

## Book Reviews

*The Early Lives of Melville: Nineteenth-Century Biographical Sketches and Their Authors.* By Merton M. Sealts, Jr. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974. Pp. xiii, 280. \$12.50.

Believing that "Sooner or later, the dedicated student of Melville will feel the need to go behind even the best of his secondary sources...and examine complete primary documents", Merton M. Sealts, Jr. has collected, edited, and interpreted "the most important nineteenth-century biographical sketches of Melville, written either during his lifetime or immediately after his death by persons who knew him directly." His goals have been to "establish the texts, set forth their basis and authority, furnish genuinely helpful notes and commentary, and — last but not least — index the entire study in order to make it readily usable as well as readable". Mr. Sealts has achieved all of these goals. Making judicious use of standard Melville references, such as Jay Leyda's invaluable *Melville Log*, and providing abundant new material from unpublished sources, Sealts has produced a book of genuine merit.

*The Early Lives of Melville* is divided into two main parts, the first of which is devoted to a study of the earliest biographical sketches of Melville and to his biographers of the nineties. J.E.A. Smith, T.M. Coan, and A.G. Stedman emerge as interesting figures in themselves as Sealts depicts their encounters and relationships with Melville and establishes their authority as biographers. The second part comprises the documents themselves, arranged in three groups: articles from four reference works published between 1852 and 1890; retrospective essays of 1891-1892; family reminiscences. There are five brief appendices, an index, and a chronology.

The collection of documents is the rock upon which this uniformly valuable book is founded. A sampling may suggest the variety and extent of the whole: the first biographical article written on Melville, from *The Men of the Time or Sketches of Living Notables* (a biographical dictionary published in 1852); J.E.A. Smith's essay in nine instalments that appeared in the Pittsfield, Massachusetts, *Evening Journal* (1891-1892), published here in full for the first time; the first complete

publication of Elizabeth Shaw Melville's memoranda; and the articles and essays of A.G. Stedman. The convenience of having this primary material assembled in one volume, with comprehensive notes and illuminating commentary, is evident. In a sense, the book is a high quality controlled research text. Aided by Mr. Sealts' reliable introductory section and notes, the reader can study the growth of the biographical sketches, observe their dependence on one another, and discover the source of "certain persistent ideas about Melville".

One such persistent idea was launched when the Scottish poet and novelist Robert Buchanan came to New York in 1884 and tried to look up Melville, whom he described as "the one great imaginative writer fit to stand shoulder to shoulder with Whitman". Buchanan's search went unrewarded:

There was some slight indication that he was 'alive,' and I heard from Mr. E.C. Stedman, who seemed much astonished at my interest in the subject, that Melville was dwelling 'somewhere in New York,' having resolved, on account of the public neglect of his works, never to write another line.

Although this account has overtones of exaggeration, it endured, and received support from other quarters. Stories in the New York *Commercial Advertiser* and other newspapers kept alive the idea that Melville was neglected by the New York literary circle. This charge did not go unanswered, most notably by Arthur Stedman, who pointed out that Melville had been among the first to be invited to join the Authors' Club. Melville accepted the invitation, then changed his mind, probably because he was becoming increasingly uncomfortable in large gatherings. It appears that the efforts of the Stedmans did not end here, and Melville may even have been persuaded to attend a dinner given in his honour shortly before his death. Furthermore, records of Melville's visitors and acquaintances make it clear that his seclusion was not so complete as Buchanan suggested. Sealts has brought together the evidence on both sides, leading to the conclusion that Melville's retirement was partly self-chosen, and "by no means impenetrable".

Melville's literary reputation in his own time is the topic of major interest in the documents. In terms of his growth as a thinker and writer, Melville did not overvalue his years at sea or his experiences on barbarous shores. To him, the most important years were those spent exploring "what in *Mardi* he called 'the world of the mind' ". In 1851 he told Hawthorne, "Until I was twenty-five I had no development at all." Most of his contemporaries disagreed, viewing his meditativeness and philosophical speculation as a canker which wasted his fame as an autobiographical adventure writer. His reputation, established by *Typee* (which one admirer said would be read "when most of the Concord group are forgotten"), rose or fell as he remained true to or betrayed the image he had created in that tale of adventure among the cannibals.

When *Moby-Dick* appeared, perceptive readers saw it as a work of power and genius, but laden as it was with a heavy cargo of metaphysics it portended Melville's imminent loss of popularity. According to Arthur Stedman, "Melville's success as a writer was undoubtedly continuous and constantly increasing up to the publication of 'Moby Dick' in 1851....With 'Moby Dick' he was to reach the topmost notch of

his fame. 'Pierre, or the Ambiguities' (1852) was the signal for an outburst of protest against 'metaphysical and morbid meditations' which already had made themselves apparent in 'Mardi' and 'Moby Dick'. Titus Munson Coan, attempting to engage Melville in talk 'of Typee and those paradise islands' was dismayed when Melville 'preferred to pour forth his philosophy and his theories of life. The shade of Aristotle arose like a cold mist between myself and Fayaway.' Coan's companion, present at the same interview, complained of Plato. J.E.A. Smith summed up a general feeling about the effect of philosophical speculation on Melville when he wrote of the "philosophical seances" Melville and Hawthorne held at Arrowhead:

Of course communion like this between two men of extraordinary mental powers, and of kindred thought and feelings amid the most pleasant surroundings, far away from any disturbing influences, must have been delightful to them. It is to be feared, however, that the philosophy which was talked, while it could well color Hawthorne's weird tales, where it had a place, had a very disastrous effect upon those of Melville, where it had none. The literary fields of the two writers were as wide apart as they well could be; and we are compelled to think that their excessive intimacy was a misfortune to the one whose charm lay in the simplicity, vigor and naturalness with which he related his observations of men and nature and his expression of the common sense, but keen and often eloquent, thoughts which they had excited in him.

Thus was the author of *Typee* and *Omoo* spoiled by vain philosophy. To his contemporaries, Melville's greatness lay in his clear and vigorous narratives of adventure. It is little wonder then to find "Bartleby" described by an early critic as "a quaint, fanciful portrait", or to learn that *The Confidence-Man* did "not seem to require criticism".

