all-out attack on the fundamental inhumanity of Europeans instead of, as Achebe intended it to be, an attack on Europeans' fundamental ignorance of Africa.

Other essays of note include Ashton Nichols's "The Politics of Point of View: Teaching *Things Fall Apart*," (in which Nichols concludes that part of Achebe's thesis is that "an individual's attitude toward change and tradition is always a function of the individual's place in existing power relations"; 56) and Barbara Harlow's "The Tortoise and the Birds: Strategies of Resistance in *Things Fall Apart*" (Harlow teaches the novel as "both an outline for national liberation from colonial domination and a critique of restrictive traditionalism as an alternative to the colonial present"; 74). For me, however, the most energetic essays—though not always the most convincing—are to be found in the "Challenging Approaches" section. In each of the four essays which compose this subsection, the author takes exception with some aspect of Achebe's novel. The spirit of this section is best expressed by Zohreh T. Sullivan: ". . . like all other objects of culture, [*Things Fall*

Apart] may be interrogated for what it contains, conceals, and depends on" (105). In this section, for instance, Rhonda Cobham reprimands Achebe for his "selective use of those aspects of Igbo traditional society that best coincide with Western-Christian social Values . . . [so as] to establish a worldview, both modern and traditional, of which he can be a part" and for his failure to pay "closer attention to women's political structures within Igbo society" (98).

In an interesting note on the political and cultural fortunes of *Things Fall Apart*, Cobham writes that "Like the institutions it helped debunk, Achebe's text has itself become the object of deconstructive exercises in the work of more recent Nigerian writers. . . . Indeed, for the modern woman writer in Africa, Achebe's authority must seem as compelling and as difficult to challenge as the district commissioner's voice must have seemed to Achebe in his time" (98-99). Unfortunately, in an otherwise diverse and comprehensive collection, there is no essay in which the deconstruction of Achebe's authority by other Nigerian writers is examined. Nevertheless, Bernth Lindfors has put together a perceptive collection of essays, one which raises important political and theoretical issues while never losing sight of its pedagogical focus. It is a welcomed addition to the MLA series and, in the end, it helps us to further appreciate one of the most important novels of our time.

John B. Margenot III

Zonas Y Sombras: Aproximaciones a Región de Juan Benet

Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1991. Pp. 201

Reviewed by Jorge Marbán

The title of this book is inspired by Benet's reference to the "shadowy areas" present in literary theory as well as in works of fiction. Part I deals with what Margenot calls "areas" in Benet's novels of the *Región* cycle. Margenot studies in detail the use of maps in these works, their self-referential value and ideological associations. He points out the discrepancies between textual and cartographical data as a means to show the illusory nature of reality and the contradictory and enigmatic characteristics of mythical space. Errors and inconsistencies also mock the customary scientific accuracy of such documents.

Demonic archetypes in Benet's novels are also analyzed in Part I. These elements contribute to the creation of a "locus horribilis" in his world of fiction. They have no religious significance but reflect the view of a world, isolated and without hope, which serves as a symbol of the tragic period of Spanish history following the Civil War.

In Part I's final chapter Margenot studies a common element in Benet's *Región* novels: the journey towards *Región* of most of the main characters and the quest to reconstruct a personal identity. He demonstrates the relationship between the disjointed narrative style and the fragmentary nature of the characters' memory.