

BOOK REVIEWS

The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion. By Marcel Gauchet. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. xv, 228 pages. \$24.95 US.

The author, a well-known professor at the École des Hautes Études in Paris, assures the reader that this book—inspired by the example of Montesquieu and Rousseau, Tocqueville and Marx—is no superficial version of universal history. Deeply distrustful of all “philosophy of history,” Michel Gauchet maintains nonetheless that we must renew ties with the “speculative” and “totalizing” tradition which nineteenth-century critics such as Durkheim and Freud thought they had forever discredited. Otherwise, he argues, we will fail to respond rationally to the “need for meaning” which religion and secular culture alike ignore and suppress, in the naïve belief that they have satisfied that need or rendered it obsolete. Without wishing to minimize the uncertainties and difficulties of such a project, Gauchet takes up the challenge of a “broader horizon,” and gives us a comprehensive history both of religion and of the secular age which developed out of it (17–18). His aim is to show the many ways in which our secular culture has failed to break with the religious past and to propose a more radical form of facing the future.

The rise of the secular age does indeed for Gauchet presuppose the breakdown of religion. He rejects the old liberal and Marxist idea that modern society is the most concrete form of a freedom that was always present in an alienated way in religion. His position is rather that, unless we see religion as something radically different from secular freedom, we will never appreciate the contingency and novelty of the present time—its “otherness” (30). Gauchet therefore presents his history of religion from the point of view of a critical philosophy that limits human reason to what can be experienced in the sensible world. To begin with, he considers the development from “primeval” religion to the reflective religion of the “axial” period. This development—marked especially by the rise of oriental religion, prophetic Judaism, and ancient Greek doctrines—is not for him the progressive unfolding of the true nature of religion, but an abyss in the religious world, an implicit affirmation of secular consciousness and freedom. The crucial event here was the disappearance of the immediate and unquestioned connection of divinity and humanity in primeval religion and the arrival of a new concept of divinity as something different and distinct from earthly life (44–45). For Gauchet the unforeseen and unintended result of this intellectualizing of religion was (in an image borrowed from Max Weber) the “disenchantment of the world,” that is, the emergence of a secular society hostile or indifferent to religion.

The reflective religion of the “axial age” directed individuals to see religious truth not in nature or imagination but in the thought of a higher

reality. The way was therefore open to them to make contact with this reality, in ever more radical attempts, through will or intellect, action or contemplation. These attempts found their most complete expression in Judaism and Christianity. But these so-called "higher" religions paradoxically brought about what Gauchet calls "the end of religion." By turning the believer away from the given order of things towards the world-creating power of God, Judaism and Christianity only made it possible for people to imagine the "death of God" (101–104). For the point at which humanity and divinity could come together as one was not in this or that doctrine or church but in the modern state—that supreme expression of power—which allowed Jews and Christians to imitate God by creating their own world. It was only a matter of time before secular culture came of age, took responsibility for itself, and consigned religion to the accidental realm of personal belief (153–55).

Yet problems remain. Gauchet holds that secular culture merely extends and deepens Judaism and Christianity to the extent that it posits necessary conditions for human freedom and wills the historical reality of those conditions. This identification of humanity and history does not so much dissolve the religious tradition as give it a secular form. Moderns remain religious in their conviction that they can come to full self-knowledge and make themselves at home in the world (176–79). Gauchet urges us not to succumb to this illusion. What is the true form of secular culture? Gauchet's view—in some sense a synthesis of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty—is that secular culture truly appears when humans reflect on the world around them and seek to change it, not in order to realize some fixed idea of truth but to prove that habit and custom cannot stifle disturbing questions about the meaning of life. A post-religious culture knows the difference between the given world and its own reflection, and acts in the gap between stability and change, tradition and revolution. It lives for the future, not for the past, and distances itself in the most extreme way from primeval religion, but it still experiences something "other," i.e. a "future" forever beyond its knowledge and control (179–80).

Gauchet says little about the relation between religion and his preferred form of secular freedom. He allows that there is room for a religious attitude after the death of God, but only so long as it confines itself to an open and indeterminate search for the meaning of life (200–201). The reason for this is at once clear if one recalls that his philosophical standpoint is one of "critique" (18). He leads us to a conception of freedom that is independent of the given world, but cannot affirm the truth of anything that is present to consciousness. He is certain that religious culture must collapse before secular culture, but concedes that the latter is purely imaginary, an unreal intuition. Gauchet is actually further away from a true understanding than Fichte or Hegel, whose views on freedom he tries to improve but really distorts (172). His post-religious culture looks at the world through that which is not the world, but only imagined. How can this be more than an attempt to derive the rational and conscious out of the irrational and unconscious? Gauchet condemns the notion of real self-knowledge as hopelessly abstract, but could

have learned from the speculative and religious tradition he works so hard to reconstruct that a knowledge of 'what is' is all that is possible and necessary.

