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## Review of Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics

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validity of any one perspective. These ideologies are manifested in the text in different styles or genres: pastoral, realist, and tragic. Had Boumelha pursued this line through close readings of several novels, she would have accomplished much. Two of her chapters, however, explore the context for Hardy's work, presumably in an effort to identify the competing ideologies on which he drew. The first, entitled "Sexual Ideology and the 'Nature' of Woman, 1880-1900," surveys sociological and medical writing about women's sexuality, touching on how this material was received by feminists and socialists. The focus and purpose of the chapter are not clear, and she concludes with the simple observation that female nature was "problematic" during this period and that female sexuality was "constructed."

Her fourth chapter, "Women and the New Fiction 1880-1900," is her most interesting; here the research into context has some direct pay-off in her reading of *Jude the Obscure*. It has even greater general value in discriminating between the ideals of "womanliness" (dependency, woman's sphere) and "womanhood," as developed in the New Woman fiction; Boumelha does a particularly nice job in establishing the conservative core of the purportedly radical ideal of "womanhood" with its appeal to nature and physiology in defining what women should be. One would like to see this work applied to *Tess* more concretely than she does.

In addition to thesis and research in context, Boumelha shapes her book around a development in Hardy's fiction: *The Return of the Native* is structured around a marital tragedy, with the male's a tragedy of intellect, the female's a subordinate one of sexuality; in *Tess* the woman's tragedy of sexuality is primary, Angel's intellectual disorder subordinate; in *Jude* Hardy achieves a successful double tragedy in which both male and female are shattered in mind and body.

All of these projects are worthwhile, but none is pursued systematically enough to be coherent and convincing. Chapter Two, "Hardy's Fiction, 1871-1886," is egregiously lacking in focus. The later chapters on *Tess* and *Jude* respectively are more successful, but even here Boumelha hops from one concern to another — and I have scarcely touched on all her concerns, which range from Jude's class situation to the problem of materiality of consciousness in a post-Darwinian era to the state of the holograph. In short, Boumelha tries to do too much.

The paragraphing reflects her organization problems, one beginning on p. 140 and concluding two pages later. Her language is often trendy to no purpose: "this irruption of the feminine into the novel" (73), "a shared code of narrator and reader" (57), "the ideology of womanhood that . . . recuperates desire into instinct" (89). Ethelberta "takes speech for herself, and in doing so transgresses all the determinations of class and kin" (42), Tess "is not merely spoken by the narrator, but also spoken *for*" (120), and Sue is "reduced from a challenging articulacy to a . . . silence [which] ironically duplicates the death of Jude" (154): all of which might have some point were these remarks developed anywhere else in this book. And a final complaint: the number of typographical errors is embarrassing. I surmise that the book is a dissertation hurried into print which should have had more time in the cask to mature.

PATRICIA ALDEN

Hans Robert Jauss. *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982. 357 pp. \$29.50 (cloth); \$12.95 (paper).

The work of Hans Robert Jauss has played an important role in the new critical series, "Theory and History of Literature." Two of the first three volumes are by Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (vol. 2) and *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*

(vol. 3). The latter book originally appeared in German in 1977, and the former contains essays published between 1970 and 1980. The success of these books has helped establish the series as a viable publishing venture with over twenty volumes now being planned.

The first essay in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* is "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," a justly famous pronouncement of the late sixties that outlines the goals and methods of a future reception aesthetics. Adapting concepts from the hermeneutic tradition, Jauss advocates analyzing the history of a text's reception in terms of readers' "horizons of expectations." *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* focuses primarily on the literary horizon of expectations, especially the assumptions about genres that historical readers bring to their aesthetic experiences. But the book also touches several times on the topic of *extra-literary* horizons. Jauss vigorously argues for the "socially formative function of literature," though he does not provide much in the way of historical evidence or theoretical elaboration. When examples of literature's historical impact are given, they include only general philosophical and ethical effects and not specifically social and political consequences. Missing is the kind of ideological reception study that would need to be done to justify Jauss's argument for the socially effective character of literature. Thus, the reader of Jauss's first book in English comes to his second with at least two pressing questions: What is the precise nature of literary reception that enables its socially formative power? What is the role of political ideology in the reception of literature at specific historical moments? In *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* Jauss presents a full answer to the first question (in essays A through D) and suggests the beginning of an answer to the second (in essay E).

