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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture*

Palgrave, Macmillan, 2006, 431 pp.

Pia Brînzeu (Timișoara, Romania)

Letters written and sent, received and read, imagined, forgotten, lost, misplaced, printed, or burnt have marked destinies, brought people together, started wars and, sometimes, killed. Beyond everything, however, they have always reflected a world: in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was a world in which personal communication, both private and public, aristocratic and low, was a diligently cultivated activity. A world in which paper and pen, calligraphy, letters and signs of punctuation carried a huge emotional load, and displayed, to those who could read them well, an immense reservoir of hidden aspirations and memories, bodily pleasures, and subconscious ghosts. That is why in her fascinating book, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture*, Clare Brant succeeds in taking us back to the epistolary world of the Enlightenment, in which letters, like archeological vestiges, reveal how people used to live, think, feel, and react. They bring a whole universe back to life, and show how letter-writers, of varied condition, education and temperament, fought against the chaos of their microcosm by trying to integrate its vibration, through messages, into a more harmonious macrocosm.

Although they might be florid or simple, despitiful or kind-hearted, in a beautiful hand or not, letters cannot be defined or classified. Clare Brant tells us that there is little agreement on what precisely a letter is, that there is no chance to delimit its territory or genre characteristics (p. 4). Their rich diversity cannot make a stable genre, while their varied contexts and effects stops them from being categorized. We do not even know whether they communicate or not. Why worry then? Why write a book in which every chapter is meant to fight with their mysteries? Brant's answer is simple and convincing: letters are more poetic, dynamic, and challenging than any other texts, and the vibrancy of 18<sup>th</sup> century letter-writing developed an amazing variety of letter-reading. It also offered numerous occasions to be polite, feel involved in creating a network of intellectuals, and bring the sublime into everyday existence.

Even if she feels unable to categorize letters and favours, therefore, thematic clusters over a linear structure of the book, Brant offers the reader a

guidebook necessary for the correct understanding of a large communicational maze. The book starts with a first theoretical chapter, *Learning to Write*, followed by seven chapters of exemplification, in which the author analyzes how parents, lovers, criminals, citizens, travellers, historians, and Christians wrote and read letters.

Brant also focuses from the very beginning on the importance of letter-writing manuals, which instructed a large audience in refining writing forms, accepting prescriptive conventions, and shaping their practical skills. Such books explained what the rules were for writing a good letter, how to be polite in evaluating one's position and find the correct tone in addressing superiors, inferiors, and equals, and how to perpetuate forms of social conformity. Learning to write correctly was easy especially when it "set pleasure against duty and duty against fashion" (p. 36).

Brant also establishes what is a 'private' and what a 'personal' letter. She prefers the term 'personal', which recognizes the significance of letters to individuals and relationships, while 'private' is inaccurate, since many 18<sup>th</sup> century letters were composed in company, circulated beyond their addressees and printed quite frequently. She correctly feels that 'private' is a term of "seclusion" (p. 5), which isolates, imprisons, and victimizes letters, since they all had public implications and concerned more people than their mere senders and receivers. But then again we have to become aware of the fact that the term 'public' includes different degrees of openness, defined and delimited in their own turn with great difficulty.

Brant successfully tackles such issues as canonical writers versus canonical letter-writers, the financial aspects of sending letters (recipients paid postage and the longer the letters the more money they paid), the way in which letters genderized and imposed their literary and political value. We learn a lot about epistolary confidence, seriousness, passion, ethics, subversion, and religious (in)tolerance, and find out that letters are of high linguistic relevance, showing how English changed under the influence of other languages, mainly French.

Although “the pool of texts to draw on is in fact an ocean” (p. 1), Clare Brant does not drown in it. On the contrary, she produces a book which might not be the first study in the field, but is undoubtedly the most comprehensive one. Full of surprises, beautifully written, rich in information and details,

clear, simple, and well-made, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* is an invitation to revisit a period of enlightened epistolary writing, so much more attractive today, when screens, cursors, and mice have annihilated all conventions and given us a simplifying and illusory freedom.

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**Renate Brosch. *Short Story: Textsorte und Leseerfahrung***

Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2007. ISBN 978-3-88476-958-4. 236 pp.

David Malcolm (Gdansk, Poland)

Renate Brosch begins her excellent study of the short story with the acknowledgement, usual among writers on this topic, that short fiction has not enjoyed the serious critical and scholarly attention that is its due. Soon such statements, which were certainly accurate for many years, will no longer be true, and Brosch’s book will be one of the texts that give the lie to them. In short, this is a fine study of short fiction that pays the form serious attention and advances the scholarly discussion of it.

The subtitle of the book is *Textsorte und Leseerfahrung* – type/kind of text and the experience of reading – and these themes focus Brosch’s discussion. She is concerned with the specific features, or, one might suggest, *the* specific and defining feature, of short fiction, and how this conditions the reader’s engagement with and response to particular short stories. Brosch draws on several general positions vis-à-vis fiction and short fiction. These include the recent work of eminent predecessors in the discussion of the form: Ivan Reid, Charles May, Barbara Korte and Eberhard Späth. They also include cognitive science and its contributions to our understanding of the processes involved in reading, and, what Brosch calls, the “postclassic” narratology connected with that cognitive science. But, above all, as the second element in the subtitle indicates, reception theory, and its interest in the reader as an active participant in the reading process, is at the heart of Brosch’s treatment of the short story.

The central point of Brosch’s discussion might seem banal, but – and anyone who has worked on the short story knows this, and it needs to be said clearly – it is not. Short stories are short. That shortness is not a fixed measure. We cannot say precisely when the long short story becomes a short novel, nor vice-versa. Nor should we want to. We can recognize border-line cases, and the liminality of such texts in terms of form is, surely, an important semantic aspect of those texts. It means as much as a metrically unresolved line in a poem, or a hopeless

lack of clarity as regards genre in a novel. These things are not accidents, but bear meaning. Brosch returns constantly to that constitutive shortness of the short story, because, she argues, it encourages, indeed demands, reader activity in ways that the longer form of the novel does not. The two key activities that brevity fosters are *Visualisierung* (visualization) and *Projektion* or *Projektionslesen* (projection or projectional reading). By visualization, Brosch means “*die rezeptive, imaginative bildliche Vorstellung, die ein Text erzeugt*” (the receptive, imaginative pictorial presentation/conception, which a text generates). As I understand it, this means the pictures we form in our imaginations of characters and settings as we read a short story (or, indeed, any narrative). *Projektion* is a little harder to gloss. For Brosch, it is an activity whereby the reader, encouraged by the text to do so, goes beyond a wide range of borders and frames. The reader responds to signs in the text to see, *inter alia*, the general significance of a set of actions, the mythic status of a character, or the relevance of the story material to her/his existential or social-historical situation.

According to Brosch, the short story’s terseness not only encourages, but even demands these activities of its reader. The inevitable paucity of description in a short story forces us to envisage its locales. We just cannot immerse ourselves in short stories as we can novels, and we are constantly encouraged to relate their events to our world. Brosch argues, indeed, that enhanced reader activity, visualization and projective reading are central to the experience of the short form. Her persuasive reading of the history of the short story (in chapter 1 of her book) sees the placing of the reader and her/his activity as vital features in all periods – from Poe’s idea of the “kindred art” expected of the successful short-story reader to Hemingway’s image of the short story as an iceberg, most of the story material of which is out of sight, and to contemporary kinds of short text consumption

on a screen and with the ability to move freely through hypertexts, and, indeed, alter them. In chapter 2, Brosch goes so far as to insist that shortness demands a kind of *Aufmerksamkeit* (attention) to detail, to beginnings, endings, language, that the novel does not and cannot.

In subsequent chapters, and, indeed, throughout, Brosch presents a range of concrete ways in which the short story stimulates visualization and projective reading. Thus, chapter 3 looks at the presentation of character in short fiction. She points out that the very laconic and elliptical setting forth of the actors in a short story by no means entails an impoverished vision of human complexity, but involves the reader in interpretative strategies which are closer to those of non-textual life than those involved in novel reading, and also leads to an emotional distance from characters than can be intellectually and existentially fruitful for the reader. Projective reading is prompted by well established features of short fiction, such as shifting points of view (between omniscient narrator and character, for example – more striking, Brosch suggests, in short texts than in novels), intertextual reference (rewriting of myth or legend), and moving from frame-narration to document or confession.

Brosch's discussions of both general issues and particular texts is always insightful and convincing, and her conclusion is well drawn, that the short story is a form which is thoroughly suited to a highly visual culture and to the dramatic democracy, nay anarchy, of parts of our present cultural and intellectual world. Short story readers do it, and do it better.

One does have some queries about Brosch's book, however. How different *really* is the reader's experience of the shorter form from that of the longer? Like many studies influenced by reader response/reception approaches, it is not entirely clear when Brosch is writing of real readers, and when of implied readers. At one point, with regard to time (chapter 6), she does not seem to be giving the reader a very active role. I am not sure how she sees the potentially very interesting notion of "recalcitrance" in texts, a resistance to too speedy interpretation, playing out in concrete terms. And the book has an excellent bibliography, but no index! Nonetheless, the strengths of Brosch's work are considerable: wide purview, detailed discussion of individual texts, clear argumentation as to how visualization and projective reading work, and a triumphant insistence on the shortness of the short story and the value of that cunning syncope.

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**Faye Hammill.** *Canadian Literature.* Edinburgh Critical Guides to Literature Series. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007).

Anouk Lang (Birmingham, UK)

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Students coming to the study of Canadian literature from outside Canada can be anxious about their perceived lack of background knowledge about the historical, geographical and political dimensions of an unfamiliar nation. It is difficult to deliver this contextual material in literature courses which already contain primary texts, secondary commentary and theoretical material. Faye Hammill's *Canadian Literature* offers an extremely useful resource for those studying and teaching this subject, providing not only a judicious amount of historical material in which to ground close analyses of a range of Anglophone Canadian texts, but also using the texts themselves as effective vehicles through which to understand some of the abstractions of aspects of recent critical theory. The volume is intended 'to provide an introduction to the subject and to suggest ways of studying key literary texts and combining them in essays or teaching programmes' (20), and it achieves this aim in lucid, accessible language. The texts chosen for discussion were mostly written after 1970, but there are several from earlier periods which give some sense of diachronic continuity and contrast.

The four central chapters are organised thematically, a workable approach given that existing surveys of Canadian literature tend to be chronologically ordered. The chosen headings – 'Ethnicity, Race, Colonisation', 'Wilderness, Cities, Regions', 'Desire' and 'Histories and Stories' – are not only productive lenses through which to view some of Canadian literature's central preoccupations, but are also topics which animate other national literatures, something which could facilitate transnational comparison if the volume were to be used on world literature courses. As the introduction explains, the themes of each chapter correspond loosely to particular theoretical approaches: postcolonial reading strategies, theories of space and place, ideas about desire that have developed in conjunction with gender theory, and post-modern perspectives on historiography. Hammill is clear about the fact that many of the texts under consideration in one chapter could have been placed in another. Summary points at the end of each chapter distill the main topics covered, and these are saved from being over-simplifications by their focus on the

ways Canadian writers tend to interrogate, rather than adhere to, recurrent themes and pre-occupations.

