

Tales project in collaboration with Peter Robinson. The aim was to digitize as many manuscripts and early editions of the *Tales* as possible. In this role he continued to supervise a number of PhD students, most of whom now have senior positions in academia.

And so we mourn the passing of a great scholar, a gifted administrator, a much-loved and inspiring teacher and supervisor, a brilliant colleague, a great supporter of ESSE, and a good friend.

Research

The Fall of Princes and Lydgate's knowledge of The Book of the Duchess

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Among John Lydgate's various tributes to Chaucer, one of the most puzzling is his reference to the *Book of the Duchess* in the *Fall of Princes* (c. 1438). In the prologue of this lengthy retelling of Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, Lydgate introduces an extensive homage to 'my maistir Chaucer', which lists several of Chaucer's literary accomplishments: it opens with stanzas on 'Troilus & Cresseide', 'Boeces book, The Consolacioun', and 'a tretis, ful noble & off gret pris/ Vpon thastlabre' (Lydgate 1924-27, 1: 8-9). About midway through this catalogue, Lydgate turns to Chaucer's elegy for Blanche of Lancaster:

He wrot also ful many day agone,
Dante in Inglissh, hymself so doth expresse,
The pitous story off Ceix and Alcione,
And the deth eek of Blaunche the Duchesse,
And notabli dede his bisynesse (ibid).

What is remarkable here is not that this text is mentioned, but that it appears to be listed twice. In consecutive lines Lydgate refers to 'the deth... of Blaunche the Duchesse', acknowledging the putative occasion of the *Book*, as well as naming the 'story off Ceix and Alcione'. This apparently refers to the Ovidian episode Chaucer retells in lines 69-230 of the text, as his narrator turns to the *Metamorphoses* 'for defaute of slep', and recites the story of 'dreynte Seys the kyng' he reads there (Chaucer 2008, 333). What Lydgate refers to, then, is an episode embedded in the larger structure of the *Book of the Duchess* itself, which he seems to treat as a separate item.

One possible solution to this issue is that proposed by the great Victorian editor Walter Skeat, who argues that Lydgate is simply conflating similar lists made by Chaucer across his works, pulling together scattered references from the *Legend of Good Women* and the *Canterbury Tales*. Skeat writes: 'it is clear to me that Lydgate is simply repeating

the information which we have already had upon Chaucer's own authority... merely following Chaucer's own language' (Skeat 1888, xi). It is true that both of these names occur in Chaucer's work in much the form that they are given here: Chaucer includes 'the Death of Blaunche the Duchesse' amongst his works in the *Legend* (F 418), while the *Introduction* to the *Man of Law's Tale* states that he 'made Ceys and Alcione... in youthe' (Chaucer 2008, 57). But what complicates matters is that Lydgate was clearly familiar with the *Book of the Duchess* by this point in his career. His knowledge is testified by the poem variously known as the *Complaint of the Black Knight* or *Complaynt of Loveres Lyfe*, which J.A. Burnley terms 'a blatant imitation of the *Book of the Duchess*' (1979, 42). This reprises many of the features of the *Book*, from its setting in a 'parke walled with grene stone' to its central complaint against 'Loves firy cheyn', delivered by a motionless knight 'in blake and white, colour pale and wan' (Lydgate 2004, 92, 95). The imitation was in fact sufficiently close for the poem to have been accepted as Chaucer's work from the fifteenth century to the late nineteenth, appearing under his name in manuscript compilations and early printed editions (Edwards 1996; Forni 2001, 173-74), and routinely being classified as 'another poem written for John of Gaunt' by Victorian scholars (Morley 1867, 2.1.202-3). Although the *Complaynt* has proven resistant to dating, with Walter Schirmer (1961, 31) and John Norton-Smith (1966, 161) placing it in the first decade of the fifteenth century, and Derek Pearsall preferring a date of 1427-29 (1997, 31), it is almost certainly an earlier work than the *Fall of Princes*. Even the latest of these estimates would still place it at least nine years before the *Fall*, which is usually dated to 1438 or 1439 on the basis of its author's reference to his 'mor than thre score yeeris' (Gray 2004, 843). As a result of this, it seems unlikely that Lydgate would unthinkingly reproduce two titles for the same text, as he had by this stage sufficient awareness of the *Book of the Duchess* to compose his own close reproduction of it.

