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## BOOK REVIEWS

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Antony Rowland, *The Land of Green Ginger* (Salt Publishing: Cambridge, 2008)

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Amongst the highly placed  
It is considered low to talk about food.  
The fact is: they have  
Already eaten.  
(Bertolt Brecht, "A German War Primer")

Antony Rowland does not consider it low to talk about food. *The Land of Green Ginger* gathers poems that delight in the taste, texture and smell of food, and that celebrate the sublime in the ordinary:

Singing herb singe roast vapours Fray: Saturday  
pie-floater in Rawson market; waxy peas island  
gelatine coated pink flush before comic stall.  
Passionate friendship wanted with a Bentos,  
good sense of meat to gravy ratio. ...

Thus begins Rowland's eulogy to the humble pie, a poem that is sticky and dense with consonants, alliterations and hidden rhymes. It refers unashamedly to the delights of a dish that does not even attempt to hide its lowly provenance; on the contrary, it looks down with pity at the (southern) 'Blair babes weaned on focaccia and lamb's lettuce'. However, this is not just a stereotypical celebration of northern English identity and difference packaged in the language of food and the culinary. The poem, like so many others in *The Land of Green Ginger*, explores the various borderlines that transverse the geographical and cultural landscape of contemporary Britain and its history by rewriting them in a language that accentuates what we usually marginalise in everyday communication: ambiguity, plurality of meaning and an enjoyment of wordiness. None of the poems in this volume is easily accessible and digestible: like a good pie, they lie slightly heavy on your stomach and repeat on you. In this respect poems like 'Pie', 'English', 'Scallops' and 'The Cake' are not just poetic texts about food, they are attempts to explore the extent to which food can be read and poetry can be eaten. In *Le corps à corps culinaire* Noëlle Châtelet argues that the idea 'that everything we absorb (air-sustenance-water-sperm) entirely traverses us to come out later transformed (gas-excrement-urine-baby) never ceases to amaze us and the astonishment increases when we consider the fact that matter not only metamorphoses in another reconstituted matter, but also in energy, intelligence or stupidity, in short in a series of social and affective gestures which we perform forgetting (or pretending to forget) that the spaghetti and the rosé eaten the

night before serve a function.'<sup>1</sup> In a similar way the poems in *The Land of Green Ginger* seem to ask: where do words come from, where does food go to, what becomes of them and what impact do they have on who we are and how we situate ourselves in the world?

This interest in the complex relationship between language and food often results in rather surprising settings and combinations of themes: 'Cake', for example, is a war poem that conveys the experience of a soldier in the trenches of World War I via the lexical spectrum of cake. The poem travels through the etymological battlefield of the various meanings of cake and, by doing so un-silences the voices from the margin and the narratives they have to tell about the precariousness of life at a time when the presence of death had become normality:

A cake for a life: the gift  
of a cake in the trenches.  
Under the moon-slice, hours  
until dawn, the package from Leeds,  
that gnawed your dreams of warmer feet,  
forgiving shoes among the rats.

Jack curses all serges as cakes,  
Their bespoke battles all to cock:  
...  
Charles knew their cak'd 'av it's dough';  
Jack bagged his cake with his ammo.

In the following stanzas the poem talks about the trench that 'was caked with dawn', uses the expression 'cake-hole' and finally turns the cake into a 'tansy-cake'. The Tansy Cake, or Tansy Pudding, used to be eaten at Easter and was a Christian adaptation of the bitter herbs which were part of the Jewish paschal feast where it functioned as a reminder of the bitter oppression the Jewish community suffered in the past. Whereas our normal understanding associates cake with a frivolous luxury, Rowland's poem travels genealogically through its many different meanings and shows that the sweet comes with the bitter as life comes with death. Food, like language, has always a surplus, these poems seem to suggest, and there is always one more story they can tell us about ourselves, our past and our private and public memories.

Although not every poem in *The Land of Green Ginger* is as immersed in the language of the culinary

and gastronomical as ‘Cake’ or ‘Pie’, there is a very distinct sense that it is the ‘edible’ in language that is at the centre of this collection of poems. What many of the poems seem to suggest is, as Elspeth Probyn put it in *Carnal Appetites*, that ‘... eating is of interest because of the ways in which it can be a mundane exposition of the visceral nature of our connectedness and distance from each other, from ourselves, and from our social environment: it throws into relief the heartfelt, the painful, playful or pleasurable articulations of identity.’<sup>2</sup> By approaching poetic language via food and exploring eating as a poetic practice, the poems in this volume push poetry to its material limit:

Last Easter broke like a podge of cream  
(binks of emetic eggs, of Yorkie chickens)  
and Akil, seven, spelt as he found, a hanger in his hair,  
spitting ‘Where’s the buffalo?’ for buffet,  
and the roast flowed with the steam of potatoes  
and something was dissing with the lilac tree  
after the winter after the crash.

In these lines from the poem ‘Rain-pie’ the sound of the words melt in the reader’s mouth (and this mixing of metaphors is deliberate!), and one feels never even tempted to search for its meaning in a straightforward manner. It is the taste and texture of words such as ‘podge’ and ‘binks’ that lingers on, their oddity standing out against the idea that language is self-present and meaningful in itself. The very eccentricity of language, its ability to render words that an everyday Thesaurus does not recognise, lies at the heart of many of the poems gathered in this volume. It is particular the northern, Yorkshire vernacular that is explored in *The Land of Green Ginger*, but poems such as ‘Cech Speaks’, ‘Golem’ and ‘Terezín’ also marvel at the way other languages can feel a mouthful next to your mother tongue. To tease the peculiar out of the mundane, to

probe the taste of lost words and to sniff out the strange in the familiar is what these poems set out to do. However, this is never done on a purely representational level, these poems are not ‘about’ eating, cooking or remembering personal and public history. ‘Cromwell’s Toothbrush’, for example, is a lesson in Englishness where the contemporary appears clothed in a history that is as tangible as the books in a second-hand bookshop and as surprising as the taste of traditional beer in an old pub:

We are neonates in this place with wrong questions on our lips:

Is Cromwell’s toothbrush before Worcester historical or not?

The hunch of backs is a Rump Parliament in the snug as we clap our eye-beams on gammon in The Lion, mock-commonwealth candles and goode beer, which is good and converts me to a one-pint screamer.

In *The Land of Green Ginger* one never stops being amazed about what can be done with simple ingredients by somebody who knows how to combine them in a novel manner. Words roll from your tongue (‘We earwig those who come in with the milk bottles,/kettled, trolled, mulled, muppets who were clangered/with mutts, mucky ducks and swamp donkeys. ‘Cromwell’s Toothbrush’) and stick to your memory like the taste of just recalled childhood food. The theme of memory and the modes in which we remember is intrinsic to most of the poems in this volume, but it is neither glorified nor simplified, and it never merges into nostalgia. The act of remembering and its culinary, linguistic, visual and sensuous triggers are closely investigated, prodded and chewed over, and every poem conveys a sense of surprise and wonderment. These are poems are to be enjoyed in their rawness and peculiarity; this is poetry with an aftertaste.