Chapter 1 addresses questions of identity, hybridity and indigeneity through texts by Frances Brooke, Pauline Johnson, Michael Ondaatje, Thomas King, and Thomson Highway. Discussion about how these authors fit into, evade, and complicate aspects of postcolonial theory is skilfully done, if necessarily short. The analysis of Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* (52-56) is a good example of how the book's close readings work: rather than startling or provocative analytical insights, it provides a condensed precis of where the text connects to wider issues in Canadian literary criticism in such a way as to assist students to continue exploring the text along the same lines themselves in greater depth.

Chapter 2 turns to an exploration of place, a central preoccupation of Canadian literary production visible in tropes of the wilderness, the garrison, the forest, the prairie and the city. Texts by L. M. Montgomery, Ethel Wilson, Robertson Davies, Carol Shields, Margaret Atwood, and Alice Munro are used to demonstrate how writers have deconstructed – as well as worked through – oppositions between different kinds of environments.

Chapter 3 takes works by Martha Ostenso, Leonard Cohen, John Glassco, Anne Michaels and Dionne Brand to investigate the way desire, sexuality, place, and displacement interrelate. Patterns of gendering and eroticising the 'virgin' Canadian wilderness are sketched, for example, and the representation of homosexual desire explored. It is a difficult task to condense a large and complex body of critical thought on desire down into a few pages, and the summary in chapter 3 feels like it spends more time recounting the names of prominent theorists and signalling the difficulty of defining desire than setting up a framework off which students might begin to hang their own understandings.

Chapter 4 considers the way Canadian literature has been both fascinated and troubled by its relation to national history. Here, Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction is used to illuminate poems and novels by E. J. Pratt, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Joy Kogawa, and Daphne Marlatt, texts which themselves elaborate aspects of the power relations at work in the reading and writing of history. The volume's conclusion draws attention

to the material aspects involved in the dissemination and circulation of Canadian literature: its publication, promotion, and mechanisms of canonisation, especially in relation to celebrity culture.

The pedagogical apparatus which accompanies the main text will be helpful for those wanting quick reference tools. Students unfamiliar with Canadian history will appreciate the chronology, which provides a timeline of historical events alongside literary events, beginning from the first evidence of human habitation in Yukon in 11,000 B.C. Terms of particular significance are fleshed out in a 10-page glossary, though these entries are too short to be able to make much headway with terms like postcolonial and postmodern. The guide to further reading lists critical texts published, for the most part from 1990 onwards, and would be of use not only to students but also lecturers preparing course reading lists.

Hammill continually gestures towards the contingency of the particular analytical framework, thematic focus or theoretical approach within which she situates a particular text. Her aim is 'not to present definitive readings but to open up the texts for further analysis' and 'suggest new reading possibilities' (22). The volume succeeded in this respect for me, as it offered me new ways to read texts and present them afresh to students. The metaphorical density of Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*, for example, is elaborated in terms of the way messages and memories inscribed on bodies figure different kinds of desire. Also appealing to this reviewer was the centrality accorded First Nations literature, culture and history. Rather than placing Native texts in a supplemental relation to Canadian literary development, Hammill begins her introduction with them. She uses the carnivalesque novel *Green Grass, Running Water* as a jumping-off point for several threads that can be traced throughout Canadian literature: attempts to establish or disrupt identities based around nationality, race, sexuality, gender, religion or class, and the recurrent difficulties of defining, and representing, the Canadian nation.

As Canadian authors become increasingly prominent on the world stage, their work deserves a broader critical audience than simply Canadianists and scholars of world literature. This book offers one way of bringing Canadian literature to wider attention, both in university and college classrooms, and to individual readers.

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***Modernism Revisited: Transgressing Boundaries and Strategies of Renewal in American Poetry*, ed. by Viorica Patea and Paul Scott Derrick**  
(Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 243.

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*Modernism Revisited* is a collection of academic papers addressing various aspects of American Modernist poetry including the perception and reception of Modernist works, linguistic and formal renewal, the question of representation, and the ideal of impersonality. Individual contributions are grouped into three sections, which is obvious from the index and justified in the introduction, although there is no visible separation between the essays themselves.

The first of these sections consists of an article by Marjorie Perloff, "The Aura of Modernism", that incisively examines the current popularity of Modernism. As she explains, Modernism studies were far from being in vogue only a short time ago: "from the 1960s well into the 90s, the word 'Modernism' was a term of opprobrium" (14). Another essay by Viorica Patea (included in section II) insists on the idea that Modernist art (with Eliot as one of its gurus) was dismissed as anti-democratic during the 1970s and 1980s (91).

Perloff notes that, while most literary texts produced today make little impact or exert a limited influence, Modernist classics continue to be a reference for many readers (29), including internet users who are outside academic circles (34). Perloff's article contains online reviews of the most significant texts of Modernism. One of these, on Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*, bears the priceless title "Modernist classic that's fun to read" (25).

The second section is made up six essays that focus on the work of key figures of American Modernism: e. e. cummings (whose name is capitalised in the book), T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, and William Carlos Williams. The essays in the third section consider external influences, such as Japanese haiku or French Surrealist poetry, as well as the work of two poets belonging to subsequent generations, albeit deeply aware of the tradition of American Modernism: Robert Creeley and Robert Lowell.

In his introduction, Paul Scott Derrick claims that the essays in *Modernism Revisited* attempt "to add some unexpected knowledge to the mix [of Modernism scholarship] and to help us undo much of what we thought we knew before" (5). Amongst the unexpected information, Zhaoming Quian's narrative of the lasting relationship between Pound

and Pao-hsien Fang, who became the poet's informant on Naxi culture (reflected in some of the *Cantos*) during the years he was incarcerated at St Elizabeth's Hospital. This is, to my knowledge, an original contribution to Pound studies.

The other objective of the book as formulated by its editors, that of encouraging readers to revise any solid assumptions they may hold, is exemplified by Patea's clarification of the misconception that Eliot's theory of impersonality in poetry bans the expression of feeling. As Patea makes plain, the Anglo-American poet struggled to give feeling the maximum relevance in poetry. He advocated the return to a unified sensibility, to the perfect conjunction of feeling and thought (91-92). Another example would be Ernesto Suárez-Toste's questioning the traditionally accepted opposition between Stevens and Williams as representatives of Symbolist and Imagist approaches to poetry respectively: "there is no such irreconcilability between Symbolism and Objectivism as they would have us believe" (172-173).

Suárez-Toste distinguishes between Symbolism and Objectivism, although he specifies that the urge to renew poetic language is common to both (173). Other contributors also identify two main currents within Modernism, as it developed in the United States: Derrick characterises these as local/American and cosmopolitan/European (4); Heinz Ickstadt sets poets who give the poem the status of common speech against those who regard it as the refined product of a creator's effort (189).

The identification of these opposing trends adds to a general vision of Modernism as essentially dialectic. The movement can successfully be defined in terms of polarity: Derrick opens his introduction by evoking the friction between tradition and innovation that is central to Modernism (2); Hélène Aji lists "the dichotomies long used to define American Modernism: local versus expatriate, impersonal versus personal, social versus individualistic, etc" (53). Similarly, the work of several of the poets considered is perceived to be dominated by conceptual, imaginative or practical tensions: Barry Ahearn writes about traditional poetic forms and Frost's individual talent attempting to adapt them to his expressive needs (40); Bart Eeckhout refers to the coexistence of the intelligible and the

obscure in Stevens's poetry (125) and points out that his imagination is articulated by opposing basic images and ideas (126); Ickstadt argues that the tension in Creeley's poems is both stylistic and thematic (192, 196, 204).

In her insightful essay about the haiku and its presence in Modernist poetry, Gudrun M. Grabher indicates that the combination of opposites is typical of this Japanese poetic genre and that, more importantly, it hints at unity: "the oneness of subject and object, the perceiver and the perceived, man and nature" (145). This defining trait of the haiku can be related to another significant dualism in Modernist poetry - fragmentation versus unity. Suárez-Toste considers fragmentation a typically Modernist effect and quotation one of its most common devices (161). In reference to *The Waste Land*, Patea states that its poetic speaker aspires to regain lost unity (97). This probably signals the influence of F. H. Bradley, who "believed that experience (knowledge) begins in unity, falls into fragments, and [believed also] in the possibility of the recovery of unity" (Brooker and Bentley 38).

A point of cohesion in the collection, therefore, is the characterisation of Modernism and Modernists as formulating oppositions, dualisms or dichotomies. Several essays also have in common that they address attributes traditionally ascribed to Modernist works. One such is linguistic renewal, which was not confined to poetry. The language used in the correspondence between Pound and Williams, analysed by Aji, contains multiple instances of Modernist ambiguity and polysemy (70), as well as traces of everyday American English, which both poets agreed should be incorporated in their verse (71). Isabelle Alfandary writes about the poetry of e. e. cummings, characterised by the subversion of prescriptive grammar, especially the rules of syntax and punctuation (115). Cummings was not concerned so much with developing an idiosyncratic style, as with fully exploring the possibilities of his language (116). In doing so, it could be claimed, he inevitably went through a personal evolution. This is a point made by Manuel Brito about American poets in general; he contends that the transformation of language is parallel with that of the self - this is a "constant in American poetry" and "a fruitful American objective" (184).

Other aspects dealt with at different points in this volume are the aspiration to impersonality and the reader's response. Early in his career, as Suárez-Toste

explains, Williams embraced automatic writing, but he later rejected the neutralisation of the poet's personality that this Surrealist technique required (166). Williams was not exceptional: "Every modern artist of any worth has achieved what he has precisely because he has found his own individual voice and because this voice is distinct from those around him" (Josipovici 179). The personalities of Modernist poets, therefore, need not be totally erased, but ideally, they should limit themselves to a witnessing role, giving full force to the text. In *Modernism Revisited*, Charles Altieri claims that Modernists clearly distinguished between "personal stances that earn their own authority as witnesses from those that rely on personal charm or rhetoric to bolster the authorial role and hence supplement what is lacking in the message" (209).

Regarding the active role of the reader, Derrick suggests that the Modernist poetics of deconstruction demands a reconstructing effort from the receiver (5). In specific reference to Stevens, Eeckhout puts forward - as the reason why readers and scholars keep going back to certain poems of his - that they have the constant feeling of being on the verge of discovery or full understanding (125).

On the whole, therefore the essays that make up the volume make it coherent, in addressing the same issues, some of which have been discussed so far. Perhaps the only significant contradiction that can be found concerns Williams's use of dreams for expressive ends. Suárez-Toste is clear that the poet was "skeptical about dreams, the other great Surrealist method of research into the unconscious" (168). Some twenty pages after this statement, in Brito's essay, we read that Williams "invites the reader to consider the poem as a dream. This is nothing really new, since this same aspect was offered as a valuable alternative by the Surrealists" (185).

*Modernism Revisited* presents a variety of perspectives on a number of authors and facets of Modernism, offering a highly representative picture of the movement. Its twelve essays are original in their approaches and invariably well documented (although a general bibliography would have been useful, in addition to the references in footnotes). Only very occasionally do some of the contributors indulge in philosophising, to the detriment of the book's prevailing academic clarity. *Modernism Revisited* fulfils its objectives of discovery and revision and is indicative of the dynamism of Modernist Studies.

**Works Cited:** Brooker, Jewel Spears and Joseph Bentley, *Reading 'The Waste Land'. Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990. Josipovici, Gabriel. *The World and the Book*. Rev. ed. London: Macmillan, 1973.

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**Robert Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and its Discontents, 1950-2000*.** Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005.