A second explanation is that developed by Haldeen Braddy and Larry Scanlon. Braddy and Scanlon have each argued that Lydgate's separation of 'Ceix and Alcyone' from the rest of the *Book* might signal that this 'portion of the work circulated separately' (Braddy 1940, 95), or that 'Chaucer may have treated this episode independently' (Scanlon 1994, 333): that is, that Lydgate did indeed know 'Ceix and Alcyone' as a distinct poem. This suggestion seems more plausible than Skeat's. It gains further authority from a recent essay by David Carlson, which notes that Lydgate often seems to be working with different versions of Chaucer's texts than we now have access to, such as 'a pre-*Canterbury Tales* Palamoun and Arcite' (2004, 251). However, accepting this view also raises further questions. In particular, it has some rather troubling implications for our knowledge of the *Book of the Duchess* itself. If Lydgate is referring to 'Ceix and Alcyone' as a piece distinct from the *Book*, then this also implies that he may have read a version of the *Book* which did not contain this sequence. After all, this is the text that he demonstrably knew well: his classification of 'Ceys and Alcyone' as a separate piece could therefore suggest that he did not recognise it as part of the text of the *Book* he had read.

While this might appear to be at best a problematic claim, since the Ceyx and Alcione story is present in all three extant manuscript copies of the *Book*, it is consistent with Lydgate's own engagement with the text. In his *Complaynt*, for instance, Lydgate

offers nothing that corresponds with the Ovidian episode, or with the larger frame narrative in which it occurs. The events of the *Complaynt* pick up instead from line 290 of the existing text of the *Book*, the point at which Chaucer's dreamer is awoken by 'smale foules a gret hep', and reports, 'Me thoghte thus: that hyt was May,/ And in the dawenyng I lay' (Chaucer 2008, 334). Lydgate's poem commences at this point, as it opens with the narrator also waking 'in May when Flora... the soyle hath clad', and venturing out into a world where 'the briddes sing' (Lydgate 2004, 90). Lydgate does not include any framing sequence before this, or any reference to his narrator reading himself to sleep. Such an omission has in fact proven difficult to interpret, given that the text is in most other respects a faithful retread of the *Book*. A.C. Spearing, for instance, is only able to explain it as a 'playful reversal' of Chaucer's precedent (1993, 219), while Judith Davidoff claims that Lydgate is developing a new, separate genre altogether, which she dubs 'the dream vision analogue' (1988, 89). However, when placed alongside Lydgate's treatment of 'Ceix and Alcyone' and 'the deeth of Blaunche' as distinct texts in the *Fall of Princes*, it seems equally likely that Lydgate did not include his own version of Chaucer's preamble because he was aware of it only as an unconnected text, not included in the version of the *Book* he knew.

