

☐ Contemporary
Literary Criticism

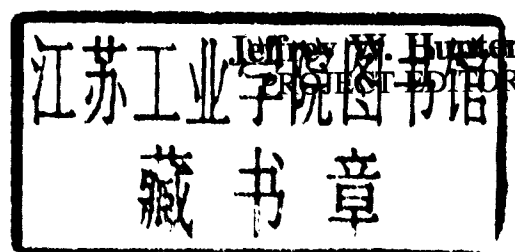
CLC

252

Volume 252

Contemporary Literary Criticism

Criticism of the Works
of Today's Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, Scriptwriters, and
Other Creative Writers



 GALE
CENGAGE Learning

Detroit • New York • San Francisco • New Haven, Conn • Waterville, Maine • London

Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vol. 252

Project Editor: Jeffrey W. Hunter

Editorial: Niesha Amos, Dana Ramel
Barnes, Tom Burns, Elizabeth Cranston,
Kathy D. Darrow, Kristen Dorsch, Jelena
O. Krstović, Michelle Lee, Thomas J.
Schoenberg, Noah Schusterbauer,
Lawrence J. Trudeau, Russel Whitaker

Data Capture: Katrina Coach, Gwen Tucker

Indexing Services: Laurie Andriot

Rights and Acquisitions: Sara Teller, Jhanay
Williams, Beth Beaufore

Composition and Electronic Capture: Gary
Oudersluys

Manufacturing: Cynde Bishop

Associate Product Manager: Marc Cormier

© 2008 Gale, Cengage Learning

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced, transmitted, stored, or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, scanning, digitizing, taping, Web distribution, information networks, or information storage and retrieval systems, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This publication is a creative work fully protected by all applicable copyright laws, as well as by misappropriation, trade secret, unfair competition, and other applicable laws. The authors and editors of this work have added value to the underlying factual material herein through one or more of the following: unique and original selection, coordination, expression, arrangement, and classification of the information.

For product information and technology assistance, contact us at
Gale Customer Support, 1-800-877-4253.

For permission to use material from this text or product,
submit all requests online at www.cengage.com/permissions.

Further permissions questions can be emailed to
permissionrequest@cengage.com

While every effort has been made to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, does not guarantee the accuracy of the data contained herein. Gale accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

Gale
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI, 48331-3535

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 76-46132

ISBN-13: 978-0-7876-9576-7
ISBN-10: 0-7876-9576-9

ISSN 0091-3421

Preface

Named “one of the twenty-five most distinguished reference titles published during the past twenty-five years” by *Reference Quarterly*, the *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* series provides readers with critical commentary and general information on more than 2,000 authors now living or who died after December 31, 1999. Volumes published from 1973 through 1999 include authors who died after December 31, 1959. Previous to the publication of the first volume of *CLC* in 1973, there was no ongoing digest monitoring scholarly and popular sources of critical opinion and explication of modern literature. *CLC*, therefore, has fulfilled an essential need, particularly since the complexity and variety of contemporary literature makes the function of criticism especially important to today’s reader.

Scope of the Series

CLC provides significant passages from published criticism of works by creative writers. Since many of the authors covered in *CLC* inspire continual critical commentary, writers are often represented in more than one volume. There is, of course, no duplication of reprinted criticism.

Authors are selected for inclusion for a variety of reasons, among them the publication or dramatic production of a critically acclaimed new work, the reception of a major literary award, revival of interest in past writings, or the adaptation of a literary work to film or television.

Attention is also given to several other groups of writers—authors of considerable public interest—about whose work criticism is often difficult to locate. These include mystery and science fiction writers, literary and social critics, foreign authors, and authors who represent particular ethnic groups.

Each *CLC* volume contains individual essays and reviews taken from hundreds of book review periodicals, general magazines, scholarly journals, monographs, and books. Entries include critical evaluations spanning from the beginning of an author’s career to the most current commentary. Interviews, feature articles, and other published writings that offer insight into the author’s works are also presented. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the general critical and biographical material in *CLC* provides them with vital information required to write a term paper, analyze a poem, or lead a book discussion group. In addition, complete bibliographical citations note the original source and all of the information necessary for a term paper footnote or bibliography.

Organization of the Book

A *CLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- Whenever possible, a recent **Author Interview** accompanies each entry.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *CLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *CLC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *CLC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in the series as well as in other Literature Criticism series.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *CLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, films, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces an annual cumulative title index that alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in *CLC* and is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

Citing Contemporary Literary Criticism

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a bibliography set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

James, Harold. "Narrative Engagement with *Atonement* and *The Blind Assassin*." *Philosophy and Literature* 29, no. 1 (April 2005): 130-45. Reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 246, edited by Jeffrey W. Hunter, 188-95. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

Wesley, Marilyn C. "Anne Hèbert: The Tragic Melodramas." In *Canadian Women Writing Fiction*, edited by Mickey Pearlman, 41-52. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993. Reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Vol. 246, edited by Jeffrey W. Hunter, 276-82. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 5th ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1999); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

James, Harold. "Narrative Engagement with *Atonement* and *The Blind Assassin*." *Philosophy and Literature* 29.1 (April 2005): 130-45. Reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 246. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 188-95.

Wesley, Marilyn C. "Anne Hèbert: The Tragic Melodramas." *Canadian Women Writing Fiction*, edited by Mickey Pearlman. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993. 41-52. Reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 246. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 276-82.