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Robert Sheppard's exploration of alternative British poetries in the post-war period is a landmark study which engages with a range of avant-garde poetic practices from the likes of Roy Fisher, Lee Harwood, Tom Raworth, Bob Cobbing and Maggie O'Sullivan. Pitching what Sheppard calls "Movement Orthodoxy" against "The British Poetry Revival" and "Linguistically Innovative Poetry," Sheppard traces an alternative line of development to such mainstream poets as Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes, thus identifying a counter-tradition within British poetry. He is at pains to oppose the claim made by Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion in their 1982 *Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* that during "much of the 1960s and 1970s [...] very little [...] seemed to be happening" in the British poetry scene. By foregrounding a number of alternative voices, Sheppard suggests that the 1960s and 1970s were, in fact, a period of prodigious growth and experimentation.

We might compare Sheppard's alternative history with more mainstream examples as, for instance, Neil Corcoran's *English Poetry since 1940* (Longman, 1993). Corcoran identifies some uncontentious modernist precursors in Eliot, Pound and Auden while also finding space for a discussion of less conspicuous modernist forbears in David Jones, Basil Bunting and W. S. Graham. But whereas Sheppard places his emphasis exclusively on neo-Modernist writing, Corcoran reserves only one chapter to discuss Christopher Middleton, Roy Fisher, and J. H. Prynne under the heading "Varieties of Neo-Modernism" while the bulk of his history covers more familiar territory: Larkin, Hughes, Dylan Thomas, R. S. Thomas, Thom Gunn, Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley amongst others. Corcoran's survey suggests a modernist ripple ruffling a mainstream tide. Sheppard's account, on the other hand, is far more polemical and controversial. It foregrounds the neo-Modernists and rejects the dominance of the lyrical voice and well-made poem in much twentieth-century poetry. Sheppard condemns what he sees as a pernicious and pervasive "Movement Orthodoxy" which, he claims, "operates as a normative set of practices that limits poetry production and reception [...] projecting an author-subject onto the world" (130). For Sheppard, the poets who matter in the post-war period are those who have rejected congenial subject-object

dichotomies, the lyric "I" and who instead embrace the fragmentation of certain foundational modernist texts, Eliot's *The Waste Land* being the most obvious example. Only the most linguistically experimental of modern poets are considered by Sheppard.

According to this schema, the type of poetry promoted in A. Alvarez's ground-breaking anthology *The New Poetry* (1962), in which Sylvia Plath's poetry first gained wide attention, remains cloistered within the egoistic postulates of the Movement. For Sheppard, the performative anxieties of Plath's work still remain shaped "by a discourse which operates through the form of the personal lyric" so that, for Sheppard, the new poetry Alvarez promotes is not new enough. The radicalism of Sheppard's argument lies in his conviction that the traditional lyric commits a certain repressive violence on its subject matter by casting it into the web of unified subjective expression. A more open poetic practice, Sheppard suggests, entails an openness to the alterity of experience, an active communion with otherness rather than the "subjective annexation of that which is other" (30). Sheppard is highly alert to post-Structuralist nuances in his chosen poets and he adopts his own theoretical framework through the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas which provides an ethical critical language for his study. Sheppard proposes an "ethics of form" (15) through which the reader can participate "in the text's structural indeterminacies" and thereby "dwell on the devices of the utterance rather than reducing them, or closing them, to dead paraphrasable fixities" (15).

This type of ideal openness may appear, to some readers, aspirational rather than realistic since language and interpretation enact a closure of possibilities in the act of expression, in the particular mode, context, and idiom the speaker adopts. In other words, expression involves compromise; certain meanings and nuances are sacrificed in favour of others and so there must be a certain determinacy in speaking and writing. But Sheppard argues that we should aim, as readers and writers, for maximal openness and his critical language is well-chosen to discuss the linguistic alterities which experimental post-war poetry has thrown up. Samuel Beckett famously argued that art "has nothing to do with clarity" and Sheppard constructively suggests ways in which some difficult neo-modern poems, by resisting closure and clarity, add to our poetic

consciousness. He urges us to do without the guiding hand of the reliable lyric voice and he claims that experimental poetry can be communicative or “dialogic” (13) – in a paradoxical way – because it engages the reader in active readerly participation in the poem’s linguistic openness.

Sheppard’s book is to be welcomed on several levels. It is theoretically sophisticated and its Levinasian vocabulary assists in some highly illuminating close readings of individual poems. It also provides some much needed critical commentary on poets like Raworth, Cobbing, Harwood and others whose work deserves careful re-reading. This is a mainstream book (excellently produced by Liverpool University Press) about non-mainstream poetry. It also provides an extremely useful historical overview of the British Poetry Revival and the trends in Linguistically Innovative Poetry from the 1970s onwards.

But we should add a brief codicil to this list of merits. It is arguable whether this excellent study will draw many new readers towards the poetic counter-tradition it excavates. There is a certain sense in which Sheppard (himself a noted experimental poet) is preaching to the converted. The oppositional paradigm he draws between the Movement (however defined) and the British Poetry Revival will remain, for many, immovable. The poetic experiments of Raworth, Cobbing and O’Sullivan are indeed radical and, to this reader, they sometimes resemble transgressive absurdities rather than the interesting avant-gardism Sheppard claims for them. But for those interested in reviewing the cultural map of British twentieth-century poetry, Sheppard provides an invaluable companion and polemical counter-view which will no doubt stimulate further debate in poetry circles.

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***The Power of Words: Essays in Lexicography, Lexicology and Semantics*, edited by G. D. Caie, C. Hough and I. Wotherspoon.** Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York, 2006.

Judith Munat (Pisa, Italy)

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This is a *Festschrift* in honour of Christian J. Kay, who recently retired from the University of Glasgow, but who continues to direct the prestigious *Historical Thesaurus of English (HTE)*, that important research tool for linguistic and literary historians. The studies in this collection are also a celebration of the *HTE*, which provides a focal point for the entire book, rendering it more cohesive than most *Festschrift* initiatives.

Carole Biggam’s opening article investigates the semantics of dyes and colours for textiles in OE, based on Anglo-Saxon and Latin dictionaries. The study documents the types of fabrics present in Anglo-Saxon England, including local production and imported materials, as well as the variety of uses to which they were put, both ecclesiastic and domestic. A certain love of luxury emerges from the descriptions of the aspect and quality of the textiles and their lively colours.

In her study of slang and cant terms for money, Julie Coleman gathers her data from dictionaries published between 1567 and 1874, and remarks on “the potential usefulness of a historical thesaurus of slang” as a supplement to the *OED* and the *HTE*. She proceeds to set up a taxonomy based on semantic headings such as monetary equivalencies, metals used, or even the effect of money on the possessor, accompanied by the author’s comparisons of definitions and etymologies drawn from her source texts.

Fiona Douglas and John Corbett, in a chapter entitled “Huv a wee seat, hen,” consider *wee* as a neutral descriptive term in Scots, and show that it frequently takes on evaluative force in context. The pragmatic functions of Martin’s appraisal model serve as a basis of comparison for the semantic categories in the *Scots Thesaurus*, and allow the authors to conclude that Scots displays a marked preference for terms having negative connotations. Their examination of positive and negative facework in a contemporary dramatic text also reveals that *wee* actually functions more frequently to express evaluative content, thus confirming the importance of context in determining meaning.

In his study of lexical splits and mergers, Philip Durkin discusses the gradual orthographic and denotative differentiation in historically distinct words, based on their entries in the *OED*. Using *mantel* and *mantle*, as well as *ordinance* and *ordnance* as illustrations of splits, and *mare* and *mire* as examples of mergers, he shows that individual word histories can be accounted for only through a diachronic account.

Andreas Fischer considers bifurcate-collateral kinship terminology in OE, and, in particular, avuncularity in Anglo-Saxon family structure, where distinct terms exist for paternal and maternal relatives. On the basis of his examination of dictionaries, glossaries, historical and literary texts, the author concludes that the words for maternal and paternal

uncle occur with more or less the same frequency in his corpus and that avuncularity appears to bear a negative connotation in OE poetry.

Roger Lass and Margaret Laing illustrate the usefulness of their *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (LAEME) by seeking all occurrences of *hōven*, a ME class II weak verb, and examining the verb in its various contexts of use. By comparing the results with the definitions in the *MED*, the authors are able to trace the evolution of three distinct sense clusters of the verb.

Caroline Macafee focuses on rhyme in Scots, expressing the need for a rhyming dictionary which would permit the reconstruction of pronunciation in older Scots. She notes that pronunciation in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Scots texts is often disguised by Standard English spellings, and affirms that a rhyming dictionary would enable greater understanding of the rhyme potential of different Scots dialects.

In their diachronic study of the transition in meaning of *polite*, Terttu Nevalainen and Heli Tissari look at data gathered from the *HTE*, *BNC*, *CEEC* and the Helsinki corpus. They examine the collocates of *polite*, and the conceptual metaphors and metonymies associated with good behaviour and courtesy, verifying that a gradual shift in meaning takes place in the course of the 18th century. Their study serves to confirm the usefulness of the *HTE* to model the semantic evolution of concepts.

Michiko Ogura examines the different senses of *douten* (doubt) and *dreden* (dread) in order to sort out the semantic and syntactic overlap between these two verbs and their OE synonyms. Sifting through OE and ME source texts, the author concludes that the two verbs generally appear as manuscript variants, although they share some syntactic environments and may also be used synonymously. It is further suggested that their phonetic similarity made them particularly suitable for use in pairs.

Looking at Anglo-Saxon texts, Jane Roberts investigates the etymology of *insegel* from its prototypical concrete meaning as the matrix of a seal to its more abstract or figurative sense as in “making the sign of the cross.” The author notes that, even though information is lacking on the visual aspect and the specific use to which seals were put, *insegel* appears with an extensive range of meanings, both concrete and figurative.

In his study of the medical vocabulary in Keats’ poetry, Jeremy Smith shows that meanings of individual words, as well as entire semantic categories, change over time, and that complete registers of language operate differently in different

historical periods. Drawing on the *HTE* database, the author discusses 19<sup>th</sup> century senses of the medical vocabulary used by Keats, and shows how this knowledge can enhance our appreciation of his poetry, given that the modern reader may be unaware of diachronic shifts in meaning.

Jane Stuart-Smith and Claire Timmins examine TH-fronting (the substitution of [f] for [th]) in the speech of working-class Glaswegian youth, in order to identify the factors involved in the innovation of traditional dialects. Analysing their corpus of spontaneous speech, the authors observe that both [h] and [f] appear as dialectal variants, and the choice between the two is determined both by the position of the phoneme in the word and by the process of lexical diffusion.

The *HTE* provides the data for Louise Sylvester’s diachronic study of social and moral attitudes as these are reflected in the *HTE* hierarchical classification system. One of the semantic sub-categories she examines is that of *desire*, pointing toward evidence of a diachronic shift in social attitudes. She concludes that it is not possible to map mental concepts, which are unstable entities, onto a fixed taxonomy, but she recognises that the grouping of concepts in the *HTE* is nonetheless cognitively salient, even though interpretation is culturally determined.

Irma Taavitsainen follows the diachronic shift of the pragmatic and semantic meanings of *humour*, beginning with a definition of humoral theory in medieval medicine and arriving at its present-day abstract senses of MOOD and AMUSEMENT. By comparing data from the *OED*, *HTE* and *MED*, the author notes that a different pattern emerges in the collocates of the word in the MEMT corpus (*Middle English Medical Texts*) which adhere more closely to the earlier concrete sense of humoral medicine.

