

played a vital (if unsung) part in settling the frontier. One notes, however, the presence of a token woman's voice: Sandra Djwa responded brilliantly to Robert Kroetsch's imaginative paper, "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction: An Erotics of Space".

*Frontiers* is a fine collection of stimulating papers and should achieve Harrison's aim: to provide a useful starting point for the comparative study of Canadian and American Western literature.

Marjorie Body

3196 Blewett, David. *Defoe's Art of Fiction: Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack and Roxana*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979. 175p. index. \$17.50. ISBN 0-8020-5447-1.

David Blewett's short, lucid and elegant study is the latest pamphlet in the twentieth-century critical debate on whether Daniel Defoe was a literary artist *malgré lui*, who stumbled into the writing of great fiction, or a conscious literary artist, the form of whose fictions was a deliberate artistic expression of a moral vision. Blewett's previously published articles in *English Studies in Canada* and *The Modern Language Review* revealed his position that Defoe, although limited in range, developed into a conscious artist in whom technique and vision successfully came together. The book under review confirms and amplifies this critical stance.

Critical attention in the study is directed almost exclusively to the four major novels written in a five-year span—*Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack* (both 1722) and *Roxana* (1724). In his final chapter Blewett elaborates on the themes, metaphors and techniques which he finds common to these four fictions, a prominent example being the theme of the struggle of the erring individual against an indifferent and often hostile society. In *Robinson Crusoe*, Blewett asserts, this common theme is worked out by a contrast between Crusoe's life, symbolically alone, on the island and the extensive background of his other life in the world of men. He stresses that *Robinson Crusoe*, which he believes shows qualified optimism about mankind, is atypical, both in Defoe's own development and in the later development of the English novel, in that it works

near the level of myth and allegory. *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack*, on the other hand, are documentary social novels, taking a darker view of the nature of man, and using large-scale metaphors for human life to embody Defoe's gloomy and realistic vision. In *Moll Flanders*, the metaphors of life as a play and life as a cheat are central. *Colonel Jack* is seen as a male version of Moll's story, and both fictions are presented by Defoe to the reader as exemplary histories of wicked lives repented. Blewett picks up from earlier critics the thesis that "gentility" is a leading motif or theme in *Colonel Jack*, and ingeniously develops this as only one example in the novel of the ambiguities inherent in identity and disguise, illusion and reality. Despite his skill and authority in critical argument, Blewett failed to convince this reader that *Colonel Jack*, by far the weakest of the four novels, has either the artistry or the structural and thematic coherence of either *Robinson Crusoe* or *Moll Flanders*.

Blewett reserves his most extensive analysis and greatest praise for Defoe's darkest novel, *Roxana*. In *Roxana*, he inevitably finds themes and approaches to humanity which are common to this novel and the three earlier ones, such as the vanity of physical appearance and external beauty, the debates on marriage, or the complex relationships between parent and child. *Roxana* displays, in addition to these and other common themes, a deeper and more sombre understanding of the need for social order. Defoe's attacks on public masquerades and dissolute court life, and his incisive commentaries on the master (or mistress) and servant relationship, exhibit his powerful and gloomy view of the moral decline of his age, and the clamant need for a renewed social and moral order. As Blewett puts it: "Defoe's darkening vision of the human lot finds expression as tragedy."

A short review of this kind cannot convey the skill with which Blewett demonstrates Defoe's literary powers. He is especially good on Defoe's skill in making the language of the novels reflect the pattern of life's cheats and frauds. Also noteworthy is the scholarship by which Blewett enlarges the deliberately narrow focus of his study of the four novels by using Defoe's nonfictional writings of the same period to underline and strengthen his critical insights. All serious students of Defoe should read this civilized

and erudite exercise in literary criticism.

Robert Hay Carnie

3197 Franklin, Ursula. **The Rhetoric of Valéry's Prose "Aubades"**. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979. 158p. biblio. index. \$15.00. ISBN 0-8020-5427-7.

Among the benefits literary scholarship derives from the new criticism are not only the insights it offers into well-known works, but also the validation it gives to those that are lesser-known. In the process, long-held opinions tend to be modified. Re-examination of works in the classical repertory is, with greater frequency, giving way to a re-evaluation, and indeed a *revalorisation* of others either of lesser magnitude or long considered to be of secondary importance. Not surprisingly, these "secondary" pieces, properly studied, are often found to contain seminal ideas which throw light on the entire work of a given author and, even more important, generate debate which may help to bring out the deeper meaning of his/her output. Ursula Franklin's books on Valéry's rhetoric in the prose poetic fragments is a good example of this type of evaluation.

Valéry's prose *aubades* are seldom or never featured in popular anthologies of French poetry and remain, for the most part, the prerogative of specialists, or graduate students sensitive or daring enough to select the field of Symbolist poetry for investigation. The elucidation here proposed by Professor Franklin will be of particular interest to both groups.

The author sets out to draw proper attention to Valéry's prose poems and to examine his techniques. In attempting to achieve this aim, she clearly demonstrates the influences exerted on the young poet by his contemporaries, especially by Mallarmé, and the interplay of the underlying themes of dawn and rebirth peculiar to the *aubades*. The close reading of the text is enriched by frequent references to recurring motifs in Valéry's *oeuvre*, with which Franklin shows an undeniable familiarity. These motifs are shown to be not mere links but expressions of a unique poetic inspiration. Though Franklin's treatment of the *aubades* is mainly explicatory, her study raises many interesting questions about the poet's philosophy of art, and answers them convincingly. Her interpretation

broadens the focus on Valéry's prose poetry. Indirectly, Franklin evaluates the bases of the poet's genius and the factors which brought distinction to his work, making it, in the eyes of many critics, the culmination of Symbolist poetry.

Of special interest is the phenomenon of the mobile fragment which, far from denoting bankruptcy of inspiration, emerges as a factor marking the work of Valéry with a refreshing dynamism, not unlike that of an architectural masterpiece.

Franklin's analysis is appropriately synthesized in her conclusion which shows the same sensitivity that pervades the entire book. She probes Valéry's mind, explores his vision of the metaphysical forces which interact in his universe and convincingly argues for the serious study of the Valéryan fragment. Her response to the sounds and images, often subjective (and inevitably so in explications of this type), should not lessen the usefulness of her study. Investigators in this field should also find interesting the rapprochement she makes between Valéry's techniques and those used in the *nouveau roman*.

Leonard Adams

3198 Thomas, W. Keith. **The Crafting of "Absalom and Achitophel": Dryden's "Pen for a Party"**. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1978. 239p. appendix. index. \$7.50 ISBN 0-88920-059-9.

"Absalom and Achitophel" is one of the most brilliant political poems in English, but for many readers the brilliance is obscured by the political occasion. Few of us know more than the vague outlines of the Exclusion Crisis of 1680-81, and most of us would normally sympathize with parliament's desire to govern rather than with Charles II's desire to retain the throne for his politically inept brother. Yet appreciation of Dryden's poem requires both detailed knowledge of the events of these years and imaginative sympathy with Dryden's royalist position. This book provides the facts necessary for understanding the poem and shows how subtle and persuasive Dryden was in his artistic shaping of those facts in order to win the reader's support.

Dr. Thomas places the poem not only in the context of the political events of 1680-81,