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## BOOK REVIEWS

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**Lieven D’hulst, Jean-Marc Moura, Liesbeth De Bleeker, and Nadia Lie, eds.**  
*Caribbean Interfaces*. Textxet: Studies in Comparative Literature 52.  
Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007. 368 pp. ISBN: 978-90-420-2184-6.

*Christina Dokou (Athens, Greece)*

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The bilingual set-up of this volume – English and French – is a major step towards practicing what is posited in it about the nature of the Caribbean, or the way scholarship should respond to it, in the manner suggested by the region’s native son, cultural critic Stuart Hall: plurivocity, multiculturalism, multidisciplinary exploration of “transversal” concepts, discursive relationality, an understanding of “positionalities,” and the perennial “displacement” of the critic. Indeed, the contributors and editors of *Caribbean Interfaces* go a long way towards showcasing the dynamic compositeness of the Caribbean, with its history of colonization, hybrid, migrating populations, problematic geographic relations, bloody political upheavals, blend of languages, traditions, races, rhythms, economies. This proceedings volume from a conference in the universities of Lille III and Leuven, Campus Kortrijk on May 19-21, 2005 declares itself (12) the latest addition to a series of critical projects in Caribbean Studies, notable among which are the works of Aimé Césaire and Édouard Glissant; Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant’s 1989 *Éloge de la Créolité*; and A. J. Arnold’s 1999 three-volume *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*. The introduction usefully sets both the theoretical framework, especially the concept of interface as a Derridean “shared boundary” (14) and its related issues, though one wonders why the Caribbean status is repeatedly called “a problem” (10, 16) instead of an opportunity reality offers for creative critical input. Perhaps it is because a scholarly project of “encompassing the Caribbean” (10) urges towards the assumption of a “panopticon” vantage point which is both unfeasible and, ultimately, undesirable for a space that “distrusts exogenous theories that ... could indeed distort the literary and historical realities of Caribbean societies” (11).

The essay launching the first segment of the book, “Interdisciplinary Exchanges,” bravely responds to such tensions, as A. J. Arnold discusses the methodological problems (and solutions) faced in compiling his *History*, and the new tangents it opens up in Caribbean Studies. He particularly deplores a

reductive (cultural) monolingualism (22), either Anglo- or Franco-, that both isolates the various Caribbean literatures in their exclusive relationship with their colonial metropolis (25) and limits critical and theoretical thinking or research, arguing instead (29) for a research that is (a) comparatist, (b) pluridisciplinary, (c) transnational/globalist and (d) unflinchingly honest regarding regional realities – such as the limited representation of gender polyphony, a taboo addressed by Vera Kutzinski’s essay on “Violence and Sexual Others.” Through her close reading of Shani Mootoo’s 1996 novel, Kutzinski offers a new model for con-structing oneself/the community as a dynamic and delightful confluence of “visible disjunctions” (39) versus the notion of “identity,” which presupposes “assigning” a violent, separatory taxonomy of Otherness (42).

In view of the above, Maarten van Delden’s essay seems oddly limited and slightly out-of-place. Though Alejo Carpentier indeed belongs within the wider Caribbean canon, no Caribbean focus exists here. In reading Carpentier’s presentation of “The Museum and the Opera-House” as positive approaches to urban “high culture” modernity, the critic overturns the stereotype of “bad city, good country,” but leaves unquestioned the modernity (rather than post-modernity) of urbanity, nor does he fulfill his promise for a wider theorizing on the “concepts of modernity.”

On the contrary, Véronique Porra’s excellent article on “La Diversalité à l’épreuve de la pensée de l’Universel” offers a clear and current overview of the theoretical struggle between “universality” or “diversity” that ultimately subsumes Caribbean literature under the hegemony of Franco or Anglo neo-imperialist umbrellas, projecting a decontextualized unity or compartmentalization of Créole literary identities against the polemic content of the authors themselves. She instead proposes the notion of “diversality,” which allows for a Caribbean common ground without reducing dynamic differences between authors, or their need for emancipation from the Francophone canon.

First in the segment called “Transversal Applicability,” Amaryll Chanady takes on a highly interesting Caribbean *topos*, that of the cannibal/Caliban and its re-appropriations, parodies, resignifications, and other resistance techniques within native anti-imperialist polemic and identity-generating literature, while also cautioning against a new colonization by theory (91-92) or abuses of hybridity discourses (98). Ottmar Ette crosses literary geography with fractal theory to provide a daring and rich new model of thinking the Caribbean – with its insular political history, world of islands, and island-worlds – as theory and vice-versa (a hegemonic gesture he doesn’t question). He calls for a trans-disciplinary, transareal turn in Caribbean studies focusing on symbolic geographic gestures such as exile, migration, house, camp and prison (like Guantanamo).

Geography is the theme of two more essays, Peter Hulme’s “Oriente” and Jean-Marc Moura’s “Des discours caribéens”: the former argues for a “literary geography” of shared topography and landscape semiotics instead of nation-based categories, though he does not question the artificiality of such concepts as “place”, or (as van Delden does) urban versus rural Cuban literature. Moura also introduces the concept of scenography – i.e., situating an enunciation in the internal or external circumstances of place (scene, ethos, and code) that configure and legitimate it, while noting that the Caribbean constitutes a “paratopia” where literature and language are both in and out of place.

Theo D’haen’s solidly informed essay shows the influence of Caribbean revolutions on Faulkner, Carpentier and Helman, both in the subject matter and form of their novels (the element of the “marvelous real”). Although the Caribbean functioned as the “dark margin” of European modernity since the sixteenth century, it also counter-transformed European conditions, as during the Haitian revolution, where domesticated French Revolution ideals turned against French colonialism. The section concludes rather oddly with Paul Bandia’s well-argued piece on “Postcolonialism, Literary Heteroglossia and Translation,” better suited to the next segment. Bandia delineates the problems of translating multilingual Caribbean texts in a world-context dominated by the monolingualism and “glotto-phagia” of a few powerful languages. Strategies proposed for maintaining pluricultural flavors are code-switching and code-mixing, while translators should arm themselves with both comparativist and postcolonial critical tools.

The final segment, “Caribbean Research Projects,” opens with another highly engaging A. J. Arnold essay that supplements his first: in the process of building the Caribbean Literature Archives (ALC), Arnold researches the case of Exquemelin, the French doctor that served with Caribbean buccaneers against the Spanish slaver fleet. By tracing the transformations of Exquemelin’s narrative identity in its various European translations, Arnold argues powerfully on how European religious wars influenced colonial politics, forming a selective image of the Caribbean for each target audience.

“Intra- and Intersystemic Relations in the Caribbean,” separate or combined, are theoretically modeled by Lieven D’hulst, who uses Systemic Theory to examine the extended Caribbean as defined by (a) “latent or overt tension between its constituent strata” (242) and (b) its various types of “relationality” (243). This appears rather as a call to further projects, such as the one by Nadia Lie, where changes of policy in the Cuban literary review *Casa de las Américas* appear dictated by the system of tightening or loosening political directives, and the ensuing tensions between internationally-influenced literary criticism and domestic Marxist literature favored by the (concluding?) Castro regime.

Liesbeth De Bleeker’s case study of scenography as “defining conditions of enunciation that it itself presupposes” (269) also relates politics to text, in how sceno-graphy supports the *antillanité* of Patrick Chamoiseau’s novels. This essay repeats many notions of the first segment (where it might have fitted better), such as the use of sceno-graphy to subvert francophone hegemony, or “the Creole village” as a resisting *topos*, concluding that Chamoiseau, by speaking not *for* but *with* non-literate people and other Caribbean authors (through allusions), re-conquers Caribbean (literary) space for Creolism.

A more original case of re-appropriation is presented by Biagio D’Angelo’s analysis of “Neo-Baroque Poetics” as “one of the most relevant cultural discourses in the Caribbean and Latin America” (283). D’Angelo shows convincingly, without failing to caution against possible abuses that turn the gesture into empty simulation, how New World authors sensed and appropriated “plutonistically” (287) the deconstructive potential of baroque to convey their own metaphysics of the marvelous real (285). In the same vein, Kathleen Gyssels’ excellent essay echoes Chanady’s focus on Caribbean cannibalism, with stereotypes here overturned and re-appropriated in rewritings of

canonical European works. Highly refreshing, this is the only essay in a volume aspiring to plurilingualism focused on a woman author: the idiosyncratic Maryse Condé and her feminist “literary cannibalism” (297) of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* – as well as on Chamoiseau’s re-appropriation of Hemingway’s and Carpentier’s man-animal relation as a master-slave allegory. Rita de Maeseneer’s essay on “The Contemporary Dominican Literature in the Caribbean Perspective” also deals with appropriation, that of Caribbean neighbors as “Others” that help construct – through migrations or massacres – Dominicans’ self-portrait, upon three axes of investigation: history (the Trujillo dictatorship), space, and popular music “as a form of resistance reflecting upon the sub-altern’s voicelessness” (355).

Against the above foci, the essay by Carla Fratta and Francesca Torchi appears literally displaced, as it consists of a bibliographical overview of research, publishing activity and popular diffusion (via translations) in the nascent field of Caribbean literature and studies in Italy. As it focuses only on

the francophone and italoophone texts, and provides no substantial reason for relating the Caribbean to Italy (not even Columbus?), it feels supplemental, though it does offer a helpful bibliography in the end and makes a good point about how mainstream translations of multilingual Caribbean texts evince problems of linguistic reduction and cultural oversimplification.

All considered, this is a lively and useful volume for those researching (mainly) franco-ophone Caribbean literature and theory, though an extended keyword and title index – perhaps also a collective bibliography – might have helped further. Several typos were also noted, a couple quite evident (e.g., the headers of Moura’s article extend to its pre-ceding essay), and one might wish for a more functional rearrangement of its segments. Still, a certain structural liberty is understandable, given the “*diversalite*” of the subject and that editors of proceedings always have to juggle between the panorama of con-tributors’ approaches and their need for a unifying volume concept.