James McGonigal offers a light-hearted closing to the volume with his “Lexico-graphical Lyrics,” four poems reflecting on language which lead the reader back to the essence of the written (and spoken) word: when all is said and done, language is about “life and death matters – bright trivial swift.”

The significant and substantially solid research presented in this collection suffers only from the absence of a comprehensive bibliography, forcing the reader to comb through the footnotes for references. The individual articles, and particularly the studies of Scots, represent an important contribution to historical lexicographic scholarship, and are sure to be welcomed by linguistic and literary historians as well as anthropological linguists, discourse analysts, and semanticists.

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**Letter Writing**, edited by Terttu Nevalainen and Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2007. ISBN 978-90-272-2231-2.

Anne-Marie Millim (Glasgow, Scotland)

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Focusing on the social and discursive practices of letter writing between 1400 and 1800, *Letter Writing* presents a wide-ranging collection of eight thoroughly researched essays, providing an instructive analysis of epistolary conventions, viewed in the context of the historical and socio-economic reality in which letters have been produced. The contributing authors lay out their methodology in an unambiguous fashion and guide the reader through this exciting, yet very complex, domain of investigation. They acquaint the reader with a variety of pragmatic and sociolinguistic approaches, thus offering the tools to a deeper and more rewarding understanding of the process of letter writing.

Seija Tiisala's essay focuses on the manifestation of power relationships as demonstrated in the correspondence between the Swedish authorities and the Hanseatic Councils between approximately 1350 and 1530. Tiisala considers the choice of language, evaluates how this may reflect the power structures in the geographical area, and analyses the politeness conventions in operation. Tiisala presents an informative general picture of the linguistic situation in northern Baltic Europe, where three languages were used in correspondence: Latin (*lingua franca*), Low German (most prestigious) and Swedish (administrative). Instruction manuals dictated specific conduct to each class. Laymen, for instance, were discouraged from using adjectives that described themselves in the greeting part of the letter. Social identity and status, as reflected in a letter, were thus prescribed by standardised guidelines, and the rules of politeness demanded strict adherence to such codes.

The genre of letter writing comprises multiple types of letters, such as "order," "request," "report," and "phatic." Alexander T. Bergs takes his analysis of the Middle English *Paston Letters* (ed. Davis 1971) beyond the conventions propagated by instruction books, and emphasises that the function of the letter had a great impact on its form. Most significantly, Bergs considers the impact of accommodation and dissociation theory (Street and Giles, 1996) on the manner in which correspondents address each other. Requests usually reveal a higher level of accommodation – an effort to establish a common ground between the correspondents – whereas orders can be

expressed by little accommodation or dissociation. Bergs presents astute linguistic research in his analysis of the use of the third personal plural pronouns and relative clauses in the *Paston Letters*, which he rewardingly combines with socio-psycho-logical theory, demonstrating that several types of text can be categorised as 'letters.'

Johanna L. Wood analyses the form and content of the letters of Margaret Mautby Paston, a fifteenth-century member of the Paston Family which Bergs mentions. Like the previous contributors, Wood considers the influence of instruction manuals on the form of the letter when adopting Fairclough's combined analysis of linguistics, social structure and the actual circumstances of letter writing (1992). Wood thus studies text production (form), distribution, and consumption. She places Margaret's letters in Richardson's "Type II" category: they repeatedly deviate from the conventions of *ars dictaminis* when creating "long and rambling" letters, which may be interpreted as part of a process of self-emancipation from social conventions. Wood carefully observes Margaret as she addresses her husband, and surveys the writer's self-references in order to evaluate the position she believed herself to occupy in her community. Sprinkled with fascinating facts of social history, Wood's essay manages to cover the relationship between author-scribe-carrier/messenger-recipient, and sheds light on the subjective experience of a fifteenth-century woman.

Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen concentrates on intertextuality in the letters of Lady Katherine Paston between 1603 and 1627. Posing the question "Why was it so important to write about writing?" Tanskanen recalls How's 2003 study of the British Post Office which explains that this reliable service transformed the practice of letter writing from a sporadic exchange to a more casual chain of communication. Writing about writing before 1650 first of all served to ensure that the letter had been received. Further, as argued by Fairclough (1992), a letter situates itself within the present and the past in an intertextual system, and references to the current letter can accentuate its meaning in this network. The merit of Tanskanen's essay lies in the correlation she establishes between the frequency of such referencing and the closeness between correspondents.

Minna Nevala's essay on the forms of address in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letters similarly aims to construct a correlation between socio-pragmatic aspects of correspondence and the subjectively perceived roles of the correspondents. The seventeenth century witnessed a boom in letter writing manuals, which imposed proper conduct to the process of composition by enforcing codes of politeness – positive and negative. Nevala provides quotations from actual manuals which the reader welcomes. She presents her research in a concise fashion and convincingly argues that the formulae used in letters reflect the relationship between correspondents.

Annemieke Bijkerk presents a detailed history of the closing formulas 'yours sincerely' and 'yours affectionately.' The reference provided by the OED, tracing the first appearance of 'yours sincerely' to a letter by Walter Scott of 1817, being inaccurate, Bijkerk, like Ticken-Boon van Ostade, demonstrates that John Gay used the phrasing in 1714. 'Yours affectionately' does not appear in the OED. In a painstaking study, supporting her evidence by numerous diagrams, Bijkerk outlines the frequency with which the two formulas appeared, but neglects to relate her findings to a wider social context.

Ellen Valle's essay deals with the eighteenth-century correspondence in natural history between England and the United States, particularly focusing on the letters exchanged by John Bartram and Peter Collinson, and between Alexander Garden and John Ellis. She highlights the professional as well as the personal elements inherent in this epistolary relationship, and offers a fascinating insight in the acquisition and cataloguing of knowledge. Letters and the shipping of exotic specimen from the United States constituted the basis of the presentations and discussions of the Royal Society in England, who incorporated – and 'approved' – the information collected in the new world into a solidified body of knowledge. Besides forming the 'quasi-personal' communication between members of the community, the letters from the new world were thus 'published' through being read aloud in the meetings of the Royal Society and recorded in their Register Books.

Letter Writing emphasises the central role of letters in social and professional interactions, their impact on the wider social reality and on the development of interhuman relationships. This collection is very useful to established linguists, literary scholars as well as novices to the field.

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**Michael Mitchell, *Hidden Mutualities: Faustian Themes from Gnostic Origins to the Postcolonial*.** Amsterdam and New York, Rodopi, 200, pp. 330. ISBN 90-420-2110-1.

*Valeria Pellis (Florence, Italy)*

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The Faust myth has dominated Western interest for five hundred years. Since it is essentially a myth of individualism, and therefore concerns all mankind, many words have already been spent on Faustian themes, and many more will be spent in time to come. As a consequence, the greatest challenge for a scholar who approaches the topic from a new critical perspective is to find unexplored connections among religious, theoretical, artistic, social, and economical categories in the Faust tradition. And this is an ambitious task, indeed.

As its title suggests, what distinguishes this stimulating publication from others on the topic is that Mitchell illustrates how hidden mutualities link the work of major postcolonial writers with Christopher Marlowe's drama of the Faustian pact (in terms of the manipulation of the material world in exchange for the soul) written at a time when a new scientific approach to the world was emerging, accompanying the imperial expansion of Europe and thus determining the economic and social structures of the colonial and postcolonial world. These

hegemonic structures may be held accountable for the marginalization of the Gnostic/Hermetic tradition which, after its flourishing in the Renaissance, combined with occult arts such as alchemy and magic (as was the case in Marlowe's *Faust*), was forced to take hidden paths. Persecuted by the Church and state, Gnostic seekers were forced to pursue the goal of divine knowledge in secret, says Mitchell, making their endeavour occult, and so linked in tradition with Hermetic traditions. Mitchell argues that this theme of forbidden learning manifested itself as the Faust story during the ecclesiastical crisis in Renaissance Europe, and continues to trace the theme through science, politics, and the arts to the present. Versions of parts of the work have been published elsewhere between 1999 and 2002. In this book, the author, who brings together research in different fields, has developed the topic into three sections.

Part I (Potent Arts), which is divided into three chapters, is devoted to the rediscovery of the Gnostic/Hermetic tradition in the Renaissance. In the first

chapter, Mitchell lays the foundations to help the reader understand how this living tradition informed the works of 'Magus' figures such as Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino, Trithemius, Johannes Reuchlin, Agrippa of Nettesheim, Paracelsus, and John Dee. It is not a simple framework but a most detailed elaboration of the topic from historiographical, religious, philosophical and philological perspectives, providing us with more than is usual in a publication on Faustian themes. Many revealing passages taken from ancient texts accompany Mitchell's critical monologue whose authority proves the firm theoretical basis of this book.

One of the reasons for the development of this section clearly has to do with the fact that all the figures mentioned above are reflected in the Faust tradition, as it appears in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and in the character of Prospero in Shakespeare *The Tempest* (chapters 2 and 3). Many of the excerpts the author derives from ancient texts deal with world-pictures where the concepts of creativity, the imagination, and the spirit of prophecy were dominant features. He thus sows the seeds for his subsequent analysis of the creative reworkings flowered in particular in the Romantic period when the Gnostic/Hermetic tradition was revived and linked to a visionary approach to human existence countering eighteenth-century mechanism.

In effect, the second section of the book (*Overgrown Paths*) investigates the dual legacy of the 'Magus' figure. A counterpoint between an objective material world and an occult visionary pursuit of the divine power of the human imagination is traced first through a comparison of Johan Kepler and Robert Fludd (chapter 4), then through the example of Isaac Newton and the way in which he was treated by the poet-engraver William Blake (chapter 5), before approaching the twentieth

century with the contrasting use of the occult in Aleister Crowley and William Butler Yeats, followed by the rapprochement between science and the irrational in Wolfgang Pauli and Carl Gustav Jung (chapter 6). In this chapter, Mitchell shows how marginalized resources within Europe prepared the ground for the postcolonial responses developed in the final part of the book (*Re-visioning Mutualities*), where textual analysis reveals in detail how attention to Faustian themes opens new and exciting critical perspectives in appreciating the works of postcolonial writers, in particular *Dimetos* by Athol Fugard (chapter 7), *Disappearances* by David Dabydeen (chapter 8), *Omeros* by Derek Walcott (chapter 9), and the novels of Wilson Harris (chapter 10). Mitchell here turns to the way in which postcolonial writers have drawn on the cross-cultural imagination to articulate the 'Third Space of enunciations' in order to regenerate a universal Gnostic potential.

This is a fine piece of literary criticism. The relationship between theoretical discourse on the one hand and analyses of specific texts on the other is consistent. Mitchell brings evidence to support his argument by choosing an interesting array of both literary and art works (as is the case of the engravings of William Blake), and he does an admirable job expanding his knowledge of the topic into the great and nuanced world of contemporary literary fiction. To follow Mitchell's solid analysis of the complex vision of the Gnostic/Hermetic universe, which reveals itself as a still living tradition, is, indeed, a rewarding effort. The author never seems too general in his observations, and his treatment of themes that are supposed to be well-known attract new critical interest. This is not a book for the casual reader but Mitchell deserves much praise for not taking the easy way out.