Suggestions are Welcome

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Associate Product Manager:

Associate Product Manager, Literary Criticism Series
Gale
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535
1-800-347-4253 (GALE)
Fax: 248-699-8983

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the criticism included in this volume and the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reproduction rights. Following is a list of the copyright holders who have granted us permission to reproduce material in this volume of *CLC*. Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN *CLC*, VOLUME 252, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS:

The Advocate, September 13, 2005. Copyright © 2005 LPI Media, Inc. Reproduced by permission.—*Art Book*, v. 13, May, 2006. Copyright © 2006 Basil Blackwell Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Blackwell Publishers.—*Art Bulletin*, v. 75, September, 1993 for review of “Reading ‘Rembrandt’” by Griselda Pollock. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and author.—*Art History*, v. 25, November, 2002. Copyright © 2002 Basil Blackwell Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Blackwell Publishers.—*Art Journal*, v. 65, spring, 2006. Reproduced by permission.—*Bible Review*, v. 16, April, 2000. Reproduced by permission of the Biblical Archaeology Society.—*Cambridge Quarterly*, v. 30, June, 2001 for “The Holocaust in Translation” by Piotr Kuhiwczak. Copyright © 2001 Oxford University Press. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press, conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., and the author.—*College English*, v. 63, September, 2000. Copyright © 2000 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Used with permission.—*Comparative Literature*, v. 56, winter, 2004 for Review of *The Holocaust of Texts: Genocide, Literature, and Personification*, by Laurie K. Vickroy. Reproduced by permission of the author.—*Contemporary Literature*, v. XLVII, spring, 2006. Copyright © 2006 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Reproduced by permission.—*Culture Theory & Critique*, v. 44, April, 2003 for “Adventures in Subsemiotics: Towards a New Object and Writing of Visual Culture” by Sunil Manghani. Copyright © 2003 Taylor & Francis Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis, Ltd., <http://www.informaworld.com>, and the author.—*European Legacy*, v. 6, June, 2001 for “Mieke Bal’s Preposterous Art History” by Wayne Andersen. Copyright © 2001 International Society for the Study of European Ideas. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis, Ltd., <http://www.informaworld.com>, conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., and the author.—*Film Comment*, v. 38, July-August, 2002 for “The Genius of the System” by Gavin Smith./ v. 38, July-August, 2002 for “Rebel without A Cause: Darth Vader’s Low Self-Esteem Problem” by Kevin Smith./v. 38, July-August, 2002 for “Movie of the Moment: *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*” by Gregory Solman. Reproduced by permission of *Film Comment* and the respective authors.—*First Things*, December, 1998. Copyright © 1998 Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—*Forum for Modern Language Studies*, v. 43, 2007 for “Holocaust Writing and the Limits of Influence” by Piotr Kuhiwczak. Copyright © 2007 Oxford University Press. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press, conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., and the author.—*The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, v. 14, January-February, 2007; v. 14, March-April, 2007; v. 14, September-October, 2007. All reproduced by permission.—*German Life and Letters*, v. 54, January, 2001. Copyright © 2001 Basil Blackwell Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Blackwell Publishers.—*Guardian*, August 11, 1999. Copyright © 1999 Guardian Newspapers Limited. Reproduced by permission of Guardian News Service, Ltd.—*History and Memory*, v. 10, September 30, 1998. Copyright © Indiana University Press. Reproduced by permission of Indiana University Press.—*Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, v. 17, spring, 2003 for “The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945-1960” by Lawrence Baron; v. 17, spring, 2003 for review of *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, by Richard L. Rubenstein; v. 20, spring, 2006, for review of *The Genocidal Temptation: Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Rwanda, and Beyond*, by A. Dirk Moses; v. 20, spring, 2006 for “The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust” by Gavriel D. Rosenfeld. Copyright © 2003, 2006 Oxford University Press. All reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press and the respective authors.—*Hudson Review*, v. 57, summer, 2004. Copyright © 2004 by The Hudson Review, Inc. Reproduced by permission.—*Hypatia*, v. 5, fall, 1990. Copyright © 1990. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of Indiana University Press.—*Journal of the Historical Society*, v. VII, June 2007. Copyright © 2007 Basil Blackwell Ltd. Translated by Piotr Gorecki. Reproduced by permission of Blackwell Publishers.—*Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, v. 3, July, 2004 for “Re-enacting the Warsaw Ghetto” by Annelies Schulte Nordholt; v. 4, March, 2005 for “How to Mend Love? Wrestling with the Legacy of the Holocaust in Recent Israeli Fiction” by Rachel Feldhay Brenner; v. 5, July, 2006 for “Imaginary Tales in the Land of the Perpetrators” by Froma I. Zeitlin. Copyright © 2004, 2005, 2006 by Joseph C. Landis. All rights reserved. All reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis, Ltd., <http://www.informaworld.com>, conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, and the respective authors.—*Journal of Popular Culture*, v. 26, fall, 1992; v. 38, November, 2004. Copyright © 1992, 2004 Basil Blackwell Ltd. Both reproduced by permission of Blackwell Publishers.—*Journal of Popular Film and Television*,