## NOTES

1. Noëlle Châtelet, *Le corps à corps culinaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 31

2. Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites FoodSexIdentities* (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 13

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**Patrick Parrinder, *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day*** (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 502pp. Hbk ISBN 978-0-19-926484-1. Pbk ISBN 978-0-19-926485-8.

Clara Calvo (Murcia, Spain)

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“What ish my nation?” Captain Fluellen’s heart-rendering question would have posed no problem for many on the long roll of novelists discussed by Patrick Parrinder in *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day*. Most of the writers and works dealt with in this encompassing

history of the English novel are unquestionably central to the English canon – even given its breadth, this history of English novel is unashamedly canonical. Parrinder offers a solid, convincing attempt at re-reading the history of the English novel using the concept of the “nation” as his touchstone. The

outcome is an original, unusual and thought-provoking study of the development of fiction in Britain that reads the contribution of the novel in terms of the assertion of a collective sense of English and British national identity. Readers may find that accepting Parrinder's invitation to cast a fresh look at the formation of the English novel is many times more rewarding than checking who is in and who is out. Since it is now also available in paperback, this shrewd and compact history of the English novel will soon make it to the reading lists of courses on English literature and narrative. Its extensive notes, author biographies, and further reading list make it a very useful volume. It is particularly suited for courses at European universities, where non-native undergraduates attuned to their own national literary traditions may welcome nationhood and national identity as tools to grapple with the staggering history of the English novel.

Novels, Parrinder points out, shape our ideas of "national character" and "national identity" through the "transmission and dissemination of national images, memories and myths" (6). A recurrent guiding principle in this history of the English novel is that the critical move from discussing the notion of "national character" to favouring the term "national identity" reflects the change of topics and interests in fiction in English itself. English novelists have been more interested in discussing identity than character. Novels have much to say about "nation" and armed with this premise Parrinder undertakes a wide, breath-taking survey of the English novel, which begins in the Middle Ages and reaches to the present day.

In the case of England/Britain, the notion of "nation" itself provides the first stumbling block, not only because of the elusive, idiosyncratic nature of "the English" but also because of the need to define the term "English" itself and its relation to "British." Those in the habit of skipping prefaces, forewords, and other paratextual matter will be ill-advised to ignore the seven self-contained pages that form the introduction to this work, as they contain meaty discussions of what the reader should expect in the ensuing pages. From the start, the author bravely addresses the prickly issues. English or British? Parrinder sets out to write the history of the novel produced by a nation defined precisely by "unity in division" (1). Amidst the hefty 502 pages of *Nation and Novel*, Parrinder convincingly argues that the development of the English novel can be linked to changes in national consciousness. The rise of the nation as a world power in the eighteenth century is coterminous with the rise of the novel,

but the decline of the Empire, rather than bringing along a matching cultural decline seems to have produced an important renewal of English fiction, i.e., of novels that can be considered English in authorship or subject matter or both, of novels written in English by an author of English nationality, descent or domicile which contain a fictionalised version of English society.

The English novel can be defined as what it is *not* as much as what it *is* – English fiction is not Irish, Scottish, American, Canadian, Australian. It may also be defined in contradistinction to the American romance tradition – as outlined by Leslie Fiedler – and the Russian and French realist traditions. Unlike the latter tradition, which has given the world its novels of adultery and grown-up passions, the English novel is the novel of courtship and growing up. Together with the family saga and the extended novel sequence, a young girl's awakening or a male *Bildungsroman* during a journey have been spotted as the typical forms of the English novel. *Nation and Novel* goes beyond this simplified view of the history of English fiction and weaves a complex and varied tapestry that unfolds in one direction – the mutual influence of fiction and nation. If nation and national identity have given English fiction its shape and peculiar nature, the novel has also helped to shape the nation – or at least the way we memorialise and construe our views of 'England.'

English novelists, Parrinder argues, have played a crucial role in the definition of Englishness. In Parrinder's narration of the development of English fiction, the picture of Englishness we obtain is shaped out of tales of pilgrims, rogues, and genteel tradesmen, Cavaliers and Puritans, universal Englishmen like Crusoe, Jacobites and Hanoverians, gentlemen and highwaymen, either as separate entities or combined into the Cavalier Highwayman. Robin Hood and Dick Whittington are themes that re-emerge along the way transmuted into new shapes as the Benevolent Robber or the Phantom Merchant. Englishness is also shaped through histories of virtue or rebellion, novels of suffering heroines (and the suffering nation) set up against novels of picturesque landscape – or as Austen put it in *Emma*, of "English verdure, English culture, English comfort." The Metropolitan labyrinth (Dickens) co-exists with provincial Englands (Brontë, Hardy, Lawrence), and internal exile (James and Conrad) follows xenophobia and liberalism (Trollope and Eliot). "Indian Englishness" (Kipling) keeps company with round tables in the twentieth-century novel sequence (Ford, Waugh, Powell). Parrinder's narration ends with an exploration of the instances

of inward migration that currently pushes English fiction, in opposite but complementary directions, towards multiculturalism and anglicization.

Parrinder's history of the English novel reminds us of the difficulty of grasping what England really is, and what Englishness stands for. National character and national identity are critical terms immersed in their own historicity but in the end they lead in the same direction. *Novel and Nation* leaves not a bitter but a perplexed after-taste, confirming the elusiveness of the very notions of

England and English-ness. National identity, after over 500 pages, remains just as problematic a concept as it was, and one feels Peter Ackroyd has a point when he sees Englishness as "the principle of appropriation ... of people or ideas or styles" (411). In spite of the three features most commonly associated with the English national character – insularity, eccentricity, and pride – England is not an island and those who long for *the thing itself*, as Sir Jack Pitman would put it in *England, England*, will have to search for a "precious whatsit set in a silver doodah."

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**Ana González-Rivas Fernández, *El mundo clásico desde la mirada femenina: Margaret Fuller, Mary Shelley y George Eliot*. Liceus (Madrid): Biblioteca de Recursos Electrónicos de Humanidades, 2008. 167 pp. e-book.**

*Christopher Rollason (Metz, France)*

No-one would deny the major nature of the influence of Greco-Roman culture on the nineteenth-century literature of Great Britain and the United States - the textual imprint of what Edgar Allan Poe, in his poem "To Helen", famously called "the glory that was Greece / And the grandeur that was Rome". The classical world has impacted on literature in English throughout its history, from the evocation of the Trojan war which opens *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to the re-creation of the Orpheus-Eurydice myth in Salman Rushdie's novel *The Ground Beneath her Feet*. For the nineteenth century, the classical heritage has a highly specific weight in view of the importance laid on it in the British and American educational systems of the period, as a vital part of the moulding of a gentleman. In this context, and in view of the exclusion from higher education of women, the slow and painful correction of which was later to be portrayed by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, it has not been frequent for scholars to pay attention to the female face of the *classicisation* of Anglophone culture - that is, the presence of themes, allusions and archetypes from Greek and Latin literature in the works of nineteenth-century British or American women writers.

