landscape. He develops an original frame of reference and carefully applies it to a wide range of work in the field, thereby bringing much needed order and unity to a large and disparate body of material. In doing so he performs a valuable service for the profession and for anyone interested in landscape. However, upon closer analysis it becomes clear that his framework, although important and valuable, is primarily a format for presenting and reviewing the diverse work in the area. In certain ways it does not provide everything that is required of a comprehensive theoretical approach to the study and the appreciation of landscape. This is in part because of Bourassa's understanding of the nature of theory. Steeped as he is in the empirical research, his conception of a comprehensive theoretical approach seems to be that of a complete scientific explanation of human landscape response. What he seems not to fully appreciate is that such an explanatory account, even when essentially complete and correct, may be neutral concerning major issues in the field.

The upshot is that some of the positions Bourassa defends, although in my opinion quite correct, are perhaps not as completely justified by his theoretical framework as he seems to think. For example, Bourassa rightly criticizes certain landscape evaluation models for being uninformed by theoretical considerations and for depending too heavily on formal qualities, noting that if such a quality, "cannot be justified by some type of habitat theory, then its inclusion in an evaluation model is suspect" (p. 122). However, the habitat theory Bourassa endorses simply attempts to explain human landscape preferences on a biological basis, and consequently even if a preference for a particular formal quality were so *explained,* it is at least not obvious that this would *justify* it for inclusion in an evaluation model—or in any other way for that matter. In a similar fashion, some of Bourassa's other positions, such as landscape criticism and critical regionalism, although again seemingly correct, are perhaps not so much justified by his essentially explanatory framework as they are simply consistent with a number of factors, such as the importance of familiarity and expertise, which Bourassa, in a somewhat eclectic rather than in a strictly theory-driven manner, has selected from the research he has reviewed and quite reasonably identified as significant.

The issue of the justificatory power of an explanatory account, however, is a complex matter, and even were it not, a failure to fully appreciate the limitations of the latter with respect to the former is insignificant in light of this volume's many strong points. First, as suggested, the positions defended seem correct. This is perhaps because even though they may not be completely justified by a comprehensive theory, they are yet obviously based on the sensitive and intelligent judgments of a broadly trained and well-informed critic of the field. Thus, the volume itself, in demonstrating the important role of such a critic, lends support to a view similar to one of the positions defended within the volume. Second, as also indicated, the scope of the volume is impressive. It presents and reviews a large proportion of the relevant research and this together with its attention to different kinds of empirical approaches makes it not only an important contribution to the field, but also a valuable introduction for those either unacquainted with the area or acquainted only with its conceptual side. Third, it should be noted that the illustrations and examples throughout the volume are not only excellent, they are by and large Australian, and thus, in addition to admirably performing their usual function, they also constitute for the typical North American reader a fresh and newly informative set of cases.

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HARRISON, BERNARD. *Inconvenient Fictions: Literature and the Limits of Theory.* Yale University Press, 1991, 293 pp., $35.00 cloth.

Harrison's central project in this impressive book is to delineate "a critical outlook which, while in a broad sense humanistic in character, could quite happily take on board the central insights of deconstruction" (p. 6). The book proceeds on two levels. Five of its ten chapters are chiefly concerned with the elaboration and defence of Harrison's theoretical argument. The remaining five chapters are primarily "critical"; in these the considerable subtlety and force of Harrison's theoretical position is brought out in a series of close readings of Lawrence Sterne, E.M. Forster, Muriel Spark, Jane Austen, the Book of Job, and the parables of the Great Feast, the Good Employer and the Prodigal Son. Each of the chapters may be read as an independent essay (indeed, eight of them, including all the critical chapters, have been previously published as such); together they constitute a rich and important contribution to the discussion of how, if at all, narrative fiction can relate us to or help us understand reality.

Harrison begins the theoretical part of the book by arguing that critical humanism (crudely, the view that literary fictions may afford us knowledge, that they may have something to tell us about "real life") has traditionally been founded upon one or another version of logocentrism. His main example here is Wimsatt's essay "The Concrete Universal"; he deftly shows that Wimsatt's account of the capacity of a text to refer beyond itself depends on a quasi-scientific

notion of objectivity of criticism, which itself depends ultimately on a logocentric and untenable conception of meaning as essentially extra-linguistic. The difficulties that Harrison finds in Wimsatt's article are, he suggests, characteristic of critical humanism; they stem from the fact that "under the spell of the Positivist picture of how a language ... serves the principles of cognition, literary humanists from generation to generation have tried repeatedly and vainly to assimilate fictional narrative or poetry, somehow or other, to the model of scientific discourse, to show that it is, in some strained sense or other, 'referential,' in some strained sense or other 'true' " (p. 51).

