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Talking About Power

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Richard Helgerson. *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1983. Pp. ix, 292.

Jonathan Goldberg. *James I and the Politics of Literature.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1983. Pp. xvii, 292; 29 illus.

Patronage in the Renaissance. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel, eds. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981. (Folger Institute Essays, published for the Folger Shakespeare Library.) Pp. xiv, 389; 49 illus.

The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance. Stephen Greenblatt, ed. Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, by arrangement with *Genre* and the Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1982. Pp. 246.

In the last of these volumes, an essay on *Measure for Measure* is heralded by a motto from Michel Foucault: "I am told it is in fashion to talk about power these days." Despite the inevitable connection between fashion and advertisement (and Foucault is certainly one of the arbiters of critical *haute couture*) it is impossible to dismiss merely as a matter of a change in style the appearance of four books, each of which is in some sense devoted to the analysis of power on culture. For readers of the *John Donne Journal* it will be especially germane that John Donne appears in all four, and in a role to which we are unaccustomed: neither the leading original wit nor the Anglican divine, nor even the cynical timeserver of John Carey's creation, but rather as the victim of a

patronage system and of a society which had rendered him for half his productive life (though not without his own complicity) a man on the fringes of power, actually and psychologically marginalized.

While it would be overstating the case to claim that we have here evidence of a revolution in critical thinking, the very facts that we are now more likely to talk of "culture" than of "literature," that Foucault is a presence of varying influence in three out of the four volumes in question, that patronage, as a crucial link between more than one of the fine arts and economics, is a subject of increasingly exciting research—all these are symptoms of what has been called the new historicism. It remains to be seen whether there really is, or can be, a major shift in the discipline, its eventual product a new aesthetics in which problems of value in the arts can be grounded in a network of social, economic, political and linguistic practices, without succumbing to any unduly narrowing theory of causation. The alternative, and saddening, projection is that all that may be possible is a change in our own critical discourse, that the new historicism is simply the old in fashionable disguise—a little more conscious of its own shape in the mirror, perhaps, and therefore more muscular, but definitely wearing designer jeans. If in the course of this review the reader detects a trace of moralism, its cause is the following premise, on which I personally take my stand: Power is real, however imprecisely reality can be known or spoken of; and power therefore carries serious implications for those who elect to talk about it, not all of which are caused by the demands of a rigorous logic.

All of these four volumes are centered on England. The major exceptions are in the *Patronage* collection: Robert Harding's choice of sixteenth-century France as a test case for a workable and not anachronistic definition of Renaissance graft; and a final section on the visual arts in Italy. In the Greenblatt volume, there are brief glances by Franco Moretti at Corneille and Calderón, a comparison between Shakespeare and Calderón by Walter Cohen, and a comparison by Richard Helgerson of utopianism in More and Rabelais. Yet there is a pervasive presence of European "theory," even in some of the places where we should least expect it. And one of these is in Helgerson's *Self-Crowned Laureates*, at first sight the least affected by the assumptions and practices of post-modernist criticism.

The concept of the "literary system," as inscribed in Helgerson's subtitle, identifies his approach as far from hostile to the

fundamental premise of conventional literary history; that is to say, that the motivation of individual authors and the phenomena of stylistic and generic change can be satisfactorily accounted for by what previous authors have accomplished. Whereas intellectual history is more likely to assume continuities, enshrined in terms like "tradition" and "imitation," when conceived as a "system" the internal dynamic is imagined to be one of reaction and counter-reaction, bursts of energy followed by periods of exhaustion followed by other bursts of energy enabled by the vacuum but proceeding essentially in the same direction, through the same pipes. As combustion engine, the concept of literature as system was refuelled by structuralism, especially by critics like Claudio Guillén, whose *Literature as System* is cited in Helgerson's preface; but here it runs into a rival metaphor, the linguistic system of differences and oppositions defined by Ferdinand de Saussure, which, as everybody knows, became in other hands a weapon against much of what Helgerson clearly believes in. For in his argument the impasse deducible from Saussure has absolutely no place; instead, he develops three critical premises of his own, all of which break down the linguistic or mechanistic analogies and persuasively rehumanize the theory.