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**David Brauner, *Philip Roth. Contemporary American and Canadian Writers*, vol. 2. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007.**

*Claudia F. Brühwiler (St. Gallen, Switzerland)*

With Till Kinzel’s thesis on *The Tragedy and Comedy of American Life* (orig. *Die Tragödie und Komödie des amerikanischen Lebens*), Ross Posnock’s *Philip Roth’s Rude Truth*, and Elaine B. Safer’s *Mocking the Age*, those interested in Philip Roth’s work in 2006 alone had three monographs to cover. The biannual appearance of the periodical “Philip Roth Studies” and the original author’s own new works, corroborate David Brauner’s observation that “the criticism has become something of a minor (or maybe not so minor) industry,” which undoubtedly “makes the task of finding something new and worthwhile to say about his work a challenging one” (7). Within the framework of the series “Contemporary American and Canadian Novelists”, David Brauner tackles this task on the one hand by developing theses on sets of mainly later novels by Philip Roth. On the other hand, he juxtaposes them with contemporary as well as earlier novels, ranging from comparisons with Kafka to an encounter with Jonathan Safran Foer’s recent bestseller *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. In light of this volume’s declared goal to provide an overview of the writer’s career and the way it has been perceived, Brauner recapitulates at the outset

of every chapter the critical reaction of both press and scholars to the novels discussed. Brauner’s monograph thus reaches out to new initiates to Roth’s narrative world, but at the same time provides thought-provoking impulses to long-time admirers.

Given the extensive pondering of these aspects in the past research, Brauner only briefly touches upon the questions of the autobiographical part in Roth’s work, the Jewish influence displayed in his narrative, or his political affiliation. Instead, he embarks in the second chapter on “the trials of Nathan Zuckerman, or Jewry as jury,” a contemplation of the cycle *Zuckerman Bound* which comprises the novels *The Ghost Writer* (1979), *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983), and, as its epilogue, *The Prague Orgy* (1985). In his view, these first encounters with Nathan Zuckerman are linked by the dominant trope of the trial. Accentuated by the – at times unexpected – use of legal language and metaphors, we witness Zuckerman being constantly judged for his fictions: confined to literal silence in *The Anatomy Lesson* for betraying his vocation as an artist, condemned by his father in *Zuckerman Unbound* for betraying the family, and cross-examined in *The Ghost Writer*

for his alleged betrayal of his historical duty as a Jew. Ironically, *The Prague Orgy* will reverse all of these accusations.

Whereas *Zuckerman Bound* is indeed bound by an overarching theme, the sub-sequently discussed “generic experiments” (116) – *My Life as a Man* (1974), *The Counterlife* (1986), *The Facts* (1988), *Deception* (1990), and *Operation Shylock* (1993) – rather “repeatedly cannibalise and regurgitate themselves and each other” (51): oscillating between the fictionality of life and the authenticity of fiction, between plurivocality and univocal authorial power, Roth constantly redraws the boundaries separating fact from fiction and mesmerises his readers by frequently changing the rules governing his narrative. While in his “novelist’s autobiography,” as the subtitle of *The Facts* reads, his own creation, Nathan Zuckerman, questions its claim to authenticity, *Deception* on the other hand converges so closely with reality that even Roth’s second wife felt exposed. The different levels of narrative reality are even more delicately entwined in *My Life as a Man* where Roth delineates Peter Tarnopol’s attempts at writing “his story as fiction and autobiography” and at transforming “his life into fiction” (57). Albeit less blurry, the boundaries between fictional and factual reality are also anything but clear in the alleged “confession” *Operation Shylock* which leaves the reader constantly wondering who is pulling the strings, for reasons enunciated by Brauner:

“On the one hand, it’s a novel about ‘The Uncontrollability of Real Things’ and the powerlessness of the novelist who gets caught up in a reality not of his making. On the other hand, it constantly draws attention to the ways in which its characters are themselves puppets being manipulated by the author.” (114)

This ambiguity sets *Operation Shylock* apart from *The Counterlife* which, in the manner of Carol Anshaw’s *Aquamarine*, offers different narrative options; but in spite of the constant reversals and subversions of sequences, their narrator Nathan Zuckerman keeps the strings in his hands.

Having taken his readers through a challenging narrative swirl that at times overstrains one’s capacities, Roth returned to a more conventional narrative set-up (though not tune) with *Sabbath’s Theater* (1995), depicting – as the title of Brauner’s fourth chapter says – “old men behaving badly”. However, the plural “men” does not apply to Roth’s novel itself, since we are dealing only with one eternal misanthrope, Michael Sabbath, “an advocate of immorality and mortality” (145). In Stanley Elkin’s

*The Guest* (1996) Brauner indeed finds Sabbath’s brother in spirit, Bertie, who partakes in his reversal of values:

“While they are tolerated, pitied forgiven, they are humiliated... For both Sabbath and Bertie, behaving badly is their way of reassuring themselves of their continuing vitality and virility ...; by implication the niceness of their male rivals signifies enervation and impotence.” (139-40)

Both protagonists have unmasked themselves and stand as mirrors of society’s hypocrisy. Unmasking and exposures are also recurrent themes of Zuckerman’s American Trilogy, encompassing the novels *I Married A Communist* (1998), the tale of a communist trying to remain a radio-star and his wife repressing her Jewish roots; *American Pastoral* (1997), the account of Seymour Levov’s attempt to live the WASPish American dream, but has to witness his daughter turning into a terrorist; and *The Human Stain* (2000), the story of Coleman Silk’s struggle to hide his Afro-American roots and pass for a Jew, only to find himself accused of racism. For Brauner, the last title cited encapsulates Zuckerman’s attitude towards humanity, for to him, “to be alive, to be human, is to be stained” – but not only in a Christian sense: “it is our bodily needs and functions ... that make us human” (179). The constant struggles of the Trilogy’s characters against their roots, their longing for purity are futile, because they cannot escape the predicament of their humanity.

And they will not escape history, since the “tension between the individual capacity for self-determination and the deterministic forces of history” (148) is likewise a topic central to the Trilogy. This applies even more to the protagonist of *The Plot Against America* (2004), Roth’s re-written history of the United States during World War II. Young Philip Roth, not to be confused with the writer himself, has to witness the rise of a Hitler friendly government under the hero of aviation, Charles Lindbergh, and experiences the impact of these political changes on his family’s destiny. Coinciding with his elder brother’s adolescence and his own loss of the security of childhood, young Philip weaves, as Brauner puts it in the title of the sixth chapter, “fantasies of flight and flights of fancy,” continuously imagining himself parentless, hoping thus to flee the necessity to grow up. In spite of the rather conventional set-up of a political scenario novel, Roth has not lost his desire to juggle with realities, as he proves in the appendix of *The Plot* which provides an overview of the historical facts: Roth therein implies, in Brauner’s eyes,

that the story contains historical fact, and also, through

the use of the oxymoron ‘historical imagining’, that what is imagined may in some sense be historical, and that what is historical may in some sense be imagined” (212ff).

In his afterword, Brauner briefly returns to the topic dominating *Sabbath’s Theater*, human mortality, this time, however, in order to glance at Roth’s short novel *Everyman* (2006) which traces the physical decline of its unnamed protagonist. That the theme would also pervade Zuckerman’s final appearance in 2007’s *Exit Ghost* could not be foreseen, and it might not be the last encounter of a Rothian protagonist with it, for the prolific author stated in an interview with the *New Yorker*, published in the issue of 1 October:

“In the beginning, Zuckerman gave me Zuckerman; later he gave me the Ringolds, the Swede and Coleman

Silk. Will I miss him? No. I’m curious to see who and what will replace him.”

So are we – and so will the “industry” of criticism, as Brauner dubbed it.

But in spite of the rich corpus of critical readings on Roth, Brauner has succeeded in capturing new facets of Roth’s works. Although the monograph might not be easily accessible for novices to Roth’s works, it is highly valuable for all those getting acquainted with the criticism and those who are tackling his more complex and experimental works. The chapters’ logical set-up and the thoughtful introductory paragraphs as well as the critical contextualization enlighten one’s path through Roth’s works themselves and the subsequent criticism.

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**Georgi Vasilev. *Heresy and the English Reformation: Bogomil-Cathar Influence on Wycliffe, Langland, Tyndale and Milton*. McFarland, 2008.**

ISBN 978-0-7864-3005-5, notes, bibliography, index. 212 pp. Softcover.

*Roumen Genov (Sofia, Bulgaria)*

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### *Medieval Surprises*

I have chosen this title for my review because *Heresy and English Reformation: Bogomil-Cathar influence on Wycliffe, Langland, Tyndale and Milton\**, by Georgi Vasilev, really offers a new and original perspective on English medieval literature and culture. The period in question, in fact, stretches further in history.

Prof. Georgi Vasilev, Ph.D., D.Litt., is teaching European civilization and Old Bulgarian literature at the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Bulgaria, Sofia. E-mail: <g.vasilev@cust.skknnet.net>; web: www.geocities.com/bogomil1bg>. In his well-sourced study, Vasilev claims that from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in English culture there has been a tendency towards dualistic, i.e. Bogomil-Cathar, imagery and thought, which have their origin in Bulgarian apocrypha such as *The Legend of the Tree*, *The Secret Book* of Bogomils, or *Interrogatio Johannis*, *Oratione of St. John Chrysostom on how Michael Vanquished Satanael*, or apocryphal texts used and disseminated by dualists: *The Dispute between Our Lord Jesus Christ and Antichrist*, *Gospel of Nicodemus*, *The Tiberiad See*, *The Infancy Gospel*. The cornerstones of this influence are the 14<sup>th</sup> century poet William Langland, the reformers John Wycliffe and William Tyndale, the great John Milton, and the visionary poet of genius and painter, William Blake.