The e-book under review, by Ana González-Rivas Fernández (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) - *El mundo clásico desde la mirada femenina: Margaret Fuller, Mary Shelley y George Eliot (A woman's perspective on the classical world: Margaret Fuller, Mary Shelley and George Eliot)* - aims to study that classical presence in three representative works of nineteenth-century women's writing, two of them novels from England and the third an American work of non-fiction. The texts chosen are: *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818) by Mary Shelley; *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* by Margaret Fuller (1845); and

*The Mill on the Floss* by George Eliot (1860). The study consists of a substantial introduction outlining scope and methodology, one long chapter each on the three works analysed, general conclusions, and a full bibliography (which, imaginatively and usefully, includes a separate section listing the classical works cited in the text, in both the originals and the Spanish translations used). The works of the three authors are quoted in English, with footnoted Spanish translations; the same practice is followed for the Greek and Latin quotations.

The main purpose of the study is to show how the reception and transformation of classical motifs by women writers (who, as women, were not and could not be part of the academic system as such) led to a transmission of knowledge by alternative, non-academic routes, thus bringing about modifications in the nature of the textual canon taken as a starting-point. The author examines both the specific approaches to the classical world deployed by each of the three writers and the shared women's consciousness that ultimately unites them as pioneers of modern-day women's writing. Stress is laid on the vanguard positions and feminist orientations of all three (Mary Shelley was, after all, Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter), and also on the exceptional circumstances in terms of family and life-history which enabled each to educate herself (not forgetting the classics) and achieve a cultural level that went far beyond the normative female confines of the era. Thus, for instance, we are told how Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin, "le permitía ... el acceso a su biblioteca personal, donde empezó a conocer a autores como Tácito, Virgilio y Ovidio" ("allowed her ... access to his private library, where she made the acquaintance of such writers as Tacitus, Virgil and Ovid" 58-59).

Rather than adhering to chronology, the author chooses to begin with Margaret Fuller, thus giving priority to the discursive space constituted by feminist ideas, as eloquently expounded by the American writer. Fuller, a leading adept alongside Emerson and Thoreau of the philosophical school known as Transcendentalism and the wife of an Italian aristocrat, has a profile differing from that of Mary Shelley or George Eliot, insofar as her best-known work is an openly feminist manifesto, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. In this context, Ana González-Rivas states that “Fuller muestra una clara intencionalidad en su uso de la mitología clásica” (“Fuller’s use of classical mythology is highly intentional” 24). She argues that Fuller’s aim is to create a *women’s rhetoric*, starting out from classical rhetoric but pursuing very different ends, since the desired end-product is a *feminisation of discourse*. At the same time, Fuller’s work is viewed as exhibiting a constant concern to reconfigure the female personalities of classical mythology, as in the case of “Miranda, un personaje imaginario que representa a la propia Fuller [que] llama a Ifigenia y a Antígona ‘hermanas’” (“Miranda, an invented character representing Fuller herself, [who] calls Iphigenia and Antigone her ‘sisters’” 27).

Next examined is the case of Mary Shelley, whose celebrated novel *Frankenstein* here represents a genre often undervalued and misunderstood, namely Gothic fiction – which, as Ana González-Rivas takes pains to stress, proves on examination to have surprisingly deep connections with the Greco-Roman world. Her analysis of *Frankenstein* points up the many cases in which Mary Shelley takes up and reinterprets classical archetypes – the Prometheus of her subtitle (an analogy never made explicit in the text itself, yet ever-latent and placing its author in an implied dialogue with Aeschylus), of course, but also figures such as Oedipus (Sophocles) and Medea (Euripides). In this way, Mary Shelley’s Gothic novel becomes a nineteenth-century rereading and rewriting of Greek tragedy, interrogated from a women’s vantage point. Ana González-Rivas concludes that “esta reacomodación ha generado una fusión de géneros, donde se sigue manteniendo con éxito la esencia de los clásicos” (“this readjustment has led to a fusion of genres, in which the essence of the classics is successfully maintained”), resulting in “una nueva tragedia griega, pero escrita por una mujer inglesa del siglo XIX” (“a new Greek tragedy, but written by a nineteenth-century Englishwoman” 87).

George Eliot (as the writer born Mary Anne Evans

is universally known) appears in representation of the Victorian novel (an appellation which, in spite of everything, derives from the name of a woman, symbol of the British nation in the epoch of all-conquering capitalism). The discussion focuses on her third work of fiction, the much-loved *The Mill on the Floss*. In her analysis of this text, Ana González-Rivas stresses the presence of multiple classical allusions (often semi-parodic, as in the ironic comparison of the suitor Stephen Guest to Hercules, or even verging on the Gothic, as when the heroine Maggie Tulliver’s locks are likened to the Medusa’s), while also pointing up Eliot’s insistent questioning of the educational values of her time. Maggie’s brother Tom is obliged, as part and parcel of his gentleman’s education, to learn Latin, a subject he finds totally alien, yet it is his sister who finds, in the classical culture officially closed to her, a source of fascination around which coalesces her entire intellectual potential as a woman – a potential still denied by the Victorian orthodoxy against which George Eliot’s life and work stand in monumental opposition. In Ana González-Rivas’ words, “Eliot pone en evidencia la falta de fundamento de los prejuicios que existían en el siglo XIX sobre la incapacidad de la mujer para los estudios, y concretamente para las lenguas clásicas” (“Eliot exposes as unjustified the nineteenth-century prejudices concerning women’s unsuitability to study, and above all to the study of the classical languages” 121).

The author concludes from her detailed examination of the three works that the triad of nineteenth-century writers create, each in her own way, a remodelled “mundo clásico en el que se subrayan las características femeninas” (“classical world that stresses female characteristics”), in a form that entails “cierto alejamiento de los ámbitos académicos ..., de modo que el mundo clásico se acerca a un público más amplio, y con una mayor presencia femenina” (“a certain distancing from the academic milieu ..., bringing the classical world closer to a broader public including a larger number of women” 155). Thus, the *feminisation* of the classics brings in its wake their *democratisation*. From this perspective and in the context of the educational challenges of the present day, this study offers an eloquent and committed justification of the continued value of classical studies for our times, while also making a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate on the nature and social and cultural function of literature and its teaching.

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**Seán Crosson, *The Given Note. Traditional Music and Modern Irish Poetry.***

Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008. 302 pp.

Gerald Porter (*Vaasa, Finland*)

As is well-known, the distinction between poetry and song has never been recognized in Ireland since the time of the traditional performers and their music, the *sean nós*. Today, poetry more than ever refuses to be word-bound, or tied to a single practitioner. It is better seen as a “text,” metaphorically linked, like “web” and “network,” with a social activity like weaving, rather than characterized as “literature”, charged with associations with the alphabet. However, writers like Yeats, Joyce and Synge, rooted in the spoken word and writing for an audience with shared understanding, were not themselves (even the tenor Joyce) performers, and so paradoxically had the effect of loosening the tie between music and poetry. Seán Crosson’s new book studies the renewed close association between poetry, music and their performance in recent Irish poetry in both Gaelic and English. In his central chapter, he identifies Thomas Kinsella as the key transitional figure in his role as poet, anthologist and critic, always searching for the narrative voice.