Not all of Mr. Sealts' material concerns the public and literary side of Melville. Perhaps the most delightful moment in the book is the discovery of the reminiscence of Frances Cuthbert Thomas Osborne, whose recollections of her grandfather were earlier published in the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*. Sealts reprints these recollections, among which Mrs. Osborne tells of a memorable walk with her grandfather on a fine spring day in 1887, four years before Melville's death. The air was warm, the tulips were in bloom in Madison Square. Melville, wearing rectangular dark glasses and carrying his cane, held the little girl's hand tightly as they walked. "His long stride required fast trotting for me to keep abreast of him", writes Frances. He answered her questions "with great, long, interesting words which sounded pleasant but had no meaning whatever for me".

The tulips were gorgeous and we walked round and round the circle admiring them. Perhaps their beauty was overpowering, for grandpa let go of my hand and went to a nearby bench to rest. I continued to run around the circular garden. It had become a game by that time, and I had forgotten the tulips. So had grandpa. Perhaps by then he was off in some distant land, or on a rolling ship at sea with nothing to distract his thoughts. Wherever he was, there was no little granddaughter with him. She had ceased to exist. Tiring

after a while of running continuously in a ring, I went to the bench on which I had last seen grandpa sitting. To my dismay he was gone, was nowhere in sight and had vanished just like the mysterious person I had always imagined him to be. There were a few men dozing behind newspapers, all strangers, not caring the least about me. I was really frightened.

The story ends happily, and Mrs. Osborne says, "It must have been wonderful to have had an imagination strong enough to carry him away so far that he could lose a grandchild in the big city and never know it." At the time, however, the most important lesson to come of the experience was never to let go of Grandpa's hand, especially on trips to the zoo in Central Park, "for to be lost amid lions and tigers would have been something too fearful to contemplate".

From the opening discussion of Melville's earliest biographers to the appendices and illustrations, *The Early Lives of Melville* is a pleasure to read. The scholarship is impeccable, the analysis and judgement thorough and balanced. The book is certain to become a standard reference for Melville studies. It provides the best introduction to Melville biography by making available the most significant sketches of Melville that appeared in the nineteenth century.

*Dalhousie University*

S.A. Cowan

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*Obedience To Authority: An Experimental View.* By Stanley Milgram. New York: Harper and Row, 1974. Pp. 320. \$10.95.

Adlai Stevenson once remarked that we North Americans are suckers for good news. Though true, this observation produces discomfort among social scientists. This unpleasantness occurs because much of the knowledge they possess consists of things they do not want to hear. It offends their preconceptions of the way the social world ought to operate.

Stanley Milgram's new book is similarly offensive. It reports, summarizes, and interprets ten years of experimental study on the psychological functions, conditions, and mechanisms of obedience to authority. His conclusions are both dramatic and arresting, and are made more so because they are constrained by the discipline of data.

The methodology and main results of Milgram's experiments ought to be known by all concerned social scientists. If these results are not known, it is as much a comment on the lack of interest among professional students of social phenomena as it is a reason for reading and recommending the book.

In summary, the main result of Milgram's work is to prove decisively that ordinary people are quite capable of performing almost any action when it is called for by an authority-figure. To substantiate this conclusion Milgram set himself the task of producing obedience under difficult circumstances. His experiments commanded obedient action in clear opposition to moral injunctions. The task involved administering increasing electrical shocks to a fellow subject for an

insignificant reason. Under these conditions Milgram measured our capacity to perform evil on authority's command.

As expected, the results varied with the experimental conditions under which they were performed. These conditions included the subject's physical proximity to the victim and to the authority, the authority-figure's plausibility, and peer group pressure on the subject. The surprising result of Milgram's experiments was the degree of obedience. The least obedience occurred under conditions where the subject had to physically force the victim's hand onto an electric plate; here only 30 per cent obeyed. But where the subject was physically removed from the victim, as bomber pilots and executioners are, 65 per cent obedience was produced.

Such results are important, unpredicted, and disturbing. When asked, every person from a variety of groups replied that they would have defied the authority under such circumstances. Psychiatrists estimated that only about one person in a thousand would be so deranged as to obey. The optimistic nature of these predictions makes the results especially disturbing, particularly to those who would have us appeal to man's moral sense for guiding him to do good rather than evil.

Milgram's book does more than document evil's banality and challenge our faith in man's capacity for willfully doing good. There are worthwhile discussions on the ethical problems of experimentation, as well as sections analysing why obedience and disobedience occur. By adding to our fund of useful social psychological knowledge, this work raises many interesting issues. One such issue is the concern with why professional students of society are often such poor predictors. The book also provokes reconsideration of the costs and merits of various formulae for social order consisting of obedience to authority and its alternative, anarchy.

This clear, well-written work demonstrates simple and elegant experimental research at its finest. As such it provides a useful model for imitation and deserves our attention.

*University of Alberta*

*Lance W. Roberts*

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*Illustrious Evidence: Approaches to English Literature of the Early Seventeenth Century.* Edited with an introduction by Earl Miner. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975. Pp. xxiii, 135. \$9.50, U.S.

In these days of crisis and stringency, it is a delight to receive, read, and review this little book. Throughout, one is enveloped in an enviable atmosphere of the civilized contemplation and argument of scholars and readers meeting in most congenial circumstances. Through it one senses that University discussions may be more than arguments about more garish ways of attracting otherwise unwanted freshmen to gimcrack programs or extracting more travel funds from cautious administrators: instead, we are invited to consider simply the delight, richness and stimulation of literature. It is true that while each has its own discrete harmony and stimulation, none of these essays will revolutionize our view of the period but some (especially

that by Barbara Lewalski) press further arguments made elsewhere which have, or should have, clearly adjusted our understanding of the age. What stands out from the collection is a tone which must also have distinguished the original presentation as papers read before audiences of students and faculty at UCLA in 1971-2: "each", records Earl Miner, "was given on a Thursday afternoon, and each was followed by discussion in the Baroque drawing room of the Clark Library and subsequently over coffee" (ix). Comfortable but not ostentatious occasions, pointing to the fellowship which literature should serve: courteous, stimulating, sometimes abrasive or passionate, above all a sense of community, a common pursuit.

