
Abstracts

Alan Nadel, *God's Law and the Wide Screen: The Ten Commandments as Cold War "Epic"* 415

Cecil B. deMille's *Ten Commandments* can be read as a major product of American cold war ideology, highlighting and localizing the foci of America's political, theological, and economic conflicts. The apparatus of wide-screen technology resolves these conflicts visually by mediating a series of gazes in an economy that equates God's perspective with American interests during the cold war and those interests with the rigidity of gender roles, the commodification of women, the representation of "true" Jews as proto-Christians, and the reclamation of the Middle East as legitimately within the American (Christian) sphere of influence. In making "truth" and "freedom" contingent on Christian doctrine, deMille distinguishes himself from the filmmakers investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee, and, as the son of a would-be minister turned playwright, he also redeems himself for being a maker of false images by suggesting that the supplementary status of film can allow the true representation of God's Word. (AN)

Rachel Feldhay Brenner, *In Search of Identity: The Israeli Arab Artist in Anton Shammas's Arabesques* 431

The autobiographical novel *Arabesques* presents a complex double self-portrayal of an Israeli Arab as an artist. The narrator's gravitation toward the cultural center conflicts with his loyalty to his ethnic periphery. His search for identity as a minority writer intertwines with his search for identity as an individual. The tension of the unresolved identity split emerges in the work's fragmented structure and inconsistent story line. I argue that the centrality of Hebrew in *Arabesques* communicates the possibility of overcoming the split. Such reconciliation requires that instability and pluralism be accepted as forces that shape the lives of individuals and of nations. The use of Hebrew explodes both the cultural stagnation of the minority and the intransigence of the majority. The hybridization of language and lore destabilizes the definition of nationalism, bringing, for both the dominating and the dominated, the hope of cultural revitalization and of ideological rapprochement. (RFB)

Sharon Davie, *Free Mules, Talking Buzzards, and Cracked Plates: The Politics of Dislocation in Their Eyes Were Watching God* 446

Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, considered apolitical by some readers, is profoundly political in its repeated undermining of hierarchy as an unquestioned mode of perception. Three formal devices in the text highlight this undermining: the free mule story and its chain of associations, the buzzard tale that moves from the inside to the outside of the free mule story, and the novel's pervasive physical imagery. Language that forces readers to juggle multiple and contradictory meanings intertwines with an acknowledgment of physicality—human sexuality, human death—in a powerful display of the limits of rational truth telling. Rooted in African American women's history, the novel confronts the complexities of racism and sexism while undercutting a belief in any monological understanding of person or politics, text or nation. (SD)

Renata R. Mautner Wasserman, *Mario Vargas Llosa, Euclides da Cunha, and the Strategy of Intertextuality* 460

When revisiting Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões* with *La guerra del fin del mundo*, Mario Vargas Llosa constructs an intertextual sequence analogous to that constituted by literary and other texts within European culture, the sphere against which Latin American writings are usually measured. As the two books examine a complex

historical event, they consider the composition, physical environment, and history of South American populations, attempting to define a characteristically Latin American culture and to question the relevance of European explanatory schemes for such a definition. The relation between the two texts suggests that intertextuality can be a tool in the service of shaping a national—or continental—consciousness. (RRMW)

Jean Wyatt, Giving Body to the Word: The Maternal Symbolic in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* 474

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison expresses the dislocations and violence of slavery through disruptions in language. The novel tells the “unspeakable” story of Sethe, a slave mother whose act of infanticide leaves a gap in family narrative; bars her surviving daughter, Denver, from language use; and hinders her own ability to speak. Morrison’s inclusion of voices previously left out of historical and literary narratives disturbs the language of the novel itself. The Africans piled on the slave ships, the preverbal child who comes back in the shape of the ghost *Beloved*, and a nursing mother who insists on the primacy of bodily connection: the expression of these subjects’ heretofore unspoken experiences and desires distorts discursive structures, especially the demarcations that support normative language. Morrison’s textual practice challenges Lacan’s assumptions about language and language users, and her depiction of a social order that performs some of the functions of mothering challenges his vision of a paternal symbolic order based on a repudiation of maternal connection. (JW)

Richard T. Gray, The Dialectic of “Enscenment”: Patrick Süskind's *Das Parfum* as Critical History of Enlightenment Culture 489

Patrick Süskind’s best-selling novel *Das Parfum* applies the postmodern literary practice of pastiche and playful allusion to pursue a critical purpose: an adumbration of the destructive logic that underpins the instrumental reason of Enlightenment culture. Süskind’s critique is informed by ideas put forward by Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and by the sociohistorical methodology of the *Annales* historiographers. In the fictive history of Grenouille, the monstrous master perfumer who murders young women to capture and exploit their aromatic “essences,” Süskind depicts the will to power and overpowering fundamental to enlightened reason. This parabolic *histoire des mentalités* of Enlightenment culture is thrown into relief by two strategic moves: the transposition of the Enlightenment’s visual prejudices into the olfactory domain and the contextualization of Grenouille’s development as perfumer in the history of Western aesthetics. Süskind thereby implicates modernist aesthetic sensibilities in the dialectic of Enlightenment. (RTG)

Kathryn Hume, Ishmael Reed and the Problematics of Control 506

Ishmael Reed’s disparate novels analyze control: its origins; its relation to patterns of racial domination in American history; and its role in sex, business, religion, and government. Foucauldian control offers a way to analyze human interactions, as do Freudian theories of sexuality and Marxist economics. American control artists, including Reed, Acker, Burroughs, Mailer, and Pynchon, offer a strangely similar set of visionary concerns: problems with sexual identity, images of homosexuality, grotesque presentations of heads of state, efflorescent anality, magic, and radical revisions of foundational myths. More successfully than these other satirists, Reed manages to suggest an answer to the problematics of control—an alternative social structure, whose center is the cultivation of certain pleasures rather than macho courage, delayed gratification, self-control, or unattached drifting. (KH)

Dennis A. Foster, J. G. Ballard's Empire of the Senses: Perversion and the Failure of Authority 519

Ballard's novels return repeatedly to some scene of trauma to explore the perverse effects that derive from that moment. This essay focuses on three novels. *Crash* (1973) is most obsessively concerned with the erotics of violence and injury, while *Empire of the Sun* (1985) and *Running Wild* (1989) locate the traumatic events in childhood. What Ballard finds is a failure of the representatives of authority (fathers, kings, capital) to found a reliable world, leading children to cling to the often horrible satisfactions of some early experience. The results in Ballard's world include mixtures of masochism and advertising, middle-class terrorism and the fetishization of presidents, war and ecstasy. And what might once have appeared a wild aberration, a violent exercise of the death drive in the pursuit of enjoyment, becomes a way of life. (DAF)