Crosson foregrounds the symbiosis of modern Irish poetry with performance by emphasizing that it is a communicative event in which the audience actively participates, a process which the critic and folklorist Henry Glassie has vividly described as ‘goodmanning.’ Poets deliberately encourage an engagement with the multilingual contexts of their audiences and assume a familiarity with music both popular and traditional: “If you’re going to Falcarragh be sure to wear rosary beads in your hair,” as Cathal Ó Searcaigh says. Paul Muldoon, who tours the world giving readings by day and performing with his band Rackett at night, often makes mouth music in his readings with sounds that have less resonance on the page, while Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill’s lament on the destruction of the Bosnian town of Srebrenica plays on the ironic kinship of the repeated sound “dubh” [black] with the English near-homophone “dove.” Crosson suggests that it is the collaborative relation between the poet, the music and the participating audience that makes poetry intelligible, like the blind woman in Paula Meehan’s poem who finds her way home by ‘a map of a tune.’

Seamus Heaney is, of course, a continual presence in the book, with his awareness of the political resonance of using Irish words and placenames, noting that, in his poem “Broagh” the closing consonants unite Nationalist and Unionist, expressing a sound available to both but not to the

English. In this way, as John Kerrigan puts it, places “are intersections of the mortal and the metaphysical unconcealed by building and dwelling.” Crosson notes Heaney’s public tributes to the traditional musician Seán Ó Riada, his acknowledgement of the historical importance of Thomas Moore, and his recognition that it was song that first led him to poetry (Moore’s role in reinstating in Irish poetry the trisyllabic foot, which had previously been considered suitable only for comedy or popular song, is also acknowledged elsewhere in the book). Despite this, he agrees with critics who have criticized Heaney for occasionally adopting some of the stereotypes of Irish romantic nationalism, such as the feminization of the land, and also for resisting those who, in his own words, “want poetry to be more than an imagined response to conditions in the world.”

A central theme of the book is to challenge anxiety about the present state of the Irish language, which has sometimes been seen by writers as giving them a fragmentary and discontinuous link with the past. Thomas Kinsella expressed this publicly with the pessimistic view that it was probably not worth defending “a minor and embattled group, keeping loyal – for the best reasons – to a dead or dying language.” It was partly in response to this that poets like Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Cathal Ó Searcaigh, Ciaran Carson and Gearóid Mac Lochlainn turned to Irish in the 1970s, setting up the influential literary journal *Innti*. Crosson emphasizes that these poets’ use of Irish goes far beyond the tipping-in of well-worn expressions, a practice characteristic of macaronic song. He describes the work of writers like Ní Dhomhnaill and Ó Searcaigh as mixing two different linguistic consciousnesses. The poet Michael Hartnett, who had only a tenuous connection with the language at that time, soon became involved. Two long chapters, half the book, are a study of these contemporary poets who write in Irish from choice. Crosson shows how their constant intertextual shifts between English and Irish take a decentred and anti-authoritarian stance in their relation to society, art and life. He particularly singles out the role of Irish in the homoerotic poems of Cathal Ó Searcaigh.

Crosson makes a strong challenge to two assumptions, that poetry can ever be divorced from “the given note” of the oral and the instrumental, and that, by revitalizing English, Irish writers have

made literature in Irish redundant. It should be added that he moves between Irish and English in a way that is never awkward or distracting (all Irish passages are translated) and the book is well-

produced, if we exclude some parts of the software-generated index, which scrambles the alphabetical order of entries under W and lists each page of a 45-page discussion of Ciaran Carson as a separate entry.

**Jacqueline Genet, Sylvie Mikowski, and Fabienne Garcier, eds. *The Book in Ireland*.** Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006.

*Frank Molloy (Charles Sturt University, New South Wales, Australia)*

In recent decades publishing down the centuries has been subject to academic scrutiny, stimulated in part by scholarship in the sociology of literature and historiography, and by reception theory. Fifty years ago, as Clare Hutton indicates in a foreword to this collection of essays, the publication in Paris of *L'Apparition du Livre* "paved the way for the leadership of the French within the field of nationally oriented book history, a position consolidated by the publication of the multi-volume *Histoire de l'édition française*" in the 1980s. *The Book in Ireland*, edited by French scholars and originally published by the University of Caen, is just one of a number of recent studies considering the history of publishing in that country.

The first of this collection's three sections is devoted to book publishing from the late nineteenth century to the present. In the opening chapter, Jacqueline Genet considers William Morris and the rise of the Arts and Crafts movement in England, one of the results being the establishment of Kelmscott Press in 1891, essentially a non-commercial operation devoted to artistically high-quality limited editions. Genet goes on to consider the influence of Morris on similar-minded Irish operations such as the Cuala Press run by the Yeats family. At the conclusion, fourteen pages are devoted to illustrations from Kelmscott Press publications, beautiful in themselves but nothing to do with Ireland.

Succeeding chapters consider individual publishing houses in twentieth century Ireland in more detail, like Cuala, Dolmen Press, Gallery Press, and Raven Arts Press. While there is inevitably some repetition in the chapter on Cuala, others give fresh insights into the economic and other difficulties facing such small operations. Especially the chapters on Gallery and Raven Arts are enlivened by the involvement of the proprietors: Peter Fallon wrote the chapter on Gallery, and Dermot Bolger was interviewed for that on Raven Arts. These chapters also illustrate the close relationship which developed between publishers and writers. The section concludes with a survey of book reading habits in Ireland by another publisher, Tony Farmar. In a revealing discussion he explodes the myth of an

avid book-reading people and canvases reasons as to why, for instance, so many Irish people preferred newspapers over books.

One might have wished for more attention in this section to the situation facing writers in the nineteenth and earlier centuries and the drawing power of major London presses. Genet only covers this in brief and mostly in footnotes. Perhaps space devoted to the Kelmscott illustrations might have deserved fuller treatment.

The second section of this collection, devoted to the transmission and circulation of ideas, is much less focused than the first, but it does not suffer from that. A wide range of topics is examined, and over a much greater period. Greek grammar books from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the development of Gaelic typographies from Tudor to contemporary times, school text books (north and south) in the twentieth century, and the controversy surrounding the publication of the Field Day Anthologies of Irish Writing in the last decade or so. A rich variety indeed, although one might quibble about the inclusion of a paper on two poets, Denis Devlin and Saint-John Perse, which is tangential to the section's theme. Chapters are enriched by considering broader social and political contexts, so that publishing, sometimes thought of as a peripheral industry, is woven into larger concerns.

One chapter illustrates this very well: Mathew Staunton's "Irish Gaelic Typography and National Identity." Staunton begins with the Irish government's decision forty years ago to abandon the Gaelic script in favour of Roman script used in most other European languages. Choosing to abandon a specific linguistic script will be seen by some as a sign of progress and by others as a watering down of national identity, and this is an argument Staunton returns to. Two points in the history of Gaelic script in Ireland are considered. The decision of the Elizabethan court in 1561 to impose a uniform script in the expectation that the message of the newly-established Church of England would be successfully disseminated in Ireland, is associated with that phase of English colonisation. And the devising of a more artistic script by George

Petrie in the nineteenth century, reminding people of the glories of Irish monasticism in pre-Norman times, was pursued so that a separate Irish identity could be fostered.