Professor Miner further offers these six essays as "exemplary...of current methods" (xii) in interpreting seventeenth-century literature, on which more later. In the first, Frank L. Huntley examines the evidence for authorship of the Parnassus plays, advancing a case for Joseph Hall with a judicious mixture of delicate speculation and carefully marshalled reasoning. Typical of the whole collection, his stated principles are as important as their applications. He is concerned with the nature of scholarly hypotheses, which "stand or fall not by a chain of reasoning (which breaks at its weakest link), but rather by explaining more historical facts and literary traits than any other"(6). An equally thoughtful combination of neatly arranged evidence and explicit methodology is found in James Thorpe's "Reflections and Self-Reflections: *Outlandish Proverbs* as a context for George Herbert's other writings". Thorpe's mode of argument should (and originally no doubt did) provide a provoking starting point for discussion. He argues that "essentially, literary scholarship consists in finding rewarding contexts for poems" and that "one crucial context...is the other writings by the same author"(25). After carefully acknowledging the importance of other contexts, he invites his audience to follow him through his own chosen test case, the relevance of Herbert's compilation of foreign proverbs to his other writings and ultimately to his poems. Thorpe's tone is perhaps the most civilized and provoking of the whole collection. The reviewer found himself making constant jottings to argue with Thorpe over coffee. To what extent is he approaching Herbert's minor work with presuppositions gained originally from the poems? What about the subtle changes of tone or dramatic place when proverbs turn up in *The Temple*? Is the brevity and superficiality of Thorpe's final discussion of the poems indicative of the unimportance of his theme — in other words, hasn't he simply, if elegantly, proved the relative insignificance of Herbert's proverbs to his greatest works? One hopes that these and other questions were being courteously put to the speaker, and to others, in the Baroque drawing room — and elsewhere.

Barbara K. Lewalski's "Typology and Poetry: a Consideration of Herbert, Vaughan and Marvell" initially covers ground made familiar by her recent work on Donne's *Anniversaries*. She presents a clearly argued case for the Protestant adaption of medieval typology "by emphasising...the contemporary Christian as antitype, recapitulating in himself the experiences recorded in the Old and also the New Testament...so to assimilate the pattern of individual lives to the pervasive typological patterns discerned in biblical and later Christian history"(43). She then

makes some suggestive applications to Herbert, locating the meaning of the typological relationship in the speaker's heart (as in "The Church" or "The Altar") where he makes traditional theological ideas "radically personal"(46). Not only is the essay closely argued and well documented — although some mention might have been made of the pioneering adaption of Protestant typological modes to devotional poetry by the Sidneys — but it also provokes further applications of the principle. She herself provides useful examples in Vaughan's transformation of the typology of the Canticles and, most interestingly, a provocative suggestion of how in "Appleton House" Marvell transfers Protestant figuralism "from the realm of devotional poetry to that of secular history"(63). Her argument here ought to provoke far-reaching debate.

"A Little Look into Chaos" by Robert M. Adams is modestly described as a "poor, sparse, speculative paper...over which I would like to inscribe a speculative and gigantic question mark"(71): he traces (perhaps reading in somewhat) the presence of Chaos in *Paradise Lost*. Again, the speculative tone invites participation throughout the essay. "A skeptic", Adams ingratiatingly concedes, "could shrink the matter which I've made such ado to small proportions indeed" but — answering his own objection — he pushes his argument not towards a direct, triumphant case-closing rebuttal but towards further dialogue, to the shared admiration and exploration of a great poem.

Two essays on *Comus* under the general heading of "Interpretation" complete the collection. Louis Martz puzzles suggestively over the music of the *Masque*, and Stanley E. Fish provides a typically virtuoso performance in "Problem Solving in *Comus*", in which he directs his readers not to the answers to the many critical questions raised by the work, but "to the question, that is, to the pattern of their asking and to the pattern of response their asking creates...questioning is the activity to which *Comus* moves us, and therefore it seems reasonable to regard the questions...as primary data..." (116). For Fish, commentary upon a work becomes a commentary on the way we read it, an approach he has developed with such bewildering results elsewhere that it is a little disappointing when he concludes that concentrating on the questions eventually brings us to read the mask "just as the conservative critics tell us it should be read"(131).

The editor offers his essays as exemplary, and indeed most of the ingredients of contemporary American approaches to the early seventeenth century are here, even a modest dash of structuralism and a *soupcçon* of New Literary History. What is radically lacking, however — and it is indicative of a massive weakness in contemporary North American scholarship — is any vital consideration of the period's social dynamics as the basis of the literature. Important and in some cases revolutionary historical research in the past decades remains unnoticed and unassimilated by most literary scholars. In the understanding of the social basis of pre-Civil War poetry, for instance, most scholars and teachers are still on a par with those antediluvian intellectual historians who rest content with Tillyard or Spencer and have ignored the vital recent work of Frances Yates or D.P. Walker in rewriting our view of the intellectual dynamics of the period. British scholarship is marginally better, with stimulating recent work by David Craig, Raymond Williams and

Raymond Southall which points, although in sometimes rigid ideological contexts, towards a richer understanding of the social basis of early seventeenth-century literature. It is sobering that the most important study of its kind remains Lionel Knights' *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*. The time is over-ripe for a new, full-scale study along such lines.

Dalhousie University

G.F. Waller

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*The Canadian Labour Market*. By Stephen G. Peitchinis. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975. Pp. xii, 367. Paper.

Peitchinis's new book is yet a third version of the college-level textbook first published by McGraw Hill in 1965 as *The Economics of Labour: Employment and Wages in Canada*, and again in 1970 as *Canadian Labour Economics: An Introductory Analysis*.

The author says the present pruning (by about 114 pp.) has produced a work, "...More evenly divided between applied, institutional, and theoretical presentations than was the 1970 version." Certainly the redundancy that plagued the earlier editions was reduced, and all to the good, but the original structure, with its problems, remained intact.

Never a high-powered theoretical work, the editorial process also watered down the limited analysis even further, and created perhaps a sub-freshman level reader whose usefulness is somewhat limited as a basic text for the normally upper-division labour economics courses.