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Judith, Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture. By Margarita Stocker. New Haven: Yale UP, 1999. 278 pages. \$30.00 US.

The apocryphal story of the chaste widow Judith, who became a seductress in order to kill Nebuchadnezzar's general Holofernes and save both Bethulia and Jerusalem, is paradoxically a now somewhat obscure biblical story and a ubiquitous myth that pervades and challenges Western thought. In *Judith, Sexual Warrior*, Margarita Stocker provides a valuable survey of the various forms in which Judith has appeared over the centuries, outlining allegorical interpretations of Judith's character as, for example, Justice, Chastity, Death, and Resurrection, and exploring the implications of Judith as a metaphor for Elizabeth I, Joan of Arc, Protestantism, assassins, the guillotine, Hollywood's Woman with a Gun, and Fidel Castro's mistress Marita Lorenz, among other images.

Stocker sets out to analyze the counter-cultural nature of Judith's myth in order to, as she says, "present an alternative history of our most basic attitudes. Power, rebellion, passion, gender, belief, deviance, murder and terror are the subjects of this investigation" (2). The resonance of Judith as a cultural icon is indeed complex and challenging, as she is somehow both chaste and seductive, the righteous saviour of her people and yet a murderer. To complicate things further, especially for the Church Fathers, she has God on her side, and in fact, it is God who perfects her beauty in order to make her an effective instrument of his justice. "The Lord Almighty has foiled them by the hand of a woman," Judith proclaims after she has decapitated Holofernes (16.6). She is one of the most powerful women of the Bible, yet her power is made ambiguous by its association with both chastity and sexuality. Through thirteen chapters with such lively titles as "The Gorgeous Gorgon," "Her Virtue Was Vice," "Judith the Ripper," and "Reader, I Murdered Him," Stocker charts the shifting representations of Judith, representations that range from the icon of the submissive domestic angel to the fierce freedom fighter. Because of the tension between the competing aspects of Judith's identity, she can be appropriated as an image for almost any version of womanhood, and because she exemplifies righteous justice enacted by an individual on behalf of her nation, her homicide can be used by either side in a conflict to justify aggression against a perceived tyrannical power.

The contradictions embodied in Judith's story have inspired innumerable paintings, poems, novels, films, cartoons, and, disturbingly, real-life reenactments, and Stocker's wide-ranging coverage of these instances makes

for fascinating reading. Yet at times the book touches only the surface of the comparisons, and stops short of meaningful analysis. In a number of places, Stocker refers to examples very briefly, often without giving even the artist's or poet's first name, the date of the work, or any contextual information. Even in a survey, where there is obviously not room for every detail, these references are unnecessarily abbreviated. The book claims to be accessible as a new vision of Judith in Western culture, uncovering new information and reading the history of Judith in a radical way, but it too often assumes that the reader is already familiar with the works in question.

If this is a popular history, it needs to do much more in the way of general introduction to the texts, works of art, and historical events; if it is an academic analysis, it needs the proper scholarly apparatus (at minimum, consistent references to dates) and closer attention to the works and events under consideration. An extreme example of the elision of literary texts is a reference to Robert Herrick's gnomic couplet, "Upon Judith": Stocker makes a brief point about how Herrick "contradict[s] the biblical figure's iconography as a Virtue," but she neither explains the contradiction nor quotes the poem, even though it is only a couplet (28). Another frustratingly brief literary reference is this single sentence: "The avantgarde Bloomsbury Group exploited Judith's image precisely because her non-canonical status liberated her for secularist aesthetic activity" (144). The idea is intriguing, but there are no examples to show how Bloomsbury used Judith's image, and a footnote only gestures to a forthcoming article by Stocker. More quotations from literary examples would make the argument of the book stronger. A serious flaw in the presentation of the book is the absence of figure numbers within the text to refer to the 36 colour and black-and-white plates included, making it difficult to follow the argument, as it is thus up to the reader to figure out which paintings are dealt with in which chapters. This is one of the more obvious problems with presentation; the book has not been very carefully edited.

One conspicuous omission from the book is any discussion of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Judith*. As an epic that revises aspects of the apocryphal story to make Judith a more passive rather than an intentional seductress, it is surely a key text in the history of representations of Judith. Yet Stocker does not mention the poem until a passage on Victorian interest in Anglo-Saxon studies, and she does not give it any sustained critical attention. It is as an interpreter of the manipulations of meaning in real-life revisions of the Judith myth that Stocker is at her best, as in her more lengthy analyses of Reformation assassinations, Beatrice Cenci and Charlotte Corday, and postwar Zionism. Ultimately, despite the glossy plates and references to literary works, the book gives more attention to Judith as a cultural phenomenon than as a figure in literature or art. This focus is consistent with the book's title, but the effect of devoting more time to the spectacle of real-life re-enactments is to sensationalize an already sensational story.