The first of these is self-presentation or "self-fashioning." Helgerson argues that not only Spenser, Jonson and Milton but also Daniel, Drayton, Chapman and Cowley elected *themselves* to the laureateship; that is, they chose poetry, *serious* poetry, as a vocation by which they would be known, nationally and permanently. "Self-fashioning" obviously alludes to Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago, 1980); but Helgerson's argument avoids the more Machiavellian aspects of that concept, replacing them with an old-fashioned emphasis on a Ciceronian sense of office (*officium*, duty) and a Stoic sense of self-worth. His alignment, then, is more with the ethical humanism of Thomas Greene, whose essay on "Ben Jonson and the Centered Self" (*SEL*, 1970), is cited several times. For Helgerson, the true laureate is more or less aware (and as time goes on, increasingly aware) of the inevitable tension between his high sense of office and the consequences of writing "official" poetry, the sad fact that serving the state is often hard to distinguish from time-serving, even that white-collar poets may get their hands slightly dirty. Whereas Spenser managed to keep the laureate idea relatively clean by following the Vergilian *curriculum vitae*, Jonson found his situation deeply conflicted, and Milton discovered finally that

the true laureate is necessarily an exile from his society. After Milton the split between poetic *officium* and officialdom became too wide to be ever again effectively bridged:

> Already in the cavalier generation the laureate ideal had slid far down the ramp toward those birthday odes that in the eighteenth century were to disgrace it forever. Both Jonson and Davenant wrote such poems, and both knew, Jonson most acutely, that in doing so they degraded the high office to which they had been called. . . . Yes, the laureate belonged by the monarch. But when placed there, he and his work seemed inevitably to decline towards mendacious flattery and triviality.
>
> (pp. 239-40)

So Davenant could only succeed as official laureate by deliberate self-trivialisation; and at the other end of the ramp were Dryden and Colly Cibber. Pope, on the other hand, invented a new dignity for the writer who was conspicuously not a laureate by vocation, but rather a self-supporting professional.

This introduces the second major strand of Helgerson's argument—that the true laureate occupies a conceptual space between the amateur and the professional writer. For the professional, writing was not a vocation but a job, a directly profitable occupation. The chief genre for professional success was the public theater, and the prototypical professional writer Shakespeare. The amateur, by contrast, was essentially non-serious, his poetry only incidental or accidental to his economic survival. The Elizabethan amateurs, according to Helgerson, systematically inverted the values of mid-century humanism, even in the literary genres they favored—"the love sonnet, the pastoral, the prodigal-son fiction," and their poetry was, if not purely recreational, at most a strategy to bring them to the attention of a patron. Characteristically, they relegated it to the status of juvenilia, and published it, if at all, with apology. The prototypical amateur was Donne.

It is this economic matrix that connects Helgerson's version of the literary system to the new historicism, especially in his concern with the consequences of patronage. Each of the writers discussed here is located on a slightly different place on the scale between amateur and professional, a scale on which money and its sources, private or public, is the bottom axis. Thus Spenser, writing

at a time when amateurship was the norm, saw no major contradictions between writing a national epic and receiving a royal pension. Consequently, he retains several of the generic preferences of the amateurs, especially love poetry. Jonson, writing when the cultural preference had shifted, under James I, to learning, while at the same time the popularity of Shakespeare made professionalism a serious challenge, was never entirely sure where laureate seriousness could reside. He abandoned love poetry, even writing a poem to explain "Why I write not of love." He insisted on trying to write learned plays for the public stage, with disastrous results; and at the same time he welcomed the rewards of royal and aristocratic patronage because, Helgerson argues, "entry into the system of patronage was a sign of his poetic elevation," that which connected him to the gentleman amateurs and distinguished him from the common professionals (p. 166). If these arguments seem at times inconsistent, they are no more so than Jonson himself. Finally, Milton's early career shows him often writing in the same modes as the amateurs of his generation—the Cavalier poets with their pastorals and masques—while attempting to transform them with his own brand of ethical gravity.