The possibility that Lydgate's *Book of the Duchess* lacked the preliminary Ceyx and Alcyone episode also finds some support in criticism of Chaucer's text, as it resonates with questions that have arisen repeatedly over the last fifty years. In particular, it feeds into dissatisfaction with what William Quinn calls the 'most widely accepted context of interpretation' of the poem, its 'specific relevance... to John of Gaunt and the Duchess Blanche' (1999, 114). Although it is undeniable that the text must have had some connection to Blanche's death, given Chaucer's own testimony to that effect in the *Legend of Good Women*, some commentators have suspected that the existing text of the poem might not be the one that was composed for this occasion, but a version revised later. As far back as 1952 H.S. Bennett had some intimation of this, bluntly stating 'it is hard to believe that *The Book of the Duchess* was written solely to commemorate the death of the wife of John of Gaunt', and holding that some elements in the text might not be connected to the aftermath of her death in 1368 (Bennett 1952, 6). Indeed, the debate surrounding the precise date of the text has led to similar speculation. As Kathryn Lynch has written in a recent summary of the issue, the text seems to date itself both 'before 1372' and 'around or even after that year': it addresses Gaunt as 'thys kyng' in line 1314, which he 'took to styling himself' only after 1372, and alludes to him as earl of Richmond in its reference to 'ryche hil' in line 1319, a title he gave up in 1372 in order to pursue his claim to the kingdom of Castile (2007, 4-5). Attempting to account for such discrepancies has raised questions about possible revisions to the text. For instance, Howard Schless, arguing for the 1371-72 date, suggests that this might highlight a later interpolation: 'that the conclusion of the *Book of the Duchess* may well have been composed about 1371-72 does not necessarily implicate the dating of the rest (that is, the bulk) of the poem' (Schless 1985, 274). Likewise Edward Condren, moving the date to 1376-77 on the basis of the narrator having 'suffred this eight yeer' (Chaucer 2008, 331), suggests that the surviving text is a reworking of an 'original version of the *Book of the Duchess*', which permits 'a 1377 Chaucerian persona to confront an earlier version of himself' (Condren

1971, 200). Along the same lines, Zacharias Thundy (1995) argues that the poem was comprehensively rewritten in 1399 as a 'political celebration' commemorating the accession of Blanche and Gaunt's son Henry IV. For such authors, then, the text of the *Book of the Duchess* is something of a palimpsest, containing the traces of several dates at once, suggesting that it has been revised at different periods of Chaucer's career: while it might initially have been written as a tribute to Blanche in some form, whether to commemorate her death in 1368 or for one of the later memorial services (Hardman 1994), the version now known to us can be seen as a reworking of this first version. The structural 'problems' many critics have found in the poem might also lead to a similar conclusion. The charge that several of its episodes are 'at odds with the dominant tone of the poem' (Muscatine 1957, 102) or 'break in decidedly upon the solemnity' (Cazmian 1930, 100-1) is a relatively common one in mid-twentieth century scholarship, and could further signpost where later additions have been made. That there were other, lost manuscripts of the *Book* which differed from the three known to us is in fact highly likely: as N.F. Blake has shown (1981), the unique sections of William Thynne's 1532 printed edition suggest precisely this.

Given these theories and observations, it is entirely possible that Lydgate is not merely working with a different version of the *Book of the Duchess*, but an early, perhaps unrevised text. More importantly, his apparent failure to recognise that the 'pitous story off Ceix and Alcione' was part of the 'deth... of Blaunche the Duchesse' gives us some idea what this conjectured 'original' might have looked like. It suggests that Chaucer's tribute to Blanche might have initially opened at the point at which Lydgate starts the *Complaynt*, and at which Chaucer's literary models De Lorris, Machaut and Froissart begin their own dream-visions, with the narrator waking into a springtime dream-world (Pelen 1976); as a consequence, the framing narrative to which the Ceyx and Alcyone section belongs may not have been part of the original text. On the other hand, the 'pitous story of Ceyx and Alcyone' could have started life as a separate piece that was later integrated into the revised text, in much the same manner that 'the love of Palamon and Arcite' and 'the lyf of Seynt Cecile' were grafted into the *Canterbury Tales* as the *Knight's Tale* and *Second Nun's Tale* (Chaucer 2008, 600). The fact that Chaucer claims to have composed this Ovidian adaptation 'in youthe' might be taken as a further hint at its original autonomy. At any rate, while much of this remains highly speculative, it remains true to say that Lydgate's testimony raises some powerful questions about the *Book of the Duchess*, and especially the relationship between the text we now possess and the historical 'deth of Blaunche'. It at least offers proof of the ongoing complexities and areas of uncertainty that surround the poem.