Speaking for the Polis: Isocrates' Rhetorical Education. By Takis Poulakos. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1997. xii, 128 pages. \$24.95 US.

In recent years there has been a recovery of some understanding of the substantial historical influence of Isocrates, in literature, politics, and education. This understanding has contributed to renewed debate concerning the content and merits of his philosophical thought. Professor Poulakos has provided us with a timely and useful book: timely because it has interesting suggestions to make about Isocrates' relevance to contemporary political and educational problems; useful because it to some degree attempts to discover the nature and content of Isocrates' thought.

Poulakos claims that we can understand both Isocrates' thought and his relevance by examining his "commitment to political agency" and the derivative educational goal to "guide his listeners' self-understanding as political and moral agents" (xi). An historically contextualized interpretation of Isocrates' conception of human agency from the perspective of politics (including education, in this view) is regarded by Poulakos as the significant contribution of this book.

Isocrates' conception of human agency is placed by Poulakos within the context of the history of rhetoric. In this view, Isocrates combined the rhetoric of Protagoras and Gorgias in a way that redirected the development of the rhetorical tradition. Poulakos argues that Protagoras regarded rhetoric as a means of maximizing one's self-interest through persuasive speech in the political arena, while Gorgias regarded rhetoric as the creation of 'public meaning' around which the political community was formed and integrated. Common to both views is a conception of *logos* as an understanding of the prevailing conventional morality, the derivation of public policy from it, and the persuasive presentation of such policy in a manner which contributed to one's own reputation and remuneration—*logos* for personal success. According to Poulakos, Isocrates transformed these conceptions by making *logos* a *collective* inquiry into the needs of the whole community which expressed itself in rhetoric, and rhetoricians, able to articulate those needs and the political means to achieving them—*logos* for collective needs.

In Poulakos' view, this reading of Isocrates' contribution to the evolution of rhetoric raises the question of human agency: how are we to understand and evaluate Isocrates' transformation of the orator from self-interested leader of citizens to a citizen-leader who is representative of the collective aspirations of his fellow citizens? This question is answered by articulating two parts of Isocrates' conception of agency, as Poulakos constructs it. First, the rhetor must acquire the moral character which will enable him to resolve the social inequalities which exist within a community of citizens which is, in political terms, composed of equal citizens, and he must do this in accordance with the needs of the community as a whole. Second, the Isocratean rhetor must bring together sophistic persuasive eloquence and philosophical practical judgement in a way which allows him to discern and to communicate the

collective needs of the community. Poulakos interprets the *Panegyricus* as a presentation of such deliberation and speech by such a rhetor. Finally, the argument of the book concludes with a brief discussion of the *Antidosis*, and Isocrates' views concerning whether and by what means human agency could be taught. Isocratean education, in this view, is intended to produce citizens able to acquire probable knowledge of the community's needs, the ability to persuasively articulate those needs in political discourse, and the moral character that enables them to cooperatively seek the collective good of the community as a whole.

There are two perspectives from which Poulakos' book can be fairly criticized, corresponding to his two intentions: the extent to which his arguments contribute to a better understanding of Isocrates, and the extent to which we are able to understand Isocrates' relevance to us.

The extent to which Poulakos' argument improves our understanding of Isocrates is difficult to evaluate, primarily because it is so short and lacking in scholarly detail. His thesis merits consideration, and his argument makes it plausible. Yet the discussion of Isocrates' knowledge of, and transformation of, the Protagorean and Gorgean traditions of rhetoric and sophistic thought, for example, requires much greater detail and evidence if it is to be persuasive. The argument, while interesting, is unsubstantiated as it stands. It may also be less original than Poulakos thinks. Some of his arguments and conclusions will be familiar to readers of two classic studies of Isocrates, Burk's *Die Pädagogik des Isokrates als Grundlegung des Humanistischen Bildungsideals* (1923) and Mathieu's *Les Idées politiques d'Isocrates* (1925). This book requires a much more precise argument, supported by both greater historical and textual detail and some familiarity with what other scholars have already told us.

