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attitudes towards the language explain the new fashions and modes of writing and the gradual loss of the monopoly of 'educated English' as a vehicle of expression. Then, perhaps more than at any time before or since, 'elegant' and 'vulgar' English were unquestionable 'markers' in a class-divided society. The ideas and the practice of such influential figures as Wordsworth or Coleridge, or of Thomas Spence, William Hove or William Cobbett, are studied here in great detail. This book is, then, especially useful to those interested in the social history of England and of the English language.

HISTORY, CIVILIZATION, SOCIOLOGY, EDUCATION AND INSTITUTIONS

Betts, C.J. *Early Deism in France*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1984. Pp. xiii + 309. The evolution of the concept of 'deism' is traced in this interesting book, which gives a historical account of deist thought from its origins in Lyon in the sixteenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century. Although, as C.J. Betts points out in this in-depth study, deism has various ideological ramifications and the term deist can therefore be applied to diverse religious attitudes, it may be said that in general it is the 'religion' of some intellectual minorities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and an important step in the process of secularization of modern thought. In this sense, this book is not only invaluable for a full understanding of the history of theology and thought in general, but also for the study of the literature of this period. This is particularly true in the case of the eighteenth-century English novel, for some of the most outstanding novelists of the period—particularly Henry Fielding—were greatly influenced by the French thinkers of their own, and preceding, generations.

Roskies, David G. *Against the Apocalypse. Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984. Pp. xii + 374.

This thorough study by David G. Roskies, written in a lucid and flowing style, contains important keys to understanding the recent history of the Jewish people, both in the diaspora and in the State of Israel. It also contributes towards a correct interpretation of the rich culture and the tradition inherited by the Jewish communities. The range of topics touched on is immense, from the recent persecution and suffering of this people to the characteristics of Jewish speech and its social varieties. For these reasons, this is an invaluable reference for all who study the culture and tradition of the Jewish people, and thus a historical document which will be of great use in understanding the total meaning of many literary works published recently in England and America by Jewish writers.

Shapiro, Gary and Alan Sica, eds. *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*. Amherst, Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984. Pp. 310.

The meticulousness demanded nowadays by the study of the so-called social sciences or humanities requires an updating and ever-greater knowledge of the current theories of interpretation. And this is what the different articles in this serious publication deal with. Apart from the main problems presented by hermeneutics, case studies referring to history and text interpretation are provided in chapter 2, which is devoted to the relationship between hermeneutics and literature; and this is where the book becomes a fundamental instrument for the literary critic. The studies by Heidegger and the theories of Foucault or Barthes, to cite three names whose importance to modern critical thought is beyond question, are approached with new insights that help the reader to understand the meaning of new tendencies like deconstruction, while opening new horizons in the study of literary texts.

Yolton, John W. *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983. Pp. xiv + 239.

This excellent piece of work reviews the various philosophical theories about the idea of 'thinking matter' that arose out of and developed from *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by John Locke, throughout the eighteenth century. This concept, which somehow includes 'matter' and 'thought', is of great importance in the dichotomy 'spiritualism'/'materialism' debated from a philosophical and religious point of view; the book traces the evolution of this debate from a theological perspective to the scientific approaches of the end of the eighteenth century, represented mainly by Joseph Priestly. Professor Yolton's essay is, therefore, of vital relevance for the understanding of the roots of