the unhappy tendency of the Romantics to "cannibalize" the "women" they imagine but also the very contradictions in this tendency, contradictions Hoeveler uncovers but does not theorize adequately.

By way of explaining her belated focus on "images of women" in Romantic poetry, Hoeveler claims that her study both accomplishes this "preliminary" and heretofore neglected feminist inquiry into the Romantics and inflects it with more recent feminist methodologies—bringing psychoanalytic theory, cultural ideology, and history to bear. And there is no question that here both impulses advance our understanding of Romantic representations of androgyny. Yet to the extent that the insights afforded by the latter approach are subsumed in the umbrella argument that Romantic "images of women" are distortions, effacements, and appropriations of "real women," Hoeveler allows potentially subversive contradictions to coexist too peacefully in their common demonstration of male power to distort "women." In so doing, she may unwittingly reproduce the very dynamic she usefully illuminates in the Romantic poets—the investment in an ideal (for she refers to a "literally real androgynous union" that the poets' "fictions" always renounce) that may reify as it seeks to dispel stereotypes of gender.

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Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990. Pp. xii + 258. $24.95.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's second book is a sequel, chronologically and conceptually, to *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985). The earlier work was on balance very favorably reviewed as a ground-breaking study that provided not only a new theory, but a new vocabulary for the discussion of male-male relationships in literature. She acknowledged a debt and an allegiance to radical feminism and recent Marxist theory; she discussed "male homosocial desire" for the most part obliquely, with woman as intermediary in triangular relationships; and, except for a coda on the reception of Whitman by British homosexuals, she went only from Shakespeare's sonnets to the mid-Victorian novel—concluding, therefore, in a period *before* (according to Foucault and the "social constructionists") male "homosexuality," as an identity-forming and exclusive sexual orientation, was invented by sexologists.

Epistemology of the Closet takes off from that point: the Marxism remains only insofar as Sedgwick's analysis is still to some degree historical; the radical feminism remains only in that feminist criticism provides a model for "less advanced" gay male theory; and the works discussed begin with Melville and Wilde. Sedgwick is aware—and not without some justification—that her focus on gay male relationships leaves her vulnerable to friendly fire from the male community, and at the close of her lengthy introduction she profers, almost diffidently, her credentials as a minority critic: she is a woman, true, but she is "fat" and "nonprocreative"—and, "under several discursive regimes," she is a "Jew" and a "sexual pervert" (pp. 62–63). Later she acknowledges an inclination toward the sentimental and country-and-western music. Such insouciant self-exposure is by turns unnerving, and disarming: one thinks of Roman consuls up for election baring their battle-scars for public approbation. In the end, however, it seems to me supererogatory: her polemic zeal and the subtlety and cogency of her analyses are their own best defense.

On another front, however, she seems more vulnerable: she maintains that she has "tried to be as clear as I can [be] . . . but even aside from the intrinsic difficulty of [the book's] subject and texts, it seems inevitable that the style of its writing will not conform to everyone's ideal of the pellucid" (p. 18). Unpellucid it certainly is—but I fail to see the inevitability. For the most part she writes in an uncompromising dialect of theory-speak, full of jargon, barbarous neologisms ("preterit" as a verb, for example), and relentless abstraction, lit up only occasionally by metaphor, frequently mixed—as when a term "functions here as a switchpoint for the cyclonic epistemological undertows that encompass power in general" (p. 7). And more's the pity. It is hard to believe that Sedgwick's work, unlike that of Kate Millett twenty years ago, will have much impact beyond her dialect community, or beyond others of the converted who will take the trouble to decipher her codes. And she *intends* a polemic: "the only imperative that [this] book means to treat as categorical is the very broad one of pursuing an antihomophobic inquiry" (p. 14).

In pursuit of this end, in a lengthy introduction and first chapter she lays out her terms. She includes a judicious discussion, for instance, of what has become the most contentious issue in gay studies: the dispute between "essentialists" and "social constructionists"—loosely, between those who believe that homosexual persons, like the poor, we have always had with us, and those who believe that homosexuality, "as we know it today," was a (medical) invention of the late nineteenth century. On the whole, she allies herself with the constructionists, and pays the now *de rigeur* obeisance to Foucault, and yet she is not a dogmatist:

she points to the intellectual and partisan advantages of each approach, and also points out that the constructionists' "as-we-know-it-today" implies that we now have a clear understanding of what homosexuality *is*—a consensus that her discussion goes a long way toward deconstructing. Her remaining chapters include much wide-ranging discussion, but they focus on *Billy Budd*, on Wilde and Nietzsche, on James's "The Beast in the Jungle," and on Proust. No one can fail to learn a great deal from her exemplary analyses—and it seems to me that for the most part her shortcomings arise from her polemic purposes.

Her chapter on *Billy Budd* is perhaps least original, and yet her ingenious and persuasive analysis of the psyche of Vere, as the truly sinister and "closeted" villain of the story, seems to me to go well beyond her precursors. She closes the chapter, however, with an apocalyptic vision of the "end of homosexuality" (in "gay genocide" and/or AIDS) that seems only tenuously connected with what has gone before, and that seriously misfires on some targets. To Gibbon, for instance, without demur she attributes the canard that the fall of Rome was due to the rise of homosexuality (p. 128); on the contrary, one could make a better case for saying that for the subtle and ironic Gibbon the fall could be attributed to the rise of Christianity.