Any discussion of Isocrates' 'relevance' must follow after an attempt to discover just what it was that Isocrates thought. We do not know whether Isocrates is a great philosopher, or whether he is useful, nor will we know until we try to understand his writings in their own terms. It is here that Poulakos is least helpful. He notes, for example, that Isocrates' educational prescriptions are dependent on his political doctrine, and that Isocrates took great care to articulate this dependence. Yet Poulakos then goes on to tell us that he personally does not like Isocrates' political ideas (xi), and will therefore ignore them and separate them from Isocrates' educational thought; he then proceeds to excavate a version of what is alleged to be Isocrates' view of "human agency" which is consistent with his (Poulakos') own political opinions. This view of human agency, now divorced from the political opinions Isocrates explicitly advocated all his life, allows Poulakos to reveal a new and improved Isocrates who, almost miraculously, is a precursor of 'cultural studies' within the context of an absolute commitment to historical relativism (8, 104). Isocrates, who repeatedly asserted that Athens was *the* best polis, the home of *the* best thought, is set before us in the clothes of Professor Isocrates—historical relativist and member of the Department of Cultural Studies, University Americanus. As Nietzsche warned us, we must beware of those aca-

demics who, after excavating the ruins of the history of philosophy, emerge with hands full of idols of themselves.

Poulakos suggests that Isocrates cannot contribute much to political discourse within and between nation-states, but that he can contribute to a reform of political discourse within local communities. If this is true, it is no small achievement. As the political discourse of local communities is increasingly that of appeasement of global economic entities, a rhetoric of local aspiration is to be welcomed. Nevertheless, there is a hesitation that must be voiced. Poulakos repeatedly lifts his head from Isocrates' texts as if the pages were blank, only to reiterate his own conformity to the now rather stale, but still fashionable commonplaces of the American university scene; for example, we must "historicize our enquiry into human agency, acknowledge its situatedness, and recognize its provisionality" (104), a simplistic sentiment as agreeable to a Heideggerian zealot as to anyone wearing purple bell-bottom pants. This self-contradictory historical relativism, presented as a trans-historical Truth, merely conforms us to the dominant university opinions and rhetoric of *our* historical situation. This suggests to me that neither Isocrates nor the drama of thought are so simple and reassuring, and that Isocrates showed profound insight into the permanent problems of intellectual life when he warned the Athenians that they were too proud of themselves.

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Virgil's Epic Designs: Ekphrasis in the Aeneid. By Michael C.J. Putnam. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998. xii, 257 pages. \$35.00 US.

Putnam, an important American scholar of Virgil, has produced a dense study of the use of ekphrasis in the *Aeneid* (ekphrasis: a self-contained aside that generates a pause in a narrative to describe a work of art or some other object). His scholarship is staggering. It will make of this a book that every PhD student working in Virgil will have to read. His command of Virgil's texts and the Greek and Latin antecedents on which he drew, of the works of his contemporaries and the subsequent tradition, is sure and thorough. He examines in minute detail the murals on Dido's temple, the cloak of Cloanthus, Daedalus' sculptures, Silvia's stag, the shield of Aeneas, and the baldric of Pallas. His chief method is to use his vast learning to connect passages where Virgil uses the same words. The results are often enlightening.

All the same, this book is no joy to read. It is awash in the jargon of contemporary scholarship. Putnam speaks of "(the shield) at the *incipience* of its manufacture" (8); "events *precursorial* to Troy's final collapse" (48); "a *continuator* of the art he enlivens" (53); he tells us that "war *devirginates* by murder, not marriage" (206): the list goes on. Unfortunately the same is true of whole sentences as well:

Ekphrasis should find itself easily at the center of such discussion [i.e., about the destabilization of meaning in literature and art], first, because it puts together two modes of narrativity that bring with them a concomitant, still broader diversity of focalization, and second, because its presence posits the challenging interplay of art and text, of art in texts and of texts about art that are themselves artful. (212)

This may be clever, or current, but it is not helpful.

Aside from the general point that Virgil uses ekphrasis as a particularly rich and informative simile (11, 209), Putnam puts forward two other theses. The first is a kind of in-the-background consideration about how the trope works. Although this is never the aim of the book (209), Putnam is drawn into such considerations. “Ekphrasis is an encapsulation of visualized art wherein a verbal medium strives both to delineate a visual object and, even while beholden to narrative’s temporality, miraculously to capture the instantaneity of a viewer’s perception” (208). There are important questions here about words and images, sight and hearing, time and space. Putnam becomes tangled up in them and never achieves any clarity.

His other theme is very clear and far more problematical. At every possible turn Putnam insists on a reading which finds the major message of each ekphrasis to be the confirmation of his view that Aeneas slays Turnus at the end of the *Aeneid* because he reverts, unavoidably and unaccountably, to an irrational and destructive Junonian rage which destroys every hope of a rational future. As a consequence of this view Putnam maintains that, while the poet aims at a ‘linear’ restoration of a golden age, he recognizes, with a kind of despairing ‘honesty’ (96), that this cannot be achieved because human nature does not change (207) and shows this by ‘circling’ back at the end to the uncreative fury of Juno with which it began.