Milton's generation: the phrase belongs to the third strand of Helgerson's argument, and the one of greatest originality and value. His book is structured so as to remind us that Spenser, Jonson and Milton do indeed belong to three separate generations, and that we have to take into account not only how the second and third reacted to their predecessors, but how they reacted to each other. This social dynamic further modifies the notion of literary tradition, reminding us that influence and reaction work laterally as well as vertically. While at first sight this might appear to be merely another reminiscence of the "School of Donne" or the "Sons of Ben" or even the "Cavalier Mode" approach, it eventually reveals itself to be, in at least one aspect, strongly revisionary. On the subject of critics who persist in seeing Milton as the last Elizabethan, Helgerson is, for a generally mild and courteous exponent of other men's views, unusually trenchant:

> We often hear that Milton thought Spenser a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas, but how often are we reminded that Cowley was one of his three favorite English poets? In a large book on *Milton's Literary Milieu*, G. W. Whiting found place for only one passing reference to Cowley and another,

> scarcely more substantial, to Davenant. . . . The massive *Milton Encyclopedia*, a work which prides itself on being "a study of English civilization in Milton's time," . . . include(s) entries for no cavalier other than Cowley and Davenant and allow(s) them no more space than a relatively minor Elizabethan like Sir Walter Raleigh. . . . Wouldn't there have been room between Clement of Alexandria and Georgius Codius for John Cleveland, who was Milton's contemporary at Christ's College and whose first published poem appeared in the same volume as *Lycidas*? Obviously the editors thought not, and their choice faithfully reflects the practice of the profession. (pp. 232-33)

For this passage one can only cheer, not only because the pillars of the establishment could use a little shaking, but because Helgerson does a superb job of documenting the Cavalier aspects of Milton's early poetry, a similarity visibly increased by the format of the *Poems* of 1645. He overlooks, however, a point already raised by Louis Martz in *Poet of Exile* (New Haven, 1980), that a volume *presented* as if it were indistinguishable from those of Waller or Carew or Shirley was a very strange phenomenon in 1645, proceeding as it did from the author of *Of Reformation* and the *Areopagitica*. The problem deserves more thought, as does that larger one, which Helgerson leaves virtually unattempted, of what to say of Milton as a poet of the Restoration.

There are some other minor oversights in *Self-Crowned Laureates*. It makes Spenser seem less troubled than he surely was about the problematics of Elizabeth's policies, including her politic virginity. It forgets that Chaucer provided Spenser with a very different model of an English poet than that of the gentlemen amateurs; and it takes entirely literally the love-theme in the *Shepheardes Calender*, without any reference to recent work on the metaphorics of courtship in Elizabethan England. The treatment of Spenser generally seems to be the least persuasive section of the book; on the other hand, Helgerson's discussion of those unpromising subjects, Davenant and Cowley, is unfailingly interesting; and his entire argument is so well-managed, conducted with so much intelligence and integrity, that the product of its reading is a sense of rightness. If no grand revisions or realignments occur, a steady stream of insights and smaller correctives make the book far

more than the summary of arguments here can suggest; well worth, in other words, reading for oneself.

In the course of a discussion of Milton's 1645 *Poems*, Helgerson noted some of the precedents for the special form of self-presentation implied: "Jonson was not the first to publish a collected edition of his literary works (Daniel and Drayton had both done so before him), but it remains true that in doing so he accomplished a distinctively laureate act" (p. 255). One could add that behind these precedents lay earlier continental ones, the *Oeuvres* of Marot and Ronsard, for instance; but in any case the remark nicely points the distinction between Helgerson's understanding of the symbolic status of a *Works* and that proposed by Jonathan Goldberg in *James I and the Politics of Literature*. The *Works* in which Goldberg is interested are, not surprisingly, those of James himself, published, like Jonson's, in 1616, and, according to Goldberg, designed and promptly recognized as a "symbolics of his power" (p. 27):

> "Works" are opera, writing; discourse reigns supreme, its might is right, the sole truth: the acts of the king are crowned in words. There is an implicit politics in language: The root of author is *auctor*, originator, warrant of the truth, supporter of the law.

There is no clearer statement of the central thesis of this dazzling but finally troubling book: that because of the power of James's self-presentation, and his ability to give it permanent, formal expression in published words, Jacobean culture was saturated with images of his power. Self-defined as absolute monarch, Roman emperor and philosopher king, James created authority by speaking it. Not prophecy, but propaganda, was self-fulfilling.