While Harrison is sympathetic to and indeed an extremely able practitioner of deconstructionist undermining of the logocentric foundations of traditional critical humanism, he is critical of a good deal of contemporary deconstructionist orthodoxy, much of which, he argues, rests on deep misunderstandings of Derrida's work. While the success of the deconstructionist attack on logocentrism is often thought to mean the end for critical humanism, Harrison uses Derrida's writings to support his claim that the true opposition to critical humanism lies not in the anti-logocentric practices of deconstruction, but rather in a variety of theses that are commonly but, Harrison argues, mistakenly thought to follow from those practices. Particularly pernicious, he argues, are formalism, construed as the view that "the meanings carried by the significant elements of texts derive wholly from relationships linking those elements to other significant elements of (the same or different) texts, and not at all from relationships linking significant elements of texts to anything which is not an element of a text" (p. 29), and "textual solipsism," expressed in such claims as that no text has a determinate meaning, that the task of the critic is not to explain or elucidate texts but to elaborate them, that texts are about nothing but themselves and other texts.

In response to claims of this sort, Harrison argues that "the rage to interpret" itself suggests that "we are very far from taking fictional narratives to be mere stories, pipe-dreams without power to challenge our sense of how life itself is organized into structures of possibilities" (p. 252). Understanding a text, he argues, cannot be merely a matter of free invention and creative interpretation, a matter of attempting to "process the text into coherence" with one or another preferred paraphrase; it may rather be a matter of investigating the points at which a text *resists* creative interpretation or "processing." If there are no constraints upon interpretation which do not vary from interpreter to interpreter, if there is no distinction between reading and "reading-in," he argues, then the notions of "text" and "interpretation" become empty; for in the absence of such constraints there is no way of distinguishing a text (or a language) from a random series of marks or sounds. Formalism and textual solipsism, Harrison argues, are themselves logocentric and hence ultimately self-deconstructive.

Harrison's suggestion, then, is that critical humanism can be "rebuilt" as an anti-formalist but non-logocentric thesis, since there are ways of conceiving the relationships between texts and the extra-textual, of holding that there *are* such relationships, which (unlike Wimsatt's conception, for example) are not logocentric. The possibility of a text's having something to tell us about something other than texts, the possibility of a coherent version of critical humanism, that is, does not depend on the truth of logocentric claims about meaning.

How then does the non-logocentric version of critical humanism understand the relationship between literary works of fiction and the real world? How, on Harrison's view, does narrative fiction "relate us to Reality"? Not by referring to it or by representing it or by offering us general or particular truths about it; Harrison goes so far as to suggest that "the notions of reference and truth have no coherent application to literature" (p. 47). His suggestion here is that we should understand the language of narrative fiction as what Merleau-Ponty calls "constitutive language," language which by setting our familiar ways of talking against alternative and unfamiliar ways shows us the former "as arbitrary in the Saussurian sense; ... as constituting a language which is not logocentrically controlled by necessities of conceptual organization originating in the world it describes ... but which rests upon ways of construing the world linguistically which could in principle give place to other, though equally provisional, ways of construing the same world linguistically" (p. 50). Constitutive language, the language of serious narrative fiction, relates us to reality by showing us the limits and limitations of our conceptual schemata. Harrison shows how the opening scene of *Lear* thus forces us to reassess our conventional assumptions about the nature of duty; and how in attempting to make sense, to see the point, of the parables of the Great Feast, the Good Employer and the Prodigal Son, we are forced to rethink our familiar ways of conceiving of human worth. Far from merely *illustrating* certain Christian moral concepts, these narratives *construct* them; rather than simply supporting candidates for general or transcendent truths, such as "one ought to love one's neighbor," these narratives force us, and help us, to rethink just what we mean by "neighbor."

What makes fictions often inconvenient, and sometimes downright dangerous, then, is that an important part of their function is to put under stress what Harrison calls our "structural fore-understandings," our preconceptions about the scope and limits of natural possibility. The knowledge that serious fiction offers us is "dangerous knowledge," knowledge that

requires us to adopt unfamiliar perspectives and challenges ways of thinking in which we may have a great deal invested. As Harrison writes, "Our structural fore-understandings make us what we are. ... We cannot surrender them without undergoing the pains of insecurity, loss and amputation, that personal change entails" (p. 251). And yet surrender them is just what serious fiction, if we take it seriously, often forces us to do.