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The Place of English Literary Studies in the Dickens of a Crisis

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One virtue of the current appalling crisis is that there is even less worth watching on the television (in Spain at least) than in times of plenty, which is one reason why I spent a considerable amount of the last Christmas vacations pondering submission of an application to the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation for funding for a (hastily) conceived research project. For even when the winter of economic and social distress is at its bleakest, like a trusty lapdog said Ministry returns each year, just in time for the Festive Season, with its announcement of goodwill to all men in the form of money to burn for all those in need of a little cheer. At that time the Socialist party was still in government and pluckily/fecklessly standing by its commitment to research as offering a way out of the crisis; the current Conservative government quite simply cannot afford to view research funding in the same benevolent light or warm the hearts of the university community (hardly its most reliable constituency) with a further annuity of Dickensian beneficence. For that is how, in the last resort, such well-intentioned generosity at such an ill-omened historical juncture demands to be regarded: it is as well-meaning as Dickens's Christmas figures and as effective in the globality of its context as they were in theirs—which is to say, not very much. Just as the extreme social injustices of Victorian England would never be rectified by Mr Brownlow, the Cheerybles or even the redeemed Scrooge, so the critical problems of Spain's hamstrung economy and divided society will never be solved by cash handouts from the Ministry for the Jellybys and Pardiggles of its universities, tending their particular Borriboola-Ghas while the drain covers of my street are stolen to be melted down at 8 euros/kilo and junior lecturers are threatened with the axe.

Distinctions, naturally, have to be drawn. One can imagine how economic recovery might be facilitated by research in engineering aimed at developing new technologies, improving competitiveness, etc. etc; or by research in some of the sciences with a more or less immediate application to industrial growth; or by research, even, into the economy itself, with a view to finding new and improved models of business activity, financial strategy and social equity. But what contribution can literary studies make to bringing an end to the crisis nearer? More particularly, in Spain (or in any other continental European country), what claim can English Literary Studies have on the public purse when five million people are unemployed and 1.6 million households are officially without income of any kind? In a country where the only growth sectors are pawnbroking, debt collection and house eviction (oh, and luxury goods), in a country witness to the obscenity of the victims of that eviction bailing out through their taxes the embezzling and pilfering banks that evicted them, what right had I to ask for the same twenty or thirty thousand euros that might make the difference between a family keeping up with their mortgage repayments for another couple of years or finding themselves next Christmas sleeping under the same bridge as the young Josiah Bounderby in *Hard Times*? When basic staples

such as rice, pasta and eggs are running out at the charity food kitchens, will those Spanish families standing in the queue be much nourished or otherwise satisfied by the intellectual luxury of my researches into, say, (English) early modern travel writing or allusion in contemporary (UK) fiction?

What ultimately underlies this bout of “shouting in church”² is the hoary old question of the role of the arts in contemporary society and, within the arts, of literary studies, that runt of the humanities litter which was born with an inferiority complex and has only survived so far by dint of its enviable capacity to constantly reinvent itself in order to adapt to constantly changing cultural configurations. Searching around for illumination on this point, a few months ago I fastened hopefully on an issue of the magazine *Oxford Today*, which is distributed free of charge the length and breadth of the world to former students of the University of Oxford. Much of the issue was devoted to addressing the question “Whither the humanities?”, the preciousness of that interrogative pronoun boding ill for its attempts to salvage an education in the arts for the twenty-first century. A glittering trio of Oxford luminaries had been assembled to reflect on the matter, and for reasons of guild loyalty I turned first to Jonathan Bate’s (2011: 31) contribution. He had approached ten colleagues in search of their justification for the public funding of humanities research in the midst of recession. Answers ranged from the preening and flippant (“If you believe knowledge is too expensive, try ignorance” or, on the translation of a work of philosophy into Arabic, “Given the billions that the military option wastes, wasn’t I more economically efficient?”) to the utilitarian (“there would be no *Oxford English Dictionary*” or “Literature offers public benefit in the arena of healthcare” or “Bertrand Russell’s philosophical investigations [...] paved the way for the artificial languages essential to computer science” or “questions about ‘Britishness’ and cultural identity [...] can only be answered properly by humanities research”) to the hackneyed (“Humanities research engenders and fosters critical thinking”). The preening, flippant and hackneyed can be safely ignored, so too the utilitarian: life is conceivable without the OED; bibliotherapy for terminal patients is all well, good and relatively cheap, but give me a healthy shot of morphine (even if it means coughing up 10 or 20 euros by way of co-payment); and are the answers of “humanities research” to those questions about “Britishness” and “cultural identity” really any more “proper” than the bartender’s gut feeling or the novelist’s metaphors? Bate himself offered little better, apart from (also hackneyed) “the humanities are there to teach us what it is to be human and what is to be valued in civil society” and (utilitarian) “students of the humanities are among our foremost interpreters of the past. A little historical perspective might have been welcome amidst the moral panic of [the London riots of] August 2011.” Welcome indeed, but more welcome still ways of predicting and preventing such riots in the first place—but that seems not to be on the humanities’ curriculum. In short, little illumination from the dreaming spires but a good deal of do-it-yourself grave-digging.