The third section, on periodical literature, follows the pattern of the first: an introductory paper sets the scene and then individual journals are considered in detail. Malcolm Ballin's introduction on a theory of periodical genres ranges over a number of issues: varying editorial roles, regularity of a journal's publication, what image its visual appearance creates, relationships with audiences and the broader community. Theorists, such as Derrida, Bakhtin, Eagleton and Foucault, are quoted but the paper is far from heavy-going, and along the way arguments are illustrated by reference to numerous Irish journals. In the chapters that follow, long-lived journals such as the *Dublin University Magazine* in the nineteenth century and *Studies* in the twentieth are examined, and a chapter is also focused on one short-lived magazine, *Dana* (1904-5). A journal in Irish, *Agus*, and one from Northern Ireland, *The Honest Ulsterman*, are also included in an attempt to make the survey of the field comprehensive. One contributor introduces her paper by stating that she

will "present a brief outline of the magazine's history, particularities and mode of functioning and examine the reasons for its demise." For the most part, this is the pattern followed in all chapters. The type of contributions accepted, or rejected, in each periodical, usually literary or historical, is also treated. One chapter, on the satirical magazine, *Dublin Opinion*, is supported by a splendid series of illustrations, particularly appropriate since illustrations were a major feature of this monthly.

For anyone unfamiliar with the area, *The Book in Ireland* is an excellent introduction. By going beyond a narrow focus to relate a specific press, journal or whatever to larger social and political issues contributors have provided a context, especially helpful for non-Irish readers. Chapters are well-structured, readable, and never bogged down in obscure detail or the jargon of the industry. Not only is this collection of papers on publishing enlightening, surprisingly, there is much to be simply enjoyed. In each chapter, evidence of extensive research on topics is made available in footnotes and the quality of proof-reading is first-class. In short, a worthwhile project, ably conducted, and warmly commended.

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**Stan Smith, *Poetry & Displacement*.** Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007. 238 pp. ISBN 978-1-84631-116-1 (hbk).

Jason Lee (*University of Derby, UK*)

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While millions write poetry, the reading of poetry is far less popular, so a thorough close reading of a major theme in recent poetry such as this is necessary and welcomed. Whether the theme of displacement is central to poetry is a key question. The ceaseless quest for external and internal certainty and identity, and the recognition of its displaced and fragmented nature, are exemplified in film and psychoanalysis, our previous century's most popular artistic and intellectual inventions. Stan Smith's book on poetry is a good selective attempt to tackle displacement, specifically covering, from chapter two, a chapter on Philip Larkin, Iain Crichton Smith, Ken Smith, Christopher Middleton, Carol Ann Duffy, Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott combined, as well as four final thematic chapters on several other contemporary poets. Beginning by asserting that the paradigmatic figure of twentieth history is the displaced person Smith then highlights the huge gap between those who in a literary way buy into the inheritance of European Romanticism and the cult of the outsider, and those who are literally displaced without a choice in the matter, those Agamben calls 'consigned to nothingness.' Given global media we are more aware of the effects of

Wars, and the situation of refugees, the homeless, and the displaced than ever before. With the current economic crises some who believed they were safe to dabble only imaginatively in the metaphorical and metaphysical realms of displacement, are coming closer to this physical reality. We might ask how being displaced relates to poetry and realise, as Smith points out with reference to Seamus Heaney, that to 'know one's place' is actually also a form of displacement, and a strong, usually class based, British put down.

Apart from the nimble analysis of the language of poetry itself, it is the structure of this book, and the clever subheadings, that make it readable and notable. As with the best poetry, Smith can tease out the paradoxes, such as post-war British poetry being frequently dominated by metaphysical and ontological displacement positioned, ironically, within a centralised world order. Then there is, to the delight of the Deleuzians hordes, the internalised displacement, where metaphorical and non-metaphorical variants of psychoanalysis come into their own, which Smith briefly touches upon. Auden for Smith was the first poet to use the phrase 'displaced person.' James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence

come to mind, primarily famous for their prose, but just as well known for their displacement. Joyce is, perhaps, the paramount paradoxical example. As novelist and broadcaster Will Self once remarked, while Joyce always stayed clear of his homeland, he was constantly outraged hearing that this or that business on Grafton Street had changed hands, as if this were a personal affront or a cack-handed rewrite of his own text. When Smith moves on to examine Larkin's engagement with Auden, and his meditation on loneliness, in a world where 'something has gone wrong,' we see how a poet stuck in unglamorous Hull makes homelessness the epitome of Englishness. We learn Ian Chrichton Smith's repressive Scottish background makes displacement a liberation, with only the roaming tourist seeking an illusory Edenic place. Stan Smith explains that Chrichton Smith's image for the poet is repeatedly that of Walter Benjamin's chiffonier in his study of Baudelaire, rag-picking through the junk of history. In Chrichton Smith's poems like 'For Nicki in December' the poet is the collector of junk and the junk itself. Life is constructed, all is re-used, no progress redeems the waste of lives, but there is still the moment, the now. Despite this apparently negative outlook, Stan Smith perceives 'Passing through' as Chrichton Smith's poem that reveals history as not being condemned to ideology.

But, as with all books on overarching themes, can we get carried away by this displacement thesis, seeing it everywhere? There is a danger of tautology. If poems and poets are concerned with its antithesis, poetry firmly rooted in place, we can still argue this is being defined by its opposite. Oddly, Smith ignores one of Carol Ann Duffy's most popular poems 'Prayer,' which, amongst other things, beautifully explores Radio 4's shipping forecast. He does observe her work concerns nostalgia, and this poem might fit this bracket, but it is also about place, ritual and hypnotic language, and the mediated nature of quintessential Englishness. By deleting Iain Sinclair completely, a writer who meticulously and mystically documents place through psychogeography, Stan Smith at times paints a myopic traditional view of what constitutes recent British poetry. Perhaps his point is to suggest its limitations. But when positioning Andrew Motion as a postcolonial poet concerned with the end of Empire, 'dealing with a history too big to comprehend,' we also gain insight into the difficulty of writing about poetry through such a large lens as this. There is also the notion, ignored here by Smith, that those 'consigned to nothing' should get more of a voice, that their own poetry should be analysed,

along with more academic and well-known work, which reflects on an on going problem concerning what constitutes the canon.

Chapter 10 'Nowhere Anyone Would Like To Get To' opens on excellent observations concerning the contemporary poet, usually living in the suburbs yet contemptuous of its mindsets. The zone of suburbia offers security without allegiance. As Smith explains, quoting Yeats, the dream of being settled 'in one dear perpetual place' moves us to make the most of the margins. Displacement is then a vocation. But let us not think this a new phenomenon. Stan Smith quotes Edward Thomas writing a hundred years ago in *The South Country*: 'I belong to no class or race, and have no traditions. We of the suburbs are a muddy, confused, hesitating mass, of much courage though small endurance,' identifying himself as one of those 'modern people who belong nowhere.' For Smith major poets have ignored identity politics and the centrality of nowhere, intimately bound to Baudrillard's now ubiquitous hyperreal, is celebrated.