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***Anglo-American Modernity and the Mediterranean.* Edited by Caroline Patey, Giovanni Cianci, and Francesca Cuojati. Milan: Cisalpino, 2006.**

*Sostene Massimo Zangari (Milan, Italy)*

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The influence of Mediterranean cultures has been crucial to the development of English literature. It was only after the Italian Renaissance crossed the Channel, giving writers models and a new sense of the possibilities of intellectual travail, that English literature began to leave the periphery of European culture and gain the mainstream role it has played ever since. However, Samuel Johnson's remark that religion, law, and the arts, together with "almost all that sets us above savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean", was by no means a

prevalent attitude, as Southern Europe was routinely seen as a distant "Other", a fantasy place, the stage of bloody tragedies as well as romances.

The archeological discoveries of the seventeenth century, though, marked a change in the relationship between England and the Mediterranean. Intellectual elites, watching with unease the transformations that the Industrial Revolution was bringing to traditional ways of living, were increasingly attracted to a place that seemed untouched by the wave of modernization, where the possibility of unmediated contact

with land held the promise of stability and order. Thus, fostered by the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum and the subsequent revival of Ancient Greece and Rome, the interest in archaeology encouraged the start of cultural pilgrimages to the “cradle of Western civilization.” What the voyagers were after, however, emerged only as a sanitized version of the Mediterranean. Whether through the appropriation of its artifacts for display in the museums or in private collections (Lord Elgin’s “looting” of the Parthenon friezes and their removal to the British Museum is a paradigm), or as a passive contemplation of sights and monuments later canonized in Baedekers, the cultures of Italy, Greece and Egypt were perceived as mere Oriental “otherness,” silent objects ready to be experienced and consumed, never interrogated.

*Anglo-American Modernity and the Mediterranean* documents one particular phase in this tale of cultural appropriation. Eager to do away with the Victorian Age as much as to flee the decadence of increasingly urbanized England and America, the rise of social conflicts and the devastating impact of World War I, a new generation of writers sought territories unspoiled by the progress of History, and the countries bordering the Southern Sea seemed to offer the promise of both intellectual and physical renewal. This collection seeks to portray this last stage in the complex set of approaches that took place between British and American writers and the human, natural and cultural landscapes of Southern Europe and the Near East. The essays collected in the book steer clear of established lines of research to explore paths that have seldom attracted the interest of scholars. Thus, established figures of the modernist canon like Yeats, Joyce and Hemingway are studied together with lesser known intellectuals like Jane Ellen Harrison’s *Ancient Art and Ritual* and Adrian Stokes’ *Stones of Rimini*, while exploring the origins of Greek religion and early Renaissance art respectively, reveal the dramatic urge to escape the cultural boundaries of British tradition and plunge into new territories of knowledge.

*Anglo-American Modernity and the Mediterranean* stresses the new role of the Mediterranean as a place of intellectual inspiration and exchange. Marking a discontinuity from previous waves of “cultural pilgrims,” Modernists did not just regard the marine landscape as a passive object of aesthetic consumption: instead they established a conversation with the cultural stratifications of Southern Europe, exploring the different historical traditions that had developed through the centuries and negotiating new ones. Grouped into three parts

entitled “Recollections and Revisitations,” “Exploring the Adriatic,” and “So Close, so Distant: The Otherness of the Mediterranean,” the essays in the book lead the reader through a journey touching upon locations that, both through a delightful scenery and immersion into alien social environments, inspired writers to develop new poetic and narrative strategies. Inner Provence provided a sunny dependence for the Bloomsbury circle, where Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry benefited from the exchange with French poet and critic Charles Mauron, experienced the original, real landscapes of Cezanne’s paintings, and also discovered and profited from the multilingual history of the region. Elsewhere, protracted contact with the cosmopolitan microcosm of Trieste and its lively literary scene offered James Joyce sources of inspiration and compelled him to question cultural constructions that were part of his Irish heritage. Pound and Yeats, by the shores of Rapallo, where memories of ancient and Romantic poetry sprung from the sea, searched for continuity with the past, engaging in the attempt at ‘sounding’ the movements of waves and the rattle of pebbles in verse.

This collection deserves attention also because it has unearthed some neglected works by major writers, like E. M. Forster’s *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*, Wyndham Lewis’ *Journey into Barbary*, and Ford Madox Ford’s *Provence: From Minstrels to Machines*. These travel writings, providing room for meditation alongside descriptions of people and places, often reveal the conflicts undermining the permanence of these Southern paradises on earth as they once were: Forster’s acknowledgment of the gradual decline of Alexandria’s peculiar cosmopolitan bent, Lewis’ attention to the political and tribal struggles that troubled Morocco, Ford’s concern with the menace of commodification threatening Provence are all symptoms of a growing sense of an ending, in which even the Mediterranean arcadia could be spoiled by History.

As Paul Fussell has underlined in *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between The Wars* (OUP, 1980), “to sketch the history of the British imaginative intercourse with the Mediterranean in modern times is virtually to present a survey of modern British literature,” This is the reason why *Anglo-American Modernity and the Mediterranean* does not intend to be an exhaustive study; even so the absence of essays dealing with pivotal Anglo-Mediterranean figures such as D. H. Lawrence, Lawrence Durrell, and Robert Graves is keenly felt. As the essays are mainly devoted to the study of single authors the picture that emerges from the book is necessarily

fragmented, a flaw that could have been avoided by adding an introductory chapter to provide an historical and geographical map of Anglo-American diasporas through the Mediterranean. A survey of the critical 'tools' and theories available so far for investigating the literature and culture deriving from the reciprocities between Great Britain, the United States and the Mediterranean world would also have been helpful.

*Anglo-American Modernity and the Mediterranean* confirms the growing interest in this domain felt by the Italian and international academic community. It is to be hoped that other works may soon follow, so that a fuller understanding and appreciation of the sea and its shores, "incrustated" with literature and art, will be achieved in the future.

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**Jan Jędrzejewski, *George Eliot*.** London: Routledge, 2007.

*Adrian Radu (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)*

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George Eliot is one of the outstanding Victorian novelists, remarkable for the construction of her prose, for the substance of her analyses based on deep psychological insight, and for the mental discipline, precision and objectivity of her prose. Realism is in her case a method of treatment, an intellectual necessity, something which rises to the level of a literary creed that is meant to offer her motivation and force in the process of creation. She captivatingly registers the virtues and vices of a large array of people from almost all walks of society and professions, in the form of characters who very often try to go beyond the narrow dimensions of everyday existence, who are devastated by principles and by the distress of moral conflicts. But most of Eliot's characters come from the lower circles of English provincial life, and in spite of the fact that they are apparently simple people, they are endowed with the versatile spirituality, active and complex minds. The value of George Eliot's writings lies in her skill successfully to deal with issues like religion, ethics, history and character. She was an erudite novelist, with an outstanding intellectual background, a person with a mind receptive to what was new. She gave the novel new dimensions and raised it to a higher level of complexity.

Many of these characteristics that make Eliot a key novelist not only of the Victorian age but also beyond and worldwide are the substance of Jan Jędrzejewski's monograph.

The book is made up of five parts. It opens with the chapter on 'Life and contexts.' Here the reader may find significant details about the life and times of George Eliot, as well as a discussion of the context and motives that led to the formation of such a complex personality. Of special interest in the subchapters that deals with the period between 1854-1876 when the 'budding novelist', became a 'professional author' and achieved 'literary triumph'. The practical orientation of this chapter is enhanced by the fact that it offers the socio-cultural and literary

realities associated with the publication of George Eliot's works (neatly cross-referenced).

The second chapter is one of the most substantial in this book, focusing on the major works: *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, *Romola*, *Felix Holt*, *the Radical* and *Daniel Deronda*. But also her less familiar work like 'The Lifted Veil, and 'Brother Jacob', as well as her literary criticism, her contributions to journals, and her poems are given ample attention. The subchapters dedicated to the major novels are most efficient, with their introduction to the works in question, the plot outlines, and the treatment of character.

A case in point is the section on *Middlemarch*. Jędrzejewski deals with a few salient facts about the novel as a study of English provincial life, as a complex text with great psychological insight, as a study of mores, and also 'a quintessential expression of the literary spirit of the mid-Victorian era and as the most comprehensive illustration of the artistic possibilities afforded by its genre' (68). Jędrzejewski then goes into detail about the composition of the work and insists on the complexity of the project that took George Eliot three years to complete. Jan Jędrzejewski then engages on an extensive presentation of the novel's structure and characters all set against the background of England in the 1820s and 1830s, of the Reform Bill, all materialised in the town of Middlemarch. Particularly appealing is the discussion of change and progress juxtaposed to the notion of vocation. What follows is a thorough examination of the novel's characters, their drives, urges and passions, and the social and often psychological motivation behind their acts as well as their place and integration in the story. Many 'technical' aspects of the novel, such as its narrative technique, its symbolism, the depiction of 'provincial life' are all properly placed under George Eliot's authorial power of omniscience, seen as they are as the result of Eliot's direct implication in her work. The section on *Middlemarch* concludes with a

discussion of the novel's critical reception.

Chapter 3 is devoted to 'Criticism'. It deals with different types of criticism and how they were or may be applied to George Eliot's works. The first considerations record Eliot's contemporary criticism and that published in the subsequent years, criticism more oriented towards the biographical sides of the writer's personality. One of the early critics was the novelist Virginia Woolf whose concern was George Eliot's feminine personality and her female protagonists. But in the period to follow, George Eliot's fame, like that of other Victorian writers, began to fade and it was necessary for modern times to reassess Eliot's place in the context of modern literature. It was again biography rather than genuine criticism that early modern critics concentrated on. For those interested in such biographical studies, Jedrzejewski's book contains a comprehensive survey. A standard biography is that by J. W. Cross, George Eliot's widowed husband. Included is also an examination of several studies of general criticism dedicated to George Eliot written before and immediately after the Second World War. Notably, there is F. R. Leavis's *Great Tradition*, which argues that George Eliot, together with Jane Austen, Henry James, Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrence, is among the few writers who offered substance to the "great tradition" in the English novel. Mention is also made of a number of significant biographies and critical studies that deal with George Eliot published in more recent years. Nowadays, Eliot is the subject of feminist, psycho-analytical, historical and post-colonial criticism. Jedrzejewski provides a valuable examination of each tradition.

In the case of feminist criticism, Jedrzejewski is of interest when he writes on critics like Elaine Showalter and her argument that the common position of Victorian women was to adopt a passive role rather than fight a world of oppression. This is the case of Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, who prefers to display a submissive attitude and does not fight for her lost position in society. Gillian Beer argues that for most women social independence was achieved to the detriment of sexual love. In the case of *Middlemarch*, George Eliot cannot accept this attitude and the result is that her Dorothea Brooke, though torn between intellect (represented by Mr Casaubon), and passion (associated with Will Ladislaw), does try to gain social independence by accepting old and dry Mr Casaubon but cannot stay away forever from young and passionate Ladislaw. Another feminist critic mentioned here is Jenny Uglow who combines biography with criticism and argues that with age George Eliot becomes more concerned with women's issues. Finally, Jedrzejewski includes the gender politics of Kristin Brady who has examined how patriarchal constructs of Victorian life influenced the novelist's own life.

Jan Jedrzejewski's volume is complete with two useful chapters that contain a chronology of the age and of George Eliot's works and recommendations for further reading to which a very handy index is added. This book is an essential and practical guide to further research into the novelist's life and work. It is an invitation to open, as wide as possible, the door to the fascinating intellectual world of George Eliot.