That the book is brilliant I have no question; and one of the signs of its originality is its rejection of conventional structures of academic discourse, by which books are organized by genre, or by author, or chronologically. Goldberg pursues the major tropes of Jacobean culture—authority or absolutism, *arcana imperii* or state secrets, Roman history, patriarchy—along an elegant and devious path, crossed and re-crossed by James I himself, Jonson, Donne, and to a lesser extent Shakespeare and Chapman; and because one of the erased boundaries is that between "literary" and "extra-literary" materials, between "texts" and "documents," the diplomatic letters of a minor figure like Sir Henry Wotton are also

important to his argument. In the discussion of patriarchy, Filmer's formal treatise on that subject stands beside Jacobean and Caroline family portraits, which are also read as if they were texts. Yet at the far end of this essentially salutary approach lies an ultimately deconstructive conclusion: "discursivity characterizes the real as fully as the imagined" (p. xiv). Discourse not only reigns supreme; there is nothing *but* discourse.

This aspect of Goldberg's work, whatever its absolute merits, seems to me to divide *this* book against itself. His earlier *Endlesse Worke*, on the fourth book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, was explicitly written under the aegis of Derrida. This one pays frequent tribute to Foucault; and, like Foucault, Goldberg is certainly aware that behind the power structures of a society, however discursive, there are prisons and executioners. His first chapter deals with the execution of Mary Queen of Scots and the occasional brutality of Elizabethan censorship; his chief exhibit of Jacobean culture is Ben Jonson, who was constantly being thrown into prison or examined by the Privy Council. It is surprising, therefore, to find so many traces here of the deconstructionist terminology, not only in the first chapter, which inevitably recalls his earlier work on Spenser, but also in the final chapter, where *Measure for Measure* turns out to be a play about presence and absence, "about substitution, replacement—and thus, re-presentation" (p. 232):

> The enactment of justice is always a scene of representation, putting into language what has occurred, doubling an event in words. In *Measure for Measure*, both events and words share a doubleness, and language when it is most accurate unspeaks itself. (p. 238)

Whatever else it may be held responsible for, language never speaks or unspeaks *itself*. And it seems to me that such talk is incompatible with the real accomplishments of Goldberg's book, his demonstrations of how James's chosen vocabulary reemerged in Jacobean culture transformed by its passage through the psyches of intelligent and complicated men; so Donne, desperately ill, imagines that his rebellious body has its own *Arcana imperii*, secrets of state, that it is holding out against him and his doctors, and thus "reconceives" the royal secrecy as conspiracy, something dangerous to the health of the nation (p. 82). Reconceiving, as a strategy for coping with a governing code to which one is necessarily subject,

is utterly different, it seems to me, from the idea that language deconstructs itself.

It should be added, however, that Goldberg himself seems slightly uncomfortable about the implications of *Measure for Measure* as impasse, suggesting in his preface that he hopes by that reading to preclude a monolithic account of "the relationship between power and representation." And yet this same sentence ends with a statement of purpose to which I cannot subscribe: the discussion of Shakespeare is meant to "underscore that no directly functional bond links authority to literature" (p. xiii). Nor can we assume that "directly" here merely means "crudely." For in another crucial paragraph Goldberg first leans towards, *and then away from*, a new, and subtle, and to my mind viable theory of instrumentality:

> Whether opaque or open, approving entirely or holding back, the language (Jacobean poets) spoke was mirrored in royal discourse, in the double language James spoke. Using James's own strategy of equivocation to represent the king, poets could rely on his self-division and self-contradiction to keep him from understanding implications in their language impossible to express directly. Employing royal language, poets turned the tables on the monarch, appropriating power against power by engaging the most radical potential that resides in language, its own multivalent, self-contradictory nature. *This does not make the king's poets subversives or revolutionaries; on the contrary, royalists all, they followed the king's prescriptions, pursuing his sustaining contradictions.* (p. 116)

One does not have to be a revolutionary to perceive in the structure of this paragraph, whose italicization is, of course, mine, a split in the critic's intentions, a sudden drawing back from the consequences of his own argument. A retreat to the nature of language, its "own" multivalency, is safer than anything as direct as political opposition in the guise of, or between the cracks of, submission and clientage.