v. 26, spring, 1998. Copyright © 1998 by Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. Reproduced with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, published by Heldref Publications, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1802.—*Literature and Psychology*, v. 45, 1999. Copyright © 1999 by the editor. Reproduced by permission of *Literature & Psychology: A Psychoanalytic and Cultural Criticism*.—*Literature Film Quarterly*, v. 18, 1990; v. 26, 1998; v. 33, 2005. Copyright © 1990, 1998, 2005 Salisbury State College. All reproduced by permission.—*Modern Drama*, v. 48, spring, 2005. Copyright © 2005 by the University of Toronto, Graduate Centre for Study of Drama. Reproduced by permission.—*The Nation*, v. 280, June, 2005. Copyright © 2005 by The Nation Magazine/The Nation Company, Inc. Reproduced by permission.—*New German Critique*, fall, 2005. Copyright © 2005 New German Critique, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—*New Republic*, v. 225, April, 2001. Copyright © 2001 by The New Republic, Inc. Reproduced by permission of *The New Republic*.—*Newsday*, March 27, 2007. Copyright © 2007 Los Angeles Times. Reproduced by permission.—*Poetics Today*, v. 27, summer, 2006. Copyright © 2006 the Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv University. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Duke University Press.—*Political Theology*, v. 4, May, 2003. Copyright © 2003 The Continuum Publishing Group Ltd. Reproduced by permission.—*Religion and the Arts*, v. 8, June, 2004. Copyright © Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., Boston. Courtesy of Brill Academic Publishers.—*Res Publica*, v. 8, 2002 for “The True Wilkomirski” by Norman Geras. Copyright © 2002. Reproduced with kind permission from Springer Science and Business Media, conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., and the author.—*San Francisco Weekly*, June 7, 2006. Copyright © 2006 New Times, Inc. Reproduced by permission of the author.—*Style*, v. 26, spring, 1992. Copyright © 1992 *Style*. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.—*Theatre Journal*, v. 59, May 13, 2007. Copyright © 2007 University and College Theatre Association of the American Theatre Association. Reproduced by permission of The Johns Hopkins University Press.—*Toronto Star*, September 15, 2004. Copyright © 2004 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Torstar Syndication Services.—*University of Toronto Quarterly*, v. 56, winter, 1986/1987. Copyright © 1986 and 1987 University of Toronto Press. Reproduced by permission of University of Toronto Press Incorporated.—*Village Voice*, August, 2005. Copyright © 2007 Village Voice Media. Reprinted with the permission of *The Village Voice*.—*Wired*, v. 7, May, 1999. Copyright © 1999 The Conde Nast Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN CLC, VOLUME 252, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

Bryer, Jackson R. From “Terrence McNally,” in *The Playwright’s Art: Conversations with Contemporary American Dramatists*. Edited by Jackson R. Bryer. Rutgers University Press, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by Jackson R. Bryer. Reprinted by permission of Rutgers University Press.—Montgomery, Benilde. From “A Perfect Ganesh: McNally’s Carnival in India,” in *Terrence McNally: A Casebook*. Edited by Toby Silverman Zinman. Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997. Copyright © 1997 by Toby Silverman Zinman. All rights reserved. Republished with permission of Taylor & Francis Company, conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN CLC, VOLUME 252, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES OR OTHER SOURCES:

“George Lucas: Mapping the Mythology,” *www.CNN.com*, May, 2002. Reproduced by permission.—“Thirty Years later, ‘Star Wars’ Force Still Being Felt,” *www.CNN.com*, May 23, 2007. Reproduced by permission.—David Brin, “What’s Wrong (and Right) with *The Phantom Menace*,” *www.salon.com*, June 15, 1999. This article first appeared in Salon.com, at <http://www.salon.com>. An online version remains in the Salon archives. Reprinted with permission.—Brian Libby, “Star Wars,” *www.salon.com*, May 28, 2002. This article first appeared in Salon.com, at <http://www.salon.com>. An online version remains in the Salon archives. Reprinted with permission.—Oliver Poole, “The Full Monty Makeover is Broadway Hit,” *www.telegraph.co.uk*, June 19, 2001. Reproduced by permission of The Daily Telegraph.—Charles Spencer, “Soul-Baring Strippers Reveal a Show Bursting With Humanity,” *www.telegraph.co.uk*, February 24, 2004. Reproduced by permission of The Daily Telegraph.—Michael Sragow, “The Biggest Indie Film Ever Made,” *www.salon.com*, May 20, 1999. This article first appeared in Salon.com, at <http://www.salon.com>. An online version remains in the Salon archives. Reprinted with permission.—Jean Tang, “*Lord of the Rings* vs. *Star Wars*,” *www.salon.com*, January 9, 2002. This article first appeared in Salon.com, at <http://www.salon.com>. An online version remains in the Salon archives. Reprinted with permission.—Charles Taylor, “The Spirit Is Willing, but the Force is Weak,” *www.salon.com*, May 19, 1999. This article first appeared in Salon.com, at <http://www.salon.com>. An online version remains in the Salon archives. Reprinted with permission.—George Weinberg-Harter, review of *Chita Rivera: The Dancer’s Life*, *www.Backstage.com*, September 29, 2005. Reproduced by permission of VNU Business Media, Inc.

Gale Literature Product Advisory Board

The members of the Gale Literature Product Advisory Board—reference librarians from public and academic library systems—represent a cross-section of our customer base and offer a variety of informed perspectives on both the presentation and content of our literature products. Advisory board members assess and define such quality issues as the relevance, currency, and usefulness of the author coverage, critical content, and literary topics included in our series; evaluate the layout, presentation, and general quality of our printed volumes; provide feedback on the criteria used for selecting authors and topics covered in our series; provide suggestions for potential enhancements to our series; identify any gaps in our coverage of authors or literary topics, recommending authors or topics for inclusion; analyze the appropriateness of our content and presentation for various user audiences, such as high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, librarians, and educators; and offer feedback on any proposed changes/enhancements to our series. We wish to thank the following advisors for their advice throughout the year.

Barbara M. Bibel

Librarian
Oakland Public Library
Oakland, California

Dr. Toby Burrows

Principal Librarian
The Scholars' Centre
University of Western Australia Library
Nedlands, Western Australia

Celia C. Daniel

Associate Reference Librarian
Howard University Libraries
Washington, D.C.