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***The Woman Turned Bully. Anonymous play, edited by Maria José Mora, Manuel J. Gómez-Lara, Rafael Portillo, and Juan A. Prieto-Pablos.*** Barcelona: Publicacions i Edicions Universitat de Barcelona, 2007.

*Aspasia Velissariou (Athens, Greece)*

This first edition of the play since its original publication in 1675 is part of the Restoration Comedy Project on which a team of academics from Seville has been working for the past ten years. The aim of this important project is to produce modernized and fully annotated critical editions of comedies selected on the basis of not only their dramatic merit but also their scarce availability on the book market.

This edition is a valuable contribution to Restoration scholarship for several reasons. *The Woman Turned Bully* has long been considered a minor play, and has therefore received little critical attention, and most of it has focused on the issue of authorship,, with Aphra Behn as a favourite. In

the past, the play has been briefly discussed from the perspective the law in it, of property, and of gender politics. The present edition features a long overdue critical approach to the play. Its lengthy introduction painstakingly discusses the issue of authorship (18-28) on the basis of three suppositions, namely, that *The Woman Turned Bully* might have been the work of an amateur author, a revision of an earlier play or, simply, that the author might have decided not to reveal his identity. Without categorically dismissing Behn's authorship, the editors arrive at the cautious conclusion that it is very likely that the author(s) was/were either a gentleman of the Inns of the Court or

professional writers working together for the Duke's of York's Company (28). The meticulous research that makes the editors' case particularly convincing is also displayed in Section 3, "Theatrical Satire in *The Woman Turned Bully*" (39-48), where the range of the play's associations with contemporary comedies offers a thoroughly documented intertextual and metadramatic reading of the text as a satirical comment on the fashionable world of the Town, as mediated on stage by George Etherege, John Dryden and Thomas Shadwell. The main interest of *The Woman* lies in the metatheatrical function of the title character, Betty who, disguised as a man, impersonates the rake-hero, a subtle pastiche of fragments from other comedies. This aspect of the play is fully highlighted, but the gender complexities involved in the artifice of a woman pretending to be a young man who tries to play the part of a rake are not fully considered. Indeed Betty's transvestitism is not sufficiently discussed (38), but very briefly mentioned in the context of the cast (56-58), which is rather surprising considering that not only the female protagonist but also her maid, Frank, is a "breeches part." For an edition that so richly provides the theatrical context of Restoration comedy, the politics of female cross-dressing would have deserved a more

thorough consideration on a number of interlinking levels. For instance, important questions such as the extent to which the "breeches part" challenges conventional gender roles and is truly subversive of power relationships, and whether it triggers homoerotic fantasies or simply draws attention to the theatrical sham and/or to gender as a construct, need to be addressed. This lack of attention overrides the gender politics of the play at large. Although the assumption is, and correctly so, that the comedy is conservative, the ways the heroines relate to female virtue is not problematised. In this sense, Madam Goodfield's attraction to a young man deserves some notice. However, the very lively account of Restoration society (28-39) that constitutes the background of the play affords much cultural information that makes this section a pleasurable reading, but the passing of the estate into the right hands, a predominant question in Restoration comedy and in *The Woman*, could have been emphasised more.

The carefully annotated text offers useful historical, linguistic and theatrical information but more importantly a panoramic view of a specific culture. This is a valuable addition to Restoration studies, combining scholarship with a challenging new reading of an amusing comedy.

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**Christine Berberich. *The Image of the English Gentleman in Twentieth-Century Literature: Englishness and Nostalgia*.** Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007. 218pp.

*John Miller (Glasgow, Scotland)*

Beginning with the 1912 sinking of the *Titanic*, Christine Berberich's account of the English gentleman in twentieth-century literature offers an initial vignette of what seems a poignant but amusingly outmoded standard of conduct. With women and children escorted to the lifeboats, one passenger 'retired to the first-class smoking room with a book'; another attired himself in evening dress in order to 'go down like a gentleman.' While these possibly apocryphal performances of dignity and selflessness in the face of disaster evoke a now seemingly culturally distant ideal, Berberich's analysis of gentlemanliness interrogates a range of ideologically central and interconnected questions of nation, class and gender and also re-energises debate on some well-known but recently critically marginal twentieth-century English novelists. The study spans early century models of the sporting gentleman, the watershed of the years following 1914, post-Second World War social upheaval and the radical shifts of Thatcher's England in the 1980s and beyond, encompassing a cast of dandies, empire-

builders, bright young things, angry young men and yuppies. Berberich argues that rather an echo from a vanished past, the gentleman remains, in fluctuating forms, 'alive and well as a literary trope' throughout the twentieth century (12) and provides a key function of manliness in literary engagements with a rapidly changing world.

Berberich's attempts to 'define the indefinable' ideal of the 'gentleman' develop in her opening section firstly through a collection of definitions and reflections on gentlemanliness from a variety of sources, ranging from the quirky to the enigmatic, with the nineteenth-century sporting novelist R. S. Surtees' insistence that if you 'call for Burgundy with your cheese [...] they will know you are a gentleman' among Berberich's comic highlights (6). Gentlemanliness appears as a marker of social status, but also later as a description of behaviour as nineteenth-century social and economic changes produced a less rigidly class-based usage. Berberich then contextualises this shift within a longer history from the origins of the term in the fifteenth century through

to Renaissance self-fashioning with its emphasis on accomplishment, etiquette and courtesy and on to Victorian ideals of behaviour with their investment in the virile, public school masculinity associated with Britain's imperial ambitions. A literary history of the gentleman follows this overview with brief attention paid to authors who might justly be seen as the usual suspects: Chaucer, Spenser and Sidney illustrate the early manifestations of the courtly gentleman; Fielding, Richardson and Austen are cited in respect of the eighteenth-century gentleman and the rise of the novel and the middle classes and then in the nineteenth-century, Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope are used to demonstrate the contrast of narratives of self-improvement with more reactionary depictions of the traditional country squire. More interesting is the reminder of a parallel tradition of self-fashioning in the homoerotic writing of Wilde, Forster and Ronald Firbank that Berberich follows with a short tour through 'sociological, cultural and gender-related approaches' to her subject, foregrounding in particular Foucault's analysis of power, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on homosociality and more recently Emily Eells coinage of 'Anglo-sexuality' as a descriptor for the complex blend of friendship and desire that characterised some male relationships in the period.

Although there is little new in these sections they provide a helpful thematic and historical anchor for Berberich's re-reading of Siegfried Sassoon, Anthony Powell and Evelyn Waugh in the ensuing chapters. Sassoon's post-First World War prose works *Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man* (1928), *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930) and *Sherston's Progress* (1936) are often read in opposition to the innovations of literary Modernism as a relentlessly nostalgic hankering for a world and a notion of masculinity that effectively died in the trenches. By contrast, Berberich convincingly argues that the 'combination of pastoralism and homoeroticism' (48) that emerges in these works' depiction of pre-War England and then the War itself comprises a unique vision of gentlemanliness that is marked by social critique as much as nostalgia, or rather by a nostalgia that is 'questioning, reflexive and even interpretive' in respect of the ideals it appears to uphold (66).

From Sassoon's portrayal of the English gentleman in his country home, Berberich moves to Anthony Powell's twelve volume sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time*, published between 1951 and 1975 and charting English society between 1919 and the 1970s. Focussing largely on two of the novels' characters, Nick and Widmerpool, this chapter analyses the tension between the well-established upper-class milieu Nick represents and which forms the locus of much of Powell's writing, and the socially dynamic middle class embodied by the angry young man Widmerpool. Berberich offers a political reading that considers gentlemanliness in relation to class divisions. While Powell appears as a resolutely conservative figure, his conservatism is to some degree ambiguous, drawn strongly in his later years to the politics of Margaret Thatcher, yet also scathing of the upwardly mobile, proto-Thatcherite Widmerpool.

In the chapter on Evelyn Waugh, the English gentleman once again emerges as a nostalgic emblem of a romanticised, lost world of civility that laments the unmannerly turn of the twentieth-century. Considering mainly *Decline and Fall* (1928), *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) and the *Sword of Honour* trilogy (1952, 1955, 1961), Berberich draws on Waugh's own rather anxious class consciousness and his equal fascination with the effeminate world of the dandy and the more stereotypically masculine idea of the man of action to offer a rich and troubled account of Waugh's recurrent nostalgia. In Berberich's final close reading, of Kazuo Ishiguro's 1989 *The Remains of the Day*, the ideal of the gentleman comes sharply into criticism. The butler Stevens' loyalty to his Nazi-sympathising employer Lord Darlington discloses a sensibility, even perhaps a national consciousness, blinded to reality by an over-valuation of tradition, duty and social status, attached, as Berberich argues, to the *image* of the gentleman behind which is merely a myth.

Concluding with some brief reflections on representations of gentlemanliness in modern popular culture (most notably in *Pop Idol* and the Harry Potter cycle), Berberich's study is both a substantial and an entertaining piece of research that offers a valuable and fresh contribution to the current surge of interest in both Englishness and masculinity.

**Richard Bradford.** *The Novel Now*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

*Linara Bartkuvienė (Vilnius, Lithuania)*

In *The Novel Now*, Richard Bradford reflects on contemporary British fiction and its many present states that have emerged in literature during the past

three decades. Today's novelist no longer stands "at the crossroads"; rather, his or her writing manner displays "an unprecedented abundance of styles,

techniques and scenarios” that equal the stylistic plurality of twentieth-century art; a plurality so great and extensive that a *Malreauxian* Imaginary Museum of today would gladly house it in its collection.

*The Novel Now* is divided into four parts, each of which examines a specific problem area that addresses not only genuine literary issues but also political (Thatcherism), gender (women, men, gay fiction), class, national (Englishness) and multicultural contexts. All of these display a variety of narrative styles and techniques that are an extension to the polylogue with their predecessor of the twentieth-century literary culture – modernism.

According to Bradford, literary culture, which predated the 1970s, rests on the binary conflict between modernism and realism, modernism and countermodernism. Modernists, such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, offered an alternative form of realism as they shifted the focus of narrative from storytelling to the representation of the conditions and states of mind. The writings of 1950s (including Samuel Beckett, Malcolm Lowry, B. S. Johnson, Christine Brooke-Rose, David Caute, Gabriel Josipovici, and John Berger) are extensions of modernist work since they are, as Bradford says, “accurate exemplars of what modernism involved after Joyce.” Their new watchword, if they had had one, would have been “self-referentiality”: novels should not tell stories; rather, they should be about the telling of stories.

Aside from the followers of fundamentalist modernists, there was a group of writers – William Golding, Muriel Spark, Anthony Burgess, Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing, John Fowles – whom David Lodge called ‘the hesitators’, those who allied themselves neither with avant-garde nor a new wave of 1950s realism.