The new version trimmed derivation of the supply curve for labour while retaining a misleading diagram (p. 28, fig. 4) on the possibility of a negatively sloped supply schedule. As for labour demand, reference to marginal productivity theory was eliminated altogether and with it the description of imperfect competition in the factor market and the distribution of factor shares. Not until Chapter 14 (of 20) do we arrive at the "theoretical" determination of the wage under perfect competition, though in theory the wage, of course, is the market price of labour: the "signal" that sets in motion the movements of supply and demand for labour through the market mechanism.

So much for the microeconomics of labour. The analysis was also removed from the original book's single chapter on the macroeconomic theory of employment, or, the aggregate demand for labour (in this version, chapter 9), and the analysis as well, but not the discussion of the relationship between employment and the price level. The book then requires intermediate micro and macroeconomics as a backstop, unless a very superficial treatment of labour market theory is expected, or unless the book is destined for a non-academic introduction to labour economics.

Excising the theory material was particularly significant, and odd, since the labour field tends toward either of two major approaches. One characterizes trade unions and the collective bargaining process in our unionized, interdependent



economy as the "institutional" forces that are primary in determining wages and the allocation of labour, and Peitchinis so identifies trade unions. The more purely economic view considers the labour market paramount, i.e., the wage is a price like any other, and its absolute and relative rates are determined by supply and demand.

As with any such oversimplification, the reality might not be recognizable from this description. The borderlines of these alternative views are as fuzzy as efforts to describe the interaction of the "institutional" and "market" forces. Consequently, we have almost as many "hybrid" labour courses as there are teachers of labour, yet Peitchinis for the third time comes down squarely on the labour market side while trying for better "balance". Thus, writing off the economic analysis weakens his argument, and the new editing does not really achieve the improved balance he sought — unless we read his extensive discussions of governmental labour market policy (with his opinions) as the "institutional" material.

The *leit motif* of Peitchinis's book flows directly from this problem of approach. Do unions raise wages and "cause" inflation as the government recently claimed, and do they snatch a larger share of the economic pie at the expense of other groups in our pluralistic economy? Trying to cope with these critical questions, and again, hoping to achieve the promised "balance", he retained some and added some limited notes on unions, often as chapter introductions. He also added an early (6th) and brief (7-paged) chapter concerning union influence on the supply and demand for labour. There he said unions only indirectly affect the wage rate.

This "classical" position required later retrenchment, but his view remained that unions may influence the price level from time to time, and under special circumstances (Ch. 18). They may gain in "hard markets" what they lose of the national income in "soft markets" (Ch. 19) but, he says, unions neither inordinately affect the price level through their wage raising efforts, nor do they gain a larger share of the real national product out of the shares of other claimants.

Labour economists differ widely on the precise parameters of union influence in the labour market. Few hold this extreme view as firmly as Peitchinis does. Even his supporting statistical analysis of labour's share in Chapter 19 differs from the findings of others. Nevertheless, he is in general expounding what may be the collective, perhaps even conventional wisdom of modern labour economists as opposed to labour relations practitioners.

The union effect through its wage negotiations in the longer term is scarcely as powerful as newspaper headlines would have us believe, nor do unions garner a greatly enlarged overall share of our economic wealth.

As before, the new text still tends to be a bit wordy. There is still much opinion, some unsubstantiated, but flowing from the author's entirely well-meant concern for human welfare. Yet, despite the carping there are so few Canadian Labour books, and each is so carefully limited in scope that Peitchinis's book nevertheless provides a background review, or overview of the labour market material and its problems, a good bibliography, and is, therefore, a useful supplement for labour courses. Since it holds strictly to the labour market approach, it also provides a provocative "antidote" reading in the more institutionally oriented courses.

*The Holy Jerusalem Voyage of Ogier VIII, Seigneur d'Anglure.* Trans. Roland A. Browne. University of Florida Press: Gainesville, Florida, 1975. Pp. 163. \$10.00

This work is a translation of *Le Saint Voyage de Jherusalem du Seigneur d'Anglure*, a journal of a pilgrimage made in 1395-96 by a party of French noblemen from Anglure (near Paris) to Jerusalem, to the tip of Sinai, then to Cairo and up the Nile (to the desert hermitages of St. Anthony and St. Paul), and then back to France via Alexandria, Cyprus and Venice. The outward journey is an uneventful one, and the narrative's interest therein rests in the author's relatively objective manner of recounting both the shrines, relics and Saracen and Coptic Christian manners observed and such occasionally outstanding details as the pyramids. However, with the growing risk of encounter with Saracen pilgrims near Mecca, an attack by river pirates on the Nile ("when the daylight came..., we saw that our boat fairly bristled with sharp arrows") and repeatedly adverse weather that drives the pilgrims about the eastern Mediterranean like Apollonius, a note of the adventure common in travel literature enters the narrative. The observations are brief and spare, however, and one does not find the drama of the *Tartar Relation* or the sustained human interest sometimes lent such journals by realistic minutiae, as Bonnardot and Longnon, editors of the scholarly French edition of *Le Saint Voyage...* (SATF: Paris, 1875) point out in comparing this work with a Florentine account of a decade earlier (*Viaggio in Terra Santa di Simone Sigoli*, publ. 1873). Ogier VIII, Seigneur d'Anglure, the presumed author and a man who probably would feel closer to Evelyn than Pepys, seems to have avoided such detail, although this may be partially due to very imperfect textual transmission.

Professor Browne freely acknowledges his indebtedness to Bonnardot and Longnon, and he does not elect to reproduce their more scholarly introduction and apparatus, focussing more simply upon translating a work "virtually unknown to the English-speaking world" and upon determining the extent to which "the [medieval] mythos associated with devout Christian belief regarding the holy places still exists". This means that to understand the stemmatic relations of the two extant manuscripts to each other and to the original text or to learn the full contents of either the Paris or Metz manuscripts, matters relevant to our assessing the authority of the text and the way it was received by its early readers, one must turn to the French edition. It also means that Professor Browne's notes are quite largely devoted to a comparison of Ogier's itinerary and experiences with those of a modern pilgrim, a comparison often curious and interesting but one not clearly directed to any purpose. Had the notes been more closely confined to elucidating the text and had the textual character and history of the Messine version been given *some* brief place in the introduction, I think the edition would have been improved. It stands, nonetheless, as an ably-written rendering of a narrative which again impresses one with the curiosity as well as reverence of the medieval pilgrim, suggesting what incredible fortitude the Wife of Bath had shown in having been "thries...at Jerusalem".