Getting the balance between theoretical observations and analytical elaborations is crucial to literary criticism. Smith sometimes pushes the Baudrillardian elements of the new generation of poets, as in the final chapter's discussion of Michael Donaghy's work. He could have had easily emphasised Donaghy's more mystical elements although, ironically, there are those who equate postmodern discourse with the mystical. Sarah Maguire's comments on postmodernism are elaborated on with Maguire, an adoptee, seen as a representative of the placeless postmodern person, searching for the lost referent, symbolised by the natural mother. In *Poetry Review* (84:1, Spring 1994) she wrote of the 'left' version of post-modern-ism, stressing difference and otherness, which may undermine established metanarratives. Being the other, women reveal the strongest desire to hold on to the referent. Delving more deeply into related theoretical work might be enlightening. I would mention the now un-fashionable observations of Lacan who noted that all perception and thought are representations constituted around originary loss. Writing positions one, and authorising desire, Maguire maintains, moves women from being the object of poetry to being its subject.

The book ends with a paragraph on Carol Ann Duffy's 'Away and See,' commenting on the whole of human history being impossible without the original fabled displacement of Adam and Eve. Stan Smith claims Duffy's poem is about being human to disorientation, being obliged to let in the new, 'the

stranger holding the future', to seek those 'things which words give a name to.' Here, as the final sentence of *Poetry & Displacement* has it, in such encounters of language and reality, 'displacement itself is displaced.' In this poem Duffy's words do refer to an external reality. The

view lapped up by so many lost in the vortex that language refers to nothing but language itself is here displaced. This book wittily fulfils its function, and I look forward with eager anticipation to further intelligent and rigorous work in this LUP *Poetry & ...* series.

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**John Milton, *Paradise Lost*.** Edited by Barbara K. Lewalski. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

*Miklós Péti (Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, Budapest, Hungary)*

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Barbara Kiefer Lewalski's edition of *Paradise Lost* is the first volume of Blackwell's planned set presenting Milton's complete poetry and selected prose. There has been no shortage lately of new and republished editions of Milton's works in general, and *Paradise Lost* in particular, but the blurb implies that Lewalski's text differs from all other versions by being both "authoritative" and "readily available" to both scholars and students. In accordance with these principles, the original spelling and punctuation of the 1674 text are generally retained, but commentary and glosses are kept to a necessary minimum. The result is an affordable, comfortably sized and handsome volume featuring a beautiful picture by Veronese on the front cover and also containing some illustrations of the 1688 Folio edition.

The presentation of the text of the epic on the basis of the spelling and the punctuation of the 1674 edition is by no means unparalleled among recent editions; Lewalski, however, presents the philological apparatus in a separate section at the end without indicating in the main body of the text where she emended the text or adopted variants. This editorial decision certainly accelerates the reading process and contributes to the neat page layout, but, with the exception of 2.1001, where the brackets in "[y]our" show clearly the widely-accepted emendation, the lack of any indication of editorial intervention might be (if only temporarily) misleading in the consideration of the status of certain words and passages (e.g. the lines added in 1674). Not that Lewalski introduces radical changes to the text: besides supplying italics to some names, indenting some paragraphs, and at 10.778, substituting an exclamation point for the question mark, her alternative readings are generally taken from the 1667 or 1668 editions, the MS of Book 1, or some eighteenth-century emendations (like Bentley's or Pearce's), and many of them are endorsed by her predecessors too. The general format of the text thus becomes a bit more consistent, but the idiosyncrasies of the spelling and the punctuation are preserved to a maximum: regarding

the intended audience of the volume (scholars and students) this is preferable to what we have in modernized editions.

The textual notes being appended to the end, what remains on the page is the text itself with glosses on the margin and commentary in the footnotes. The former provide interpretation of obscure words or expressions with different historical meanings, while the latter serve several different functions: they may refer to other parts of the epic, parallel or contrasting episodes in the plot, call the attention to Milton's possible (ancient or early modern) sources, unveil the most important classical and Biblical echoes and allusions, and occasionally provide explanation of difficult expressions or passages (or sometimes a combination of these). One might imagine that the preparation of such commentary first and foremost requires restraint – as Lewalski herself remarks in the introduction, merely the attempt to trace Biblical and classical references thoroughly would result in a much bulkier volume –, but even in the relatively few notes she succeeds admirably. As for the cross-references, they are most informative when they set the reader on possible paths of interpretation, about, for example, the consideration of Eve's love songs, or the significance of the use of hands. Similarly, the notes highlighting Milton's sources become especially helpful when they invite comparison of certain motifs and even structural devices to texts not usually considered in relation to the epic, e.g. how the proceeding of Adam's and Raphael's discussion of the structure of the universe at the beginning of Book 7 may reflect the influence of Galileo's 1632 *Dialogo*. The references to Biblical and classical echoes and allusions are limited to the most apparent such instances, and are generally succinct and helpful, although one might wonder why the note to 9.729-30 ("can envie dwell / In Heav'nly brests?") referring to 1.11 of the *Aeneid* as a possible source, could not be reproduced at 6.788, too ("In heav'nly Spirits could such perverseness dwell?"), or why the Virgilian parallel of 3.236-7 is cited only in Latin (contrary to all other notes where foreign texts are either translated or paraphrased).

What the present reviewer occasionally misses from the commentary are the reflections on (what we could anachronistically term) Milton's own special "formulaic diction," involving the recurring subjects of certain similes, repetitions, or parallel structures (3.130, "Self-tempted, self-deprav'd" vs. 5.860, "self-begot, self-rais'd"). In general, however, it might be safely said that Lewalski's lifelong engagement in Milton Studies is synthesised in these notes which, besides providing ample and sound basic commentary also offer insight into the generic complexity of the narrative, call the attention to the multiplicity of early modern interpretive practices, and, when necessary, refer to the wider context of Milton's *oeuvre*.

The volume starts with a chronology presenting the major facts we know about Milton's life in parallel to the historical events of the period. The introduction that follows touches upon the most important aspects of the poem from the circumstances of its creation through its place in the epic tradition to problems of subject and style. Here, as in the commentary, Lewalski manages to

provide essential information briefly and lucidly without becoming superficial, and this remains true of the textual introduction too where she guides the reader through the mazes of philological problems besetting the modern editors. The text of the epic is followed by the textual notes and an appendix featuring the transcript of the Trinity Manuscript in which Milton's early plans for dramas on the Fall are sketched. The volume ends with a selective, but wide-ranging bibliography which contains a list of the major editions, and a selection of the biographies, scholarly resources and the critical literature. The copy-editing of the book is almost flawless, although there seems to be a preposition missing from the note to 3. 436., the note to 11. 689. "modernises" the expression to be commented upon, and there is an extra accent on the Greek verb *prologizei* in the appendix. These minor lapses, however, do not significantly disturb the pleasure of reading the volume which due to its reader-friendly format and scholarship is bound to become a favourite text for undergraduate seminars.