Her unlikely pairing of Wilde and Nietzsche, however, provides in some ways the most daring and most enlightening of her chapters, especially in its discussion of the "sentimental relations of the male body." She begins by conceding the frequent charge that "Reading Gaol" and *De Profundis* are in some sense sentimental, and then proceeds to a brilliant and devastating deconstructive analysis of the concept of sentimentality, pointing out along the way that Nietzsche's macho sentimentality—only the tears of the strong, of *Uebermenschen*, are worthy of respect—has far more sinister consequences than the compassionate sentimentality of Wilde. Nietzsche has become such a totem of modern criticism that it is somehow satisfying to see him taking a few hits, even if in the end she pulls her punches and concedes that his ironies may perhaps elude her. She also discusses at length Wilde's and Nietzsche's idealization of the Greeks at the expense of Christianity: she does not say so, but both were aesthetes, and their aestheticisms, however disparate, were grounded in philhellenism. Here, however, once more her polemic zeal carries her astray. "The assumption . . . that the main impact of Christianity on men's desire for the male body . . . is prohibitive," she writes, "is not true" (p. 140)—and both Wilde and Nietzsche "know" it. Because of celibate orders of men in feminine clothes, among other things—and because of the "fetish" of naked crucifixes. "Does the Pope wear a dress?" she asks (p. 52): a cheap shot, surely, but more

important, it confuses issues that elsewhere she labors to keep distinct. Male bodies are not made more "desirable" in dresses; in the long tradition of misogyny in the church it is plain that it is primarily the *female* body that is "prohibited"; priests wear cassocks for the same reason that nuns wear habits: to conceal the body, and to elevate it to the status of symbol. Naked crucifixes—appearing for the first time only about the tenth century—obviously originated not in a desire to make the male body erotic, but to make the suffering more immediate and obvious.

It is in her discussion of the topic of narcissism and homosexuality, of what she calls the "linkage" (and "slippage") between "desire" and "identification," however, that it seems to me that she goes more seriously astray. She opens with a disclaimer: "I do not believe that identification and desire are more closely linked in same-sex than in cross-sex relationships" (p. 159; in her "anti-homophobic" stance she is clearly aware that the Freudian association of narcissism with homosexuality has long been a sore point indeed among gay critics). Nevertheless, she lays stress on the "process" by which "a man's love of *other* become[s] a love of the *same*" (her italics). This process "is graphic in *Dorian Gray*" in the manner in which the love of Basil Hallward and Lord Henry for Dorian is eclipsed by the "bond of figural likeness . . . between Dorian Gray and his own portrait" (p. 160). This seems to me to distort not only this novel, but a far more general issue of the period: Billy Budd, Dorian Gray, Alfred Douglas—and Tadzio in *Death in Venice*—are all Narcissus, or are figured as such by their admirers, but they are not lovers, in story or in life, nor do their lovers in any way "identify" themselves with them. *Pace* Freud, the issue becomes one not of "identification," of the desire of homosexual lovers for themselves or for their likenesses, but of their desire for Narcissus. Perhaps because of envy of the narcissist's seeming self-sufficiency (Socrates implies as much at one point in the *Symposium*), but more, I suspect, because the homosexual lover knows that such love will not be returned, because consciously or unconsciously, in his internalized homophobia, he needs to draw down on himself the punishment he so richly "deserves." In a word, he needs to see himself as St. Sebastian, as Wilde does in *De Profundis*, and as von Aschenbach does even *before* he has encountered Tadzio. In "Reading Gaol" and *De Profundis* it is not simply the sentimentality, or even the self-pity, that ultimately disturbs, but this seeking out of punishment, this evident masochism—which, one should note, disturbs also Wilde. Both works are redeemed, it seems to me, only in the heroic effort that Wilde makes to find some meaning and value, aesthetic *and* moral, in this suffering, a value the very possibility of which he had heretofore so assiduously denied.

The essay on Henry James titled "The Beast in the Closet" has been

familiar (and notorious) since its appearance in 1984. It is the earliest of the essays in *Epistemology*, and extends Sedgwick's discussion of "homosexual panic" (a major theme of *Between Men*) into the twentieth century. It also obviously provided the opening for her brilliant deconstructive analysis of the concept of the "closet," a concept that she proves to be central not only to the matter of homo- and heterosexual definition, but also applicable to a wide range of definitional discourse in this century. It is perhaps some measure of the subtlety of her analysis (and of the complexity of her prose?), however, that this essay has often been taken simply to imply that John Marcher is a (self-conscious) resident of a homosexual closet, whereas Sedgwick's more subtle point is rather that Marcher is to the end quite unconscious of the contents of his closet—as May Bartram is not.

Her last chapter extends her discussion well into the twentieth century, to Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Once more she concedes the "gay-affirmative" criticism that the lengthy preamble to *The Cities of the Plain*—in which the narrator maintains that gay love is inevitably tragic, with gay males falling only for straights (surely a parallel to the theme of gay males loving narcissists?), and the subsequent pathetic portrait of the aging Charlus—is "sentimental and reductive" (p. 216). She then proceeds, however, to demonstrate quite persuasively that Proust's subsequent narrative seems to deconstruct these negative sentiments. Charlus, for instance, in spite of or even in part because of his "glass" closet, becomes something of a hero, and the relationship between Charlus and Jupien is the only one in the novel that really endures!

I hope that readers will not be so put off by the opacity of Sedgwick's prose as to neglect her serious, innovative, and quite compelling argument. If her cocky combativeness does not invite dissent, it nevertheless stimulates it; and behind her polemic front there is a great deal of both mordant and engaging wit, and graciously reflexive irony.

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H. DANIEL PECK, *Thoreau's Morning Work: Memory and Perception in "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," the Journal, and "Walden."* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. Pp. xiv + 194. $22.50.

As its subtitle indicates, *Thoreau's Morning Work* is a study of what are commonly viewed as Thoreau's three most im-