Dalhousie University

H.E. Morgan

*Question Time*. By Robertson Davies. Toronto: Macmillan, 1975. Paper, \$5.95.

*Question Time* is a shrewd, witty, and ironic fable about the search for self-discovery of Peter Macadam, Prime Minister of Canada and (at the opening of the action) sole survivor of a plane crash in the Arctic. As his exhausted, starving body lies in the care of the local Shaman, his mind wanders about the Terra Incognita of his own unconscious, to him as alien and dangerous as the Arctic itself. He is being pressed to choose between life and death, but he can make this choice only after a prolonged debate in a visionary version of the world of his conscious activity, the House of Commons. The debate is between Macadam's two opposing selves (in the shapes of Prime Minister and Opposition Leader), with the Shaman as the Speaker, and involves, among others, the national heritage (a herald) and the national animal (the Beaver), Macadam's wife Sarah, and his personified intelligence (Arnak). But it is finally settled only by Macadam's appeal to the ultimate authority of his Terra Incognita, *La Sorciere des Montagnes de Glace*. After his reconciliation with her, he wakes to rescue and to life.

As Prime Minister Peter Macadam is a public personage as well as a private individual, and in him the twin themes of the play are united. In the "Preface in the Form of an Examination" these themes are set out by Davies in answer to the question "What do you think your play is about?":

It is about the relationship of the Canadian people to their soil, and about the relationship of a man to his soul. We neglect both at our peril.

These are central issues of every individual's life — to make his/her soul and to take part in establishing the relationship of the people to the soil. They are moral issues, and this, although it is no longer explicitly Christian in its frame of reference, is "a moral play" in the same tradition as *Everyman*. (Indeed, Peter Macadam is *Everyman*, as his name, Peter son of Adam, tells us.)

It is, I believe, a part of the irony in which Davies delights that so serious a message should come in so entertaining a package. We are certainly intended to enjoy the play, but it would be unwise to let our enjoyment obscure the recognition that Davies is fundamentally a writer whom we must take seriously.

Dalhousie University

Patricia Monk

*History and Myth: Arthur Lower and the Making of Canadian Nationalism*. Edited by W.H. Heick. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975. Pp. xxii, 339. \$16.95.

Professors are professional talkers. They talk much of the time and they are frequently good at it. Many of them also talk in print, in *Maclean's*, the *Canadian Forum*, *Saturday Night*, or in the university quarterlies like the *Dalhousie Review*

or the *Queen's Quarterly*. They take out their exasperations in talk.

A whole book of talk takes a good deal of tolerance to read. That is the problem with this book. There is really only one truly memorable piece in it and that has already been reprinted twice before appearing here. Its substance has been put into Lower's good textbook on Canadian history, *Colony to Nation*. Still, the essay is so good, so perceptive of the French Canadian position, it can stand being made available again: "Two ways of life: the primary antithesis of Canadian history." There are also one or two other good ones, rightly professional in character. But too much of the rest of the book is composed of those fugitive pieces, interesting enough for reading in 1931, 1941, or 1951, but without much that elevates them beyond tracts of the times. It is not surprising that they were written: what is surprising is that they have laboriously been dug out and reprinted.

Lower would be pleased to know that what survives best are his professional articles. Indeed, I find it difficult to understand why his great article, "Geographical determinants in Canadian history" was not reprinted. The book in which it occurs, *Essays in Canadian History Presented to George Mackinnon Wrong* (Toronto, 1938), has long been out of print, and is remarkably difficult to get. It is, in fact, these truly professional papers, aimed at the long distances of Canadian history, that alone survive the changes of fifty years.

Yet, one cannot quite leave Lower's essays at this. When one has finished admitting the fatuousness of some of this volume, there remains still something admirable about Lower's preoccupations, and it wells up through the surface triteness of so many of these papers: his sympathy for the underdog; his dislike of authority; and above all, his transcendent love for his country. Of this last, one must quote a gleam of sheer emotion from a piece in *Maclean's*, 15 June, 1948:

And yet, that north! The illimitable wilderness, its shining lakes! Those waves I've fought with on the Gulf of Georgia, or on Nipigon or Simcoe, those far blue hills down the St. Lawrence! Those simple, kindly people! Whatever their shortcomings, they are mine.

And you, Professor Lower, are also, recognizably and happily, ours.  
*Dalhousie University*

*P.B. Waite*

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*Her Own Woman*. By Myrna Kostash, Melinda McCracken, Valerie Miner, Erna Paris, and Heather Robertson. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975. Pp. 212. \$10.95.

"Why not?" Why not gather together five of Canada's "best and brightest young writers" (as the dust jacket blurb christens the authors) and come up with a book, keeping ever in mind that 1975 is International Women's Year? Four of the five promising young journalists in question, our best young writers they are assuredly not, spawned the idea over wine and small talk in a Toronto apartment in March of

1973. Their avowed purpose was to re-write the woman as victim scenario, with women in the leading roles radiating success, strength, and stability. Unfortunately, the reasons "why not?", evident from a reading of *Her Own Woman*, are several, and as diverse as are the five authors.

Each of the authors has written two studies of women they admire, women who represent to them the being totally in command of herself. Their choices are interesting in themselves and reflect the often very different styles of the authors. Heather Robertson chose to write about Judy LaMarsh and Barbara Frum, two public personalities who suit Ms. Robertson's popular, ladies' mag. style of journalism. Melinda McCracken, in syrupy tones and with reverential adjectives, presents her mother and artist Esther Warkov to us. Myrna Kostash has contributed articles about Rita MacNeil, songstress of the Fem. Lib. movement, and Kathleen, a liberated young lady from Ms. Kostash's U. of T. woman's course. Somewhat more balanced and interesting are Valerie Miner's articles on Abby Hoffman and Margaret Atwood. (Couldn't leave Margaret out of a book like this!) And Erna Paris's articles about Madeleine Parent and her friend Barbara are downright excellent. So we have a near perfect distribution of achievement, in my opinion. The variety of *Her Own Woman* is found not only in the variety of subjects the author's were attempting to present. Nor is it found only in the variety of age groups the subjects represent, or the diverse philosophies they espouse. The success of the five authors is equally varied and bears out the law of averages very nicely.