David M. Durant

Reference Librarian
Joyner Library
East Carolina University
Greenville, North Carolina

Nancy T. Guidry

Librarian
Bakersfield Community College
Bakersfield, California

Heather Martin

Arts & Humanities Librarian
University of Alabama at Birmingham, Sterne Library
Birmingham, Alabama

Susan Mikula

Librarian
Indiana Free Library
Indiana, Pennsylvania

Thomas Nixon

Humanities Reference Librarian
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Davis
Library
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Mark Schumacher

Jackson Library
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, North Carolina

Gwen Scott-Miller

Assistant Director
Sno-Isle Regional Library System
Marysville, Washington

Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xi

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board xiii

Mieke Bal 1946-	1
<i>Dutch essayist, critic, and editor</i>	
Contemporary Holocaust Literature	60
<i>General Overviews</i>	63
<i>Literary Models of Holocaust Representation</i>	106
<i>The Generation After</i>	136
<i>Post Holocaust Philosophy, Theology and Ethics</i>	201
<i>The Benjamin Wilkomirski Affair</i>	206
George Lucas 1944-	218
<i>American screenwriter, producer, and director</i>	
Terrence McNally 1939-	287
<i>American playwright and screenwriter</i>	

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 345

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Topic Index 457

CLC Cumulative Nationality Index 471

CLC-252 Title Index 487

Mieke Bal

1946-

(Full name Mieke Maria Gertrudis Bal) Dutch essayist, critic, and editor.

The following entry presents an overview of Bal's career through 2007.

INTRODUCTION

Dutch academician Bal has written and edited a number of books in the fields of literary theory, semiotics, feminist theory, Biblical studies, cultural studies, and visual art analysis. Some of her best-known works deal with the portrayal of female characters in the Bible, and her critical volumes have seen print in many European countries, including France, Germany, and her native country of the Netherlands. Since her tenure as a professor of comparative literature and women's studies at the University of Rochester in New York, Bal has published many of her books in English, most notably, *Femmes imaginaires: L'Ancien Testament au risque d'une narratologie critique* (1986; *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*), *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera's Death* (1988), *Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (1991), and *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (1999), among others. Bal has also contributed numerous articles to both books and periodicals, and has been active in women's studies conferences

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Bal was born on March 14, 1946, in Heemstede, the Netherlands. She attended the University of Amsterdam and later studied French and literature at the University of Utrecht. As a professor, Bal has worked at several universities in the Netherlands, including the University of Utrecht, where she co-founded the women's studies program. At the University of Amsterdam, she taught theory of literature, and helped found and served as a director for the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, Theory, and Interpretation (ASCA). Bal has also held positions at several universities in the United States and Canada, including the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York,

where she held the title of Susan B. Anthony Professor of Women's Studies; Cornell University, where she served as the Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large; Harvard University Divinity School; the University of Montreal; the University of Toronto; and Dartmouth College, where she earned the title of William H. Morton Distinguished Senior Fellow in the Humanities.

MAJOR WORKS

A study of narrative theory and one of Bal's first publications, *Narratologie* (1977; *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*) examines three different aspects of the narrative: the text, story, and fabula. In *Lethal Love*, Bal offers critical readings of love stories from the Old Testament—including the relationships between David and Bathsheba, Samson and Delilah, Ruth and Boaz, Judah and Tamar, and Adam and Eve—and deconstructs the patriarchal interpretations, she argues, that have influenced the legacy of these tales. *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* and *Murder and Difference*, both published in 1988, also focus on issues relating to women in the Bible, this time concentrating specifically on the Book of Judges. Bal ventured into the genre of art history with *Reading "Rembrandt"*, which presents a critical vocabulary for analyzing the paintings of Rembrandt and comments on the relationship between visual art and literature, suggesting that these two disciplines are more interconnected than most scholars realize. In *Quoting Caravaggio*, Bal observes ways in which twentieth-century artists refer to, or "quote," the work of the Italian Baroque painter Caravaggio in their own artwork, arguing that this practice affects not only the modern art, but also the original pieces. In *Louise Bourgeois' Spider: The Architecture of Art-Writing* (2001), Bal utilizes Louise Bourgeois's sculpture *Spider* to describe her personal theories of interpreting art. The essays in *The Artemisia Files: Artemisia Gentileschi for Feminists and Other Thinking People* (2005) reconsider the Italian Baroque artist Artemisia Gentileschi's place in art history, focusing on her artwork itself, although many feminist writings on Artemisia concentrate on her dramatic life story and status as a famous female painter. Released in 2006, *A Mieke Bal Reader*, a compilation of some of Bal's