The postwar realism had undoubtedly moved away from its nineteenth-century counterpart, and is frequently cited as the “Angry” mode of 1950s writing. The postwar novelists (“Angry Young Men”) found themselves in the midst of a counter-revolution against both the modernists and the classic realists. According to Bradford, they rejected both the “mannerisms” of modernists as an “obtuse, inaccessible preserve of an intellectual elite,” and classic realists since they saw “George Eliot’s notion of the Victorian novel as a ‘mirror’ to society as purblind hypocrisy.” Therefore, counter-modernism in postwar fiction was neither a reaction against the narrative experimentation of modernism, nor a continuation of techniques which were used through the nineteenth century. It was a new, “unprecedented form of realism” since the novelists who began their

writing careers in the 1940s and 1950s were confronted with a new Britain which was going through a period of transformation of the economic and social infrastructure set by the policies of the postwar Labour Government. The social change was fast indeed – even ignoring the outburst of popular culture in radio, TV, cinema, music – and the novelist had little if no time to think what tools to choose; “mimesis rather than experiment became the preferred technique.”

In the 1970s a new generation of writers made its way into literary culture. For them modernism, as Bradford suggests, was a fascinating but antiquated phenomenon. They began to draw new demarcation lines of a new territory of contemporary fiction. Martin Amis and Ian McEwan (Chapter 2, “Something Unusual”) earned themselves recognition as talented writers in the mid-1970s, but by the end of that decade neither was regarded as having significantly changed the landscape of fiction that had predominated since about 1950. Peter Acroyd, for instance, argued that England had ‘insulated itself’ from the benefits of modernism and maintained the ‘false context’ and ‘false aesthetic’ of realism.

However, the end of the 1970s brought profound change, as in 1979 the Conservative administration led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher came to power (Chapter 3, “The Effects of Thatcherism”). Thatcherism, as Bradford remarks, provided a wealth of fresh material, revitalizing a subject area which, as he says, “had been stale since the 1950s and 1960s.” Not only did it revitalize the subject area; it also united a group of writers of the post-1979 generation – different in their outlook and narrative styles – Justin Cartwright, Julian Rathbone, Tim Parks, David Caute, Michael Dibdin, Terence Blacker, and Jonathan Coe – in “their unreserved contempt” for Thatcherism. Their novels addressed social and political issues, but, as Bradford adds, conventional realism “held the centre ground.” A solid commitment to realism was also clearly expressed by the arrival of a new subgenre of the British ‘University Novel’ practiced by Martin Amis, Malcolm Bradbury, and David Lodge.

The 1980s also saw the evolution of “a special form of postmodernism” which Bradford chooses to call New Postmodernists (Chapter 4, “The New Postmodernists”). In a perceptive manner Bradford examines the novels of Julian Barnes, Will Self, John Lanchester, Nicola Barker, Andrew O’Hagan, Candia McWilliam, Ali Smith, Toby Litt, David Mitchell, among many others, suggesting that their narratives, which are mostly a product of their education (many of them are graduates in English or related subjects), could be read as carrying a deconstructive,

“Derridian subtext.” According to Bradford, their novels not only incorporate many of the literary theories that their readers, if similarly schooled, would recognize, and guarantee intellectual hauteur, but also execute an alluring and “by varying degrees” elegant style of multinarratives with no cohering pattern, self-evidently bizarre scenarios, and, therefore, entertaining their “fashionably accomplished reader.” Moreover, these writers, as Bradford puts it ironically, are not symptomatic of the postmodern condition: “they exploit, sell it and, like many others, treat it with the Postmodern Condition skeptical detachment.”

If the New Postmodernists knew how to “clothe themselves” in the “respectable garments of metafiction,” so do the writers of the historical novel. They also used their vestments – ‘Grand Narratives,’ as Bradford humorously writes – to repackage and sell the past. Bradford distinguishes three dimensions of history that have proved attractive for historical novelists of the past two decades – sixteenth and seventeenth century Britain, High Victorian Britain, and the two world wars of the twentieth century. A critical look at the writing of John Fowles, Peter Acroyd, Robert Nye, Iain Sinclair, Lawrence Norfolk, Pat Barker, Sebastian Faulks, William Boyd, Adam Thorpe, Rose Tremain, A. S. Byatt, Iain Pears, among many other writers mentioned in this chapter (Chapter 5, “The New Historical Novel”), gives the reader a better understanding of literary developments outside mainstream fiction. According to Bradford, staying away from the tensions between realism and postmodernism in mainstream fiction, historical fiction has made “manipulative use of the conventions of realism” and has, therefore, offered us the excitement of watching the past “as though time travel had allowed us to witness its convincing particulars,” the excitement of comparisons – between our time and theirs.

Crime and spy fiction (Chapter 6), as much as the new historical novel, has also been practiced outside mainstream fiction. Its practitioners - Reginald Hill, Colin Dexter, Ruth Rendell, R. D. Wingfield, Ian Rankin, P.D. James, Bill James, John Le Carré, Frederic Forsyth, Gerald Seymore, to name just a few, had no intention to revivify the subgenre. Instead, they enjoyed making use of its “hidebound conventions” appealing to our sense of thrill at witnessing disturbing, sometimes life-threatening occurrences.

*The Novel Now* also examines the ways in which gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation have been addressed in fiction over the past three decades. The ideology of feminism became both a collective

phenomenon from the mid-1960s onwards and an attempt to apply those modes of thinking to literature (Chapter 7 “Women”). The writing of Kate Millet, Doris Lessing, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, Fay Weldon, and Anita Brookner display attempts to remodel fiction to accommodate non-male perspectives. Angela Carter’s novels, for example, Bradford writes, are “hybrids” pairing together the conventional novel and the fairy or folk tale. Whereas Jeanette Winterson’s novels (like *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*) offer a mixture of “dry naturalism and sardonic observation,” they also show the writer’s wish to break free from a predominantly male, “heterosexual literary culture.” However, the pragmatics of feminism seems to have served its purpose; since the mid-1990s women novelists have begun to treat the feminist movement with a mixture of “circumspection, disinterestedness and [...] deference.” The emergence of a somewhat amorphous subgenre known as ‘chick lit,’ for example, was accepted with commercial applause. It is, as Bradford writes, “entertaining, clever but not on par with ‘serious’ writing”. Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, as Bradford believes, captures a modern woman who balances between preserving her independence and her wish to find a reliable, handsome and “comfortably off” man so she can play the role of dutiful wife.

At the other side of the gender divide (Chapter 8, “Men”), there is a particular brand of fiction by men that has proved popular and contentious, namely ‘lad lit.’ In ‘lad lit’ novels – whose their prominent exponents are Nick Hornby, Tim Lott, Tony Parsons, Simon Armitage – the main character is typically a man who having attained a degree of adulthood (Bradford is reluctant to use the word “maturity”), finds himself in a social milieu that is at once seductive and perplexing. Gay fiction (Chapter 9), with its most commented-upon representatives Alan Hollinghurst and Adam Mars-Jones, centers around the notion of homosexuality, and AIDS-related themes. David Head argues that British gay fiction has created its own ‘socially withdrawn’ niche and has become somewhat narcissistic.

The analysis that follows (Chapters 10-14) examines national identities and interdependencies of national identity and writing. For instance, in his discussion on Scottish literature, Bradford carefully discusses the narrative styles of Alistair Gray, James Kelman, Irvine Welsh, Alan Warner and Ali Smith, and notes their determined attempts to “free Scottish fiction from the suffocating maw of its English counterparts and antecedents.” Things, however, get more complicated when the focus of attention

turns to the notions of England and Englishness, against which, ironically, the Scots, and many others, feel secure in their antipathy, and which turns out to be a chimera (Chapter 11). Bradford explains that any attempt to locate a social, cultural literary unity within England is like “chasing shadows.” Novels which address some element of Englishness are significant of their rarity. The writings of Graham Swift, Adam Thorpe, Julian Barnes, Martin Amis, Candida Clark, Julia Darling, Nial Griffiths, Sam North makes some attempts to locate and represent the qualities of Englishness and/or class but the methods used to achieve this aim are self-limiting at times, as Bradford writes. The notions of Britishness and/or Englishness are addressed in the novels of Caryl Phillips, Salmon

Rushdie, V. S. Naipaul, and Kazuo Ishiguro. Racial themes are addressed by Zadie Smith, Monica Ali and Andrea Levy.

Readers of *The Novel Now* will find in Bradford’s study a sensitive account of contemporary British fiction, an account written with admirable attention to detail and with great devotion to the field of research. The book is of great use to those readers for whom, as Bradford says, pleasure plays a large part in evaluative judgment. It is most also invaluable for university readership, meaning for those readers for whom their choice of reading and their response to the novel “are compromised by other commitments.” The reading of this volume is not a commitment, but it, undoubtedly, commits to the highest standards of literary research.

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**Scott McCracken. *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere.*** Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007.

*Rob Spence (Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, UK)*

Scott McCracken introduces his important new book with a very personal account of how he became interested in his subject. In a few engaging paragraphs, he charts an autodidact’s progress in the socialist-feminist circles of London in the eighties, during which he acquired the interest in politics and gender exemplified in this book – together, somewhat unexpectedly, with an interest in teashops, “exemplary products,” as he says, of “the new industrialised public sphere” at the start of the last century. The chain teashops which appeared at that time provide the ideal context for McCracken’s examination of Modernist fiction using a cultural materialist approach.

The book is organised into three parts, each of which focuses on an aspect of modernist fiction using prominently, but not exclusively, Dorothy Richardson and George Gissing as key observers of the urban scene. McCracken is an enthusiastic advocate of Richardson, and has founded a new journal devoted to her work. It is a welcome development in the study of Modernist fiction, where Richardson’s name is not mentioned often enough, and this volume will further boost her critical visibility.

McCracken’s approach stresses the importance of material conditions and their effect on literary expression, so a fair proportion of the book is given over to an examination of the physical geography of London in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. These sections are meticulously researched, and offer a good deal of curious and quirky detail. For example, the growth of the chain teashop, such as Lyon’s, is illustrated by an account of the

names of shops a walker on the Strand in London in 1873 might have observed, compared to 1900: the tobacconist, the boot maker, the dressmaker and so on, have all been replaced by teashops. The point is reinforced by maps showing the distribution of these new establishments. A similar stroll today would doubtless show how Starbucks and similar coffee emporia have occupied the same urban space. This level of detail is important to McCracken’s argument, as he wishes to suggest how the dynamically changing urban sphere was crucial to the development of new approaches to the representation of reality in literature.

This study does not stay strictly bound to London, though that is the major site of interest. Dublin, inevitably, figures, as do Paris, Berlin, as well as Prague, the home city of Kafka, whose work features prominently here. Indeed, McCracken is to be commended for the breadth of his scope, which extends far beyond the usual Bloomsbury boundaries that so many studies of modernism inhabit. Of course, as the title hints, this study is particularly concerned with constructions of the masculine within this new urban landscape, and the second part of the book examines the relationship between the individual and society in the newly emerging context of the modern city. McCracken’s argument is that the modern city was the locus of a new kind of interaction between the public and the private realms, giving rise to new definitions of selfhood and subjectivity – and that this had an impact on the construction of gendered identities.

The idea of the New Woman is a well-known figure

in critical writings about late Victorian and modernist literature; what is less frequently discussed is the rise of new masculinities in response to, or perhaps complementary to, the New Woman. Whilst some of McCracken's examples are obvious, but necessary (Bloom in *Ulysses*) others are unfamiliar, particularly the ones drawn from the less well-known works of Gissing. In one respect, enlisting Gissing as a modernist in the usual sense is problematic – but then, this study sets out to problematise some well-worn critical paths, and McCracken makes a good case for his use of Gissing, invoking Fredric Jameson and Roland Barthes in his argument. Gissing, the chronicler of a London characterised by a paralysing ennui that infects many of his characters, has a

modernist sense of the futility of existence. It doesn't take big a leap of imagination to see the connection to Kafka and Joyce.