At one end of the scale is Melinda McCracken. She throws words around until the reader doesn't know the relative weight of any of them. For example:

And when you look up accidentally to find yourself fixed by large black eyes shimmering with something a little wild and uncanny, the atmosphere is scary.

This is just journalistic overkill. Ms. McCracken's first article, "The Heart of the Family", is little more than soppy sentimentality about the archetypal "mom", and sounds more like a high school essay on "My Mom" than an article fit for publication. Endless paragraphs begin with the illuminating "My mom is...". My mom is a "typical middle-class Canadian mom", "a perfect lady", "a romantic", "an individual", "a wonderful person", and "the symbol of harmony, security, understanding, and love". Betty Crocker and Duncan Hines had better make room for Melinda McCracken's mom, because on top of everything else she also "cooks with love". Ms. McCracken finally comes up with some brilliant conclusions and bits of advice. Witness, "You can learn an awful lot from your mom", and "As long as women have children, there will be moms." Really?

At the other end of the scale, though, is Erna Paris. She seems to have a love and a respect for words that make you respect what she creates with them. Her descriptions and rich similes add a depth to her writing that most of the other authors lack. Her writing is as appropriately complex as are the women she is portraying. Madeleine Parent emerges in multiple dimensions, a personality exploding in multiple directions. Ms. Paris strives to understand the origins and

depths of Ms. Parent's social beliefs, and largely succeeds. In her second article Ms. Paris's feelings for her friend, Barbara Greene, are very powerful, and are powerfully projected onto the page. In my opinion these are the best portraits in the book.

Much of the rest of *Her Own Woman* is merely glib journalese. The book should be judged as a collection of magazine articles, the kind you pick up and read when waiting for the doctor or while flying from point A to point B, and as nothing more. Heather Robertson leans toward Chatelaine-shalowness and trendy jargon. She sums up Judy LaMarsh and her interaction with people:

There is something primitive, archetypal in the relationship; she is sun and moon, Great White Mother, Virgin Queen, and bitch goddess all in one, dangerous and unpredictable, yet at the same time strong and wise.

There's also a fair amount of heroine worship in Heather Robertson's article on Barbara Frum. Valerie Miner's writing is more thoughtful, but even she has to admit that in Margaret Atwood's presence, she feels "more like a disciple than a reporter."

The publisher's blurb leads one to believe that the ten women portrayed in the book will jump from the pages liberated, self-assertive, and free. Instead they emerge, sometimes painfully, sometimes self-consciously, as "survivors". The survival syndrome seems to shackle rather than release them. Even though the avowed purpose of the book was to deny the "woman as victim" idea, survival continually rears its ugly head: Judy surviving as a politico, Melinda McCracken's mom surviving as a housewife, and Myrna Kostash's student surviving in the world of drugs and on-the-road sex.

After reading a number of the articles a type of formula-recipe seems to emerge: several pages of present persona, then backtrack to origins and a discussion of upbringing, family, and expectations, a few comparative comments drawing interviewer and interviewee together in the spotlight (we're all sisters under the skin) and then some witty conclusions. Mothers are usually seen as the formative influence, and the thirties and the fifties are the most important decades. Women's Lib. is the touchstone; domesticity, the villain. The women writers in this book are working out things about themselves as much as they are discovering things about other women. The "I" is never very far from the surface; comparisons are made and evaluated. There's admiration, empathy, and even at times a little rivalry.

So the Canadian women one might expect to find between the covers of such a book as *Her Own Woman* are here: Margaret Atwood, Judy LaMarsh, and Barbara Frum. There are also some one might not expect to find: Melinda McCracken's mother, Erna Paris's best friend, and Myrna Kostash's student. There is plenty of talk about "role models" and "survival", but often terms such as "courageous" and "powerful" are stretched rather more than even their elasticity allows. St. Jude, the patron saint of lost causes, is enshrined in the home of one of the article's subjects; he could also be the patron saint to whom *Her Own Woman* is addressed. This is a very uneven book, because of its multiple authorship. Variety can be the spice of life, but a surfeit of variety can equally cause discomfort. Valerie Miner thus manages to sum up the collective collage of *Her Own Woman* when talking about Margaret Atwood:

A composite of disparate images. Some more sharply focused than others. Some candid. Some posed. Some double exposed. No one representative.

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*The Faroe Islanders' Saga.* By George Johnston. Oberon Press: Ottawa, 1975. Pp. xviii, 98, xxviii. \$7.95 (cloth), \$3.95 (paper).

*The Faroe Islanders' Saga* is an able translation of a very substantial early-thirteenth century saga. The principal characters of this saga — Thrand, Sigmund, Sigurd, Thurid and Thora — are complex figures of strongly-marked individuality, and are used to develop a sophisticated story of interlocked personal destinies influenced by fundamental political and religious change. In the period of perhaps 960-1040, Norwegian overlordship and the intimately-related growing influence of the Christian church challenge Faroese political independence and loose pagan tolerance, and this contest is realized in and profoundly shaped by the struggles of two leading Faroese families. Fate, magic and *gaefu* or "luck" occasionally enrich the story, but with a single slight exception (Leif Ozursson's final slaying of Thrand's nephews) not at the expense of humane motivation: the fast-moving plot is consistently and realistically driven on by the values and passions of those involved, with even the encroaching influence of Norway represented in such varied characterizations as those of Harald Greycloak, Earl Hakon, Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf Haraldsson, very personal portraits showing these rulers themselves subject to the ironies of fate and the personal contests which shape the lives of the central characters.