most influential writings, highlights her contributions to the studies of literary theory, theology, interdisciplinary methodology, and visual art analysis.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Bal has received consistent praise for her texts focusing on women in the Hebrew Bible (*Lethal Love*, *Death and Dissymmetry*, and *Murder and Difference*), with critics remarking that the works make significant contributions to feminist theory. Laura J. Bird, however, has found fault with the English-language edition of *Lethal Love* (compared to the original French text, *Femmes imaginaires*), noting that the translation contains less theory than the original volume and caters toward a purely academic, rather than a general, audience. Bal's ability to write about a wide range of topics and her skill at making connections between disciplines has earned her the respect of many scholars and critics. Reviewers have commended her art history collections for their originality and relevance to not only art, but also to various other fields of study. Griselda Pollock has stated that *Reading "Rembrandt"*'s "intellectual brilliance, methodological clarity, and illuminating insight make it the book we must all read, discuss, and respond to regardless of our specialist area of cultural study." In reference to *Quoting Caravaggio*, Marsha Meskimmon has noted that the text "is the work of an accomplished and assured scholar, moving deftly between sources and attending closely to works of art, without being convinced (or coerced) into believing that there is a simple or singular meaning or 'answer' to be deciphered by correct 'reading.'" Many commentators have praised *The Artemisia Files* for its fresh approach of interpreting the artist's work rather than focusing solely on her biography. Louis Byrne, for example, has written, "Thankfully the authors, all 'Thinking People' as well as feminist art historians, make sure that Artemisia's artistic accomplishments are foregrounded, while her much-cited personal life . . . is never allowed to become the unmediated, causative influence upon her work that many claim it to be."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Complexité d'un roman populaire* (essays and criticism) 1974
- Narratologie: Essais sur la signification narrative dans quatre romans modernes* [translated by Christine van Boheemen; *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*] (essays and criticism) 1977
- De Theorie van vertellen en verhalen* (essays and criticism) 1978; revised and expanded edition, 1990
- Mensen van papier: Over personages in de literatuur* [editor] (essays and criticism) 1980
- Inleiding in de literatuurwetenschap* [with Jan van Luxemburg and Willem Weststeijn] (essays and criticism) 1981
- Litteraire genres en hun gebruik* [editor] (essays and criticism) 1981
- En Sara in haar tent lachte: Patriarchaat en verzet in bijbelverhalen* [with Fokkelien van Dijk and Grietje van Ginneken] (essays and criticism) 1984
- Femmes imaginaires: L'Ancien Testament au risque d'une narratologie critique* [*Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*] (essays and criticism) 1986
- Het Rembrandt Effect: Visies op kijken* (essays and criticism) 1987
- Over literatuur* [with Jan van Luxemburg and Willem Weststeijn] (essays and criticism) 1987
- Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (essays and criticism) 1988
- Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera's Death* (essays and criticism) 1988; revised edition, 1992
- Verkrachting verbeeld: Seksueel geweld in cultuur gebracht* (essays and criticism) 1988
- Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* [editor] (essays and criticism) 1989
- On Story-Telling: Essays in Narratology* (essays and criticism) 1991
- Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (essays and criticism) 1991; revised editions, 1994, 2006
- On Meaning-Making: Essays in Semiotics* (essays and criticism) 1994
- The Point of Theory: Practices of Cultural Analysis* [editor; with Inge E. Boer] (essays and criticism) 1994
- Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (essays and criticism) 1996
- Images proustiennes, ou comment lire visuellement* [translated by Anna-Louise Milne; *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*] (essays and criticism) 1997
- Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* [editor; with Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer] (essays and criticism) 1999
- The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation* [editor; with Bryan Gonzales] (essays and criticism) 1999
- Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (essays and criticism) 1999
- Looking In: The Art of Viewing* (essays and criticism) 2001
- Louise Bourgeois' Spider: The Architecture of Art-Writing* (essays and criticism) 2001
- Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (essays and criticism) 2002

Inge Boer: *Disorienting Vision—Rereading Stereotypes in French Orientalist Texts and Images* [editor] (essays and criticism) 2004

Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies. 4 vols. [editor] (essays and criticism) 2004

The Artemisia Files: Artemisia Gentileschi for Feminists and Other Thinking People [editor] (essays and criticism) 2005

Inge Boer: *Uncertain Territories—Boundaries in Cultural Analysis* [editor] (essays and criticism) 2006

A Mieke Bal Reader (essays and criticism) 2006

CRITICISM

Peter Stoicheff (review date winter 1986/1987)

SOURCE: Stoicheff, Peter. Review of *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, by Mieke Bal. *University of Toronto Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (winter 1986/1987): 375-76.

[In the following review, Stoicheff suggests that Bal's work in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* offers an entry point to literary criticism for readers unfamiliar with advanced theoretical systems.]

Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative is Christine van Boheemen's translation of the second, revised edition of Mieke Bal's *De theorie van vertellen en verhalen* (Muiderberg: Coutinho 1980). Bal's study has a practical goal—to 'improve the quality' of the reader's interpretations of texts, and of the reader's 'capacity to teach.' 'Quality' is a somewhat suspicious word here. The study conveniently assimilates various concepts of narrative theory, regularly avoids imposing terminology, and reduces theoretical problems to their simplest elements. In so doing, *Narratology* creates a system of agreeable concepts for the interpreter uninitiated in structuralism. It is the quality of the reader's *structuralist* interpretation of texts that is likely to be improved here.

Bal's theory concentrates on three important layers of 'a narrative.' The first is 'fabula,' 'a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by . . . agents that perform actions' (p 5). Again, 'logically' is a tricky word. Much of the delightfulness of many forms of fabula, particularly though not exclusively post-modern ones, is in the apparent illogicality of the relation. As Bal admits at the close of the discussion of fabula, the 'assumption is

that fixed relations between classes of phenomena form the basis of the narrative system of fabula.' Although Bal allows that such an assumption is reductive, it is not really: as with many theories of literature, it is not the adequacy of the proposal but the breadth of texts to which it is applicable that is disappointing. Bal's 'ideal' text is the kind devoid of structural and verbal instabilities.

The second layer is that of 'story,' the presentational 'ordering' of the 'imagined' fabula (p 49), the apparatus that retrieves a fabula from embarrassing banality, or lends it modesty and decorum. One component of this ordering is language, the other is 'the way the material, the fabula, has been handled' (p 49). Bal does not discuss the first component, a deliberate omission designed to erase complexity. It is this omission that retains structuralist boundaries for the book, though, and somewhat limits its scope as an arbiter of interpretive 'quality.' Language is a way of 'handling'—it is the medium which allows the grasping and moulding of the fabula, to continue the metaphor. Despite this, Bal's discussion of 'story' concentrates on the concept of 'focalization,' productively assimilating and simplifying Genette's working definitions for aspects of perspective in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil 1972) and Hamon's analysis of character perception in 'Pour un status semiologique du personnage' (R. Barthes et al, *Poétique du récit* [Paris: Seuil 1977]). The use of the term 'focalization' is productive: it clarifies the distinction between those who see and those who speak that other terms blur, and contains a self-apparent intimacy with the concepts of vision, perception ('focal-') and acting upon them, speaking ('-ize') that terms such as narrative perspective (does one 'perspectivize'?) lack.