This book achieves a great deal. It takes a fresh and critically acute look at a crucial aspect of European Modernism, and takes the reader on an entertaining ride through some little-known but illuminating byways of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century fiction. The title doesn't do justice to the breadth of this endeavour, and readers interested in cultural studies, psycho-geography and gender are as well-served here as those with a solely literary interest. Enjoyable and erudite, this book relocates the ABC of Modernism from Ezra Pound to the Aerated Bread Company's teashops.

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**Anne Holden Rønning and Lene Johannessen, eds, *Readings of the Particular: The Postcolonial in the Postnational* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007).**

*Konstantina Georganta (Glasgow, Scotland)*

*Readings of the Particular* is an attempt at bringing postcolonial literature and theory back to its particular roots of treating the complex themes of belonging, identity and the dynamics between peoples and cultures by 'engaging with and problematizing issues of transculturalism and the refraction of local practices in the diaspora' (p. ix). Choosing 'transculturation' for its dialogic specificity that progresses along with the particular realities of dominant and subordinate groups and cultures, the aim of the collection is to offer postcolonial specifics as 'one of the important counterweights to conflation – hence, control' (p. x). The interplay between masks and identities as the core idea becomes a simple yet telling symbol for the postcolonial defensive to the complexity of cultural citizenship this volume constructs.

To this effect, the prelude 'Have Culture, Will Travel' by Wenche Ommundsen is original in assuming the condensed form of an open-ended 'airport fiction' and experimenting with real-life national, diasporic and global allusions to address the 'complexity and fluidity of national and cultural belonging' (4). In just ten pages and three airports, Ommundsen manages to include language barriers, economic considerations and the paradoxes of cultural heritage and national belonging, all under the watchful eyes of randomly assumed officials whose vaguely generic language hints to a corporate mentality: 'we are all in favour of heritage and cultural diversity. But we can't let it get in the way of the efficient administration of global business, so it must be sensibly managed' (14).

The volume's focus is on African, Canadian and

Irish identities, which is in itself an extraordinary task, and a reader of postcolonial narrative will learn a lot on the shared anxieties and limitations that writers from these backgrounds face. Even though each essay makes a case in itself, the volume as a whole succeeds in presenting the width of the notion of 'transculturation' as national identities, traumas and myths are discussed along with gender stereotypes, everyday language and music with examples taken from literature, film, drama and poetry.

The first section on 'Novels and Their Borders' is rich on discussions of clashes, and syntheses between civilizations, nations, the Empire or State and the language of the Other. The pivotal theories used are those of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha to set the postcolonial mosaic along with Samuel Huntington, Hayden White, Andreas Huyssen, Linda Hutcheon, Mary Louise Pratt, Gayatri Spivak and Paulo Freire. Half the essays in this section are on South African novelists André Brink (Ute Kauer), Bessie Head (Johan Schimanski) and Zakes Mda (David Bell), discussing the re-imaginings of national identities due to 'an urge towards the entertaining of diverse realities' (67), the archaic and the modern on postcolonial territorial and textual border and the flexibility of African culture. The remaining three essays explore the 'glocality' in 1980s fictions of North African migrants in France (Priscilla Ringrose), the ambivalent and insecure status of Scottish norm and Scottish Other in the fictions of Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and William Boyd (Alan Freeman), and, finally, the resistant-to-control fiction of Jean Rhys (Ulla Rahbek). Each discussion is a compact introduction to specific writers with shared cultural

backgrounds but, as a whole, the section can also serve as a theoretical background to the postcolonial narratives in film, drama and poetry that follow.

The second section titled 'Performing Possibilities' is introduced by Asbjørn Grønstad who discusses 'interstitial cinema' and views the screen as a mask, a metaphor which, in contrast to the screen as a frame, window or mirror, takes into account the 'materiality of the image' (128) and thus acknowledges elements that are not institutionally visible. In the same section Evelyn Lutwama discusses African indigenous performances and gender stereotypes in postcolonial theatre. Anne Nothof discusses the staging of diversity in Canadian drama in its interrogation of the diverse national character of a country of immigrants, and Susan Knutson deals with Canadian writers' use of Shakespeare to address colonial history. Kristina Aurylaitė writes about the dominant white Other in a Canadian city and its influence on Native spaces.

'Poetic Sites of Intertextuality', the third and final section, begins with Geoff Page's return to his need for a personal cultural rhetoric in a poem called 'I Think I Could Turn Awhile' and Erik Falk's presentation of amnesia as another form of memory

in David Dabydeen's *Turner*. The strain placed upon memory is then re-visited as the war of masks in Yeats' poetic construction of Irish identity (Charles Armstrong), the conceptualization of Northern Ireland in the work of Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon (Ruben Moi), and the blues as a free form of self-expression within the complex life conditions encountered in Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Albert Murray's *The Seven League Boots* (1995) (Jacquelyne Modeste).

Nothof's suggestion that 'nations, like theatre, are imagined spaces, created from a diversity of shared perspectives and experiences, which articulates who we think we are' (155) sums up the problematic with which this volume deals as it considers not only the Other but also the fictional status of the supposed norm. As Armstrong suggests, 'colonization frequently involves not only that the subjected be forced to adhere to a stereotype of the exotic but marginalized Other, but also that the colonizing powers-that-be put on a stiff upper lip' (206), since a rejection of cultural tradition can cast one, Other or Native, as Modeste suggests, 'as an outsider in his own community' (230).

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**S. Collingwood-Whittick, ed., *The Pain of Unbelonging: Alienation and Identity in Australasian Literature*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007.**

*Marilena Parlati (Calabria, Italy)*

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Alan Sinfield taught us long ago how to think about faultlines as a fertile critical metaphor. I shall borrow his term and re-use it in connection with Sheila Collingwood-Whittick's *The Pain of Unbelonging*. In her preface, Germaine Greer to the collection locates this volume within the recent, heated debate she occasioned with "Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood," an essay which was later reprinted together with the most poignant responses to it as *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood* (London: Profile, 2004). In her 2003 essay Greer advocated that (white) Australians had to acknowledge the predicament they live in and also take in the paradoxical contemporaneous guilt and innocence inextricably linked with the pain, depredation and degradation Aboriginal Australians have been inflicted by colonialism and its aftermath. In her argument, they must also recognise the fact of living in an Aboriginal country, before Australians, as a whole people – I consciously avoid here the term "nation" – can move on to rethink their various specific senses of belonging. The text of the preface is altogether less provocative and oppositional, but Greer's main contention aptly suggests both the

background settings and the possible directions for many of the questions raised by *The Pain of Unbelonging*.

In her well-balanced introduction, Collingwood-Whittick motivates the choice of the key term 'Australasian' to identify the literary and artistic production placed under scrutiny by the contributors to the volume. Her text pinpoints some of the historical *facts* that have made Australian and New Zealandish colonial and postcolonial roots so difficult to discern, digest and put to ideological use. In her view, as in that of many of the essayists, the pain of unbelonging *belongs* to the deracinated Aboriginal peoples of Australia and New Zealand, whose colonial histories are markedly different. Yet, the volume also suggests that unbelonging is the complex legacy offered to colonial Australians of British descent, whose own reconfiguring and mapping of the spatial expanses of Australia and New Zealand are read as variously-successful grafting policies.

The essays rework the themes of the grafting and re-negotiation of identities in the geographical and cultural terrains of Australia and New Zealand. Marc

Delrez analyses Nicholas Jose's *Black Sheep*, which he aptly marks as "autoethnography," also alerting readers to the dangers inherent in any project which, like Jose's, aims at searching "for redemptive affinities between the settlers and the Aborigines" (13). In his essay on Kim Scott's *Benang*, Pablo Armellino reads this complex novel as a metahistoriographic experiment and connects it, on the one hand, with Deleuze's and Guattari's rhizomes, and, on the other, with the tradition of literary realism. On her part, Elvira Pulitano contends that the very famous autobiographical novel by Sally Morgan, *My Place*, ought to be read in the context of diaspora studies. Australian Aboriginal writers, she argues, can contribute to this field with their very original and dynamic refashioning of oral and written traditions. Eleonore Wildburger works on "Snow Domes," a short story by Janice Slater, a "Yamatji from Badimawa country" (57). Her main argument is that Indigenous Australian texts – but I would say, all texts – must be viewed within the wider arena of their production and reception, and what she terms their "authority" is an essential asset which cannot be overlooked (57). In a different key, Christine Nicholls profits from her own experience of life in remote Aboriginal Australia in order to read against the grain Stephen Gray's *The Artist is A Thief*. The question of authority and authoritativeness of Aboriginal voices is strongly put to the test, in connection with the many faking and hoaxing cases of art and Indigenous identity that we have witnessed in recent years.

Lorenzo Perrona discusses the ways in which belonging and unbelonging haunt, in derridean style, the works by Mudrooroo, for whom "'belonging' is a desire whose object [...] is unstable, uncertain" (115). Perrona convincingly claims that the topics of disinheritance and spectralization (of refugees, of displaced persons) be read in a global perspective, and also as "risky but productive" tactics for reconfiguring cultural locations in non-automatic ways. Sue Ryan-Fazilleau tackles *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith*, Peter Carey's unconventional reading of the relation between Australia and the United States, the neo-imperialist antagonist which has supplanted the United Kingdom as Australian colonial *hantise*. In Ryan-Fazilleau's view, Carey thinks of Australia as a young marsupial

whose gestation is yet to be finished; therefore, the metaphor the novel powerfully employs is that of the disabled artist Tristan Smith, whose life ventures mirror "Australian culture branded and stunted by the pain of unbelonging" (137).

Sarah Shieff's essay introduces readers to New Zealand by looking at Keri Hulme's by now classic *The Bone People*. Her reading of the context of production and reception of the novel usefully exposes the dangers of its conciliatory and romanticizing version of Maori cultural traditions. Françoise Kral convincingly articulates her reading of Albert Wendt's *Sons for the Return Home* by referring to the *topoi* of island and archipelago. She links the "archipelago" paradigm – which certainly reminds one of Derek Walcott's powerful poetic constructions – with Appadurai's notion of "scapes," thus arguing for a literary and political articulation of identities which takes into account the possibility and necessity of multifarious *excesses* of belonging. Anne Magnan-Park ends the collection by introducing Margaret Mahy, "paradoxical and eccentric" (181) icon of national culture in New Zealand. She argues that Mahy can be taken to represent global bridge-builders and crossers, and takes as case examples two short stories in which bridges and skins feature as interstitial spaces which successfully "infuse the nation's narrative with an unwelcome overabundance of meaning" (201).

The unequal *quantitative* balance between essays dedicated to Australia and New Zealand suggests that much work on New Zealand is hopefully yet to come. Secondly, I wish Collingwood-Whittick ventured on a second collection which would include *other* histories and presences in Australasian literatures, presences which are still often relegated to the very niche-like enclave of "ethnic minority" studies. As "white studies" have strongly been trying to make clear in the last few years, if white is in itself a *naturalised* ethnic category, one should maybe do without the term "ethnic" and make cultures, languages and literatures interact within wider and more fruitful categories. Apart from this suggestion, *The Pain of Unbelonging* should be of interest to scholars and students alike, offering varied and often very well-designed critical interventions in (post)-colonial and diaspora studies.