I have wrestled with Goldberg's book in this way out of respect and, it must be admitted, not without a tinge of rivalry. He has found such marvellous material, and has marshalled his evidence with such sophistication, that *James I and the Politics of Literature*

ought to become a benchmark for this kind of study, impossible to ignore. One can certainly disagree with some of its premises; but the quality of the evidence carries its own conviction.

In turning to the two collections of essays, questions of argumentative coherence and authorial premise give way to questions which are themselves social, perhaps even political: how does one build a volume of multiple authorship around a topic, ensuring balanced coverage of the subject, as well as a suitable mix of established scholars whose reputations qualify them for the project (and will help to sell the volume) with those younger scholars of promise from whom new ideas can reasonably be expected? How, an even more delicate question, can one ensure what one might in another kind of market call quality control, especially when essays have been commissioned, or have to be expanded in the wake of oral delivery? To most of these questions Stephen Orgel and Guy Fitch Lytle seem to have found most of the answers. The balance and coverage of *Patronage in the Renaissance* ought to be satisfying to literary critics and scholars and historians of all kinds, including art historians. As defined in Lytle's own essay, "patronage in the sixteenth century was an inherited muster of laws, properties, obligations, social ligatures, ambitions, religious activities, and personal decisions that kept a complex society working" (p. 66); and one can get a very good sense from this volume of exactly how complex the muster was. Compare, for example, the subtle approach to the ethics of patronage by Robert Harding, already referred to, which focuses on the introduction of the *paulette* by Sully at the turn of the century in France, with the equally subtle psychological approach of Arthur Marotti's essay on "John Donne and the Rewards of Patronage." The rewards turn out to be nonexistent, and the resulting picture of frustration and inhibition compares favorably, from the point of view of critical sympathy, with the treatment of the same subject in John Carey's recent biography.

Then there is the brilliant approach, through financial detail, that Gordon Kipling takes to early Tudor culture in the court of Henry VII, showing exactly which members of Henry's household were given responsibility for building his library and putting on his entertainments, making the costumes and building the sets, and what and how they were remunerated. Not only do we learn that Henry VII was far from the skinflint conventional history has

delivered to us, but how he transformed his court from one that had virtually no culture at all to a model of Burgundian chivalry.

Although there is only one woman contributor (out of fourteen), Linda Levy Peck, whose book on Northampton and Jacobean patronage made her an obvious choice, women enter this otherwise mixed society in David Bergeron's essay on female patrons, which happily broadens the rather limited picture that Jan van Dorsten offers of English literary patronage. An enormously large topic, the patronage of historians, with all its political implications, is suggestively broached by Leonard Tennenhouse's account of Sir Walter Ralegh's *History of the World*: how it came to be written under the auspices of Prince Henry while Ralegh was conspicuously out of favor with James, "confined to the Tower and living under suspended sentence of death" (p. 248). This essay opens up useful connections with Goldberg's book, not least because James first suppressed the *History of the World*, and then, "shortly after Ralegh was released from the Tower to find El Dorado for the King . . . James even marketed those copies he had confiscated several years before and pocketed the profits" (p. 257).

But the truly stellar essay of this volume is Charles Hope's "Artists, Patrons, and Advisers in the Italian Renaissance," delivered as a paper at the original Folger conference, but expanded here to a fifty-page essay. This presents a major challenge to one of the bastions of twentieth-century art history, the belief that the Renaissance artist was merely "an executant":

> working to a detailed program rich in abstruse allusions to a literary and philosophical culture in which he can rarely, if ever, have fully participated. But even his patron, it would seem, was not entirely at home in this culture. For it is believed that the devising of programs was entrusted to a learned "humanist adviser." (p. 296)

It would spoil the pleasure of those who are likely to read this essay if I were to describe the rigorous research and the logical dexterity by which this venerable principle is demolished, and replaced by these eminently sensible conclusions:

> Even when a particular subject was required, the way in which it was treated was often left very largely to the painter or sculptor. . . . This obviously does not mean that Renaissance artists were free to

> paint what they liked, or that iconography was commonly a matter of indifference to their employers; but the degree of control that the latter exercised depended on the nature of the commission. In certain circumstances humanists were consulted, but for the most part their role was a limited one with two quite different aspects. Firstly, they suggested suitable subjects, often in very general terms; and they were asked to do so especially when a decorative project involved a number of separate compositions with a related theme. (p. 338)

One should not be misled by the plainness with which these conclusions are stated into underestimating their significance.

