

Classical narratology has often been criticized, even dismissed, as reductive, presenting narratives as two-dimensional models that overlook the roles of both the real overdetermined author and the real overdetermined reader. The importance of O'Neill's four-level model is his incorporation of post-structuralist notions of textuality—the ever-changing process of intersecting currents of intratextual and extratextual elements—which accommodates not only the text and its implied and real authors, but also (and more importantly) the culturally and historically constituted reader. As *Fictions of Discourse* makes clear, narratives are never stable and unchanging entities.

M.D. Fletcher, ed.

Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie

Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994. Pp. 400. US \$33.00

Reviewed by Axel Knoenagel

Salman Rushdie is today possibly the best-known English-speaking author in the world, perhaps even the most famous and most talked-about novelist in any language. Much of this fame is undoubtedly due to the death sentence pronounced after the publication of *The Satanic Verses* (1988). As a consequence of "the Rushdie affair," the figure of the literary artist frequently recedes behind the figure of the political victim.

Reading Rushdie is an attempt to remind us that Rushdie's oeuvre is larger and includes other important novels as well. M.D. Fletcher has collected a total of twenty-two essays on Rushdie, four of them published here for the first time. He proposes in his introductory essay, "The Politics of Salman Rushdie's Fiction," that "analyses of Rushdie's fiction can be divided roughly into two categories, one which emphasizes its metafictional nature and its experimental attempts to 'de-colonize' English, while the other stresses its more narrowly 'political' purposes of commenting on Islam and on Indian, Pakistani, and British society and politics" (3).

The range of the essays demonstrates the scope Fletcher claims for Rushdie criticism. The book contains three essays each on *Grimus* (1982) and *Midnight's Children* (1981), four on *Shame* (1983), two on both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, eight on *The Satanic Verses*, and two on *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990). *Reading Rushdie* thus presents a representative survey of Rushdie criticism since 1984.

The strength of *Reading Rushdie* lies in its making accessible a number of highly interesting texts that had previously been quite difficult to obtain. Especially noteworthy in this category is "The Importance of Being Earnest About Salman Rushdie," in which Sadik Jalal al-'Azm discusses Rushdie's

critique of Islam in the context of Rabelais's and James Joyce's criticism of organized religion. Al-'Azam summarizes Rushdie's fiction as "a sustained attack on the unexamined" (290).

The most interesting of the new essays is Peter Jones's "*The Satanic Verses* and the Politics of Identity." Jones suggests a more detached consideration of Rushdie than has been common in recent years. In Jones's reading of *The Satanic Verses*, he deliberately abstains from the emotional position common since Khomeini's *fatwa*: "I shall examine just those features of the novel that have landed Rushdie in trouble. I shall concentrate on Rushdie as offender rather than as victim" (321). Jones identifies the problematic fusion of belief and identity as a central cause of Rushdie's dilemma. According to Jones, in a society where the two are not separated, Rushdie's postmodern play with a text many believe to be sacred but that Rushdie regards as just a story cannot but cause violent reactions of self-defense, since what is being threatened is not only the belief system, but also the very identity of numerous people. While not justifying the attacks on Rushdie, Jones's essay allows the reader to see much of their inner logic.

The scope of the various contributions and their consistently high quality make *Reading Rushdie* a welcome tool for everyone seriously interested in Rushdie's fiction. The collection's usefulness is enhanced by a complete bibliography of Rushdie's books, essays, and interviews, a list of books and articles about the Rushdie affair, and an annotated bibliography of English-language criticism of Rushdie's fiction up to 1993. Altogether, *Reading Rushdie* is a useful glance backward on ten years of Rushdie criticism as well as an indication of the direction of future study.

Lance Olsen

Lolita: A Janus Text

Twayne's Masterwork Studies

New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995. Pp. 143. \$14.00

Reviewed by Allan Reid

Few works attain the combination of fame and notoriety which has accrued to Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. It is ingeniously complex, outrageously contradictory, provocatively scandalous, and stylistically peerless. Despite—or more likely because of—this, it remains elusive, problematic, occasionally unfriendly, but always enormously interesting to scholars, students, and other readers. Lance Olsen's contribution to "Twayne's Masterwork Studies," *Lolita: A Janus Text*, is up to the task of providing a concise, accessible study of this challenging novel.