

Editorial

Although this last issue in Volume 12 is eclectic rather than thematic, the articles and interviews all focus on poetry and fiction written in the second half of the twentieth century.

James Booth opens with a perceptive and illuminating analysis of the poetry of Larkin, Hughes and Plath, examining the ways in which their different lines of approach – personal and impersonal, secular and sacred – intersect, not least in their individual treatment of animal passion and love. The exploration of Hughes and Plath's poetry continues in the second article, in which Paul Bentley probes the relationship between the personal and the public/political in Plath's 'Daddy' and Hughes's 'Hawk Roosting', discovering in the former an identity crisis and linguistic breakdown which extends beyond the personal.

Mark Forshaw looks to the fiction of popular novelist, Douglas Coupland. Focusing his critique on *Girlfriend in a Coma*, Forshaw identifies in Coupland's work a spreading sense of cultural discontent, a dissatisfaction with the liberal irony of postmodernism, and suggests that, for all his contemporary preoccupations (Coupland has his own web site and gleans much inspiration from the visual arts) 'Coupland is at heart a theologian or metaphysician'.

Popular culture also enters the literary debate in Jill Terry's article, in which she considers the ways in which Steven Spielberg's film version of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, distorts the ideologies for which Walker's novel received acclaim, thus providing a valuable lesson for students and teachers who may be tempted to use film versions of texts uncritically. Feminist issues raised in Terry's article are then continued in Judy Hayden's reading of Angela Carter's *Wise Children*, in which Hayden identifies

Eric Rhode's *On Birth and Madness* as the catalyst which provoked and propelled Carter's novel. Hayden suggests that Carter was writing against the view of women presented by Rhode, and employs the carnivalesque to subvert and 'send-up' the 'crude biologism vis-à-vis the Oedipal situation', the social fictions created by Rhode and Freud.

Finally, before turning to Poetry and Reviews, we have included two interviews with contemporary novelists themselves. Pat Wheeler and Sharon Monteith question Livi Michael on the creative process, working-class fiction, region, violence and the political forces behind her fiction; and Joanna Zylinska leads Fay Weldon to express her views on women and nature, male and female qualities, the body and power, plastic surgery and varieties of feminisms.

The articles collected in this issue represent the views of experienced critics, novelists, poets and teachers, and of relatively new writers engaged in post-graduate research in the field of literary and cultural studies.

GRAHAM HOLDERNESS and CAROL BANKS

Graham Holderness and Carol Banks are now responsible for the general editing of Critical Survey. Thanks are due to Sharon Monteith for her editorial work on this issue of the journal and for her services as Modern Editor for Volumes 9–12.