The major contributions of the study are, firstly,

finding out the image of Christ the Ploughman from *The Legend of the Tree*, composed by the Bulgarian priest Jeremiah (p.110), present in the 14<sup>th</sup> century ceramic tiles series of Tring (near London); and secondly, discovering that John Milton borrowed scenes from the *The Secret Book* of the Bogomils and other apocrypha, which is confirmed by comparative textual analysis.

According to Vasilev, the image of Piers Plowman is an English version of Christ the Ploughman from *The Legend of the Tree*, and he focuses attention on certain undeniably dualist expressions in Langland’s text. Vasilev also sees the episode of Christ teaching the ploughman how to plough as coming from the old Bulgarian apocrypha *The Legend of the Tree* in scene 28 (in M. R. James’s numbering) of the ceramic tiles series of the church of Tring, which is no longer in existence. In fact, this is only a single instance of a whole series of Lollard iconography depicting Christ as farmer or the Christ of trades, described in the study by T. Borenius and E. W. Tristram, *English Medieval Paintings* (1927).

Vasilev finds obviously dualistic overtones in many of John Wycliffe’s theses, e.g. his famous phrase *God debet obedire diabolo* (God ought to obey the devil), in unison with the fundamental Bogomilic-Cathar formula that the devil is the unrightful master of this world (p.62).

Similarly, William Tyndale’s sentence “God and the devil are two contrary fathers, two contrary

fountains, and two contrary causes: the one of all goodness, the other of all evil.” (p.83) almost repeats the basic Bogomilic tenet: “...there are two principles, a good one and a bad, one the creator of light, the other of darkness, one of men, the other of the angels and other living bodies...” On the very first page of his great poem *Paradise Lost*, and on throughout that work, Milton refers to the Bogomilic tale of Satan’s revolt against God and his fall from heaven. The grand epic, and also several of the episodes in *Paradise Regained*, represent an artistic reworking of key moments of the apocryphal *The Dispute between Our Lord Jesus Christ and Antichrist*. Finally, in his treatises, undeservedly termed by some literary scholars “pamphlets”, John Milton suggests that the English Presbyterian Church follows the model of the old heretical churches of the Waldensians and the Cathars.

Another major contribution of the book is the information it provides about the transfer of apocryphal and dualist literature from the Continent to England. One of the most convincing cases is the one concerning a substantial collection of heretical writings given to Samuel Morland by Jean Léger, pastor of the valley of Lucerne (p.147), when the former was acting as Oliver Cromwell’s commissioner to protect the Waldensians of Piedmont, who in 1655 were subjected, at papal instigation, to ruthless extermination by the troops of the Duke of Savoy. The evidence in support of apocryphal influences (*Oratione of St. John Chrysostom on how Michael Vanquished Satanael* and *Infancy Gospel*) on the texts and prints of William Blake is set out in the section “Blake and beyond”: the need for further exploration” (p.157). Vasilev’s research acquires even greater credibility from the fact that he uses primary sources in English, French, Provençal, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, and Russian.

Proving the alleged influence of the ideas of the Swiss Reformation historian Henry Fusseli, through

his relative the painter Johann Fusseli, on William Blake, needs, however, a more detailed investigation. Greater attention should be paid to the relation between the Lollards and the Puritans. Some English authors have already noted such a lineage between some of the southern Lollard communities and the Puritans, but without substantiating it or carrying out further research. It is logical to expect that, while tracing the Bogomilic-Cathar influences through the communities and culture of the Lollards to the leaders of the English Reformation, Vasilev should offer us an interpretation of the relationship between the Lollards and Puritans.

By way of conclusion I would like to say that the novel idea of how the Bogomilic-Cathar influence reached the British Isles and found its way into English literature and culture, thus forming part of the Pan-European dualist expansion, which stretches farthest to the north, and – as it turns out – the most durable one, deserves serious attention.

The transfers of ideas and imagery indicated in this volume are remarkable examples of early cultural influence in Europe, of *interculturalité*, which foreshadows today’s deliberate and desired cultural dialogue within the integrated Europe of today. Vasilev’s work is justifiably dedicated to the renowned Bulgarian writer and humanist Stefan Gechev (1911-2000), who was not only a distinguished expert in Bogomilic scholarship, but managed, during the years when Bulgaria was isolated by the ruling communist regime, to introduce through his fine translations from Greek, French and English important elements of contemporary European literature.

Finally, I cannot but agree with the comment in *The Year’s Work in English Studies 2007* on the earlier version of Georgi Vasilev’s book (Sofia, 2005): “This thought-provoking study is sure to incite further work in the area.”

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## **Stan Smith (ed), *Globalisation and its Discontents***

Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006.

*José Carlos Redondo-Olmedilla (Almería, Spain)*

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Globalisation is often portrayed as an overpowering new force which, depending on your perspective, will shatter or save the planet. Any good analysis on this subject is torn between admiration and fear. For many the discourse of modernity and the phenomenon of globalisation tune magnificently and what was initially intended as a weapon to destroy capitalism is paradoxically its best ally. For others the opinion is that there exists only a disabled kind

of globalisation which is only economic in nature. The erroneously called anti-globalisation movement aspires to a proper ‘global globalis-ation’. For many a virtuous vice, for yet others a mistaken concept, for others a discourse that lacks perspective in time as it often ignores the difference or similarity between present globalisation and previous globalising times. Not only this, but one must also take into account the usage of a panoply of terms that this subject has

produced: 'glocalization', 'overlapping fields of global-local linkages,' 'offshoring', 'overarching umbrella', 'ethnocentrism', 'acculturation', 'coca-colonization', 'globalized panlocality', 'commodification' 'transnationality of commodity chains', 'cultural miscegenation.' Everyone is able to see how the nature of life is changing around the world; modern technologies and anticapitalist protests have thrust globalisation into the spotlight.

In this context of several directions and responses, *Globalisation and its Discontents* describes this current struggle with gusto. Although inevitably Anglocentric in its concerns, this work is more than mildly committed to the idea of a universal antiglobal fraternity. This ideological and aesthetic brotherhood can operate openly or surreptitiously, but it is a must in the dialectical and diachronical process of globalisation. Smith's work could lead us mistakenly to the homonymous Joseph E. Stiglitz's book which, although considered today as a major reference for economists and politicians, has an altogether narrower scope than the text under study. The present book, edited by Stan Smith for the English Association, aims to provide clear and illustrative examples of the phenomenon of globalisation through different and stimulating chapters. It apparently reveals a delicate trend in recent criticism as it is engaged in a much-debated topic of our time, but it is definitely more ambitious.

*Globalization and its Discontents* is polyhedron-like in the ways it conveys and analyses globalisation, but, at the same time, it is a solid read. The introduction synthesises and acts like a true hors d'oeuvre to what appears later. We must admit that it presents the virtue of variety, for not only is it transnational, but also moves across times and periods. In chapter 1 "Arabesque: Shakespeare and Globalisation," Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey present an example of the kind of linguistic imperialism and universalization of English by bringing striking links and relationships between Shakespeare's mind and his globalising power as a true global image-maker: 'The world can know itself in Shakespeare because Shakespeare knew the world' (27), 'The round skull of the poet mapped the vast known world within this concentrated space of theatrical representation' (28). Furthermore, the authors do not ignore the globalising capacity of Shakespeare through his use of international tools. We know that William Shakespeare's plays are always located somewhere, in time and space, and those features define more than confine. This chapter also presents globalisation as a controversial term. We recognize that there are many types of globalisation and that economic

globalisation is not (though it can imply) cultural globalisation. The authors of the article account for the fact that many people take the term globalisation to mean and directly to entail homogenisation, but things are not so simple or so obvious. It is true that postcolonial criticism has favoured the broadening of some features and considerations. But there is also a coalescence between some Shakespearean plays and the globalisation phenomenon. The authors point out some features that could possibly hinder a global reading of *Hamlet* such as the Scandinavian Viking roots of English-ness, or the whiteness abstraction embodied in the characters and in the landscape. They also account for more Eurocentric or even 'Euromediterranean' readings of the work, in the sense that there is a clear bond with what the play represents in European cultural terms. But for the authors the conclusion is obvious: "Shakespeare's tragedy is truly global and Hamletism is a universal phenomenon." The chapter moves at random in some places by comparing the Shakespearean characters through time. In this sense, the authors mention the way Richard Curtis' *Skinhead Hamlet* is a parody and a travesty, a grotesque imitation of Shakespeare's play. Globalisation is inevitable, but is it desirable? It depends. If we interpret the play in terms of disaffection it is immediately globalised, in spite of its postcolonial framework and its process of 'ghettification' (imperial culture/fragmented diaspora of colonial outposts). This opening chapter, though virtuous in many ways, as in its consideration that globalisation is marked by the development of diverse, overlapping fields of global-local linkages (1) and in its grasping of the fact that the idea of conflict is practically inherent to that of global-ization, it could well have expanded the scope of the three meanings of globalisation on which it seems to have based its analysis: global consciousness, cultural imperialism, and universal communication

Chapter 2 "(En)countering Gobalisation: Resistances in the System" is one of the principal chapters in the book. It presents and traces globalisation as a drive to unify economic systems and cultural practices, but at the same time confers the true importance to the key idea of resistance. One cannot deny that this analysis is partial and fragmented, but it is made clear from the beginning that this is the authoress' intention. Jennifer Birkett travels from Europe to the Caribbean to draw a sharper contrast between the symbol of fixed frontiers and close identities and the unpredictable identities and openness of diversity and

'miscegenation'. But this is neither a typical black and white scrutiny nor a typical western form of self-punishment inflicted on a psychologist's chaise-loungue. It ponders the performances and achievements of the European mind at the same time as it recollects some of its tools: exchange, competition and cooperation. Furthermore, the authoress does not ignore brilliant moments in the recent history of Europe, such as the *Commission internationale de cooperation intellectuelle*, the forerunner of UNESCO set up in 1921. But what is relevant in this feeling of Europeaness that the authoress tries to convey before moving to the other side of the Atlantic is the 'doubleness' of the European mind. She magnificently captures the dual compartment (trade-revolution) voyage to the rest of the globe. This part of the chapter could be understood as the European quota of the essay, but only the unaware can ignore the European part played in present day globalisation. Birkett's chapter is undoubtedly subjective and misses several *tesellae*, but the scholar simply presents certain evidence. Africa is skimmed though the 1970s global swamps as in the case of V. S. Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River* (1979). Naipaul's book is a good choice as it involves the representation of multinationals as well as trade, and the subordination and exploitation exposed make it clear that there is resistance to be fought from within and 'the natural human condition of miscegenation' (60). The study within the chapter gathers momentum as it approaches the Caribbean, the location that is more interesting in terms of resistance and which is 'generating the most productive forms of poetic resistance' (62). We know that there are many controllers of the subjects of globalisation, and that one of the most important is time, but culturally speaking, for such a recently colonised place, the Caribbean is a tremendously rich *locus*. The scholar takes us to wander and wonder about the collection of local identities, the place of undifferentiation, this *plethora of loci amoeni*, the pleasures of miscegenation in a kind of ideal mind archipelago. It is evident that a bit more charting is lacking, though we equally know that this task is both daring and risky. In the meantime insightful statements involving language and globalisation make good reading and make it clear that when a language becomes the mechanism of a *lingua franca*, if everybody can speak it indifferently, it dies.