Part of the reason for the inability of the humanities and, more particularly, of literary studies to muster a half-decent argument in its own defence is, I think, its built-in

² This piece picks up the gauntlet, and the expression, thrown down by L. Vianu (2011: 75-6).

sense of other-worldly superiority, of august, immaculate loftiness—of, in a word, elitist self-sufficiency. Fired perhaps by their deep-seated inferiority complex, the humanities have reveled in the arts versus sciences debate and equipped themselves with a vainglorious siege mentality born of an aristocratic disdain for the mechanical, hands-on, anti-establishment character of science and industry. For, as often happens in dear old Blighty, matters of taste, differences of opinion and intellectual leanings soon become class-signed and potentially divisive of society; and Dickens was as aware—and guilty—of this as anybody else. Some of his characters often fall into one or other of the following pair of mutually exclusive categories, the feckless dilettante and the diligent plodder. The former are usually members of the decadent aristocracy, minor gentry or hangers-on, and the legitimacy of their social pretensions is only matched by the ineffectuality of their artistic ones: a case in point is *Bleak House's* Mr Turveydrop, Master of Department, who reclines on his sofa “like the second gentleman in Europe”, pines for the Regency, and gives his son the name of Prince—his exploited, sickly son whose mission in life is to ensure that “deportment is not wholly trodden under foot by mechanics” (ch. 23). The diligent plodders are often precisely that, “mechanics”, engineers or industrialists. A case in point is Robert Rouncewell the self-made “iron master”, whose successful industrial career is met with the haughty contempt of Sir Leicester Dedlock and the incomprehension of his own brother George, who prefers a life in the service of the obsolescent feudalism Dedlock represents to a position in Thomas’s foundry somewhere up north, that vague, grim and grimy locale which the English popular imagination still associates with dull scientists and engineers.³

Of course, all of this has a ring to it of C. P. Snow’s *The Two Cultures* (1959). Rightly so, for Snow’s diagnosis is still essentially correct. One may take exception to much of his analysis—his crude application of the categories of religion and politics, for example (though he himself admitted his blunt polarities were more rhetorical device than scientific procedure); one may point out too how the scenarios he depicted never came to fruition, or that the solution he recommends is overcompensatory in its emphasis on a scientific education; but the basic division of English society he puts forward and the prejudices on which it is founded and which it perpetuates is still applicable. As Snow suggests, “traditional culture” is “unscientific” when not plain “antiscientific”, and “intellectuals”, particularly “literary intellectuals”, are “natural Luddites” (1959: 11-12, 23). Oddly enough, society at large still sets a premium on intellectual culture over scientific culture: to use Snow’s own example, greater value is still attached to having read a play by Shakespeare than being familiar with the Second Law of Thermodynamics (1959: 16). Snow argues that the emergence of the two cultures was a byproduct of the process of industrialization, the consequence of what he calls the “crystallization” of social forms when “economic inequalities” are “iron[ed] out” (1959: 18).