The first three essays proliferate reception categories and lead to still another question: What is the relation of Essay B's five interaction patterns of hero identification (associative, admiring, sympathetic, cathartic, and ironic) to Essay C's two kinds of laughter (laughing at and laughing with) and laughter's three functions (relief, protest, and solidarization), and the relation of all these to Essay A's three fundamental categories of aesthetic enjoyment (poiesis, aesthesis, and catharsis)? I will answer this mind-bending question as I discuss the details of the three essays.

Essay A sketches a theory and history of aesthetic experience. This analysis, which occupies half the book, successfully rehabilitates the concepts of "aesthetic experience" and "aesthetic pleasure." However, the exact nature of the aesthetic experience becomes a bit mysterious in Jauss's formulation when he contrasts the "aesthetic attitude of play" with the "wholly serious involvement" of everyday life (5-6). Such a contrast does capture a lived distinction between, say, working daily at a job and playing a child's game or reading a novel. But the contrast easily becomes too stark, and here ends up making one of Jauss's central arguments more difficult to understand. On the same page that he posits the contrast, Jauss notes that the aesthetic sometimes "precedes concrete experience and conveys norms and contents for the practice of life first hand." But if in the aesthetic experience the "player" suspends his "serious" interests and commitments, how can such experiences have any significant effects on the bracketed beliefs and attitudes toward action? Jauss does not raise this troubling question, but it is possible to develop an answer consistent with his reception theory: The aesthetic attitude can be viewed as a frame placed around an experience. This framing involves the reader in an experience of the imaginary which results in the aesthetic pleasure Jauss defines as the "enjoyment of self in the enjoyment of what is other" (32). This framed experience is not cut off from everyday life; indeed, it can't be if it is to have the social effects Jauss claims for it. The reader takes his beliefs and values with him when he opens a book. While reading he does not passively contemplate, suspend his judgement, or act disinterestedly. Rather, he actively constructs meaning, makes ethical judgements, and feels real emotions. In other words, the reader has a real experience of the imaginary not an imaginary experience. Though aesthetic pleasure does free him from "the practical compulsion of work and the natural needs of the everyday world" (30), the reader is only relatively free from these concerns. It is precisely because the experience framed is real, interested, and in other ways continuous with non-aesthetic experience that literature can have personal and social effects in addition to and (Jauss would argue) as a result of

aesthetic pleasure. Exactly how the aesthetic experience achieves these effects is a question Jauss attempts to answer in this and the following essays.

Jauss distinguishes three fundamental categories of aesthetic experience. *Poiesis* encompasses the productive side of the experience and refers to the artist's creative activity and the pleasure he takes in his own work. But *poiesis* does not apply only to the artist. For example, in Essay D, "On the Question of the 'Structural Unity' of Older and Modern Lyric Poetry," Jauss gives the example of an editor functioning as an active reader who produces his own version of someone else's poem: Gide's *poiesis* in abridging Theophile's third ode. *Poiesis* can also refer to the reader's or viewer's reception in another way: "The observer may consider an aesthetic object to be incomplete, abandon his contemplative attitude, and become a cocreator of the work by completing the concretization of its form and significance" (36). Perhaps Jauss's description here is a bit misleading since it suggests that only when the observer judges a work as incomplete can he become a cocreator. Jauss's later discussion of pop art reception reinforces this same view and implies that *poiesis* is relevant to the receiver's activity only in the case of modern art. But in another place Jauss stresses the recipient's "active share in the formation and reformation of meaning by which a work lives historically" (20), and he seems to be talking here about traditional as well as modern art. Indeed, throughout his reception aesthetics, Jauss emphasizes the active role of the reader again and again, and he often appears to assume a kind of *poiesis* of concretization in all aesthetic reception.

Jauss's second category of aesthetic experience is *aesthesis*, which embodies the receptive side of that experience. *Aesthesis* involves "sensory perception and feeling" and refers to the "aesthetic pleasure of cognizing seeing and seeing recognition" (34). Jauss explains the dynamics of *aesthesis* in this way: "to one's own manner of seeing, which abandons itself to aesthetic perception as it is led along by the text, there opens up, along with an alien manner of seeing, the horizon of experience of a differently viewed world" (64). Jauss gives his most extended example of *aesthesis* in Essay D, where he compares older and modern lyric poetry in terms of reception categories instead of categories derived from representational aesthetics.