In favour of his view Putnam has the fact that the words used to describe Aeneas’ slaughter of Turnus (12.938ff) are words that, from the beginning, Virgil uses to characterize Juno. The question is what this resemblance conveys, and Putnam’s conclusion is faced with huge problems he does not discuss. If this is the reading Virgil intended, we have to ask why Maecenas and Augustus did not make certain that the book was burned. If its message is that Rome fails wretchedly and cannot possibly embody the “reasoned, ethical demands” (198) urged by Anchises (91), being foiled by human nature (207), it is hard to see how it could serve the imperial designs or become the textbook of how Rome was to rule the world. Putnam’s reading about the final return of a vindictive, irrational, archaic, vengeful, Juno-like action that brings only resentment simply ignores the reconciliation between Jupiter and Juno that is achieved moments before Aeneas kills Turnus.

Had Putnam paid attention to this he might have seen in Aeneas’ hesitation the desire to grant the *clementia* his father recommended. What prevents Aeneas is the one thing that is more important—namely, satisfying the demands of the divine law. Such demands are present in this case through

the religious obligation placed on Aeneas by Evander to requite the life of his son, Pallas, with that of his slayer. Evander had earned this right by the unconditional, unstinting, and uncomplaining aid he offered to the Trojans as their willing ally. With his close attention to the words, Putnam does recognize the religious character of the act: it was "owed" (*debere*) (197), and Turnus' life is claimed as a "sacrifice" (*immolo*) (203). What he does not recognize is that the *ira terribilis* which rises up in Aeneas on seeing the belt of Pallas is not the irrational wrath of Juno but the rational wrath of Jupiter. Yes, it is a shame to have to sacrifice this fine man who was now freely willing to become a citizen of Rome, but, yes, this is the price that divine law requires. Aeneas' *failure* to pay it would be the irrational act. Putnam never considers such possibilities, and this too is a shame.

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The Theater of Nature: Jean Bodin and Renaissance Science. By Ann Blair. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. xiv, 383 pages. \$45.00 US.

Although Jean Bodin figures more prominently in political histories as an influential theorist of absolute monarchy, in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries he was known equally for his massive work in natural philosophy, the *Universae naturae theatrum*, first published in Lyon, 1596. Ann Blair has made an impressive attempt, in the first instance, to bring that book—its method, content and influence, its place in the history of philosophy and of science—back into the prominence that it deserves. As such this work is necessary reading for historians of science interested in the Renaissance beginnings of the 'Scientific Revolution,' the heroes of which were Bacon, Galileo, Newton, and the scientists of the Enlightenment.

Yet the book will be of interest to a wider range of scholars, and this is precisely because Bodin was not one of those heroes. On the contrary, his *Theatrum* represents a high point in a tradition of natural philosophy against which such heroes, to some extent, defined themselves. Bodin's was a natural philosophy that was decidedly 'bookish,' a feature later heroes of the Scientific Revolution would reject. But the nature and extent of that revolution has been little understood by historians of science, largely because the immediate world that was left behind is so difficult to recapture. Building on previous articles, and on the work of her mentor Anthony Grafton, Blair extends the argument that the late Renaissance formed the common context with which the period's scientific heroes were in creative negotiation. Her book belongs thus to the larger project of understanding, as she puts it, "the persistence of tradition, and the emergence of the modern" (13).

Important features of that world included the seemingly endless capacity for eclectic uses of ancient philosophical sources and their schools in moving beyond what Renaissance figures commonly regarded as the sterility

of the middle ages; the fertile burgeoning market of the printed book, along with the associated cultivation of the scholarly habits of reading and discourse, fueled by the European expansion of universities and colleges; and an extraordinary breadth in the disciplines pursued by individuals, a breadth covered by the term ‘humanism,’ and comprehensible only to those historians willing to enter simultaneously into the philosophical, literary, theological, and political dimensions of such figures. Blair’s careful exposition of Bodin’s *Theatrum* constitutes an erudite treatment of these features, facilitated by her classical training, her thorough reading of Latin Renaissance natural philosophical texts, and an impressive command of English, French, and German secondary scholarship.

But the principal element in Blair’s understanding of Bodin, and the period generally, is the coherence of his various scholarly pursuits in the larger project of making manifest the workings of God in the world—the natural world and the human world—in the service of a pious stability across doctrinal differences that were shaking Europe. In treating Bodin’s natural philosophical work in this way, Blair adds to a growing body of early modern scholarship generally, and in particular Bodin scholarship, that sees a religious coherence in the period’s ethical, literary, political, philosophical, and theological thought. In the case of Bodin, the cohesion was afforded by the central question of the “power and limits of reason in understanding a world that is both providentially arranged according to laws subject to the free will of humans and of God” (117). This not only means for Blair that Bodin’s more famous work in political philosophy was of a piece with his natural philosophy (though this connection is only briefly pursued in her book), but also that what natural philosophy meant for a figure such as Bodin must be seen primarily from the standpoint of a kind of natural theology—the study of God’s attributes in and through the natural world.