Again, I think he is right, as long as the roots of industrialization are traced back far enough to reach the second half of the sixteenth century and the whole of the seventeenth when the divorce proceedings between wit and science, so uneasily joined in

³ When I was an undergraduate, there was no creature on the ladder of all God’s creation lower than the “northern chemist”.

wedlock by John Redford (*The Marriage of Wit and Science*, 1561), were set in motion. For where the humanists had prized wit as affording a means to secular mortality, converting the pseudo-Virgilian tag “vivitur ingenio, caetera mortis erunt” into an article of scientific and artistic faith, later generations transformed it into a sign of social status which set apart those who sheltered beneath its aegis from those others who followed the more demeaning pursuits of industry. Indeed, wit’s debasement is marked by the metamorphosis of the grand aspirations encapsulated by the Latin tag into the cheapjack resourcefulness connoted by its English translation, “to live by your wits”. And those who did live by their wits also came to be known by the colloquial sobriquet of “knights of industry”, the ironic point of which is that hard graft is not always a precondition of success, as proven by the idler members of the aristocracy for whom industry was a dirty word.

It is fascinating to see how in *Little Dorrit* (1857) Dickens insinuates English society’s division into Snow’s two cultures through his recurrent deployment of the very clichés we have just discussed, not least when Blandois/Rigaud boasts to Mrs Clennam as, the novel reaches its climax, that “ am a Knight of Industry” (Dickens 1985: 837). But the French blackmailer and wife-murderer is only one of (at least) four “knights of industry” exposed by the novel. There is, of course, Dorrit himself, who lives quite ably by his wits as the maudlin’ sponger of the Marshalsea, before slowly losing his wits when the financial windfall ensconces him among the foremost idle rich of Europe. There is, too, Henry Gowan, whose *bon disant* cynicism is symptomatic of the landed, leisured class fallen on hard times and who admits to Sparkler that he has to live by his “mother wit” (561). Most remarkable, perhaps, is Mr Merdle (the French root of whose name should not be overlooked), the giant fraudster who amasses extraordinary wealth and attains to the loftiest of positions quite simply by living by his wits. Sadly, more than a century and half later, the Merdles keep floating to the top of societies worldwide, when not otherwise sinking their economies. Even a criminal like Blandois/Rigaud is not unaware of the pernicious hold the establishment’s knights of industry have on society. As early as the opening chapter, he regales his Marseilles cell-mate Cavalletto with an autobiographical sketch which doubles as instruction in the ways of the world: “I have been treated and respected as a gentleman universally. If you try to prejudice me by making out that I have lived by my wits – how do your lawyers live – your politicians – your intriguers – your men of the Exchange” (48).

In contrast to these four “knights of industry” the novel presents us with Daniel Doyce, “the originator” (Dickens 1985: 239) and representative of scientific culture. The England of the Circumlocution Office, institutional incarnation of “traditional culture” has no room for Doycean inventiveness; refused patents, this “public offender” whose crime is his wit as a Renaissance humanist might have understood the term (“he has been ingenious, and he has been trying to turn his ingenuity to his country’s services” [160]) is forced to take his inventions out of the county and seek contracts and success abroad, more precisely in France, that “barbaric power”, as the narrator puts it with irony (735);

and Doyce was not the only inventor to be spurned by his own countrymen.⁴ When at the very end of the novel Meagles reports back from France that Doyce is “medalled and ribboned, and starred and crossed, and I don’t-know-what-all’d, like a born nobleman” (891), we cannot be quite sure if he speaks figuratively or not. But his words hold out the possibility that Doyce’s mechanical wit has squared the industry-nobility circle—that he may even have become a true knight of industry, or at any rate a French *chevalier*, a title which reminds us of the French origin of the English sobriquet (*OED* “knight”, 12.c).