In "Double trouble: George Orwell, Martha Gelhorn and the War to End Global Imperialism," Phyllis Lassner implies a view that tries to bestow a righteous value on what the victory and bankruptcy

of Britain and other allied countries meant after World War II. Without that dual carriageway the postcolonial world would have been different. A nuance frequently ignored, as the author shows, is that the colonial crisis cannot be separated from the global crisis of the Second World War. Racism and oppression were not exclusive to the defeated totalitarian forces. The winners, too, exerted disguised oppression and racism that were resolved thanks to the new weakness the victors experienced from winning the battle. We know that History is full of paradoxes and oxymorons. This oxymoric dual nature of the consequences of the fight and the atmosphere prior to the fight is made evident in George Orwell's essay, 'Marrakech' (1939) and Martha Gellhorn's novel, *Liana* (1944). The choice of Orwell is more than suitable as we know that he is the writer who probably best epitomizes the fight against any kind of totalitarian power, and we realize that Orwell projects the message further and deeper than the anti-colonial stand. How long are the Europeans going to maintain their dual status of ensnared and ensnarers? The kind of Orwell that appears in the essay is one that anticipates the moral ambiguities that tortured and would torture many intellectuals of the 20th and 21st century. 'Marrakech' is a milestone, expressing a passion for truth not achieved in 'official' postcolonial thought. Lassner presents a dual Orwell because thanks to the Orwellian transmogrification, globalisation can be grasped through duality, and it is duality that makes us see the global Orwell so clearly. In Gelhorn's *Liana*, Lassner analyses one of the examples of French colonialism during the Second World War. France, as we know, fell into a dual trap: the war itself and the willing participation of the Vichy regime, but the novel is not so concerned with Nazi oppression as it is a global war-story more worried about an ulterior message: the war to defeat totalitarianism in Europe is also a global war against racism. Here Phyllis Lassner emphasises that the authoress associates the oxymoron of the colonial affair to the opposing moral reactions to the war. It is a coupling but at the same time it is also a displacement. It is a pity that her scholarship remains unenhanced due to a lack of more illustrating examples.

In "Lost Worlds: Southern Italy and the Resistance to Globalisation," Sharon Ouditt engages herself in setting a practical example of the refusal to accept globalisation in a land traditionally used to forms of globalisation: Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Hohenstaufens, Angevins, Bourbons ... as is the case of southern Italy. To start with, the



essay gauges globalisation properly not as an effect of current capitalism, but as a kind of inner force essential to the spread of human civilization. Ouditt grants a good deal of her attention to travel writing, a literary category that has been associated with the imperial gaze, but has also facilitated valuable individual experiences and magnificent records and portraits of reality. However, there is more value in this exercise as she demonstrates that travel writing can constitute a globalisation exercise, as the expressions of nostalgia for past civilisations can juxtapose time and space. These travel writers are the ones that make possible a multilayered and hybrid past-present. Sharon Ouditt mixes delight at the ancients' globalisation(s) and some contempt for the kind of haughtiness shown in our times when we think of globalisation as an exclusive contemporary phenomenon. It is clear that the travelogues vary depending on the cultural perspective, but it is equally true that a deeper analysis not only accounting for the globalised practice of tourism in Southern Italy is missed. To help explain globalisation in the region and in our time better, some kind of miscegenation records could have been used. In the meantime it is a good retrospective analysis that leaves the doors to information open.

Tony Sharpe in "The Planet on the Table: Some Modernist Perspectives on Globalism" starts by linking 'modernisation' and 'Modernism'. Much of this chapter is devoted to the homogeneity of heterogeneity, as we know that the universalist aspirations of modernism contradict the unending heterogeneous and variegated realities in it. Sharpe makes correct guesses on many aspects and confirms the true spirit of discomfort that characterised Modernism. Tony Sharpe reminds us with helpful examples about how the new promiscuous world of Modernism and supposed unification proceeded at a high cost. There were many disjointed details, new scales, new elements, new intrusions, chaos, and a need to redefine the world. This is clearly seen in James Joyce's omnipresent derision and necessity for parochialism. Another good example can be seen in the school of the 'armchair anthropologists', represented in the possibility of the world in a resting place, an effective example of the convergence between the different major locations in the world and the minor location at home. It is the kind of 'imaginative understanding offered by Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*: the world at your fingertips, or a new edition of it, with psychological and artistic elements as in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Tony Sharpe's perception of the global perspectives of Modernism (or vice versa?) brings

back the idea of plenitude, and shows that the alien rhetoric of the movement, if it was once so, borders on the comprehension and rationalisation of otherness as it approaches globalisation.

Edward Larrissy's "Irish writing and Globalisation" focuses mainly on two locations – America and Europe – as they represent symbolic locations in Ireland's literary effort to distinguish Irish and British culture. The array and sampling of Irish authors – including Paul Muldoon, Dermot Bolger, Justin Quinn – is calibrated, but could be commonplace. Nevertheless what proves to be the crucial point in the chapter is the Hegelian part, the one that also informs Simon During's study on 'Post-colonial-ism and Globalisation'. During poses interesting questions and most are directly or indirectly related to dialectics, especially to the dialectics of colonialism and globalism. He refers to these drives, forces, like Macpherson's poems, 'crucial in the dispersion of ethnicities across Europe because they urged the claims of indigenous literary traditions and at the same time cannily support a state embarking on a new stage of globalism' (136).

In chapter 8 "Local Habitations, Global Names: Les Murray and the Poetry Superleague," Michael Murphy tries to create a position for the 'superleague of poets' – a term which appeared in the 1990s and that includes the poets Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott, Joseph Brodsky, as well Les Murray. The stance taken towards the poets is offered in terms that could offer an interpretation of modernity as being inextricably enmeshed in globalisation. For Michael Murphy the individual influences and collective concerns of these poets recall Blaise Pascal's circle to some extent, where the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere. In this sense, the references to Anthony Giddens are more than appropriate as this author refers to the aforementioned dialectical process and as they are perfectly applicable to the poets of the superleague: 'a dialectical process whereby local transformations are not only a cause of globalisation but an essential component of its being'. Moving between the poles of modernity and globalisation one encounters the geographical space where the superleague's poets live. Old but newly rescued terms such as *Völkerwanderung* are enlightening and reinforce the idea that globalisation is not a new phenomenon. Murray in the core part of the chapter reinforces the idea of global wandering beyond the frontiers of physical space, giving relevance to dreaming, a tool that allows one to denationalize and that allows the cohabitation of a far-off mythic past and the historical present. The analysis ends with the treatment of

Les Murray's picaresque verse-novel *Fredy Neptune*. In this analysis we can see how after several interpretative codas Michael Murphy finds a definite one, a kind of vanishing and integrational interpretation because all the wandering of the main character of the work finds respite in the local exemplifying of what Murray means when he says, 'there is no place more global than a village' (159).

As is stated at the beginning, chapter 9 "Business as Usual: The image of Corporation in the Cultures of Globalisation" is of a speculative nature. Here Liam Connell, seems deliberately to attempt to find a more insightful analysis of globalisation through speculation. We know that the formation of corporations is one of the myths of globalisation, and so the chapter tries to shed some light on a range of human attitudes belonging to people under the influence of business and appearing in recent narrative texts. This chapter can even be interpreted as a postcolonial view on colonial attitudes, especially if we account for the work spirit in some corporations and their disguised enslavement systems. The author also introduces the subject of the symbiosis between corporations and globalisation as an obvious socio-economic phenomenon. He means to show that the decline in the sovereignty of national governments is identified with the internationalisation of business in our present-day capitalist economies. The idea of resistance emerges again in this essay: those who are unable to resist the supranational thrust, the governments; and those who, like some intellectuals and some pressure groups or some trends in contemporary narratives, exert influence over governments and manoeuvre them out of the supranational thrust. But if some popular narratives present a distrust of foreign corporations according to the author, the analysis of them as an inherited fear of the Cold War transformed now into post-modern anxieties is a statement that needs some explanation. The dismantling of the postwar atmosphere brought the deconstruction of a system and new appendages. The fears existed on either side of the Iron Curtain and were really about the relationship between authority and subservience, such as those that face the totalizing face of globalisation. The most revealing point, however, is when Mr Connell highlights the pendulum behaviour of critical narratives and their adaptation to the capitalist environment through an alternative way. It is at least a pyrrhic victory.

