

In subsequent chapters Cohen analyzes the different kinds and manifestations of repetition and intertextuality in Duras's works as her female characters struggle to find their own voices and eventually, as in the deeply moving case of the Aurélia Steiners, to speak and write from the triple perspective of daughter, mother, and lover. And in what is perhaps the most critically provocative part of her study, Cohen examines the specifically erotico-pornographic texts *La Maladie de la mort* and *L'Homme assis dans le couloir*. She exposes the many different ways in which Duras subverts the goals and expectations traditionally associated with this kind of text, foregrounding the relationship between the genre and gender and emphasizing the role of irony and parody in the whole deconstructive process.

In the second part of her study, Cohen examines the particulars of how Duras's stylistic techniques produce the subversiveness and openness discussed in the first part. She deals here with a number of phenomena that have figured extensively in other studies of Duras's work, such as the significance of silence, of blanks, of hesitation, of questioning, of lying etc. Yet she treats these issues in a way that offers new insight and opens new dimensions to Duras's use of these techniques. In her final chapter Cohen discusses the importance of the ritualistic, mythologizing qualities of Duras's texts, once again emphasizing the deprivatizing, communal, cross-cultural quality of the legends this author seeks to produce.

The one small criticism I would make is of a purely technical nature, stemming from the fact that the quotations from Duras's texts were presented only in English. Since this study examines in detail the intricacies of Duras's discourse, it would have been very helpful to have the quotes in the original French as well as in translation. Nevertheless this criticism in no way detracts from the importance of Cohen's analysis, the incisiveness of her own discourse, and the significance of her contribution to both Duras scholarship and the broader domain of feminist criticism.

Norma Rosen

Accidents of Influence: Writing as a Woman and a Jew in America

Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992. Pp. 210. \$34.50

Reviewed by Melvin J. Friedman

Norma Rosen is one of the best-kept secrets among contemporary American novelists. She is the author of four novels and a collection of short stories. Unlike so many novelists who till the same monotonous soil from fiction to fiction, she seems to acknowledge "the imagination's new beginning" (Wallace Stevens's words) with each subsequent work. She started her career with a predictably 1960s dose of Jewish comedy and victimization in *Joy to Levine!* (1961). Its hero, Arnold Levine, is a born loser who has been accident prone since childhood—which accounts for his limp and his missing finger. Rosen's first novel seems to indulge in the kind of black humor we associate with Jewish contemporaries like Bruce Jay Friedman and Stanley Elkin. *Touching Evil* (1969) takes a quite different and more serious turn as it measures the impact of the Holocaust on non-Jews. As she remarked in the Foreword to the 1990 reissue of the novel: "*Touching Evil*

is about the Holocaust but there are no living Jews in it, only the shadows of dead ones." Her third novel, *At the Center* (1982), is situated in an abortion clinic and involves a good deal of extramarital activity. The Jewish element creeps in through one of the female characters who suffers from Diaspora and post-Holocaust anxieties. *John and Anzia: An American Romance* (1989) turns fact into fiction as it chronicles the liaison involving the philosopher John Dewey and the immigrant American Jewish writer Anzia Yeziarska which was managed between 1917 and 1918. The fact-fiction interplay, which another Jewish contemporary, E.L. Doctorow, has used so skillfully in *Ragtime*, *World's Fair*, and *Billy Bathgate*, seems ideally suited to Rosen's talents in her fourth and most accomplished novel.

This is the literary profile of the author of *Accidents of Influence*, which is a collection of Norma Rosen's occasional prose written over the past two decades. She remarks in her Foreword that she didn't turn to essay writing until 1973, considerably after she had established herself as a novelist and short story writer. *Accidents of Influence* should probably be read as a parallel text to her fiction—as it illuminates elements in her novels, particularly *Touching Evil* and *At the Center*, and offers autobiographical insights. She speaks eloquently about this: "This memoir-journey has taken me through examinations of my role as a post-Holocaust writer, a woman, and a Jew in America" (x). Preoccupations with what she calls "a Holocaust mentality" and with various forms of anti-Semitism occupy the first half of the book. She begins an essay on the Book of Jonah, for example, with these words: "Show me a text that speaks of God's unbounded mercy, and images of the Holocaust appear before my eyes. It's not anything I can help" (87). She wonders on several occasions why other American Jewish novelists have largely omitted the Holocaust from their work and why it seems to have had so little impact on them. In this connection she mentions Philip Roth, who appears to be "caught in a Jewish writer's nightmare" and is "forced to write about material he clearly hates" (41). (Roth has brushed the edges of the Holocaust in his recent fiction, especially in his 1993 novel *Operation Shylock: A Confession*.)