But Hope's challenge goes further than this, to suggest that the misinterpretation of the evidence hitherto has not been accidental. Its origins are in "the development of iconography as a subject of academic study," and hence in the wish of iconographers to extend their territory. It arose, in other words, from the discursive practices and professional motives of art historians; and given that iconographical study has been most closely associated with the Warburg Institute in London, which is now Charles Hope's own institution, this critique of his predecessors in the field seems especially courageous.

Unfortunately, this essay rather dwarfs the two that follow it, especially since H. W. Janson's brief paper is on a closely related topic, "The Birth of Artistic License." And we must similarly regret that Stephen Orgel's own essay, on "The Royal Theatre and the Role of King," is also extremely brief, as well as being more of a retrospective to his earlier work on Jonson and Inigo Jones than a new encounter with the subject of theatrical patronage. All in all, however, the *Patronage* volume is a credit to its editors and the Folger Institute; a well-produced, handsome, consistently interesting collection, definitely a cut above the vast majority of published conference papers.

The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance belongs to a different genre altogether; that is to say, it is a special issue of *Genre*, guest-edited by Stephen Greenblatt, additionally produced as a book by arrangement with *Genre* and the University of Oklahoma Press. It features a dozen essays, more than half of which are by persons who either teach, have taught or been graduate students at one of the campuses of the University of California; and there are other features which seem to narrow the social range

of the volume. The familiar anecdote about how Elizabeth I interpreted a production of *Richard II* in the light of Essex's rebellion appears both in Greenblatt's introduction and Orgel's essay, which is, again, disproportionately brief, a scant eight pages. (Greenblatt's own essay, which concludes the volume, is less than four pages long.) Orgel's piece contains a version of Goldberg's remarks on the trial of Duessa in *Faerie Queene* V, a problem of overlap which is unfortunately exacerbated by the simultaneous appearance of *James I and the Politics of Literature*, which incorporates in its first chapter all of Goldberg's essay on "The Poet's Authority." Several of Greenblatt's contributors, also, make deferential reference to *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*; so that the reader may begin to feel not that he is entering a new and diversified field, as the preface suggests, but rather a tightly knit community.

In another way, the lead essay, by Franco Moretti of the Università di Salerno, sets the tone, or, as they say, establishes the discursive practices. Influenced by Hegel, Nietzsche and Benjamin, but citing also a range of Marxist thinkers, Moretti proposes to explain the genesis of modern tragedy in terms of the rise of modern statism, or absolute monarchies. By contrasting the dramatic treatment of despotic behavior in *Gorboduc* and *King Lear* (based on their shared plot of unwise abdication) Moretti argues that the more pessimistic close of Shakespeare's play is a consequence (give or take a century) of the breakdown of feudalism, whose trace is found only in Cordelia's sense of contractual obligation. The fact that Henry VIII was probably considerably more despotic than Elizabeth or James is not considered, nor is there any trace of real work on English constitutional or social history. In a footnote, Moretti admits that his thesis is incapable of accounting for Christopher Marlowe; and the essay in general proceeds by means of what one can only call an absolutist rhetoric:

> Without the absolute sovereign, modern tragedy would not have been possible. (p. 10)
>
> Alone in the Elizabethan period, tragedy is truly modern, truly rigorous. (p. 14)
>
> Poetry is thus synonymous with the organic crisis of a political and cultural order. (p. 33)