The third layer is 'text,' a 'finite structured whole composed of language signs' (p 5). Bal's book is limited to a consideration of narrative texts, of course, and the discussion of 'text' is really a discussion of the distinction between various narrative situations or 'relationships of the narrative "I" to the subject of narration' (p 126). That is, it notes various arrangements, or 'levels,' of focalization ('impersonal,' 'personal,' and so on) and shows how they are revealed through differences in language (personal pronouns, emotive words, and so on). These arrangements lead to the extremely short discussion that *does* have the potential to improve the reader's 'quality of interpretation' that Bal claims for the study at the outset. Different relationships between focalization levels in a narrative text create gradations of embedded texts, subtexts, and 'mirror-texts' (Bal's term for the functional relationship of levels in metafiction). An ability to recognize these relationships, and a vocabu-

lary with which to articulate them, allow the reader of narrative texts a vision of the potential limitlessness of significance and interpretation.

Kelly Oliver (review date fall 1990)

SOURCE: Oliver, Kelly. Review of *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*, by Mieke Bal. *Hypatia* 5, no. 3 (fall 1990): 169-71.

[In the following review, Oliver contends that Bal's analysis of the biblical Book of Judges in *Death and Dissymmetry* does not go far enough toward excising patriarchal systems.]

Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges is the third book in a trilogy by Mieke Bal, professor of comparative literature and Susan B. Anthony Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Rochester. Although the first two books, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* and *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera's Death*, are part of her larger project to reinscribe women's subjectivity into biblical texts, Mieke Bal maintains that this latest book is the first of the trilogy which is "primarily a women's study endeavor." She suggests that unlike the other two volumes "the primary audience consists of all who have a serious interest in the history of gender-relations" and "the lives of women."

Mieke Bal's analyses of the Book of Judges in *Death and Dissymmetry* are creative, carefully argued and researched, and brilliant. Her project is to retrieve women subjects from marginalization and repression in Judges. She employs various strategies to this end. Two of the most striking are naming the unnamed women who show up in brutalized, dismembered fragments, and deconstructing the book's narrative condensations. Narrative condensations are those places in the text where the multiplicity of a concept or phenomenon is collapsed into one word or concept in order to hide a reality even while displaying it, e.g., violence against women and its causes.

Mieke Bal suggests that Judges is more than a book about the establishment of monotheism in the Promised Land. She claims that it is the history of a struggle between two marriage practices, a power struggle between father and son for control of the bride. In her analysis of the narrative condensation in the book, of Judges, Mieke Bal exposes a patriarchal power play: turning the *real plurality* into the *ideal one*; or as she says, turning "flexible outer reality" into a reflection of the "fixed inner image."

Mieke Bal argues that in Judges, the father and son are conflated, the dispute between them is covered up. She argues that in the text's narration and subsequent translations and interpretations, paternal authority has been protected by concealing this evolution of patriarchal power. The change from one form of patriarchy to the next is covered up with one term "patriarchy" which makes it seem "eternal, without a history, thus unchangeable." Mieke Bal's lesson, that patriarchy is not eternal, is an important lesson to learn in order to plan feminist strategies which can eliminate particular patriarchal practices within particular historical contexts.

One of Mieke Bal's strategies is to name the nameless virgin, "Beth," and to recreate the meaning of virginity from her perspective. From this perspective she has knowledge of her body which is independent of man. She experiences the cycles of her body. She experiences the certainty, the authority, of her own body. As Mieke Bal says, she experiences *life phases* of her socio-bodily experience. She celebrates the knowledge of her body not within the patriarchal culture, not with a man, but in the wilderness with her sisters.

"Beth" has a completely different sense of time than man. Man is caught in a linear time, history as a series of singular events, lines of individual people and relationships. Her time is the time of her body, the time of her life.

What, then, is her memory? Mieke Bal suggests that the virgin is a virgin precisely because she has no memory. Man is allowed a memory, woman is not. Part of Mieke Bal's project is to reinsert woman as subject into the memory of man, into the traditional history. This reinsertion, it is hoped, will serve also as reclamation.

At this point I am worried that reinserting woman into an oppressive structure, although a start, is not enough. To place "Beth" back into a patriarchal structure as a subject who views herself differently than the patriarchy views her, does nothing to make that patriarchal context any less alien to her. She is still a "wandering rock."

To give "Beth" a memory, a history, is not enough if she is still possessed by man. I do not just mean that "Beth" is still a victim of the arbitrariness of patriarchal power. Rather, I mean that "Beth" is the victim of patriarchal notions of memory, history, and subject. I am worried that Mieke Bal too quickly imports categories from literary and cultural theory, "subject," "subjectivity," "memory," "past/future," without analyzing the ideologies out of which they come.

"Beth's" memory is not the chronological memory of biblical history. How can it be liberating to confine her within this chronology, a chronology in which she is eventually dismembered? "Beth's" time is not the time which proceeds chronologically from the past to future. Her time is moving with life cycles. Her body re-members. In her time the past recurs in the future. Her lament/celebration for the past is a lament/celebration for the future. Past/future are only separated by man's linear time which makes history one line which runs from origin to telos. This is not "Beth's" time.

"Beth's" time, however, is a threat to the unified notion of man's time. It is a threat to patriarchal authority. This authority unifies time in order to unify its power. The center of this power is memory. Perhaps this is why all of the murderesses in Judges go for the head. They go for man's head, his memory, with stones, stakes, and scissors.

