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utis, and the Humanist Tradition,
N 0-85-991-305-8.

classical and renaissance dramaturgy, directing productions of Shakespeare's *Amphitruo*. Referring to an impressive range of work to the development of Greek New Comedy, through the adaptations and imitations of Plautus, to the evaluation of the Roman comedies of the sixteenth century, the humanists and playwrights favoured Plautus. Riehle sees him as anticipating renaissance comedy in the links between *The Comedy of Errors* and Shakespeare's play is more of comic and potentially tragic elements, for instance, that the Sosia of *Amphitruo* has the Messenio of *Menaechmi* has; and the range of soliloquies and asides used with variety and subtle dramatic functions). The book is on 'The Structure of Plautine Comedy'. At no time does Riehle ignore H. F. Schlegel's discussion may be found in more than one place (which, of course, were frequently drawn on more than one tradition). He argues for a merging of traditions, techniques in Plautine, early Elizabethan comedy, for instance, their approaches to time and exits show interesting similarities. He shows how New Comedy's principles of plot related to tragedy, being a development of the inclusion of the Evanthian essay 'De Terence and in some of Plautus, 'and which 'certain comic plot elements reveal a new attempt is made to define the complexity of Shakespeare's comedy, he is, with Jonson, in the tradition of Plautus.

Another particularly striking chapter discusses dramatic language in Plautus and *The Comedy of Errors*, taking as its starting point Keir Elam's claim that Aristotle failed to see that language could be action. Riehle, acknowledging Derrida, looks closely at the gaming character of the comedies, at Plautus and *copia*, juxtaposition of styles, and gesture (alluding to Donatus and Lucian). He explores implied stage directions in Plautus and Shakespeare, together with dialogic strategies such as questions and persuasions. He investigates names and their meanings. In the closing chapters, he takes a broader look at the humanists and, for instance, the Lucianic tradition, and at evidence for the continuation of the New Comedy tradition in the Shakespeare canon.

This is a persuasive work, with admirably detailed analyses of text to back the arguments. Sometimes one may feel that enthusiasm for the case causes hypothesis in one chapter to become fact in another; sometimes the argument falters, as when it is asserted that a wife's submission is part of the Elizabethan world order and so not Pauline. And it would have been nice if the liberal Latin quotations had been consistently translated. But that said, this is an absorbing book, fully justifying its plea that we take another look at the classical legacy to Shakespeare and his era.

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MARÍA ROSA MENOCAL, *Writing in Dante's Cult of Truth from Borges to Boccaccio*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1991. viii + 224 pp. ISBN 0-8223-1117-8.

María Rosa Menocal's book studies Dante (pp. 11-50), Pellico (pp. 51-88), Pound (pp. 89-129), Borges (pp. 131-75), Boccaccio (pp. 177-203) and their interrelationships. The use in later writers of previous works is examined from the point of view not only of the treatment of the source material, but also as an agent modifying the subsequent reception of the author thus treated. This is a book which contains some fine critical responses of individual works and authors. There are, however, some problems in it.

One of Menocal's basic premises is that 'authors from different centuries and different universes [*sic*] sit one next to another and shape each others' work' (p. 3); Borges and Petrarch, for instance, are studied for 'the influence they have on Dante, how they have cajoled and coerced and poeticized us into reading him, how they shape him' (p. 141). 'On Dante' actually means, of course, 'on how Dante has subsequently been read'; linear chronology is rejected in favour of conceding critical primacy to the view that an individual reader's reaction to a literary text will be conditioned less by the historical chronology of literary composition in Western literatures than by his or her previous literary readings. (This principle, discovered in time and opportunely applied, might have saved Olivia Manning's Toby Lush some embarrassment.) For Menocal, it is possible to argue that 'there is a far more compelling and influential reality in the orderings of personal histories [...] than in other constructs' (p. 3). It is, of course, a valid approach to one dimension of literary criticism; but one might suggest that to elevate to the status of an overriding

critical principle what ought to be a commonsense recognition of the variability of individual background experience and textual parallels brought to the act of reading is to adopt an approach as one-sided as the monocausal vision of some manifestations of the conventional linear literary history which is rejected by Menocal. This 'more compelling and influential reality' illuminates nothing other than subsequent readers' responses to a work. The inverted chronology of Menocal's subtitle encapsulates her approach. Equally emblematic is her statement (p. 194) that 'in the room where Boccaccio sits, philology has not yet become an imitation science, it does not yet believe in its own rigors, and Pound's and Vico's voices can still be heard, pleading that time is not so simple and reading trickier still.'

In her assault on philology, and in her self-location vis-à-vis 'the "conservatives" of what is now the vast bulk of the critical profession — the professoriat' (p. 124, n.35), Menocal deliberately marks herself out as a progressive in literary criticism and theory. It is a pity that valid insights concerning her chosen texts are thus placed in the context of what is essentially a power struggle, with generational and gender overtones, between rival critical factions. In Menocal's lexicon, 'philology' is evidently a pejorative term, indicative of an outmoded mentality; 'reader' is a feminine noun (p. 88). Remarks on attitudes to critical terminology also enter the fray (pp. 193-94, n.15). The tendency of modern academic literary culture to discard established methodologies (often for purely ideological reasons) precisely at the moment when technical advances promised to render them most productive (by enabling more effective use to be made of the cumulative work of successive generations of commentators) is a tragic waste. So is the concomitant denial, whether implicit or explicit, of the benefits of an eclectic approach. Surely preferable to a succession of hegemonistic orthodoxies is a recognition that a plurality of critical approaches is best placed to cope with the complexities of literature.

This book is often rather imprecisely phrased. Menocal's style also tolerates statements like 'the strength of Petrarch's own dicta on the subject have had a surprisingly powerful effect' (p. 138) and 'medieval literary studies in practice is now neatly divided' (p. 9); one of the sillier terms currently in critical fashion, the verb 'to prewrite', is employed. In the Index, we read of Northrup Frye (p. 219).

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STANLEY W. BEELER, *The Invisible College: A Study of the Three Original Rosicrucian Texts*. New York: AMS Press, 1991. 168 pp. ISBN 0-406-4054-0.

In his Preface to this book Professor Uri Margolin makes large claims for its importance for literary studies which are essentially justified, though one feels that the essay, brief as it is, never quite fulfils its promise. I imagine that few readers have actually encountered these three texts, *Fama Fraternitatis* (1614), *Confessio Fraternitatis* (1615) and *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz* (1616), though