Just as *poiesis* can be part of reception and thus an aspect of *aesthesis*, so too does *aesthesis* open up into catharsis, Jauss's third category of aesthetic experience. *Catharsis*, as Jauss uses the term, involves the communicative efficacy of aesthetic experience and refers to "the enjoyment of affects as stirred by speech or poetry which can bring about both a change in belief and the liberation of his mind in the listener or spectator" (92). In focusing on the social function of catharsis, Jauss makes his most interesting observations and faces some of his most difficult problems. How does literature perform its socially formative function? "The aesthetic attitude disposes the individual more strongly to adopt a model than does a model set by religion, tradition, education, or a life pattern called for by the abstract affirmation of morality, because in the former case, self-enjoyment through the enjoyment of the other functions as an incentive bonus" (93-94). Though aesthetic pleasure probably motivates a reader to pay attention to a model, does it actually provide an incentive to emulate it? Jauss claims it does. Nevertheless, Jauss also points out that cathartic identification does not necessarily lead to the adoption of a represented model. Catharsis "can either bring the spectator to a free, moral identification with an exemplary action or let him remain in a state of pure curiosity," a naive amazement at the hero's deeds that ultimately leaves the spectator unchanged (96). What determines whether any specific cathartic reading experience is formative or not? Jauss doesn't answer this (perhaps impossible) question, though his discussion of identification in the next essay does suggest some possible avenues of investigation.

In Essay B, "Interaction Patterns of Identification with the Hero," Jauss develops his account of catharsis in more detail. He describes five levels or communicative patterns of aesthetically mediated identification: *associative identification* which involves "assuming a role in the closed, imaginary world of a play action" in such a way that the dichotomy of actors and spectators is annulled, as in the religious drama of the Middle Ages (164); *admiring identification* with a perfect hero, saint, or sage that may dispose the reader "toward

acknowledging and adopting models and patterns" of behavior (168); *sympathetic identification* with an imperfect hero that involves "projecting oneself into the alien self, a process which eliminates the admiring distance" and can inspire feelings of solidarity (172); *cathartic identification* "that frees the spectator from the real interests and affective entanglements of his world, and puts him into the position of the suffering and beset hero so that his mind and heart may find liberation through tragic emotion or comic relief" (177); and *ironic identification* "where an expectable identification is held out to the spectator or reader only to be subsequently refused or ironized" so that his is provoked to question the conditions of aesthetic activity or even the aesthetic attitude itself (181-82).

Jauss makes his classification scheme more useful by dividing each mode of identification into progressive and regressive attitudes. For example, admiring identification could result in a disposition to emulate a desirable model or it could degenerate into mere marveling at the extraordinary, "aesthetically neutralizing the call for emulation" (152). And ironic identification could lead to aesthetic and moral reflection or to "attitudes such as irritation, boredom, disgust, or indifference" (158). Thus, in this essay on identification, Jauss not only clarifies his notion of the persuasive power of literature; he also indicates the various ways this power can misfire. His description of literature's rhetorical effects and the strengths and weaknesses of aesthetic persuasion provides a framework for analyzing the assumptions of such historical activities as popular reviewing, literary censorship, and humanistic education. Perhaps more importantly, Jauss's rhetorical account carves out a space for social and political reception studies. As he points out, "Between the extremes of the norm-breaking and norm-fulfilling function, between the progressive change of horizon and the adaptation to a ruling ideology, there lies an entire range of frequently overlooked possibilities for the social effectiveness of art which can be referred to as communicative in the social sense" (154). By discussing identification within the catharsis of aesthetic experience, Jauss attempts to make this literary range of social effects more visible. In Essay C, "On Why the Comic Hero Amuses," he investigates further one aspect of cathartic identification by showing how laughing at or with a hero can result in affirmative relief from sanctified traditions or circumstances, in negative but safe protest against the status quo, or in the creation and justification of new social norms.

