

1475. Frances Underhill directs her investigation to Elizabeth de Burgh, who founded Clare College, Cambridge. And Ralph Hanna devotes his paper to peasant and bourgeois women promulgators of literature in Norfolk.

The book's main limitation is its focus on women from the highest echelons of society; it thus sheds light on the aspirations of the most highly privileged and has little to say about the generality of women. Really, Hanna's paper is the only one to go beyond this; his essay also extends the notion of patronage beyond benevolent support. Hanna considers two Lollard women, Margery Baxter and Avis Mone, and the well-known mystics Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich. Most interesting is his account of the illiterate Margery Baxter, whose "patronage" manifested itself in physical acts like stretching out her arms to exemplify the presence of the Cross in the true believer, and personally carrying Lollard books to potential converts. Hanna also sees Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich as women who found inventive ways to produce and disseminate books—though, sadly, this inventiveness never forestalled male appropriation.

Unfortunately, much of the material in McCash's collection simply catalogues the acts of patronage undertaken by various aristocratic women. Also, inferences are sometimes drawn from inadequate evidence. McCash observes that Hild, abbess of Whitby in the seventh century, "could read Latin, *no doubt*, with a fair amount of ease" (27; my emphasis). In fact, Bede praises her sagacity but never mentions her Latin. Again, Underhill paints a picture of an avidly musical Elizabeth de Burgh—on the basis of several account-book references to payments for music and musicians.

Overall, *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women* is less searching than one would like, but still a highly informative and interesting collection, and a valuable addition to our knowledge of women's relationship to political power and social change in the Middle Ages.

Karen R. Achberger

Understanding Ingeborg Bachmann

Columbia, S. C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995. Pp. 228. \$34.95

Reviewed by Holger A. Pausch

Critical and scholarly discussions of Ingeborg Bachmann's works in recent years are not only alive but indeed well. The exegeses of her texts have lost neither their luster, intrigue nor remarkable dynamics, as affirmed by the broad and undiminished interest in her work on the national and international literary scene. Since the height of Bachmann's critical reception in the early 1980s, an average of over fifty papers, articles, studies, and books have been published annually, not counting chapters in anthologies, theses, and dissertations. The

range of topics includes, but is not limited to, the following: the influence of Bachmann on other writers, motif studies, mythologies of her *Weltangst* and *Weltanschauung*, philosophical positions, subversive strategies in prose and poetry, the function of music in her works, her status regarding the literary canon, feminist aspects and ideologies, social criticism and political views, the problems of identity, subjectivity and individualism, linguistic structures, erotic utopias, translations, and the national and international reception of her oeuvre.

This is the scholarly context of Karen Achberger's new monograph *Understanding Ingeborg Bachmann*, which makes an important contribution to Bachmann scholarship based on precise, informed, and detailed textual analyses. It ranks as a noteworthy study regarding the clarification of many thus far misunderstood textual situations, and helps to clarify her position in modern literary and feminist history. According to the information given by the publisher, this monograph contains the first complete bibliography of Bachmann's works in English translation.

The Table of Contents reflects a traditional arrangement of six chapters: poems (I), radio plays (II), librettos and critical writings (III), *The Thirtieth Year* (IV), *Malina* and the "Death Styles" Cycle (V), and *Three Paths to the Lake* (VI). Even though one may dispute individual points in her line of argumentation, Achberger's exemplary interpretations are both solid and refined, they are both lucid and unobtrusive, and a pleasure to read. Achberger herself translates (with enviable success, I might add) all original German quotations, based on the four-volume edition of Bachmann's opus (Munich: Piper, 1978). It is understandable that in connection with Achberger's thematic intentions—Bachmann's criticism of postwar Germany, the topic of constant war in society and continued fascism, the patriarchal power structure with its animosity towards women—her interest lies less in the realm of Bachmann's famed poetry and more in her prose texts. In this context, however, and in the context of Bachmann's critical writings, the reader might be lead to wonder why there is little mention of these newly published fragments and essays, available for the first time in the four-volume edition of her works. In particular, I am referring to "Hommage à Maria Callas," "Das Gedicht an den Leser," "Gruppe 47" (with historically invaluable remarks), and the important theoretical fragment "Auf das Opfer darf keiner sich berufen." All other new texts, sketches, fragments, drafts, and outlines—which appear for the first time in *Ingeborg Bachmann, "Todesarten"-Projekt*, ed. by Christine Koschel and Inge von Weidenbaum, 5 volumes (Munich: Piper, 1995)—were not available to Achberger, as they were published during the same year of her monograph.