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**Rob Pope. *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice*.** London and New York: Routledge, 2005. xxviii + 302 pp.

*Nathalie Vincent-Arnaud (Toulouse, France)*

Reaching the core of the variegated process of creation is certainly not an easy task, and yet that is what Rob Pope manages to do throughout this book which in itself offers an out-standing example of the creative vein at work in writing and structuring. Very little is overlooked in this far-reaching investigation which, as suggested by the title itself, encompasses the various facets of the notion of creativity, ranging from the Romantic conception of the genius to contemporary prospects such as cognitive science. In this respect the "critical anthology" of creative practices – which make up the fourth and last part of the book – may be considered as both the mirror image of the diversity of the whole book and a *mise en abyme* of the creative process itself, providing the reader with the most inviting food for thought. Art, culture and, more specifically, 'literature' – the inverted commas are the author's as are fully justified in a section which bears the significant title of "Literature other-wise" – are envisaged from a variety of angles, including everything from "Creativity and constraint" according to Chaucer, Robert Frost and Adrienne Rich, to "Making Musics" which features a consort of miscellaneous voices including Tchaikovsky, Barthes and Eurhyth-mics. The epigraph from Deleuze's *Negotiations* is an appropriate threshold to this

wide-angled vision which, to quote Deleuze's, "unfolds" throughout the different chapters as further aspects of the notion under scrutiny are taken into account. The reader may well have the feeling, therefore, that he has hit upon the "rhizomatic" book *par excellence*. In keeping with this overall impression, this book is, to borrow one of the final chapter headings, an "Open Invitation" to browse through it as one wishes, a practice invited by the author himself in his preliminary "directions for use": "As the epigraph that heads this section reminds us, 'Look before you leap is criticism's motto. Leap before you look is creativity's' [this epigraph derives from E.M. Forster's *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951)]. Leap into or across this book as you feel moved. There are many lines of enquiry that cross and re-cross within it; but few start or finish in one place" (xviii). The dual pragmatic purpose – and, indeed, quality – of the book is, thus, clearly delineated: to ensure the reader's comfort just as it gives him or her the strongest incentive to go on with a random hypertext-based search which, in the context of our contemporary web-bound culture, turns out to favour closer attention and concentration on the item and analysis selected.

For all the liberty of investigation and creative impulse that it leaves the reader in his wanderings

through the many areas of in this exploration, the organization of the book is anything but loose or erratic. The first part examines the various prospects and conceptual extensions opened up by the notion which, according to Pope, “can only be fully grasped by reaching beyond distinctions between the arts, sciences and technology as conventionally conceived” (22). The metaphor of the rhizome is at work here again, seen as “a powerful image of genuinely creative thinking” (16) in the light of Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. The second part delves into the semantic and etymological content of a term which is regarded as branching off into a huge variety of correlates and derived terms, each of them marking a further stage in the author’s approach to a word whose notional field encapsulates much more than what is usually acknowledged as relevant to it. Pope brings together the classics and the utmost modernity in a genuinely playful yet thought-provoking manner: one outstanding feature of the book is indeed its recurrent diachronic perspective which, not unlike the theory of chaos which is briefly yet efficiently discussed and illustrated (123-31), connects the old and the new, such sections as “Creatures: monsters, machines, wo/men” taking us from St Augustine’s and St Thomas Aquinas’s creeds to the dystopian worlds staged by contemporary science fiction. In the same way, the academic and the mundane (from classic literature to contemporary advertising), the biological and the metaphysical (from Darwin to Kant and Bergson), the accepted and the less familiar, are shown as closely related in the field of creative or re-creative performance, the latter being defined by the author as basically involving “some transformation of form or function, however slight or apparently accidental” (84). Emphasis is, of course,

placed on language and cognition in this synthetic yet carefully detailed approach which retraces the evolution from Freud’s “‘deficit’” conception of creativity (71) to gender-based studies in the light of Hélène Cixous’s seminal writing “Sorties” (published in 1975), including the wide scope of intertextuality where the figure of the *homo ludens*, characterized by his/her “openness to the interplay of differences” (94), is brought into sharp relief. The third part completes this convincing portrayal of what Pope regards as “the defining human quality” (119) by offering an insight into the various perspectives of religion and science, pointing out the similarities and discrepancies of the myths and metaphors at work in the apprehension of man as both creation and *re-creator*. As has been said before, the fourth part mainly consists in a variety of illustrations, making the book come full circle since virtually none of the questions tackled at the very beginning is left in abeyance. It would certainly be more appropriate, however, to see its whole progress as spiralling, given the wider and wider areas of significance and the echoing of the notion that are disclosed in these final sections (from jazz and “carnival laughter” to “cultural morphing”), an openness which in many ways reflects the author’s basic principle according to which culture is “a matter of *human becomings* rather than *human being*” (253).

Be this openness that of the reader for whom the discovery of this book should be both a disconcerting and a comforting experience since the vision which is conveyed of the world and of the cognitive powers at work within is a re-structuring and unifying one. Though this be *re-creative* fancy – in all senses of the word, and all in the service of intelligibility – yet there is definitely method in it.

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**Peter S. Baker, *Introduction to Old English*, Second edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007**  
(xv + 388 pp.)

Jacob Thaisen (Poznań, Poland)

This past decade has witnessed an explosion in the number of textbooks available that introduce the history of the English language in whole or in part, and with varying success and novelty value. While we are perhaps nearing the saturation point, it is nevertheless fair to say that these publications fill a need. For besides raising the level of awareness of a field often sidelined, they outperform many of the older textbooks whose encyclopaedic nature and poor pedagogy make them less inviting and less accessible to the beginner. Reviewers greeted one of these recent publications – Peter Baker’s combined grammar and reader of Old English – with unanimous praise when Blackwell released its first edition back in 2003.

The cordial welcome was well-deserved, for Baker had succeeded in his aim to design a course that would build reading capacity in Old English gradually in his target group of ‘students whose interests are primarily literary or historical rather than linguistic’ (xii). The second edition (2007), here under review, is largely identical to the first. Minor inaccuracies have been rectified, especially in chapter 3, and four extracts have been added to the anthology of texts, bringing the total to eighteen verse and prose texts. Among the additions is the *Peterborough Chronicle* entry for 1087 with the ‘Rime of King William,’ a brave selection that rightly emphasises the continuity of English literary production after the Conquest also stressed by

Elaine Treharne and Seth Lerer among others in recent years. References to the supporting 'Old English Aerobics' website have, however, for the most part been taken out, since the site has, in Baker's own words, 'aged poorly' (xiii), as indeed it has: only parts remain available online, and those from a different URL to the one cited in the volume.