With its blend of philosophy and criticism, *Inconvenient Fictions* invites comparison with the work of Eldridge, Nussbaum and Cavell, and it stands the comparison well. It is a rich and challenging book, distinctively and stylishly written. (My favorite sentence comes in Harrison's dismissal of a particularly unconvincing explanation of the profundity and resonance of the parables of Jesus: "Such talk," he says, "butters few literary critical, or for that matter epistemological parsnips.") Harrison has given us an important and original contribution to a debate which will be the better for it.

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ERENS, PATRICIA, ed. *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism.* Indiana University Press, 1990, xxvi + 450 pp., 1 b&w illus., $27.50 cloth.

Issues in Feminist Film Criticism is an anthology of twenty-seven articles originally published elsewhere, primarily in film journals, from roughly 1978 to 1988. Erens has grouped the articles into four sections and provided a broad general introduction as well as overviews of each section. The book includes a useful glossary and a detailed fourteen-page bibliography.

Erens's section one, "Critical Methodology: Women and Representation," traces developments in the dominant psychoanalytic approach to feminist film theory. The tradition was launched by Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), an article heavily freighted with a Freudian vocabulary of voyeurism, scopophilia, fetishism, and castration anxiety: "the female image as a castration threat constantly endangers the unity of the diegesis and bursts through the world of illusion as an intrusive, static, one-dimensional fetish" (p. 39). While seeking to go beyond Mulvey's straitjacketed association between spectatorship and male pleasure, Mary Ann Doane, in "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator" (1982), retains some puzzling psychoanalytic jargon, e.g., about the woman viewer being "haunted by the loss of a loss" (p. 46). She also issues blanket assertions about the female spectator's desire being "inscribed in narcissism" (p. 45), or the male spectator as "destined to be a fetishist" (p. 47). The psychoanalytic approach is further refined by Tania Modleski, who argues that Hitchcock's films exhibit ambivalence about femininity, problematize male spectatorship, and allow the female viewer a different response than masochism. The strongest article in section one, Jane Gaines's "Women and Representation: Can We Enjoy Alternative Pleasure?" (1988), places the preceding authors' work under review and summarizes weaknesses in the psychoanalytic approach, in particular the fact that it "poses a subject that is undifferentiated by either social class or history" (p. 79).

Section two, "Rereading Hollywood Films," includes contrasting interpretations of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Stella Dallas,* as well as readings of several other films. Lucie Arbuthnot's and Gail Seneca's "resistant reading" of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* argues that the two man-chasing sex bombs played by Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell "cherish deeply their connections with each other" (p. 113). They are comfortable with their bodies and their sexuality, and they forcefully return the male gaze. All this is in sharp contrast with Maureen Turin's characterization, in "Gentlemen Consume Blondes," of the film as "racist, sexist, imperialist, consumerist" (p. 107). Though I am sympathetic with Arbuthnot's and Seneca's attempt to "chronicle our search to understand our pleasure" in this film, things seem to have gone too far when they label Gentlemen "a profoundly feminist text" (p. 123)!

In another debate in Section two, E. Ann Kaplan interprets *Stella Dallas* as teaching us "what it takes to be a Mother in patriarchy" (p. 132), and as punishing its heroine for violating this conception. By contrast, Linda Williams offers a more complex and subtle reading of the film's "variety of subject positions." The fact that women viewers can identify at once with Stella Dallas, her daughter, and her rival Mrs. Morrison shows there are "contradictions that animate women's very active and fragmented ways of seeing" (p. 157).

In "Illicit Pleasures: Female Spectators and *Personal Best,*" Elizabeth Ellsworth analyzes reviews and pressbook prereadings of this film, showing how the mainstream press played down, while feminist, especially lesbian, reviewers played up or even rewrote, the film's lesbian themes. Ellsworth's approach is significant because, instead of studying the film text in a vacuum, she discusses how "material practices ... develop interpretive strategies" (p. 184). Jane Gaines's contribution to this section is again a strong one. In "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory" she constructs a detailed reading of the Diana Ross star vehicle *Mahogany* (1975), demonstrating that a