Natural theology is normally associated with its heyday in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but Blair argues that much of its later character was established in the late sixteenth century. Chapter 1 provides a very useful overview of the complexities of Renaissance natural philosophical literature. Blair surveys various genres of natural philosophical texts from which Bodin eclectically and creatively drew in composing the *Theatrum*, texts that pursued one of two strategies, or both. They stressed either the design and rationality of nature or its incomprehensibility, but either way the point was to engender fear and love of God. Blair first gives a very useful survey of the various genres and sources of natural philosophical books current in Bodin’s world, as well as the readerships they enjoyed. She then shows how, in citing an impressive array of natural ‘observations’ from the world of minerals to that of the celestial realm, Bodin not only drew on these sources, but presented what he called ‘causal’ accounts of them. In this he saw himself as going beyond not only that literature, but Aristotle himself, whom he criticizes relentlessly.

Chapters 2 and 3 together form a valuable overview of what Blair calls the humanist “methods of bookishness” that were shared by scholars in all

disciplines. By showing their use in natural philosophical contexts, Blair develops a richly detailed contextual approach to the issues of scientific method, standards of proof and evidence, and the interplay of reason, tradition, and experience in Bodin's world. These chapters form the necessary background to Chapter 4, which sets out methodically the content and structure of the *Theatrum*. This chapter is invaluable for those wishing an overview of Bodin's text, but is also critical reading for historians of philosophy interested in notions of the 'chain of being' in the Renaissance. Bodin's text alone makes clear the complexities of that notion (oversimplified by Lovejoy), and illustrates the importance of the period's reworking and partial rejection of the neo-Platonic tradition in tackling the question of the relations of faith and reason, and of religion and philosophy.

Historians of literature, of theatre, and of the book, will find Chapter 5 most stimulating, since it charts Bodin's engagement in the sixteenth-century development of the ancient and medieval notions of the 'book of nature' and the 'theatre of nature.' Particularly important for Blair is the innovation that the book itself literally becomes the *theatrum* in which God's handiwork, including the human self, can fall under the pious reader's gaze. Blair gives a useful summary of the genres of *theatrum* literature, and brings out an inherent question of human subjectivity in the *theatrum* of God's handiwork. By rephrasing the natural theological and scientific questions of the period in terms of the reading processes belonging to the "disciplines of the book," Blair contributes to our understanding of a complex feature of the early modern period in which, as she notes, "theatrical metaphors interacted to form a veritable fad, in a period when not only stage plays, but also royal rituals, anatomical dissections, and natural collections marshalled an increasingly theatrical apparatus" (153).

The final chapter is the fruit of Blair's exhaustive survey of the reception of Bodin's work throughout Europe, and it is premised on the fair assumption that such traces of actual readership of Bodin's text "offer especially precious clues to evaluate what was 'ordinary' and what was unusual in a premodern practice of natural philosophy so remote from our own notions of science" (181). Its most interesting conclusion is perhaps that the virulent anti-Aristotelianism of the work hampered its success in the early seventeenth century, but improved its staying power through the end of the century. Blair's book concludes with a short epilogue, comprised mostly of a comparison between Bodin's approach to natural philosophy with that of Francis Bacon. Given their shared humanist context, this allows for a refreshing treatment of how innovative Bacon actually was, making a welcome change from historical accounts that rather assume that innovation as self-evident. As such, the epilogue is a testimony to the success of Blair's book as a whole, even if Bodin's *Theatrum* sank within seventy years to the obscurity of a museum piece, a relic of bad science. It is to be hoped that Ann Blair's book, due to its scholarly character and subject matter, will not suffer the same fate.

Women in the Holocaust. Edited by Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998. 402 pages. \$30.00 US.

Only a few years ago, scholarly analyses (though not survivor accounts) specifically concerning the experiences of women during the Shoah were almost unknown. That significant deficit in Holocaust studies is now being overcome, as the fine collection of essays edited by Professors Ofer and Weitzman attests. However, the subject is still controversial: didn't Nazi racial anti-Semitism target *all* Jews for destruction irrespective of age, class, nationality, gender, or any other distinction? It is not the least attractive characteristic of this book that even fundamental critics of the project such as Lawrence Langer are contributors to it. Besides the co-editors these comprise a distinguished group: twenty-one in all, too many to discuss individually here. The volume originated as a workshop held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1995 and has been carefully edited for publication. (But Joan Ringelheim evidently began her current research program on the Holocaust in the "mid-1980s" and not "1890s"; and Bismarck's famous Jewish banker was named Gerson von Bleichroeder.)

