

be used to generate theory from digitized text collections by permitting the analysis and interpretation of texts along thematic lines. This kind of research has been done, of course, for decades with much expenditure of time and effort, but Day's examples show a new approach that automates some of the work and presumably frees the researcher for more analysis and interpretation. One cannot help but wonder if something like this has applications in areas such as citation and citation context analysis, which hitherto have been served mostly by quantitative methods. If so, one could study citations as discursive practices, just as one studies the larger texts and contexts in which they are embedded. Examples such as these show that this volume has the potential to stimulate some very promising research indeed.—*Michael F. Winter, University of California-Davis.*

Travis, Molly Abel. *Reading Cultures: The Construction of Readers in the Twentieth Century.* Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Pr., 1998. 173p. \$39.95, alk. paper (ISBN 0-8093-2146-7). LC 97-10063.

Reading Cultures explores the expectations that readers bring to books and the ways that critics, scholars, teachers, and the texts themselves work to "construct" readers in different times and places. It analyzes reactions to and interactions with different kinds of literary works. The particular contribution that Molly Abel Travis (associate professor of English at Tulane University) hopes to bring to the field of reader response theory is to examine reading communities or cultures as defined by race, gender, class, and age. To oversimplify a bit, she wants to synthesize the rhetorical study of texts and readers with newer concerns of feminism, cultural studies, postcolonialism, queer studies, and so on. No small task.

The implied reader of this book about readers is an English professor or graduate student. Because I am neither, I found the book heavy going. It would be easy to declare it unreadable: laden with ref-

erences to other people's theories (no doubt the residue of a dissertation) and brimming with the specialized vocabulary of critical theory ("metaplagiarism" was a new term for me). But this would be cowardly. As others have argued, literary studies—like all academic disciplines—is entitled to its own jargon, theory, and intellectual rigor. So I will soldier on and try to translate the main points of the book into ordinary English.

Travis works her way through the twentieth century in five chapters, each a foray into a different field of readerly complexity. "Two Cultures of Reading in the Modernist Period" begins with an analysis of "the cultural effort invested in rendering Joyce's *Ulysses* readable." The author makes excellent use of primary sources and quotations to tell this essentially comic tale. Readers were perplexed and angered by *Ulysses*. Perhaps many still are. Joyce knowingly dismantled and parodied all the comfortable conventions of nineteenth-century narrative, refusing to compromise for readability's sake. Promoters of high art labored to persuade the American public of the novel's order, harmony, and mastery. Travis reproduces a two-page spread that appeared in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in 1934 entitled "How to Enjoy James Joyce's Great Novel *Ulysses*," with a plan of Dublin, list of characters, and detailed synopsis. The chapter continues with some rather desultory discussion of Virginia Woolf's terror of a devouring middlebrow culture, touching on such institutions as the Book of the Month Club, *Reader's Digest*, and the *Saturday Review* itself.

The next two chapters deal respectively with gender and racial differences in texts, readers, and interpretation. "Sexing the Text: Postmodern Reading, Feminist Theory, and Ironic Agency" compares works by Vladimir Nabokov and Italo Calvino (who implicitly assume a masculine reader) with works by the avant-garde feminist writers Kathy Acker (a punk writer) and Angela Carter ("who wants her readers to engage interactively

in the postmodern ideological critique"). Travis notes the emergence of the "resistant" reader, who engages with texts rather than immersing herself in them. Reading in the postmodern age has become an ironic act. "*Beloved* and *Middle Passage: Race, Narrative, and the Critic's Essentialism*" contrasts novels by Toni Morrison and Charles Johnson. Most interesting here is the explanation of how Morrison builds on and overturns the conventions of the traditional slave narrative, creating a genuine sense of the "other" that readers can neither wholly identify with nor wholly reject. Johnson, on the other hand, attempts to transcend race and in doing so negates the existence of the "other." Both chapters are marred, in my view, by an undercurrent of anxious moralizing not uncharacteristic of academic writing today.

The chapter "Reading (in) Cyberspace: Cybernetic Aesthetics, Hypertext, and the Virtual Public Space" will be more accessible to most librarians. There is less theory and more straightforward description of the experience of reading hypertext narratives. How many of us have actually read any of these? Travis gamely traversed William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, Michael Joyce's *Afternoon*, Carolyn Guyer's *Quibbling*, and Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*. Despite her predisposition in favor of interactivity and agency in a hypertext environment, she found these books somewhat disappointing. There was not enough surprise or adventure. They created a dreamy world without resolution and were in danger of "fetishizing" form. Some of these early hypertext fictions, curiously enough, originated as commentaries or recreations of postmodernist novels by writers such as Thomas Pynchon.

The final chapter, "Cultural Production and the Teaching of Reading," is very tentative. Here Travis espouses the "pedagogic turn evident in recent literary theory and criticism." She is seeking ways to reform the traditional classroom hierarchy, in which the teacher is the "author" and students are passive "readers."

She also wants to create a truly multicultural educational experience. Although she admits, with characteristic candor, that computers in the classroom have mostly proved a failure, she projects a vision of a pedagogy of multicultural "performance" through computer networks. Even this chapter, thankfully, has patches of interesting material, such as the comparison of college campuses to shopping malls and theme parks.

Clearly, this is not an essential book for librarians to read. However, there is a recurring theme that I found relevant. Every profound change in publishing or readership has given rise to a reaction of fear. Too many readers with too much freedom, it is feared, will lead to excess, promiscuity, and anarchy in reading. Worse, people will spend too much time in an imaginary world. They will lose touch with reality and be unable to distinguish truth from falsehood. These same fears arose with each expansion of printing, literacy, mass media, film, television, and now the Internet. Perhaps we should step back and reflect historically on our present concerns about readers (especially students) surfing on the Web, our worry about information overload, superficiality, and loss of standards. I suspect we would be less afraid.—*Jean Alexander, Carnegie Mellon University.*

Untold Stories: Civil Liberties, Libraries, and Black Librarianship. Ed. John Mark Tucker. Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1998. 210p. \$27 (ISBN 0-87845-104-8). LC 98-196951.

Untold Stories is a major contribution to the study of African-American librarianship and the struggle to provide library and information services to African-American communities. The book is the result of a Library History Round Table program presented at the 1994 ALA Conference in Miami Beach, Florida. The essays—by fifteen different writers, some black and some white—describe nearly two hundred years of effort; chronicling the struggle for liberty and literacy for