The last part of this book is by the editor Stan Smith himself. His "Epic logos: On Last Looking into several Homers" is truly modernist in the spirit it

confers on language and post-modernist in the *esprit* it gives to fragmentation as a deconstruction of global motivations into subjectivity. Smith introduces the *Polytropic Man* by presenting the wonderful example that Seamus Heaney set himself on the occasion of his 1995 Stockholm Address on accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature. Young Heaney, a child twiddling the dials of the wireless, was encompassing what could not be encompassed, 'a journey into the wideness of the world beyond' (188). This serves as a wise movement for an exercise of deconstruction in which Heaney is himself deconstructed and relativised through a projection in which poetic subjects are made out of conflicting narratives. This final chapter also exemplifies the connexion with tradition through the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the former there is a conversion of subjects into simple bodies, in the latter there is an insistence on intersubjectivity. For Stan Smith, Homer provided the moral and ethical template of Europe and its civilisation, but one must be careful because there are several Homers and the objective logos can suppress the subjective element. Smith parallels the beginning of this century with three millennia before. It is the everlasting imperial logos 'proclaiming peace and commanding war' (199). With no doubt this last chapter serves to articulate the meaning and course of globalisation by framing it within former times.

Today more than ever globalisation is a meta-narrative and, in this sense, the different parts of the book, varied as they are, constitute both socio-anthropological and literary-anthropological attempts to comprehend globalisation in our world. No study that properly intends to approach globalisation can ignore the social and anthropological dimensions in it; consequently, the study does justice to this observable fact.

On the other hand, if the present work can be said to have a weakness, then it resides in the enormous ground it tries to cover. One occasionally feels that the emphasis should fall on a given section and that some of the points covered in the chapters have been dealt somewhat randomly. However, each chapter offers a monographic analysis on a particular topic and a pondered final opinion about the globalisation phenomenon. Precisely because of that, the work results in tactical eclecticism.

The writing is generally unpretentious without being unscholarly and full of meaningful statements allowing thoughtful but pleasant reading. If globalisation has something of an extravaganza of deployed cultures that forcefully converge, the collection's introduction is not only a good tool of

anticipation, but also a measured and concise element. The book may be a bit tangled in some parts and may disappoint the reader in small matters, but most of the collaborators in the volume are to be congratulated for incorporating such a vast array of well-documented details, and above all for presenting and applying the virtues of the dialectical approach. It certainly puts globalisation under scrutiny. All in all, it is a dynamic approach to an understanding of globalisation, a view on some of the interconnections, contradictions and syntheses

of globalisation. At the same time it is a book of significance because it embraces the ideal and material dialectics of the debate surrounding globalisation. It is a work which approaches globalisation not from a perspective slanting towards resistance or towards a rigid antithesis. The reader gets the impression that she/he enters a metaphysical sphere of the dialectical mode and elaborates her/his own synthesis. It invites the reader to participate in a much discussed debate, a demanding but unavoidable debate in our times.

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**Pamela Gossin, *Thomas Hardy's Novel Universe: Astronomy, Cosmology, and Gender in the Post-Darwinian World*. The Nineteenth Century Series. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007, pp. xvii + 300. ISBN: 9780754603368.**

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Gossin's is the first book-length study devoted to Thomas Hardy's use of astronomy and cosmology. The ambitious subtitle only partially explains its subject matter, which both covers a wider temporal spectrum and alludes to a wider range of authors. Hardy's own work is the main focus of the second part of the book, while the first hundred pages offer a long and comprehensive introduction to critical methodology as well as the development of astronomy and cosmology, both from a purely historical as well as a literary stance.

Gossin starts with a rather apologetic remark about the interdisciplinary nature of her study, and even though this long biographical *incipit* helps the reader assess the solid cultural background of the author, in my opinion the underlying claim to embark on a project as yet almost unattempted is rather far-fetched. Gossin's premise that "no one of us has fulfilled Hardy's heart's desire to have his life, work and thought represented 'truly'" culminates in a surprising statement: "Of course there is, perhaps, no one who could better empathize with the ineluctable futility of our efforts than Hardy himself, whose every work was a failed experiment in representing 'truly' life and the universe within him and around him" (xiv). It nearly goes without saying that, as a Hardy enthusiast, I do not agree; to me, the whole argument sounds like a *captatio favoris* in order to be forgiven the inevitable shortcomings of the original approach, which is in fact duly motivated and explained:

Bringing methods of analysis and values of historical inquiry from the history of science to literature seems an apt choice for close reading of primary texts which themselves display – as Hardy's texts do – the deep integration of historical, scientific and

literary materials and concerns. (xv)

The introductory chapter produces several sweeping generalizations and raises too many issues to tackle, and in my opinion the attempt to offer different methodological models for the reading of primary texts in fact turns out to be the real *bathos* of the book, spoiling its solid scientific quality. For instance, the five introductory questions to eight mysterious quotations (sources are revealed only four pages on!) on life, death, history and literature are supposedly aimed at opening up the reader's conscience on the complexity of the act of reading; yet, I cannot help thinking that they rather add to the confusion of the paragraph, and that each of them would deserve a critical study of its own: "What is out there? What is in here (my heart and mind)? And, who by the way, are you? What can we mean to each other? Is there really no exit?" (12-13).

Chapter 2, however, offers an interesting, annotated summary of the literary history of astronomy and cosmology from Prehistory through the Victorian age. Gossin's effort to squeeze such an extensive lapse of time within 12 pages is undoubtedly laudable and shows rigorous method in selecting the relevant issues among a wealth of data. Yet, the reader might wonder at the necessity of this section, as part of a book of literary criticism. Personally, even though I was glad to learn something about a different field of study, I would have appreciated a more explicit and concrete link between this huge amount of information and data and their literary appropriation in the Victorian age. In sum, the introductory section is extremely ambitious in its aim to offer a comprehensive view of the literary history of astronomy and cosmology, but owing to its concise approach, when we get to nodal issues

like the Victorian antinomy between the utopian visions of space travel and the “darker literary treatment of the laws of physics” conveyed in Conrad’s novels (38), we as readers are not allowed to know more nor are we given any bibliographical references. Thus, while the author apologises for her “all-too-brief” (39) introduction, I would rather define it ‘all-too-broad’. On the contrary, the brief section on the scholarly engagement of the history of astronomy offers useful references to the critical studies devoted to this subject (39n15)

The final subchapter on the origins of Hardy’s literary cosmology redeems the previous ones, first by offering a solid account of the writer’s philosophical and scientific background, and secondly by reporting and commenting the main entries from the *Literary Notebooks* related to the origin and meaning of life, the supernatural, science, and Darwinism. Gossin’s comments are generally perceptive and documented, apart from a few peremptory remarks left dangling, like “Hardy shows how other characters successfully deal with the world by relying on inner character, moral strength, and human caring” (51).

Chapter 3, entitled “The *Other* ‘Terrible Muse’”, retraces the history of astronomy and cosmology from ancient times to the Victorian age, and once again Gossin’s all-embracing approach did not meet my expectations. I cannot reconcile the idea of an undoubtedly scholarly study with the introduction of an entire section devoted to the reader’s compelled ‘revision’ of his undergraduate studies. For instance, we are given a detailed summary of Plato’s natural philosophy (62), of Aristotle’s stance, as well as of the Copernican Revolution... Maybe, when the author writes that “university students in the British Empire were no strangers to Aristotle” (63), she should be reminded that neither are we nowadays readers....

The subchapter on Victorian astronomy and cosmology is extremely interesting, in that it accounts both for the cultural climate of the age and for the main astronomical discoveries and inventions, such as Daguerre’s photograph and Herschel’s telescope. There is only one contradictory statement, in that the presentation of an analytical listing of “four forms of astronomical terrors” (80) is dismissed soon after by the author’s statement that: “there was nothing *newly* ‘terrible’ or freshly fear-inducing about Victorian astronomy and cosmology *per se* – the individual’s readiness for the encounter was all” (82). If this means that the causes of ‘terror’ had always been there in the cosmos, but became available to the general knowledge only in the

Victorian age, in my opinion this fact cannot impair the relevance of the new awareness.

The second section – “Reading Hardy’s Novel Universe” – finally meets the demand of the title, with four chapters entirely devoted to the reading of astronomy and cosmology in his novels, and a concluding chapter on cosmology and gender in nineteenth-century Britain. This study is cleverly constructed and deserves close attention, both for its interesting and original content and for the interrelatedness among the chapters, each portraying a stage of the development of Hardy’s literary use of astronomical and cosmological knowledge. Even though Gossin’s labelling of Hardy as a cosmologist (106) may sound rather peremptory, in fact her detailed report of the writer’s deep interest in Proctor’s work and of his speculations on life and the cosmos give the reader a clear idea of the wideness and depth of his interest.

Chapter 5 tackles the issue of Hardy’s cosmology in three early novels: *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, and *The Return of the Native*. Gossin’s reading of the first novel offers several perceptive hints, such as her remark on Knight’s aloofness from his environment, as a refusal of the general Darwinian “instinct for joy” (126), or on Hardy’s use of meteorology “to invert the pathetic fallacy” (127) and convey the presence of a *fatum ex machina* (129). Likewise, particularly effective and convincing are the reading of Gabriel Oak’s “indifference to fate” as mirror of a Schopenhauerian attitude to life (140), and the metaphorization of Troy as an “ephemeral atmospheric phenomenon” (143) which “temporarily distracts the eye of Bathsheba away from the natural (and celestial) light represented by Gabriel” (142).

The analysis of *The Return of the Native* offers an enjoyable insight into the novel’s astronomical tropes and their link to the protagonists’ inner nature. Apart from Clym’s already underlined photophobia as a psychological refusal to see things in their true light, Gossin perceptively highlights the implications of Hardy’s metaphor of the ‘double stars’ in relation to Clym and Eustacia’s bond.