It is also interesting to note the enormous range of opinion which such untrammeled thinking permits. Whereas Goldberg saw *Measure for Measure* as language unspeaking itself, as Shakespeare's meditation on the problematics of James's style of government, Moretti finds the play, through its characterization of the Duke, to be an ideal representation of kingship, a symbolic definition of "the sovereign of the Elizabethan utopia" whom modern statism has rendered obsolete (p. 21); yet Leonard Tennenhouse, in his essay on the same play, perceives the Duke as a positive representation of James, the benevolent patriarch, arranger of marriages, in contradistinction to the sterile and restrictive Elizabeth. And whereas Moretti believes that tragedy is the genre that reflects the rise of political absolutism, and *distinguishes* therefore between Macbeth and Calderón's *La vida es sueño*, Walter Cohen finds that it is romance that represents the institutional transition to absolutism, that Shakespeare and Calderón are *alike* in using the genre to enact the utopian dream of national unity in its final moments, which in England occurs "from roughly 1608 to 1614" and in Spain in the 1630s (p. 123). Again, although many readers would agree that romance is a utopian form, and even that it may have been, in Shakespeare, linked to the "Utopian speculation that the New World inspired" (p. 131), it is somewhat startling to be told that "Shakespeare's hopes of national unity depend on the lower rural classes," a statement based on Perdita's upbringing in a shepherd household, surely a romance trope as old as the hills. One finds it, to choose a single example, in Jean Lemaire de Belges's account of the youth of Paris in his *Illustrations de Gaule et singularitez de Troye*, a work written in 1512 as a form of propaganda for French national unity, then in its earliest infancy.

To make matters worse, *Macbeth*, which is for Moretti the tragedy of a man who "acted according to Machiavelli, while continuing to think like Hooker" (an intriguing definition, but one which completely overlooks the actual polemical circumstances to which Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* were addressed, not to mention their deliberate conservatism), is given by Harry Berger, Jr., a radically Freudian reading. Beginning with the promising objective, to sort out the confusions in our understanding of the play that have been caused by blending stage-oriented and study-oriented readings, theatrical and anti-theatrical approaches, Berger eventually comes to the conclusion that "the basic theme of the play as text" is "Man's fear of being unmanned," that the tragedy is largely caused by the chauvinism of the Scottish thanes and their

fears for their virility, which prevents them from noticing what is happening to Duncan or to their wives. While there obviously is something worthy of comment in the emphasis on male swagger and female aggression in *Macbeth*, and while Berger is certainly not the first to meditate on this, his essay shares the overall tendency of the volume to overstatement. The contradictions I have noted do not, in my opinion, create a climate of stimulating exchange; rather they indicate the perils of collecting a series of bright ideas and suggesting that they have any serious consequences for a social theory of drama.

Now this is rather too bad, especially because the essays I have not mentioned, by Helgerson, Margaret Maurer (again, the only woman contributor), by Jonathan Crewe and Daniel Javitch, are far more moderately and hence persuasively argued; and even the more flamboyant contributions, those of Moretti, Berger and Traugott, might well sparkle in another context. The problem is partly of aggregation; and when one comes to the breathless, verb-less, Punch-and-Judy show that is John Traugott's version of *Much Ado About Nothing*, there seems to be a dreadful pertinence to his account of the discursive practices of that play:

> Their game . . . has the pleasures of role-playing, keeping them free of prescribed roles and received ideas. They write the dialogue and play the parts in an intuitive but offhand collaboration (p. 169). . . . They are skating on thin ice, every scene shows it (p. 171). . . . But smart talk forever? (p. 173). . . . Who would not weep to hear such stuff? (p. 174)

A man I know once quipped that "Parenting is a difficult and dangerous job, but someone has to do it." Clearly that is also true of reviewing; and I am painfully conscious of a disinclination to say what has to be said, a natural fear of being excluded from the community, not to mention reprisal. Which brings me to the final embarrassment; the fact that I was constantly distracted in my reading of this volume by typographical errors. On the first page of the preface one finds "metasticized" for "metastasized," and "disposition" for "deposition." There are three mistakes in the quotation preceding Moretti's essay, and, among others in its text, "*Le Cit*" for "*Le Cid*." There are eleven typographical errors in Tennenhouse's essay alone, including "Stephan Orgel" and the rather charming "artistocracy." The index offers us Stephen

instead of David Bevington, Corneilles, and entries for *both* Philip Sidney and Phillip Sydney, each with his own group of page references. And this is, alas, only a selection. As Jonathan Goldberg quite rightly says, there *is* an implicit politics in language; and the way in which we talk about power will inevitably affect the future of our discipline, of the humanities, and even of the university as a sociopolitical institution. It behooves us to do it more carefully than this.

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