

Editorial

In response to manifest reader interests and needs, the current issue of Pynchon Notes both adopts a modified format and shifts to a greater emphasis on criticism. Pynchon Notes will retain all its former functions and capacities. We therefore continue to welcome notes and queries, news of conferences and papers, of work in progress, circulating manuscripts and forthcoming works, and bibliographic information about recent and only recently discovered works, as well as references to Pynchon of all sorts and scales, and from any source. We have no wish to abandon the gathering and dispersing of such news and information, which was one of our primary purposes in launching Pynchon Notes, and appears to remain one of the most valued services it renders. But the response to our previous modest ventures into publishing criticism has indicated to us that our other primary purpose, that of providing a forum for criticism and critical exchange, answers a felt need. We hear that a certain well-known critical journal sometimes has as many as twenty-five essays on Pynchon under consideration at one time. Our experience, too, suggests that there is an abundance of material on Pynchon available. We hope that the appearance of plenty is not deceptive, and that our optimism will not prove to have been ill-founded or premature. We trust that enough fine criticism will continue to come to us to justify and sustain a small Pynchon journal.

There is assuredly work waiting to be done. For instance, Robert Alter, patrolling the borders of haute bourgeois culture, has recently had at Pynchon once again, this time for not being Stendhal or Robert Penn Warren ("The American Political Novel," New York Times Book Review, 10 Aug. 1980, 3, 26-27). Pynchon, bundled in with Coover, Doctorow and Vonnegut, is said to be the author of works of an "astonishing degree of puerility," of "adolescent outbursts," of "phantasmagoria of an apocalyptic cast," given to "sexual and scatological imaginings . . . [which direct] us more toward the psychology of the writer than to any political referent, expressing an ultimately infantile fantasy of a brutal, threat-

ening father, based on paranoid fear and resentment." What the novel should do, we are told, is what it does best: depict character as it encounters politics. Such prominently displayed peevishness can be ignored, but to debate various possible refutations of it would be more useful and more satisfying, especially if the debate were to focus on the repressed reasons for the professional and ideological paranoia displayed by the likes of Alter.

Pynchon Notes solicits any and all thoughtful criticism of Pynchon's work; we want to avoid lapsing into idolatry. We welcome dialogue, debate and controversy.

JMK, KT