The core chapter, devoted to *Two on a Tower*, is introduced by an inedited biographical account of Hardy’s meticulous preparation for the scientific subject of the novel, and the analysis is centred on several quotations about the increasing significance of the cosmological foundations of the narrative structure. The protagonists are at once seen as imbued and overwhelmed by the magnitude of what they perceive as “a vastness they could not cope with even as an idea, and which could hang about

them like a nightmare” (163). Swithin and Viviette are interpreted as the “postlapsarian Adam and Eve” (164) who struggle in order to find their identity under the guidance of astronomy, the new religion for the modern age. The whole analysis is persuasively conducted in the light of the metaphor of the variable stars and of the stellar dynamics:

Hardy describes Swithin and Viviette as exhibiting behaviour similar to that of eclipsing binaries changing over time their relative positions on personal, social, even geographical planes. Their orbits around each other are functions of their mutual attraction, relative distances, brightness and age. Hardy reinforces his suggestion that his main characters (and we) are star stuff, by extending the symbolic presence of astronomy in their world. (175)

Even though this one-sided reading at times results in a few simplistic conclusions which seem to impair the depth of the discussion (194-95), the overall interpretation is undoubtedly subtle and solidly supported by intertextual evidence, taken from Hardy’s sources as well as from his poems.

In chapter 7, the reading of *The Woodlanders* posits the thesis of Hardy’s “consideration of the possibilities of living a full and fruitful life [upon the freshly created *tabula rasa* of the woods], in contrast to the probabilities of living an empty and meaningless existence” (204). The characters’ actions are accordingly assessed in metaphorical relation to the natural cycles of sunlight and moonlight. In the appraisal of *Tess* this last attempt to inscribe the fictional texture within the web of a natural universe is superseded by a more complex vision of the struggle between the protagonist’s instinctual response to life and “the gods of social law, [which], abetted by the Malthusian calculus, will claim more victims” (219) in the last novel. *Jude* is thus seen as the enactment of the impossibility to create a realistic character who possesses the qualities to survive in his natural and social environment. Even though Gossin seems to forget about Arabella, her overall conclusion sounds surprisingly probable. Her thesis that Hardy’s characters could have turned fate in their favour

meets too many ‘ifs’ (226), while it lacks the final and fundamental one: if they had been different characters! Likewise, I fail to understand why at the end of such a thorough analysis of the writer’s aesthetic use of scientific knowledge the author should change the course of her clever critical appraisal in order to conclude on a forcedly optimistic note: “The loving kindness of Elfride, the loyalty of Viviette, the vitality of Tess need not be sacrificed in this world or to this world, and if they are not sacrificed to it, they may save it.”...but, unfortunately, they are sacrificed.

“Moral Astrophysics: Myth, Cosmos, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century Britain and Beyond” (chapter 8) is a useful *coda* that brings full circle the thesis of Hardy’s interest in the “interaction between the inner life of conscious awareness, perception, psychology, and personality and the outer life of nature and culture” (230). Unfortunately, when the argument turns to gender, Gossin’s stance appears less solid, especially in her conviction that Victorian narratives unanimously portray “the apparently irrefutable evidence of man’s ‘natural’ and historical superiority and woman’s equally ‘natural’ and historical interiority” (232). Of course, a close look at Gissing’s Rhoda Nunn, Meredith’s Diana Warwick, G. Allen’s Herminia Barton or S. Grand’s Evadne Frayling, to name but a few, would help the author to reassess Sue as something more complex than simply a “Venus Urania fallen from the stars and the future” (249).

In conclusion, what to me at first sounded like an extremely ambitious premise in the end has proved a fulfilled task: Gossin’s reading of Hardy’s novel does enrich Darwinian and feminist perspectives, does extend formalist evaluations of his achievement and provides indeed fresh interpretations of enigmatic scenes. Scholars may disagree on the peremptoriness of assessing these novels as a cosmologist’s work – in fact, Gossin herself admits, for instance, that in *Jude* astronomical allusions are few (222) – but I think they will all agree that her work deserves praise both for its complexity and for its critical achievement.

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**Kaplan, Cora. *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism*.**

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. Viii + 173 pages.

*Marco de Waard (Amsterdam, Netherlands)*

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What is it that gives Victorian Britain its persistent fascination? When was the Victorian period first discovered as the preeminent “significant other” of our time, the subject of an unabating spate of historical fictions, biographies, and films? Why are

readers and cinemagoers so eager to identify with a period when the transgression of norms was much more scandalous in proportion to the present? And whence the recurrent – and often unfortunate – appropriations of nineteenth-century culture in the

political domain, from Thatcher's hazy recommendation of "Victorian Values" to Gordon Brown's proudly unapologetic stance on the British Empire?

In *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism*, Cora Kaplan, emerita professor of English literature and an American expatriate now living in London, deals precisely these questions to see how contemporary culture in turn cherishes and chastises, and in any case ties itself to, the Victorian past. She argues that from the 1970s onwards, "Victoriana" (a term initially referring to material collectibles) has come to constitute a much-encompassing phenomenon, its reference widening to literary works and critical commentary, and its practice deepening to the "self-conscious rewriting of historical narratives" about gender, ethnicity, and class. Although Kaplan's interest is much broader, it is clearly the novel that took the lead. Starting with Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), a wave of Victorian recastings became a flood in the 1990s and early 2000s, when the popular success of A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) was joined by screen adaptations of Victorian classics (Dickens, Gaskell, Eliot), very marketable biographies of their authors, and finally the sleazy "Vic Lit" of Sarah Waters and Michel Faber.

The merit of Kaplan's monograph lies in her insistent probing into what this resurfacing means. She does not aim to offer a comprehensive overview of her subject (Beryl Bainbridge's *Master Georgie*, a widely acclaimed specimen of late-1990s Victoriana, is not even mentioned in her book), but rather seeks a critical dialogue with Victoriana in its many forms, asking what this manifestation of "dislodged history" tells us about subjectivity, authorship, and the capacity of historical narratives to (dis-)empower in the present.

Doing so Kaplan is refreshingly eclectic. It is true, she stands much closer to Fredric Jameson's thesis that "late capitalist modernity" is marked by the loss of a sense of history, rendering the past an empty "simulacrum" (Baudrillard), than to the idea that we are witnessing a "memory boom" or a long bout of collective nostalgia. But if she sees Victoriana as a "symptom" of a "crisis of historicity," of a loss, perhaps, of social and moral direction, she is open-minded in her investigation of the politics that Victoriana can serve on different occasions. In her eyes, the nineteenth century has become "a setting capable of producing a reading experience that is potentially both cerebral and sensuous" (115), an imaginative site or space that can be colonised to

various purposes. Kaplan tracks those colonisations with an acute sense for time and for the moral imperatives of the moment.

Adding to the distinct tone of this book is its author's decision that nineteenth-century scholarship and criticism be included in her definition of "Victoriana". In the opening pages she reflects on her identity as a "theory-friendly feminist Victorianist" (4) who set out as a Marxist critic some thirty years ago, and who has since seen her radical agenda and that of her peers mutate. In retrospect, the critical practice in her field may seem uncannily self-serving: in the first chapter, Kaplan revisits heated twentieth-century debates over *Jane Eyre* to conclude that Brontë's novel functioned as a "mnemonic symbol" around which scholars built up a "feminist aesthetics of anger." Victorian criticism, apparently, has an "emotive history" that is marked by a "high degree of affect." Kaplan knows that her own work is not exempt from this history, and sees no need to repent. Indeed, it is a measure of her intellectual commitment that those self-reflective, at times autobiographical passages never become obtrusive, but that they read like integrated elaborations which add substantially to her main argument.

The remaining three chapters explore forms of "Victoriana" outside academe. In "Biographilia" Kaplan turns to literary biographies such as Peter Ackroyd's *Dickens* (1990) and to "biofictional" representations of late Victorians like Henry James. One recognises the feminist scholar in her devastating critique of Ackroyd, in whose hands "life-writing" amounts to a public form of male-male bonding or "homosociality"; a form of writing, also, in which the author remakes himself in the image of the biographee. Kaplan goes further, however, when she pits "biography's triumphal moment" of the last two decades against the poststructuralist proclamation of the "death of the author" that preceded it. As she sees it, biography as a genre may well have come to replace the nineteenth-century novel in that it adds realism and credibility to the liberal myth of supreme individual agency. If the desire to recover this myth forms the hidden undercurrent of contemporary biography, Ackroyd's case of a sudden seems less perverse.

In Chapters 3 and 4, finally, Kaplan gives elaborate interpretations of novels by John Fowles, A. S. Byatt, and David Lodge, and of Jane Campion's film *The Piano* (1992). In each case she analyses the tropes and narrative strategies deployed in terms of Victorian realistic and melodramatic conventions, asking what is gained by the recycling of forms of

meaning-making so profoundly informed by a social structure that is no longer ours.

The question is what it all adds up to. In the introduction, the issue is broached whether Victorian culture forms “the origin of late twentieth-century modernity, its antithesis, or both at once” (3). In the course of her argument Kaplan seems to subscribe to the first diagnosis, as when she claims – rather sweepingly – that “Shakespeare and the nineteenth-century novel” have replaced classical and biblical narratives in providing “the mythic structure of the early staging of our own modernity” (133). Yet what seems to me the most pressing concern that emerges from her book is left somewhat underexplored: her suggestion that some of the case studies at hand indicate a “‘new’ literary humanism” (161), a move beyond deconstructivist and feminist assaults on the “liberal humanist subject” and its reconstruction on a new basis. Remembering Kaplan’s earlier references to Baudrillard and Jameson one tends to be sceptical about this: they would rather argue that the fantasies of agency and individual autonomy

are potentially regressive as long as they prefer to reach us – as Kaplan shows they do – by way of a historical detour, a disavowal of the present. My one (and only) regret about this engaging book, therefore, is that after her dense chapter on *The Piano*, which eloquently demonstrates how “tattooed” modern culture has become with Victorian citations, Kaplan did not add a further essay that returns us squarely to the theoretical remarks with which she started. As it is, her deft exploration of the many intertexts in modern Victoriana leaves the reader somewhat perplexed.