In regard to anti-Semitism, Simone Weil, T.S. Eliot, and Paul de Man emerge as Rosen's bêtes noires. Weil, the Jew who flirted with the Catholic Church through much of her brief life, comes in for the harshest treatment. Rosen tellingly ends a short piece on another doubtful Jew, Norman Mailer: "Woe to a world of such apocalyptic visions from such a counselor to the Jews" (80).

Among those Rosen admires are novelists like Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, E.L. Doctorow, and Anzia Yeziarska; and figures we connect with the Holocaust like Anne Frank, Primo Levi, Peter Schwiefert, and Elie Wiesel. Her own Holocaust novel *Touching Evil* keeps threading its way through the first part of *Accidents of Influence*. We are given glimpses of the writer's workshop as Rosen explains the genesis of her novel and how it came to assume its final published form.

The second half of *Accidents of Influence* is filled with autobiographical insights. Rosen tells us revealingly: "I am a third generation Jewish woman in America. . . . Writing, woman, Jew. I name them in the order of discovery. From an early age I knew that a writer was what I wanted to be. Love of words gave me the pa-

tience, and acute shyness the desperate need to figure out a way of communicating other than face-to-face" (133). Details are filled in elsewhere about her Mt. Holyoke College years, her husband, her children, her fondness for such works as Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" (the poetics of the women's movement). But it is her "love of words" which determines the contours of *Accidents of Influence*—as it does of her four novels and her collection of stories, *Green*.

A.S. Byatt

Angels and Insects

London: Chatto and Windus, 1992. Pp. 290

Reviewed by Jane Campbell

In the two novellas, "Morpho Eugenia" and "The Conjugal Angel," which comprise her latest book, A.S. Byatt extends the project of fictional recreation of nineteenth-century history which she began in her prize-winning novel *Possession*. Some admirers of the earlier book will miss the additional dimension provided by the interaction, in *Possession*, of Victorian and late twentieth-century characters, and some will regret that the compression of the form prevents the development of characters as richly many-sided as those in the earlier book. Like its predecessor, however, this volume brilliantly probes the Victorian mind, its preoccupations and terrors, and the stories it told itself in its search for comfort and coherence. Like *Possession*, too, *Angels and Insects* both metafictionally foregrounds its own fictionality and presents characters which are meant to be taken seriously. Like all Byatt's work, *Angels and Insects* is intellectually engaging, resolutely involved with human experience, satisfyingly evocative and explorative of a dazzling range of intertexts, and seriously playful with language and form.

The two stories, set a decade and a half apart (the first in the early 1860s, the second in the mid-70s), are independent yet linked by motifs (shipwrecks bring about the beginning of "Morpho Eugenia" and the ending of "The Conjugal Angel"; classification and naming are prominent in both); by one character, the sea captain Arturo Papagay; and by their subjects: religious doubt, Darwinian science, gender roles and relationships, and, joining and transcending all these, loss, love, and transformation.

In the first story a Darwinian entomologist, William Adamson, returns to England after years in the Amazon jungle. Without funds, his specimens lost in the shipwreck from which he barely escaped, he finds a temporary haven with the wealthy, leisurely Alabaster family, classifying the insect collection amassed by his host, a clergyman fascinated by natural history yet tormented by its challenges to faith. There is a beautiful unmarried daughter, Eugenia, and, in this inversion of the Ferdinand-Miranda plot, William marries her. "And so he lived happily ever after?" asks the narrator—and proceeds to tell of William's sexual joy with Eugenia, the birth of many children, his increasing awareness of Bredely as a microcosm of hierarchical, patriarchal social organization and his longing to return to the Amazon to continue his work. His troubled idyll ends abruptly when he discovers that his wife and her half-brother are incestuous lovers and that the chil-