I am also worried that Mieke Bal listens to the voices of these women in Judges with the ears of patriarchal literary theory. She asks who speaks? Where is the subject? Isn't she looking for the center of woman's authority as subject? Isn't she demanding that woman be fixed and unified, at least a name which provides the semiotic locus of action and meaning? Isn't she demanding of these women "subjects" the same kind of patriarchal authority which denies its own history? The "subject" too, after all, has a history.

In other words, in order to be a subject who can be reinserted into the history, one must be a certain kind of subject. One must be a unified subject who stands as the center of one's own authority. Within this structure a unified authority with a fixed locus stands in for a plural authority with shifting loci. There is, then, a condensation of "the subject" within Mieke Bal's own narrative.

In order to reclaim women from our use by men, we need to do more than reinsert ourselves into the oppressive power structure of man's knowledge, man's history, man's memory, man's authority. We need to do more than legitimate women as men.

Making women into subjects in history may be one step toward liberating us from the oppressive structure of that history. However, perhaps these first steps can provide the momentum for leaping out of the oppressive structure itself. Perhaps this is what Mieke Bal suggests when she claims that demonstrating that patriarchy has a changing history, a moving center of authority, is the first liberating step toward dissolving patriarchies' absolute authority.

Laura J. Bird (review date spring 1992)

SOURCE: Bird, Laura J. Review of *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*, by Mieke Bal. *Style* 26, no. 1 (spring 1992): 146-49.

[In the following review, Bird contrasts the English-language translation of *Lethal Love* with its original French version, suggesting that the translated work, though provocative, does not offer as full an analytical vision as the original.]

In the first sentence of her introduction to *Lethal Love*, Mieke Bal locates her work at the three-way intersection of literary theory, feminism, and narrative theory. In the second paragraph, she introduces her subject matter: five familiar biblical "love" stories, David and Bathsheba, Samson and Delilah, Ruth and Boaz, Judah and Tamar, and Adam and Eve. The priority of theory over content is therefore established from the outset. This volume is a revision of an earlier French version, *Femmes imaginaires* (1986), which ran twice as long and was much heavier with narratological theory. In the conclusion of that work, Bal ranges over the hermeneutical theorists of positivism—Pierce, Dilthey, Habermas, Adorno, Lacan, and others—bringing philosophical and critical sophistication "in the new Frankfurt style" to her reflections on feminism and ideology. Bal is currently Susan B. Anthony Professor of Women's Studies and Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Rochester and is eminently qualified to range freely across disciplinary and methodological boundaries.

The design of the English revision, however, was to cut down on theory and focus instead on the biblical stories themselves. Yet this book suffers from the common fate of revisions: its transformation was incomplete. Despite its best efforts, it remains controlled by the theoretical apparatus, so that many of its insights are buried within methodological subtleties.

Indeed, Bal's methodological program is so complex that it warrants a literal table of contents (9; Table 1), outlining five variables within each of five chapters. This table is quite helpful to the reader, who might otherwise mistake the volume's complex organization scheme for mere eclecticism. Each chapter views its biblical text through the lens of a different type of reception, such as literary theory, popular culture (children's Bibles), or even feminism. Bal asserts that underneath these disparate interpretations lies a shared patriarchal ideology that has systematically excluded or ignored details in the stories inconsistent with its values and assumptions. Bal's purpose is to highlight these omissions, thus restoring to the biblical stories

their full textual ambiguity. By calling attention to the multiple ambiguities of the texts, Bal aims to deconstruct their traditional patriarchal interpretations, but at the same time she asserts that modern narrative theory would deny the possibility of any privileged meaning, for the biblical texts themselves subvert attempts to impose univocal, unambiguous readings upon them.

The deconstruction of traditional, ideological interpretation clears a space for alternative voices and possibilities, especially feminist ones. As Bal states in her conclusion, "the point of literary analysis is that there is no truth. . . . And when the truth is absent, women can creep in" (132). Thus for Bal feminism aligned with narrative theory is not a new ideology, but a method that calls for the subversion of all ideologies.

But interpretation abhors a vacuum, and Bal at times violates her own ideologically free stance toward the texts and interprets the stories in a more ideologically feminist framework. What, for example, is the ideological status of the word "real" in the statement that the "connection between physical strength and sexual pleasure, and the violence involved in both . . . is Samson's real secret" (45; emphasis added)? Does not this usage imply an epistemologically privileged reading?

In an attempt to deny stable meaning, let alone "truth" to the texts, Bal submits them to a veritable torture chamber of theoretical apparatus. We get far too many passages like the following, ostensibly about Tamar and Judah:

If it is possible to define temporal figure as analepsis-on-paralepsis, there is no reason not to include the paralepsis within the analysis of order and to assume the possibility of the specification paralepsis-on-analepsis. It consists of the presentation of some information as an aside from the diegetical chronology, in order to fill in a previous gap. The sidestep is coming closer now. The status of the figure is even far more convincing than that of its counterpart. Because the figures of -lepsis are positively defined, it is clearer in its manifestation, and its analeptical character, which is its motivation in the theoretically necessary, diegetical past, is often explicitly indicated.

(94)

While the French version has the space to develop this terminology based on the work of Gerard Genette, the shorter English version does not. Because each of the five chapters employs a different hermeneutical framework and because the discussions of theory have been abridged in this revision, the reader never develops a sustained familiarity with any one theoretical approach. Each chapter is independent, and

although we are told that the sequence of chapters is "both important and random" (8), there is no apparent cumulative or developing argument from one chapter to the next.