Yet the merit of this book remains that it incites us to take up those larger questions ourselves, reminding us how the study of “Victoriana” can be relevant for cultural theory and criticism more generally today. *Victoriana* is a necessary monograph for everyone interested in the cultural afterlife of the Victorians. But then, Kaplan would insist, whose “afterlife” is it really? Perhaps, if the Victorians had not existed, we would have invented them *anyway*?

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**Thea Summerfield and Keith Busby (eds.), *People and Texts: Relationships in Medieval Literature*. Studies Presented to Erik Kooper. Costerus New Series, 166. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007. xii + 205 pp.**

Martina Häcker

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This book is a festschrift consisting of 14 articles by colleagues and friends of Erik Kooper. The somewhat ambiguous title and subtitle appear to have been chosen deliberately, as they need to be interpreted in different ways to cover the topical range of articles. The relationships studied in the articles are relationships between literary works, between characters in literary works, between manuscripts, between languages, and between people. The majority of articles deal with medieval English literature, especially the genre of romance.

Three essays compare English romances with work in other languages. Bart Besamusca finds similarities in structure, setting, and characters between the epic *Gilgamesh* and medieval Arthurian romance; Karen Hodder and John Scattergood compare *Wynnere and Wastoure* with the French *Roman de la Rose*; and E. D. Kennedy *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with French prose romances, focusing on the different depictions of Gawain’s character. Four articles address the topic of family relationship and love. Frank Brandsma investigates the gradual revelation of the family relationship between Hector and Lancelot in the *Prose Lancelot* and N. M. Diekstra the depiction of the relationship between men and

women in Robert de Sorbon’s *De Matrimonio*. Elsa Strietman’s article on the Dutch *Het Spel van Sinnen van Lazarus doot* deals with the figure of Mary (here merged with Mary Magdalene) and the two types of love (towards man and towards God), comparing the character of Mary with that in the Digby play, while Geert an Iersel draws a comparison between the inheritance left to each of the three brothers in *The Tale of Gamelyn* and contemporary inheritance practice. Thea Summerfield studies the relationship between William Stewart’s metrical chronicle (*The Buik of the Croniclis of Scotland*) and John Bellenden’s prose chronicle and their Latin source Hector Boece’s *Scotorum Historiae a prima gentis origine* as well as the contemporary John Major’s *Historia Maioris Britanniae*. She shows that Stewart deliberately changes both the style and the content of the chronicle, focusing on stories rather than details of battles and statesmanship, and using simple rather than Latinate language, in order to make history more accessible to its intended audience, those who are like the young king James V of Scotland ‘nocht perfite / in Latyn toung’. Rolf H. Bremmer’s and Douglas Kelly’s contributions

deal with national identity in early English literature. Bremmer shows the change from Anglo-Saxon to Englishman in the Latin *Gesta Herewardi*, while Kelly studies the depiction of the development from Trojans to Normans through the technique of topical invention in Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* and *Chroniques de ducs de Normandie* and Wace's *Le roman de Brut* and *Rou*. The relationships between manuscripts is the topic of Keith Busby's 'Erec, le Fiz Lac', which includes an edition of MS London, British Library, Harley 4971, and D. J. Curnow and Ad Putter, who suggest a new stemma for the manuscripts and early editions of *Sir Eglamour of Artois* on the basis of a recently dis-covered fragment of the text, in MS Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Library 225, which fills fol. 136r of a manuscript of the *Prose Brut*. Two of the contributions deal with texts that fall outside the area of medieval literature. These are Juliette Dor's edition and translation of the text

of the Chaucer scholar Caroline Spurgeon's *Viva Presentation* at the Sorbonne in 1911, and Jane Roberts' new edition of a lease, MS London, British Library, Additional Charter 17692 (first edited by Morsbach), which is mainly of linguistic interest, showing a high degree of transfer from French and Latin in Middle English legal texts.

The volume has been carefully edited and the articles are thoroughly researched. But like many other festschriften, the book suffers from a certain disjointedness with respect to its topics. It would have been helpful if the editors had provided some signposting either in the introduction or by grouping the essays thematically rather than by alphabetical order of author names. The book is predominantly of interest to scholars of medieval Arthurian literature, but due to the number of articles addressing directly or indirectly aspects of medieval education and social history, it makes also a contribution to medieval cultural study.

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**McHale, Brian, and Randall Stevenson, eds.** *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Literatures in English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, vi + 294 pages. £75.00 ISBN 0748620117.

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How could a group of dedicated scholars renew the usual formula for a new companion in English studies? There are a handful of very good volumes on that topic available nowadays from the most respected publishers and university presses; so the next ones will have to offer something else but still, remain essential and up to the point. In their *Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Literatures in English*, Brian McHale and Randall Stevenson have commissioned some twenty accomplished colleagues from all around the world to write some 21 chapters that would tell the history of English literature in the past century. As opposed to many previous companions and readers, these new texts are not centred on a series of selected authors, social issues (like race and gender), or a genre, but rather on a chosen place, a precise year, and a leading theme, throughout the twentieth century: taking from Freud's Vienna and the Congo from 1899 (in this case referring to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) to some twenty important moments, including the two World Wars, and until the end of the twentieth century.

In their introduction that should not be overlooked, the co-editors explain how they modeled their very original *Companion* on various events and approaches, as it was made in similar anthologies

made elsewhere in other domains, such as "the innovative *New History in French Literature*," a book published in 1989, that linked literary events with non-literary moments (3). In other words, according to McHale and Stevenson, English studies should not be based only on literature, poetry, novels, plays, etc., but also on almost anything else in the cultural field, from popular music to movies and magazines, including "*l'air du temps*" of an era. In many ways, the *Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Literatures in English* is a bit like a sea cruise: we travel through the years, capitals, writers and their works with refinement and nonchalance. Each contributor seems free to introduce his favourite pieces, plus as many digressions as needed; for instance, the chapter on "Vienna and the Congo from 1899" about the turn of the century refers as well to James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) (p. 19). All chapters are well-written, with style (specially Michael North) and elegance, without jargon or any useless semiotic analysis. In some cases, the authors succeed in showing how just a few years can make a substantial difference in the history of literature. For instance, in an essay focussing on the year 1922 in Paris, New York, London, Michael North demonstrates the stylistic



changes that occurred before and after the publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), as compared to, say, Virginia Woolf, who incidentally seems to be the most quoted author in this book (p. 55). (In this case, I would have introduced Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu* as well, which is mentioned a few times elsewhere, but we would have been too far from the main topic).

The four pieces in the central section present four moments "between the wars." A few of these chapters discuss the emergence of modernism; for instance in his essay, Chris Baldick sets in 1928 the "year of Victorian endings and postmodern beginnings," with the passing away of poet Thomas Hardy, seen as the "last of the great Victorian writers" (73). In the following pages, Baldick discusses how the history of English literature was made, even in those days and afterwards, referring to Cyril Connolly's book from 1938, *Enemies of Promise*, which indicated a shift from an elite style ("the Mandarins") toward mass literature, with authors who were seen as "vernacular realists" (75). Connolly was an influential journalist in London and his literary preferences are analyzed by Baldick in two ways: how tastes evolved then and what it means today for the history of English literature. Following that, Cary Nelson's chapter 7 on "Madrid 1936: The Heart of the World" is not mainly about Spain, but focuses on U.S. poetry and provides many verses about the race crisis by some twenty lesser-known poets (85). An impressive list of English-speaking poets (like Eldon Grier and Geoffrey Parsons) will mourn the death of Federico Garcia Lorca in poetic elegies (many excerpts of these poems are quoted here), thus the reference to the Spanish Civil War in the chapter's title (93).

From the six chapters in Part 3, Alan Nadel's piece on "1955, Disneyland: 'The Happiest Place on Earth' and the Fiction of Cold War Culture" is the book's strongest contribution, centred on the current ideologies and values of that era. Nadel writes: "Using the language of utopian idealism, however peculiar, to define reality was not inconsistent with American Cold War ideology that presented the American way of life as a visible refutation of Communism's utopian claims" (127). Many lesser-known but significant works are mentioned, from Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952) and James Baldwin's own *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), both about racial issues (134). But this chapter goes beyond books and includes as well in its wide portrait of the "baby-boom" decade the *Lolita* phenomena and even famous celebrated musicals such as *Gigi* (135).

In the following chapter, Rick Rylance selects a British play, *Look Back in Anger* (1956), in order to understand the ongoing tension in postwar writing, specially during the Suez crisis. He cites an often-quoted definition of "the Establishment" as published in an article from the *Spectator* in 1955: "the whole matrix of official and social relations within which power is exercised" (137). Following the success of that play (and later a book) enables Rick Rylance to mention how the consumption of mass culture in British working-class homes was beginning to be studied by young scholars Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams using an interdisciplinary approach that would become Cultural Studies (140-44). There are also accurate mentions about other plays, even television programs such as *Steptoe and Son* in the early sixties, and popular magazines, in order to capture this decade's ideology (141).

The seven texts in Part 4 include interdisciplinary openings and overtures. In the excellent chapter 15 titled "1967, Liverpool, London, San Francisco, Vietnam: 'We Hope You Will Enjoy the Show' ", John Hellmann gives countless examples of the new ideas that emerged, from Beatlemania and their famous LP *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band* (1967), "which presented itself as mass entertainment as high art" (194). The strength of Hellmann's essay is to provide the thoughts of the most influential creators and writers (from Paul McCartney to critic John Barth), now and then, in a reflexive way (189). Although there are fewer references to novels and plays, the following pages rather highlight, here again, the works of artists and musicians, but also critics like Robert Scholes who wrote books comparing fiction in England and in the United States, giving hints about how that decade of changes was understood (sometimes wrongly or in an apocalyptic fashion) by various commentators (192). This is clearly the book's most enthusiastic contribution.