Two brief comments can be made here before proceeding to the final essay on reception and social norms. Jauss's method of developing his reception aesthetics is extremely interesting. He relies on a dialectic between theoretical elaboration and historical evidence. His methods include reception studies of concepts used in his reception studies as well as more traditional investigations into literary and social history. The historical evidence used to support his theoretical claims is problematic but only in the sense that all such articulation of evidence and theory is problematic. To support his theory of identification, for example, Jauss uses a myriad of historical examples: philosophical discourses on aesthetic experience; polemical religious tracts assuming, attacking, or praising aesthetic effects; letters and literary prefaces referring to specific aesthetic effects; inferred experiences of genres in literary history; and even thematized examples of reading in literary texts themselves. Jauss's theory of identification becomes a key for interpreting these examples. Like all theorists, Jauss must persuade others to "read" his evidence positively in terms of his account. If they do, then the evidence is taken as support for the theory; if they don't, then the evidence fails to support it. From this perspective, theory is not elaborated from evidence nor does evidence independently prove a theory valid. Rather, contemporary theory and historical evidence are elaborated simultaneously.

Since I am among those who find Jauss's elaboration persuasive, a second general observation seems in order, a comment not on his theory's method but on its content. What Jauss calls the communicative efficacy of aesthetic enjoyment often determines the social impact of an ideological performance in literature. (The reception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the most striking example in American literature.) Yet it is this vital aspect of reading—emotional involvement—that seems most difficult to describe in productive and interesting ways. Its discussion is found primarily in the casual remarks of popular reviewers and the controversial theories of psychological reader-response critics. The in-

stitutionalized discourse of contemporary literary studies usually ignores both of these groups, relegating the first's commentary to a devalued history of taste and dismissing the second's theorizing as the extravagance of critical solipsism or the misguided effort of reductive psychologism. Jauss's reception aesthetics could legitimize discussions of emotional engagement in reading literature, and it could do so as it effectively encompasses the psychological, social, and political within the rhetorical. (Unfortunately, Jauss neglects a related project in the American critical tradition, that found in Kenneth Burke's writings, e.g., the discussion of identification in his *Rhetoric of Motives*.)

The most provocative essay in Jauss's book is the last, "*La douceur du foyer*: Lyric Poetry of the Year 1857 as a Model for the Communication of Social Norms." Here Jauss focuses on the socio-political effects of reception: "the passing on, elaboration, and legitimation of social norms through literature" (264). To answer the question of how a poem's representational achievement can acquire a communicative function and how the receptive experience can convey interaction patterns of social life, Jauss uses the sociology of knowledge in a cross-sectional analysis of twenty French lyrics (selected from a corpus of 700) to reconstruct the literary and social horizons of expectations in 1857. I cannot do justice here to the intricacies of Jauss's reception-aesthetic inquiry, but its most important claims deserve mention.

Jauss assumes that a historical life world consists of subuniverses (scientific, religious, familial, etc.) that have their own interaction patterns or norms of behavior. He describes one such subuniverse represented in the lyrics of 1857: *la douceur du foyer*, the hearth's warm charm, the secure and happy home of the bourgeois family. Jauss then argues that "In its life-world function, lyric poetry does not evoke the basic situational pattern and poetically heightened ideal of the *douceur du foyer* for its own sake. As social paradigm, the lyric theme and its variations always also convey experiences, modes of conduct, and norms of everyday knowledge" (273). In its cathartic aspect, the reception of the 1857 lyrics communicates and legitimates certain social norms of attitude and behavior. Jauss shows how this poetic legitimation can take on a specifically ideological function: "In our context, ideology means that lyric speech veils an interest of the powers that be, that communication is distorted by an asserting which simultaneously suppresses what it does not care to be known, that a group interest claims universal truth for its particular interpretation of the world" (283). The family portrait conveyed by the 1857 lyrics reflects the ideal order that serves the interests of the ruling bourgeois class. Even more interesting to Jauss is the ideological exclusion taking place within the limits of the bourgeois family portrait itself. He notes that the *douceur du foyer* pattern presents the home as the "gentle sphere of the woman" and completely ignores "the authority that was the father's and the family head's in the bourgeois classes of the Second Empire" (284).