The story opens with the initial rise to a position of influence, through the strength of his character, wit and luck, of Thrand of Gotu, an often ambiguous figure who commands respect if not affection and who reminds one of Snorri the Wise. Often devious and sometimes deceitful and coercive. Thrand proves, given power, remarkably just and not overbearing, while his cunning and resourcefulness are never corrupted by the malice and greed which destroy his nephews. His rise involves the exile of Sigmund and Thorir Beinisson, sons of his principal opponents. Sigmund, who is to be Thrand's great opponent in the saga, is thereafter first fostered in a remote mountain valley by Thorkell Dryfrost and then, through viking adventures in the Baltic, the Orkneys and Anglesey, proves his courage and allegiance to Earl Hakon. Thorkell Dryfrost's own story and his early fostering of Sigmund very strongly suggest the influence of the *Tristan* story (which is remarkable considering the presumed date of the saga) while the mature Sigmund's story has been held to suggest that of the German Siegfried (cf. Felix Niedner, *Groenlaender und Faeringer Geschichten* [Eugen Diederichs Verlag: Dusseldorf-Koln, 1912; repr. 1965], p.18). These literary relations and the aesthetic merits of their rendering are not critically explored at great length. Professor Johnston is

concerned with effectively translating the text: his helpful notes are essentially reading notes, and he keeps interpretive comment to a minimum. Nonetheless, his edition derives no little value from its again bringing into currency a text of such broad historical as well as aesthetic interest.

Sigmund meets his future bride in Norway and proves himself in Hakon's service, but, sent by Hakon to slay Harald Ironskull and forced by events to ally with Harald, Sigmund shows proud independence in facing the Earl and forcing a reconciliation of these former enemies. Given an arm-ring from Hakon's pagan goddess, which ring becomes "unlucky" and proves Sigmund's bane in a powerful climax of tragic irony, Sigmund after his conversion to Christianity refuses to surrender the ring to Olaf Tryggvason; and, although he is noble and heroic, Sigmund also reveals a distressing streak of pride. That is, neither the political nor the religious identification of Sigmund with the new "centralizing" influences is simply presented, and his personal character is also complex: loyal, he is yet independent; converted to Christianity, his pagan past yet promotes his death; heroic and noble, he is occasionally too overbearing and one finds oneself sympathizing with his opponents at some critical turns.

Sigmund regains his patrimony and depresses Thrand, but Thrand's foresight and the religious polarity which develops enable the men of Gotu to regain such power that following the last major turn of the plot Thrand himself is able to dictate the settlement, thereby determining the rule of the Faroes. Karl of More, sent by King Olaf Tryggvason to collect his tribute from the Faroes, is slain by Thrand's nephews (also his foster sons) in a chain of mysterious events, the motivation of which is intriguingly hidden in the objective narrative realism of the saga style. Remarkable at this point are two developments which remind one of the dual time scheme of this saga, with the rush of narrative events and the full-scale depiction of character keeping the action immediately before one, while developments actually cover decades. Thrand's judgement suggests a fair-minded maturity and impartial desire for stability, reminding us that he has changed and enabling us to sympathize with him, to doubt that he is as ruthless as he was when he sold Sigmund and Thorir into slavery. At the same time, the growing independence of his nephews, who become murderous predators — as cunning as Thrand but without his honour, indicates that with advancing age he is also losing control of men whose malice he fostered. That is, these characters are not only complex, but alive, changing, continuously challenging both the sympathies and the judgement of readers. It is in fact Thora Sigmundsdottir who on one hand recognizes Thrand's strengths and allows him to foster her son, and on the other later deceives him in the final destruction of his household.

These few selected observations may suggest some points of interest in this tale masterfully told. In retelling it, Professor Johnston steers a middle course between the unmannered, unobtrusive and timeless style of a Dasent and the more semantically and poetically exotic style of a Morris. He maintains a consistent, unobtrusive vocabulary, avoiding archaisms, slang and (with one or two exceptions) "conspicuously modern turns of speech" with the result that the prose is usually fluent and idiomatically natural:



...they sail toward the land and see that they are approaching the islands from the east, and according to men on board with Sigmund who know the lie of the land they have come almost into Eysturoy. Sigmund said that he most wanted to get his hands on Thrand. But as they are bearing up toward the island, gale and current both work against them so they came nowhere near reaching it, but they do get ashore on Svinoy, for the men were good and canny seamen. They come up at first light and immediately forty men run up to the house and ten guard the ship. They circle the house, break into the house, take farmer Bjarni in bed and lead him out.(Ch. 24, pp. 54-55).

On the other hand, he follows the Icelandic "as closely as possible, not only in words and phrases but also to some extent in word order", attempting to maintain the text's shifting tenses and "proper prose rhythms", with the prose itself often suggesting the balanced social forces which clash in the personal contests of these men. One can only guess at the rhetorical intentions of the saga's author and at the "equivalent effect" to be sought by a translator, but it is my distinct impression that Professor Johnston's translation responds sensitively to the complex demands of this fast moving yet carefully balanced work with its possibly quite sophisticated literary associations.

In short, this is an eminently readable translation of a very good saga deserving of further study.

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*A Structural Study of Autobiography: Proust, Leiris, Sartre, Lévi-Strauss.* By Jeffrey Mehlman. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974. Pp. 246.

One suspects that this is a book written by an intelligent man who is afraid of being thought simple-minded, or naive. The prose bristles with proofs of the author's insightful and imaginative grasp of home truths. One must assume that some such fear of simplicity leads him, for instance, to leave untranslated the passages from the French authors the book deals with. When it is a question of a quotation from Proust, or one or two bits from Michel Leiris or Lévi-Strauss, the reader can justifiably be asked to exercise his grasp of French prose. A book, however, which quotes extensively from the tortuous theoretical and mind-boggling prose of such as Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida — and this in a book which aims to introduce current French intellectual trends to North America — is self-defeating. Despite its claims to be an introduction, it seems likely that this book is nothing more than its author's claim to membership in a very small and select group who read each other's work and write about it. In this sense, the book may perhaps succeed; it has about it a Gallic quality which stolid Anglo-Saxons will unhesitatingly describe as 'French-flu'. It is cryptic, metaphoric, intelligent and passionate in its conviction that the debate over theories of psychoanalysis and literature is the one thing of importance. This particular obsession can occasionally have a charm to it, even if ultimately one feels that what is going on is advanced game-playing with very little

at stake.