The most important "love story" Bal chooses is the familiar Eden myth of Genesis, and here she claims that even recent feminist scholarship participates in the same patriarchal biases that it attacks. Both Phyllis Trible and "Paul" in 1 Timothy base their interpretations on what Bal calls a "retrospective fallacy": that is, "the projection of an accomplished and singular named character onto previous textual elements that lead to the construction of that character." This fallacy contributes to the creation of myths, which Bal defines as "narrativizations of ideologies" (108). The proper name "Eve" retrospectively signifies an assortment of figures who fallaciously appear as a developing character. But "Eve" is a mythological product of the story, not a stable character within it. "At the end of the story, the myth of Eve begins" (129). This deconstruction of the Eden myth makes an interesting addition to recent feminist scholarship and will no doubt take a place alongside the more familiar recent analyses of Elaine Pagels, Nehama Aschkenasy, and others.

The other three stories—Samson and Delilah, David and Bathsheba, and Ruth and Boaz—are interpreted in a more traditionally feminist vein as variations on the theme of patriarchal insecurity and fears of impotence and female sexuality, which Bal calls "the most underestimated mythical meaning of the Bible" (5). Bal's interpretation of the Ruth and Boaz story is especially interesting, since instead of focusing on Ruth's loyalty she takes her cue from the poetry of Victor Hugo and sees the story through Boaz's perspective. This is an important chapter in that art is used as an interpretive medium. The original French edition benefitted from illustrative plates, unfortunately omitted from the English edition.

The English title *Lethal Love* is explained in the afterword:

In all the love stories discussed, love is presented as lethal. . . . Love is not lethal, but there is a problem for some people who think it is: such a statement I have read in the stories, if statements there were at all. What went wrong in the history of the reception of these stories is precisely the repression of the problem.

(131)

Bal's style exemplifies the continental poststructuralist penchant for writing "under erasure," as Derrida called it, negating what one has previously apparently af-

firmed. But it is a style suited to Bal's purpose: to release "the repression of the problem" by reopening the problem. But the problem, once reopened, does not admit of solutions, which by their very nature would close the problem again, substituting a new interpretive ideology for an old one.

As narrative theory from a feminist perspective applied to biblical texts, *Lethal Love* makes a valuable and provocative contribution. In stressing patriarchal interpretation rather than patriarchal texts, it adds a whole new level of theoretical sophistication to feminist biblical criticism and accomplishes its aim of opening up the texts themselves to new and exciting hermeneutical possibilities. But its overreliance on critical apparatus and its difficult readability will limit its audience to professionals and graduate students of biblical criticism, feminism, and narrative theory, the same audience which had access to the fuller French version. We can regret that the English revision did not proceed far enough to widen its readership to the great segment of the general literate audience concerned with issues of gender and religion.

Other Works Cited

Aschkenasy, Nehama. *Eve's Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Literary Tradition*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1986.

Bal, Mieke. *Femmes imaginaires*. Utrecht: HES, 1986.

Pagels, Elaine. *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*. New York: Random, 1988.

Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978.

Griselda Pollock (review date September 1993)

SOURCE: Pollock, Griselda. Review of *Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition*, by Mieke Bal. *Art Bulletin* 75, no. 3 (September 1993): 529-35.

[In the following review, Pollock offers unqualified praise for Bal, applauding *Reading "Rembrandt"* for its sophistication, erudition, and readability.]

There are very few books that demand unqualified recommendation. Having studied this text [*Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition*], I can simply summarize my response as: you have to read this! Mieke Bal has produced one of the most important books of recent years and one that must surely become required reading for all art historians—be they undergraduates, graduates, or established

scholars seeking a text for study groups in art history as well as in comparative arts, cultural studies, and literary and semiotic theory. This is not to say that Bal's is an authoritative text; it does not supplant all others. And I am not suggesting that there is nothing to argue with or dispute in it. The grounds of potential disagreement are themselves, however, part of the value of the publication. While never claiming to be an "art history book"—a monographic study of the canonical master Rembrandt, an iconographic analysis of 17th-century Dutch biblical or history painting, or a cultural contextualization of either—this study addresses the central concerns of art historians at the moment: what do we do when we look at a visual image and, assuming it to have meaning, begin to interpret its signs?

Challenged by the intellectual revolutions, some might say upheavals, in the study of the humanities that have characterized the last few decades, art historians are currently aware of the need to be critically self-aware about their methods and purposes. They are at the same time skeptical of the wholesale importation of methodologies and systems that may or may not assist in dealing with the specificities of the visual arts. Taking the possibilities seriously, instead of being defensively xenophobic, does not imply any mere following of fashion, requiring us all to become "new" in some unspecified way. Bal's book is a serious attempt to struggle with the issues raised by both traditional art-historical methods and developments in narratology and semiotics, fields to which the author has made major theoretical contributions in her previous publications. As a "visitor" to the field of art history, she provides an interesting picture of that discipline's strategies and practices—dealing with each seriously and often offering important new insights about their operation. Indeed, the major impression of Bal that one derives from reading this book is of her fairness based on an open desire to argue all cases, to assess all claims, and to avoid any simple replacements or inversions. She wants to show how productive the tensions between methods and interpretation strategies can be if we allow them to remain in tension—as she argues the actual process of meaning production in the image itself often may be. Thus Bal writes on "iconography" in one of the most interesting chapters of the book:

I shall discuss iconography as a useful yet limited code, a code which like all others can be used to ward off threatening interpretations, to fit the works into a reassuring tradition, but which can also be taken beyond its most obvious use to yield a powerful critical reading. Iconography is both a vulnerable and a productive central dogma in art history as a traditional discipline. It is in the name of iconography that some art historians