There are several questions about Jauss's book that I don't have the space to pursue but which I would at least like to pose. In relation to the historical life-world, how actually "transparent" (120) is the aesthetic experience that conveys social norms? What exactly are the relationships among historical reconstruction, critical interpretation, lyric theme, social idea, and social reality? How "free" is the reader to adopt models portrayed in literature if reception is determined by horizons of expectations? What exactly is the difference between free emulation and mechanical imitation, between literary persuasion and literary seduction (cf. pp. 8 and 103)? What is the most useful way of conceptualizing the text-reader relation within reception aesthetics? Is Jauss's formulation of this relation (e.g., on pp. xxxii and 64) vulnerable to recent pragmatist attacks on epistemological realism and idealism in literary theory? How does reception aesthetics relate to deconstruction (which Jauss mentions in passing) on the one hand and the emerging Marxist rhetorics on the other?

Despite these as yet unanswered questions, Jauss's reception aesthetics successfully provides a much needed corrective to American reader-response criticism, which often neglects the historical context of reading and almost completely ignores its social and political effects. More importantly, Jauss's proposals offer an exciting opportunity for revitalizing literary studies by directing its attention to reception history. If reception is understood as mediating the relation of literature to society within history, then a focus on reception can

incorporate (rather than replace) formalist insights into narrative strategies and textual structures and at the same time encourage the appropriation of relevant models from history and the social sciences.

The editors, Wlad Godzich and Jochen Schulte-Sasse, have performed a valuable service in making Jauss's book available in their series, "Theory and History of Literature." At the time of this writing, they are considering a third Jauss volume for translation and eventual publication. The readers of their series can only benefit from such an addition.

STEVEN MAILLOUX

Howard Stern. *Gegenbild, Reihenfolge, Sprung: An Essay on Related Figures of Argument in Walter Benjamin*. Berne: Peter Lang, 1982. 122 pp. \$34.70 (cloth).

It is significant that so much writing on Walter Benjamin will at some point explicitly identify its method with that of its subject, while at the same time asserting that this very approach permits Benjamin's own convictions and concerns to be cancelled from the agenda. The justification is implicit, so it seems, in his impressive and enviable capacity to discover hidden currents in a text which move in directions contrary to its surface flow—for example where he conjures a revolutionary social critique from the writings of the arch-conservative Karl Kraus. In most instances the rejection by critics of his conclusions rests on a sense that Benjamin occupied irreconcilable positions. It is argued that some—but not all—of these should come under the hammer to bring the undivided force of his method to the legitimate furtherance of the remainder. Yet this still permits that between the camps of his Marxist and theologically oriented adherents there should still be, besides the obvious oppositions, agreement that an understanding of his writing always looks towards the issues of truth, happiness and the redemption of life.

Howard Stern is interested in something quite different here—what he calls a "context-free structural basis" (p. 12) of the texts under examination. He has taken a very small selection of passages by Benjamin and traces in them a triad of organizing figures—*Gegenbild*, *Reihenfolge* and *Sprung*—which he presents in terms of spatial metaphors drawn from geometry. He does so, moreover, with indisputable care and precision. One would not want to deny that these are *possible* readings, nor even that they are in places more than ordinarily ingenious and inventive. The difficulty arises with the question of what kind of authority such constructions can claim over their material. Stern's view of his own project is made clear in the references to the 1956 essay by Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances." This comes in for high praise as a model, but not for its claim to find criteria *outside* the literary text itself which account for the readings made within it. "My method," Stern observes, "differs from Jakobson's in that I do not try to anchor my rhetorical readings in linguistics or any other science, nor do I see any way in which this could be done" (p. 21). He then concludes:

Jakobson's idea must be defended on the same ground as a good piece of New Criticism: it gives a systematic account of some features of literature that may be perceived by a literate reader and are very likely to be perceived by him after assimilating Jakobson's account. The idea has been successful not because of its objective derivation, but because the history of literature and literary criticism has trained us to use the categories of rhetoric and to accept their logical extension as meaningful. (p. 22)

Stern therefore not only builds on this familiar, adaptable but indifferent notion of what is at stake, but also distances himself from what is both starting point and conclusion for Benjamin, namely that such impassivity with regard to the received history of literature effectively negates any meaning in a serious sense whatsoever.