One weakness of the book is the lack of a clear definition of 'structure' — although this absence in the text may be intended by the author since it is absence, gaps, holes in webs of totality that fascinate him. Important matters of definition appear in this book as holes supposedly filled by someone else. On p.99 we find a footnote: "For the crucial distinction between archetype and structure, see Serres, *Hermes*, pp. 11-35." And on p.205 another footnote: "For a discussion of the distinction between image and sign, see Ortigues, pp.9-69." With holes this large the

Indeed, heavy going is perhaps what Mehlman is most interested in. In a discussion of Lacan's Freudianism he says: "The alleged virtues of the ego reveal a disquieting underside: 'insight' masks rationalization, and 'objective knowledge' smacks of systematic deformation." To avoid "systematic deformation" one must constantly be de-structuring while structuring, hence the gaps. A footnote gives us another clue: "For Mauron, this realization goes with a belief in the usefulness of an alternate, controlled form of textual violation (superimposition), which would allow one to accede to the text's *otherness*." If reader and text collapse into identity, they suffer mutual violation; one preserves the integrity of both by distancing the text and so guaranteeing its otherness. That Mehlman himself is perhaps trying to mimic this form of textual distancing is indicated by a passage in his eulogy of Lacan:

And Lacan's (merely?) pedagogical strategy has been to attempt to forge a prose style adequate to that loss [of a metalanguage].... In its monumental difficulties it is a style that offers, in its way, an objective correlative of the effects of textual distortion that are the very medium of analysis.

The point of this is that Mehlman recognizes the danger in searching for a structure: it is potentially reductive. Faced with a danger of reductionism, one can safely and sanely give up the search for underlying structures, or one can try to confuse the issue by creating an imbalance. Mehlman seems to have made the latter option. He claims to have found a similar response in the several authors he discusses.

Mehlman's structuralism has two originating poles, one in psychoanalysis, the other in linguistic theory. The psychoanalytical one will, despite the author's claim for the newness of his and Lacan's approach, strike the reader as old Freud writ large. Indeed, those who hope that structuralism might offer something of value to literary studies will not welcome this sort of sentence: "It is in chapters like 'Persephone' that Leiris, as we shall see, is at his most authentically Freudian (that is, structural)." Freud offers two central notions valuable to Mehlman's "structural" study of "self-writing" (autobiography is not writing about oneself, it is creating a self by writing it): the first is the Oedipal complex and the other the fact of repression. Lacan's genius apparently is to have seen that Freud's discovery of repression was an insight itself subject to powerful repression; he was subject to repressing the recognition of the fact of repression. Freud's sense is therefore best read by means of attention paid to his contradictions. To try to make thorough systematic sense of him is a mistake in method. He writes more than he knew. So too did Proust. A Freudian analysis uncovers a counterplot in Proust which reveals that

Marcel is to be identified with his sickly Aunt Leonie of the madeleines. The Oedipal complex helps because it has been given a new twist. It is the absence of the threat from the father that is to be feared. In the absence of a third term, mother and son incestuously collapse into one another. Marcel's story is the story of a father who fails to be an Abraham and so allows Marcel that one fatal night in his mother's bed. "It is the dream of a world (at last) without (structural) unconscious or Oedipus complex, of a world without 'father'. I have attempted to show the slow undermining of that fantasy in the very words Proust used to celebrate it, to gauge the toll of degradation that the novel's "cote bordel" (Sollers) exacts from the whole of Proust's project." If father is a negative third term in the complex, it turns out that the absence of that negative is not to be desired: an absent negative is a kind of positive and is therefore not a gap or hole of the requisite kind. We must live according to the structural programme (the unconscious one) or, yielding tension, collapse into degradation. In other words, Proust, while he has some elements that interest Mehlman, disagrees with Lacan. And of these the greater is Lacan.

Mehlman develops his ideas at greatest length with reference to Michel Leiris's "poetics of lack". The Freudian danger of incestuous collapse in the absence of a third term is given further linguistic application. There is a danger that what is said about the world, or the image that one creates of the world in writing of it, will replace the world. There is a danger of collapse of word into object. We are informed that: The ideology of literature in the West has long thrived on the mystic dream of reducing linguistic difference, denying the arbitrariness of signs, and discovering at last a signifier perfectly adequate to what it signifies." The third term in the dual linguistic structure (signifier-signified) is the "arbitrariness" of relation of signifier to signified. What makes Leiris interesting is that he sees literature as a kind of bullfight in which one must risk the horn. One must risk a structure that will be complete, and then one must unbalance that structure just enough — let the cape slip just a fraction — to risk the horn. The tension between structure and destructure in Leiris is truly fascinating and in his discussion of *L'Age d'homme* Mehlman is at his best.

The sections on Sartre, Genet, and Lévi-Strauss are disappointing, however, and it is unlikely that this book will have, or deserve, the wide readership needed to introduce French structuralist thought to America. Paul de Man's work, *Blindness and Insight*, to which Mehlman is indebted, does the job much more satisfactorily. Mehlman's book will more likely spike the guns of those anti-intellectual academics so anxious to discredit a movement that demands so much thinking, and re-thinking. The fear of structuralism, and of current French intellectual life, is partly founded on what is seen to be a systematic rejection of the individual in favour of structure. Mehlman courts this response when he casually speaks of Lévi-Strauss's "rejection of individualism". *Tristes Tropiques* is a moving account of the interplay of individual and system (social or metaphysical). In it, Lévi-Strauss suggest that imbalance in artistic designs reflects the human condition, which is always unequal since it is death we contend with. We are suspended between structure and destructure. What is most surprising and refreshing in *Tristes*

*Tropiques* though is Lévi-Strauss's statement that the more he uncovered elaborate social structures, the more he became aware that he was meeting individual human beings not wholly explicable in terms of social structure. It is the task of structuralism to explain the nature of the truth of the old maxim: *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. To be convincing a structuralist explanation must ultimately have the simplicity and clarity of the maxim. To those obscurantists who chase Freudian counterplots because of that intellectual Catch-22: the repression of repression, one must turn the countercharge. They are repressing clarity.

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