The anthology is divided into four sections, three of which begin with a survivor's memoir. Equally original, the first series of papers deals mostly with the situation of various segments of European Jewry during the years preceding the Shoah. These contributions highlight often overlooked connections between the two periods. For example, with respect to the interwar socialization of young Jewish females in Poland, because their religious education was considered less important than that of boys (a reflection of the centuries-old division of synagogue life), girls much more frequently attended Polish schools, learned both the language and Catholic customs, and made Gentile acquaintanceships—all factors that could assist survival when the Germans arrived. This already established pattern of acculturation significantly influenced Jewish behaviour in the ghettos the Nazis created all over eastern Europe. Yiddish-speaking (and circumcised) males could scarcely venture onto the street for fear of arrest; whereas many of their youthful sisters and wives could pass undetected on the 'aryan' side of a city. Hence, Jewish women had to shoulder a disproportionate burden in the daily struggle for existence: not only as factory workers serving the occupiers but also as representatives of their families in official dealings with them. The traditional role of 'homemaker' involved especially a never-ending battle to obtain sufficient food to ward off starvation and disease, the preferred Nazi methods to decimate Jewish communities before setting up death camps. In Auschwitz and elsewhere new gender-specific terrors awaited female Jews. At the arrival ramp, *every* woman with an infant in her arms or children clinging to her dress was earmarked with them for immediate execution in the gas chambers. Healthy, unencumbered females who received a reprieve faced death through labour (so did Jewish men) as well as constant fear of rape and other forms of sexual exploitation. If they were or became pregnant and did not

abort, the baby was murdered either by the SS or secretly by fellow prisoners to save the life at least of the mother.

In the debate about strategies of Jewish survival most authors today agree that chance, pure and simple, was the overriding determinant. Beyond that, women seem more likely than men to have preserved or developed family and family-like relationships of mutual support which in conjunction with other crucial circumstances (in particular, transport to the camps only late in the war) surely saved lives. A few Jews of both sexes did escape and even militarily resisted their persecutors; the exploits of Jewish women with the forest partisans of western Russia and in the French underground are among the book's most informative chapters. Once again inherited Jewish practice helped shape the female role: in opposing the Nazis Slovakia's Gisi Fleischmann was the sole woman who held a major leadership position.

The common-sense conclusion of almost all the essays is that focusing on the element of gender yields important insights about the texture of the Shoah and its impact upon subsequent Jewish history. I think this is beyond dispute and that Cynthia Ozick's stricture ("The Holocaust happened to victims who were not seen as men, women, or children, but *as Jews*") is therefore untenable in the sense she once expressed it (349). This thoughtful and persuasive volume offers numerous poignant pen-portraits of remarkable, 'average' women confronting unimaginable horrors. Even the 1941 photo on the book's dust-jacket, of a serene Jewish mother and her two middle-aged daughters, bears pondering: just one survived Theresienstadt. They, too, lend a human face to a frequently anonymous calamity.

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James Joyce and Censorship: The Trials of Ulysses. By Paul Vanderham. New York: New York UP, 1998. xii, 242 pages. \$34.95 US.

In his treatment of the censorship of *Ulysses*, Paul Vanderham makes several useful contributions to the study of Joyce's novel. The first is, archival: Vanderham collects all the passages that censors found objectionable in the novel's various brushes with the law. Such evidence allows Vanderham to conduct a sophisticated argument. Instead of the usual vague statements that a certain number of passages from Nausicaa were found objectionable, *James Joyce and Censorship* turns to the exact words that were found objectionable. And that is a laudable project in itself; it is useful to see what censorship looks like in practice. For example, one of the best parts of this book is its excursion into the editing practice of Ezra Pound, and Pound's objections to Joyce's linking of the excremental and ethereal aspects of human sexuality. In doing so, Vanderham also occasionally draws attention to the self-censorship of scholars who actually quote the novel.

But the book also has a larger function, which is seen in its turning to the various legal cases surrounding *Ulysses*' publication. Vanderham argues that he wants to take the objections to *Ulysses* "seriously," which means that he believes that there was (and is) a case to argue that *Ulysses* is obscene. We have accepted what Vanderham calls, following Leslie Fiedler, several "well-intentioned lies." Vanderham argues that Judge Woolsey, for instance, was wrong in that he appealed to the "esthetic view of art," a view of art in which art is *pure*. Art doesn't change people's actions; it cannot urge them into action. Such a view denies some of the real power of art, since it argues that works of art can't change anything: insofar as a book is a work of art, it is apolitical. Vanderham goes on to argue that such an insistence on the purity of art is not a good way to defend against censorship.