Dickens had little to say about the university system. Indeed his silence on the matter is only matched by the clamorous haziness of his descriptions of the industrial base. Probably the very idea of “English Studies” would have baffled him completely: after all, its non-existence—creative writing courses and all—had done him no harm, and he would have deplored, when not lampooning, our modish technospeak. But if English Studies and, more generally, the humanities, is to survive the present crisis, I think it should do some pretty serious thinking about what it has to offer and how best to offer it. And I am convinced that the solution to those questions demands the bridging of the two cultures defined by Snow and textualised by Dickens. This is why, finally, the answers of Bate and his friends are wrong and may, in their self-serving introspection, prove to be dangerously misguided when Ministers of Economy in countries like Spain are casting about for the next victim of their scissors. Bate’s contribution to the humanities debate in *Oxford Today* was sandwiched between those of philosopher of law Martha Nussbaum and neuroscientist Colin Blakemore. Nussbaum (like Snow before her) identified premature specialisation as one problem of the English university system and pointed out how US undergraduates “are required to maintain a broad focus and several ‘minor’ subjects” during the first two years of their degrees, which means mathematicians can appreciate poetry and poets admire science (2011: 29). Whatever else it may have done, Bologna did little to broaden the interdisciplinary scope of undergraduate degrees and, therefore, to enforce the literary intellectuals to come out of their ivory towers and start communing with scientists and engineers. According to Nussbaum, one advantage of the US system is that when, years later, engineers and businessmen have made their fortunes, their nostalgia for the “great texts” they read at university may make them reach for their pockets when straitened English departments need funding. Blakemore, too, implies that the humanities need to find their justification in the context of a more universalist system of university education where scientists and artists rub shoulders, inspire each other mutually and share the same “devot[ion] to the totality of scholarship” (2011: 33). The high-sounding ideas of Nussbaum and Blakemore, which evoke long-dead ideals of the Renaissance man, are unlikely to cut much ice with Ministers of Education; much less with Ministers of Economy. And if they really hold water, it seems that those who worked out the details of Bologna have quite simply missed the boat.

³ Doyce’s footsore companions in fatigue include the likes of James Watt and Matthew Boulton (see Uglow 2002) and, around the time *Little Dorrit* was being written, Sir Rowland Hill, originator of the penny-post, Chief Secretary of the Post Office, and bone of contention in the spat between James FitzJames Stephen of the *Edinburgh Review* and Dickens himself (see Shelston [ed.] 1985: 118-23).

Nor do they help me as I try to justify asking the Spanish Government for a little more money to help me tend my little plot of English Literary Studies. Yet, as Nussbaum concludes, academics “owe the public a broad and sustained account of what they do and why” (2011: 29). As a lecturer and researcher of English Literature based in Spain, I’m afraid I cannot offer my public any such account. Our colleagues in the UK may still, at a pinch, talk about preserving the national cultural tradition; and colleagues at the most privileged and/or privately funded institutions may still be able to invoke that “training of the mind” so jealously arrogated by Classical Studies and revamped (I suppose) as the post-Bologna competence of “critical thinking” that we stick into our course guides to fill them out a bit. But how can I and other English literary academics based on the wrong side of the English Channel justify our continued sponging off cash-strapped states? If you can’t help me out with the Second Law of Dynamics, at least a few answers to that question would be welcome. And if none can be found, then “God Bless Us, Every One!”

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Reports and Reviews

Ethical Debates in Contemporary Theatre and Drama

20th Annual Conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE), Mainz, 2-5 June 2011

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The renewed interest in the ethical dimension of art and performance has been a much discussed phenomenon for quite some time. This is reflected in numerous publications, conferences and special issues of scholarly journals across a wide range of academic fields. Drama and theatre studies are no exception here, which is not surprising since the very word *drama* itself means action, which implies ethical decisions. It was therefore most fitting to make ethics the topic of the 20th annual conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE) in Mainz, which was co-hosted by Bernhard Reitz, Mark