Despite my very positive reading of Achberger's monograph, I would like to briefly discuss a central and somewhat problematic feature of her work, as it touches a nerve in contemporary literary criticism. There is no doubt that Achberger is enthralled by Bachmann, which in itself does not distract from the

importance of the book. In the Acknowledgments she frankly states: "The extent of my identification with Bachmann became shockingly clear to me a few years ago when a symposium moderator absentmindedly introduced me as 'Professor Bachmann'" (xi). In many cases scholarly interests are triggered by personal associations, individual recognition, or, as seems to be the case here, by psychological and intellectual affinities.

While this kind of psychological attachment often turns a frustrating workload into a productive labor of love, problems do arise when the critical and, more importantly, ironic distance seem to be compromised. Even though Achberger's book cannot be accused of such infractions, it comes dangerously close at times. I would like to illustrate these difficulties with a few examples.

Achberger's lack of critical distance is already signified by her unqualified praise for all of Bachmann's work. She does not question or critically analyze the status of Bachmann's various texts regarding their poetic function or literary quality. According to Achberger, *all* of Bachmann's texts deserve absolute distinction, which they do not. There are poems like "Die große Fracht" and "Im Gewitter der Rosen" or prose passages which deserve critical attention and less unconditional praise. Achberger's analytical view of Bachmann's texts is more a question of style and attitude. Additionally, Achberger's detailed and extensive pursuit of possible references to music (a complex problem with varying degrees of justification) does not lie at the heart of the issue. The result of this approach is the construction of an almost religiously devoted and consequently fictitious Bachmann image in the framework of numerous well-known clichés.

In this light, Bachmann is portrayed as a fragile writer whose message pertaining to her "uncompromising struggle against fascism" (1) was not heard. Her literary works are "in large part about music" (5) as she "lets the narrative flow with the logic and structures of a musical work" (6). Achberger points out (like so many others before her) Bachmann's "uncompromising standards," "her belief in writing on the verge of silence and on the brink of destruction" (8). Thus, her final poems, "which give voice to her belief in the impossibility of writing poetry," were written again "on the verge of silence" (12). In the face of the "undeniable signs of restoration in postwar Germany," the only recourse for Bachmann appeared to be the "flight into the world of magic and myth" (16) and into "her own constant state of exile" (22). In this situation, Bachmann had to choose between "either ignorance and status quo, or irreversible insight and destruction" (34). Furthermore, "in her philosophical approach to modernist literature, Bachmann has been shown to have anticipated subsequent developments in the literary theories on deconstruction and feminist criticism in the 1970s" (58). It is not necessary to continue the list of such references.

Consequently, on the basis of Achberger's "fragwürdiger Lobredneri" (a term coined in the 1970s by Peter Conrady for precisely this kind of Bachmann

critique), a new, detached, and historical Bachmann image is not visible. This absence is unfortunate, because the basic elements for the creation of such an image are all present in Achberger's otherwise outstanding analysis.

Zev Vilnay

Legends of Jerusalem

Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973. Reissued 1996.

Pp. ix+338. \$24.95

Reviewed by Miriam Roshwald

The book is a collection of legends and tales which have grown around the city of Jerusalem. They contain what may be considered as folklore—which an ancient city with a checkered history, complex and contested, and yet hallowed, glorified and idealized, can claim. Jerusalem, being both a concrete city and a religious-spiritual symbol for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, has given rise to a wealth of literary material. It embodies the loftiest aspirations and deepest longings of humanity, which found expression in mystical visions, intricate speculations, and untrammelled leaps of imagination. The present collection, translated from the Hebrew, is the first out of a work of three volumes dealing with the Holy Land. It includes not only Jewish, but also Christian and Muslim material, the latter translated from the Arabic. The three volumes contain about 1,200 tales, out of which 300 are included in the present one.

The sources from which Vilnay, a distinguished Israeli geographer, has drawn his material are mainly the Bible and the post-biblical literature, particularly the Talmud and the Midrash—terms carefully explained in a separate chapter, "The Ancient Sources." His examples of Christian and Muslim traditions are derived, *inter alia*, from the writings of Christian pilgrims in the Middle Ages and from Arab tales. Vilnay explains the peculiar character of the Hebrew legends, linking it to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and the subsequent exile: "Hebrew folklore ... withered and shrank.... Without a land, a sound folklore cannot exist and grow ... it became destitute of the life-force vital to its existence.... In the lands of dispersion, wholesome, earthy legends took on an otherworldly air, mixed with the traditions of a messianic age and heavenly Jerusalem" (vi-vii). Thus it happened that the remnants of national folklore became incorporated in the holy writings. The compilation is divided thematically, in great detail, into twenty-nine chapters, subdivided in turn into a number of sections. The major themes are: "Jerusalem—Center of the World," "Dome of the Rock," "Moriah—the Mount of God," "The Temple in Its Glory," "Ancient Jerusalem," "The New City," etc.

As one reads through the legends, the centrality of Jerusalem in the Jewish tradition becomes clear. Every site and every place-name carries a message, a