In the essential chapter 16 ("1970, Planet Earth: The Imagination of the Global"), Ursula Heise indicates how the representation of our world changed as it seemed to become smaller, under the influence of Marshall McLuhan's catchy formulas. In her impressive piece, Heise argues that: "Writers, thinkers and social movements that focus primarily on the implications of global connectedness have tended to rely on allegorical representations such as the 'global village', 'Gaia', or 'Spaceship Earth' " (203). Therefore, the studying of imaginaries becomes salient in order to analyze the paranoia dreams, utopias, and anxieties that emerged towards some new demons that appeared in new forms: "The

Man', 'The Firm' or 'The System' became ways of referring to a hidden global conspiracy designed to control individuals' bodies and minds and to hold them in check through political and economical structures" (206). To illustrate that trend, the authors could have added as well some cult science-fiction TV series like *Star Trek* and *The Prisoner*, although Ursula Heise already includes various references, even in world literature (213).

Among many elements in the last chapters of Part 4, I specially appreciated Cairns Craig's appropriate remarks about "Canada as a state which had never had a 'grand narrative', and therefore had none of the typical features of European nationalisms" (220). We could certainly discuss Québec as a nation with a deeper sense of identity and its own "grand narrative" about its roots, but that will be for another debate. Among other many good passages, I also liked Andrew Teverson's tribute to Salman Rushdie's works, talent, and courage (p. 234). The co-editors' coda concludes on Y2K and New York City in 2001 with events that

clearly marked to coming of another century.

In sum, this *Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Literatures in English* is a well-made and original book that will appeal to advanced graduate students and scholars in English literary studies. Obviously, it is not made for undergraduates or newcomers in the discipline, who would probably feel lost in an ocean of mentions of countless names and works that are rather evoked than explained in their deep significations. However, the expert in English Studies will certainly appreciate this excellent revisiting of a very rich century (in terms of art and literature). It is clear that most contributors enjoyed writing their piece, specially John Hellmann, remembering with passion the early rock scene and the dynamics of the 1960s pop groups in an era when popular culture was not artificial, as it is nowadays: "The Beatles, Rolling Stones and Dylan influenced each other in fulfilling McLuhan's global village while defying Adorno's view of a strictly top-down culture" (195). What a day it was. Wished you were there from the beginnings, and still young.

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***A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern.* Edited by Ruben Quintero. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. xvi, 608 pp. ISBN: 1-4051-1955-1.**

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What is satire? Is it a genre? A medium? What are its distinguishing characteristics? Can we systematize it? Or do we simply recognize it when we read it, hear it, or see it? Rather than attempt to answer these questions outright, *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern* edited and introduced by eighteenth-century specialist Ruben Quintero, offers readers a wide-ranging anthology of twenty-nine scholarly essays treating the development of satire in western literary traditions. Organized into four parts, the first three sections chronologically address satire from Biblical times to the present. The final section features interdisciplinary essays exploring the connections between satirical works created in multiple literary eras and genres. The cumulative effect of reading this comprehensive work conveys an array of expertise and learning, as well as an appreciation for satire's promethean expressions and functions in every age.

Though most of the volume follows a chronological arrangement, selections stand alone and readers can consult individual pieces for historical overviews and backgrounds of satirical works produced in specific eras, places, and genres. Sample chapter titles include: "Verse Satire in the English Renaissance"; "Gendering Satire: Behn to

Burney"; "Irish Satire"; and "Mock-biblical Satire from Medieval to Modern." Read from beginning to end as a continuous narrative, however, this anthology suggests that certain aspects of satire persist from age to age. Defining what satire is, for example, remains difficult, as does describing what it does. Most of the contributors agree that on a fundamental level, satire is an artistic attempt to express discontentment that seems to have far-reaching social influence or implications to the author. While satire often begins as an attempt to articulate personal indignation, it typically expands in scope to preserve the commonweal from potential harm by raising public interest in the inherent and potentially troubling ironies arising from particular incidents or events.

Accordingly, "dissonance" is another characteristic of satire frequently addressed in this volume. Unequal relationships, disparities between words and deeds, and displays of moral or ethical hypocrisy represent only a few of the disproportionate scenarios satire seeks to adjust by means of irony and wit. An exemplary model of this type of discord recurring throughout *A Companion to Satire* is the portrayal of the relationship between the Old Testament god Yahweh and Biblical characters such

as Isaac and Job. In spite of Yahweh's forbearance and mercy, the god's interactions with others can never attain balance or reciprocity. Throughout the ages, this theme of inherent inequality translates to other situations characterized by an imbalance of power between royalty and their subjects, the church and the faithful, and nobles and commoners, to name only a few examples.

While selections examine satire produced in all literary eras up to the present, Restoration-era and eighteenth-century English authors and works receive a slightly greater share of critical attention with separate chapters devoted to Dryden, Swift, and Pope. This topical focus may simply reflect the editor's own areas of expertise, though in his introductory essay "Understanding Satire," Quintero rationalizes that concentrating on literature produced at this time is appropriate since: "Satire in the English language flowers most completely during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and more satires were written during these centuries than any others" (9). This assertion seems provocative in light of the prevailing resistance evinced in most of the essays to establish a definitive description of satire, which evolves from age to age. Indeed, Catherine Keane summarizes this notion early in the volume in her essay "Defining the Art of Blame: Classical Satire": "In a fundamental sense, all satire is a product of its immediate circumstances" (50). Still, European writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries remain accomplished imitators and innovators of classical, especially Roman, satire. Perhaps Quintero's argument points up an instinct to view satire's development as continuous and proceeding from a

discernable historical and literary origin to which later authors allude and adapt. Sources for satire, however, remain murky. For example, considering the situation in terms of current etymological evidence suggests that the term *satire* derives from the Latin *satira*, denoting a mixed arrangement or hodgepodge. Yet, historically, *satire* has also been associated with the Greek *satyr* plays from which both ancient tragedy and comedy may have developed. Focusing too closely on classical precedents, however, excludes earlier and non-western contexts for satire.

Fortunately, contributors to the present collection dispense with the necessity of solving such difficulties to explore the language of satirical texts through close and comparative readings. As a result, *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern* provides readers with judicious and articulate critical examinations of the historical and literary contexts of satire. The fourth and final section of the collection, "The Practice of Satire," is particularly illuminating for discussions regarding how specific aspects of satire, such as irony and secrecy, change over time in several genres and media. As mentioned above, coverage of Restoration and eighteenth-century literature from the English canon is very strong in this volume, and scholars seeking more detailed accounts of classical and nineteenth- and twentieth-century satire may need to consult other sources. Still, this companion serves as a broad and lucid survey of satire performed, written, and published in Europe and North America, and is recommended to students who desire a scholarly yet jargon-free introduction to this complex and compelling topic.

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**Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson. *A Guide to Old English*.**

Seventh edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.

Angeles Ruiz Moneva (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

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Scholars in the field of the English diachronic linguistics will have welcomed the recent publication of highly relevant works covering the entire history of the language, like Hogg and Denison's *History of the English Language* (2006), or a concrete period like Early Modern English (Nevalainen, 2006). Likewise, both researchers and students will welcome the publication of the seventh updated edition of Mitchell and Robinson's classic, *A Guide to Old English* (2006).

The new *Guide to Old English* largely maintains the overall structure of previous editions. It is also organised into two main parts, devoted to the theoretical study of the language and to an anthology

of Old English texts respectively. Chapter 1 focuses on general, introductory remarks on Old English, while Chapter 2 deals with the most important aspects of orthography and pronunciation, even though there used to be a much closer correspondence between the two at this early stage. The alphabet and Old English diphthongs are introduced, emphasising the existing differences with Present Day English. Under the heading of "Inflections", Chapter 3 dwells upon the study of Old English morphology. Chapter 4 provides a brief account of the most relevant features of lexis and semantics, focusing upon the main procedures of word formation, as it stands for the most important means

of expanding the vocabulary in Old English. Chapter 5 concentrates upon the study of syntax, and approaches the following areas: the main differences between Old and Modern English; word order; sentence structure; subordinate clauses (noun, adjective and adverb clauses); parataxis (with special emphasis on the complexity of the language); the different aspects of agreement or concord; the use of the cases; and the main points regarding the syntax of the verb (the use of tenses, both conjugated and resolved, as well as the uses of the modal auxiliary verbs). Chapters 6 and 7 offer a general survey of current Anglo-Saxon studies and also an introductory bibliography. These enable the reader to broaden his knowledge of the language, literature and culture of Old English. The annotated bibliography has been thoroughly updated.

This new *Guide to Old English* also presents some of the appendices from previous editions, such as the list of strong verbs in Old English and the illustration of the main effects of *i*-Mutation. Even so, significant new features have been included that will be welcome. The most remarkable additions made in this new edition concern a revision of Appendix C, devoted to a study of Old English metre, but there are also several new appendices. These include linguistic terms (Appendix D), and an appendix that reviews the main uses of the different moods of Old English: indicative, imperative, infinitive and subjunctive (Appendix E). My own students found this section particularly useful and rewarding.

The second part of the work is a compilation of Old English prose and verse texts, organised by increasing complexity. The reader will also find substantial help and guidance in the explanatory

footnotes that accompany each text, and which supply the necessary linguistic and cultural background so as to achieve a fuller and more enjoyable understanding. This part also includes an Old English-Modern English glossary of the vocabulary that appears in the texts. It has been updated, on account of the new works included in this edition. These include a selection of "Cotton Gnomes or Maxims," as well as Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*. Some of these works may be hard to find elsewhere, whereas in other cases the complete work has been included in full, especially verse texts. Together they provide a thorough account of the language, literature and culture of the Old English period.

This new edition of Mitchell and Robinson's *A Guide to Old English* combines the scientific rigor that has made it an essential reference work with the clarity that has made it so user-friendly. It is useful for specialists in linguistics and literature alike, and for lecturers and students as a course-book. This new edition even lends itself to self-study. The seventh edition of this *Guide to English* continues to provide a highly enriching and stimulating approach to a period of the history of the language which, no matter how remote it may appear, lies at the very core of English as we know it today.

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