In contrast, Vanderham argues that art is not autonomous. *Ulysses* is obscene, *and* it is great art; you can't separate the two. But along with this point, Vanderham makes an important distinction. While works of art can be obscene, that does not mean they should be banned. The consequences of accepting this distinction should make us rethink the Woolsey decision, which relied on the view that art and obscenity cannot exist together in the same work. While the Woolsey decision was the most famous and influential of *Ulysses*' trials, the later decision (in response to an appeal of Woolsey's decision) more usefully argued that the book's aesthetic benefits outweigh its possibly negative moral effects. Vanderham (quite correctly, I think) sees this as a "saner" approach, for it allows for art's mixed motives, and it allows for works of art to have political effects.

Vanderham also argues that the composition of the novel was influenced by Joyce's fear of censorship. Joyce's strategies to curtail censorship are what Vanderham calls his aesthetic of "exile." Basically, what Joyce did was to increase the novel's formal parallels to Homer, which not only heightened the sense of the book as artifice, but also made it harder to see the obscenity. Joyce's difficulty was a second way of accomplishing the hiding of obscenity. In order for this argument to overturn a lot of Joyce scholarship, Vanderham needs a smoking gun: a statement by Joyce that, in order to protect the novel from the censors, he increased the Homeric references and the difficulty. Vanderham doesn't quite get that, though he writes as if he does.

James Joyce and Censorship thus has some weaknesses: in addition to overstating the case for Joyce's cloaking devices, it is a little repetitive, and it has a tendency to quote secondary sources too often. If one puts these moments aside, however, one is left with a very useful addition not only to the study of Joyce, but to the study of censorship.

Borderlands: How We Talk About Canada. By W.H. New. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1998. viii, 129 pages. \$49.95.

The politics of experience in Canada, according to W.H. New, have their crucible or defining moments in borderlands, psychic and indeterminate territories where boundaries are “metaphors more than fixed edges: *signs* of limits more than the limits themselves.” Such borderlands are regions of possibility and inclusion rather than hierarchically conceived centres of exclusionary power. What takes place in them defies hinterland/heartland paradigm structures and media-based assumptions as well as perpetuations of national norms. Borderlands are large; they contain if not multitudes then a substantial number of what Homi Bhabha calls negotiative or hybrid figures who are not afraid of contradicting themselves in self-deprecatory, awkward and unpredictable ways, as opposed to parroting the kind of fixed-truth rhetoric of those who promote hegemonies of religion, gender, class, ethnicity, race, and sexuality (among other things) in Canada and elsewhere.

The big Canadian borderline follows the forty-ninth parallel and the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River division between those who apparently prefer peace, order and good government on the one hand, and those who supposedly promote life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness on the other. New calls into question what seem to be obvious distinctions between Canadian and American social values—do all Americans prefer the duality of winners and losers, for example, and all Canadians yearn for the tie game? Are certain dates in Canadian history (1759, 1837, 1867, etc.) always merely rhetorical tropes, while specific points in American history (1776, 1861, 1941) remain consistent marks on “a calendar of inviolable truths”? New destabilizes national margins to push his readers toward a retracing of all-too-familiar boundary lines within Canada and a reconsideration of historically inbred assumptions of difference between anglophones and francophones, between the national and the regional, between empowered whites and disempowered racial ‘others,’ and between the unstable matrix of cultural creations and the inviolable master narrative of cultural closure.

While obvious distinctions exist, difference is too often part of a pre-determined political agenda. Thus, New asserts, it is vital we recognize and work with what relates people to one another, and with what moves our perceptions and practice of living from a multicultural world of peculiarities to an intercultural one of alternatives or what might be called cross-bordered existence. New would have us ask to what degree race relations in Canada are bound up in an inescapable binary rhetoric of self versus other that contains no discourse of resonance and shared experience, only declarations and impositions of restriction and division. Related to this, and given the ongoing battle for the hearts and minds of those who live in Quebec, he feels it is crucial that we consider whether that borderland province/*pays* is culturally uniform rather than ethnically and linguistically diverse.

If New emphasizes the importance of Canadian irony in resisting an American cultural takeover, he does not seem to grant an equal value to a *Québécois* passion for identity that will go to the very edge of separation (if not yet beyond) to protect against anglo appropriations of a Québec *libre* enough to continually renegotiate cultural space. But it is the integrity of the borderlands cultural exchange *process* (rather than the dangerous commodification of culture itself) that New promotes throughout this slim though critically substantial text, as he consistently underlines the efficacy of resistance to centralizing metaphors and consolidated applications of power.

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