The book is laid out in sixteen chapters followed by three appendices, the anthology, and three indices. Baker begins by situating Old English temporally, geo-geographically, and in relation to other members of the Indo-European family of languages in chapter 1. A guide to the pronunciation of Old English follows in chapter 2, and to necessary grammatical terminology in chapter 3, for Baker assumes no previous exposure to the language or familiarity with linguistics. Then come seven chapters each devoted to a part of speech. They are individually headed by a 'Quick Start' section that gives useful rules of thumb along the lines of 'all dative plural [noun] forms end in *-um*' (51), before giving a more detailed account. Panning out to larger units, Baker goes on to address concord and word-order in chapters 11 and 12 respectively. Chapters 13-15 discuss metre, poetic style, and the grammar of poetry, all matters that normally receive no attention in textbooks of this kind. The final chapter draws attention to the difference between the original manuscripts and the editions from which many scholars work; a topic not normally discussed in readers either, but included in some histories of the language.

The first of the three appendices is a list of frequent spelling variants. Appendix B is a key to pronunciation expressed in terms of the International Phonetic Alphabet, while Appendix C makes suggestions for further reading arranged by topic. Helpful to learners is the consistent marking of vowel length and dotting of <c> and <g> in the anthologised texts, which follow in pedagogic order of mounting difficulty, and also the systematic splitting of certain complex forms (such as the conjunction *oþþæt*) regardless of the word spacing found in the manuscript source. Textual comments on the extracts appear appropriately as endnotes so that they cause no distraction, while the glosses are foregrounded as footnotes. The entries in the indices, a glossary, a bibliography, and an index of topics, are accurate.

Typographical infelicities climb above average for a second edition produced by a major publishing house, with unsystematic variation in font size (x, 110-111), use of italics (56, 82), and the formatting of captions (tables 7.3, 7.12). Other small minuses include the inaccurate claim that a rule

should exist that always associates a pronoun with the most recent possible antecedent (103), the non-standard definition of 'complement' as that which follows a copula (31-33), and the imbalance in the apparatus to the anthologised texts that Ælfric (text 1) has been accorded no more than a short head-note and spare glosses, whereas the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan (text 8) are furnished with copious annotation. Section 1.1 provides selective, basic information on who the Anglo-Saxons were which the target readership will already possess, and the exposition of Sievers's five major metrical types in section 13.2 has no clear goal and may be overly detailed for this readership.

The plusses, however, vastly outnumber the minuses. Baker's sensitivity to students' needs has resulted in friendly, inspiring prose written in plain English. Learning is furthered by interaction with texts rather than memorisation of paradigms, the historical linguistic material having been trimmed down to its essentials, with minor declensions and conjugations omitted altogether and phonological change brought into play only when necessary for explaining seeming irregularities, although a larger amount of linguistic information is in fact included than at first meets the eye. Handy tips clearly developed from years of teaching experience ('it is often best [...] to translate the sub-junctive with a plain indicative' [85]) aid the students in tackling a subject they usually approach with apprehension. Paradigms are tabulated for easy consultation, and dedicated boxes contain explicit comparisons to present-day American English that illustrate foreign features like split compound subjects or the postpositioning of verbs. As a particularly strong point, the glossary contains every Old English word cited in the volume. Less transparent inflected forms are helpfully given separate entries that cross-refer to the main entries. The glossary itself is preceded by the list of frequent spelling variants mentioned above that provides a useful additional aid in looking up words.

On balance, the Old English specialist will find little of interest in this combined grammar and reader and may even quibble at its content on minor points of accuracy. Baker's target readership of beginners and their instructors will, by contrast, find the volume an extraordinarily effective learning tool, and this reviewer has no hesitation in wholeheartedly recommending it. Diligent students who follow the course in the intended step by step manner, consulting the grammar and absorbing inflections, vocabulary, and constructions from the anthologised texts as they go, will soon find themselves able to appreciate Old English literature in the original language.

**Msiska Mapalive-Hangson. *Postcolonial Identity in Wole Soyinka.***

Amsterdam and York: Rodopi, 2007.

Adriana Neagu (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)

This study proposes a thematic-stylistic reading of constructions of selfhood and otherness in the work of Nigerian playwright, poet and novelist Wole Soyinka. Drawing on a significant body of scholarship in African and comparative cultural studies, Msiska embarks upon a revisionist, post-Marxist interpretation of the parables of cultural difference in Soyinka's writing. In perceptive textual analyses of the paradigms of postcolonial formation constitutive of Soyinka's discourse, Msiska orchestrates a revealing dialogue between what have by now become the classic texts of postcolonialism. The examination makes constant reference to some of the most authoritative voices leading the debate in postcolonial theory, from Frantz Fanon, Paul Gilroy, and Homi Bhabha, to Henry Louis Gates, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, along with Msiska's own explorations of the dialectic of myth and history in postcolonialism.

Reading Soyinka's work as a continuum in its protean thematisation and symbolisation of diasporic identity, the critic circumscribes the enquiry to the philosophy of the subject. The central line of Msiska's argument is that what drives Soyinka's work is the commitment to developing a conceptual framework that is more congenial for a discussion of African postcolonial identity than the competing discourses of legitimisation dominant in the writing of Africanity and self-identity. This would engage Western categories and conceptions of identity symbolically, and in so doing, remain uncontaminated by its easy dualities. Soyinka's cultural-critical project is animated, Msiska posits, by a will to historicise the postcolonial contemporary and its exploits within a more enduring symbolic order, one grounded in an indigenous mythopoesis, instantiating a dialectical *rapport* with Western culture and knowledge. Msiska's analyses thus aptly valorise the metaphysical and mythopoeic dimension in Soyinka's model, advancing a hermeneutic perspective whereby the symbolic has prevalence over the ideological. Purged of the ballast of an ideologically saturated postcolonial idiolect, the new language Soyinka seeks to configure is better equipped to "beat the white man at his own game" (xxii).

Given the centrality of Nigerian writing to postcolonial theory and literature, due in part to Soyinka's stature as the first sub-Saharan Nobel Prize Laureate in literature, it is fitting that a consideration of his work touch upon the author's international quality. Taking stock of Soyinka's internationalism, Msiska's study addresses the radically divided opinions and mixed reception of Soyinka's 'universalism' by fellow Africanists. Dismissed as 'Euro-modernist' (a manifestation of his alienation

from traditional African values), Soyinka's non-adherence to the cultural nationalist statement, Msiska shows, is a measure of the extent of the writer's keen awareness of the dangers of Afro-radicalism that the infamous alliance between nativism and nationalism breeds. Msiska underlines Soyinka's effort toward configuring a symbolical order consonant with the representation of a deeper sense of African specificity, foregrounding an image of cultural authenticity and resistance that transcends the limits of existing theories of Negritude. A convincing motif running through the textual analyses is Soyinka's notion that, in their content of negative definition and over-valorisation of self, nativist attitudes turn into structures of exclusion replicating Europe's dualistic Manichean traditions. According to Msiska, the mythological method enables Soyinka to complexify the representation of the ambivalent, affirmative-negative in his conception of the God of transition, construed as "the embodiment of destructive essence."

Together with Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka is a canonical figure in postcolonial African literature in English, indeed in African intellectual history. Celebrated as a staple of humanism, or castigated as an act of betrayal and vulnerability, the 'Achilles' heel' rendering ineffectual his political activism (xxii), Soyinka's universalism forms the over-arching concern of *Postcolonial Identity in Wole Soyinka*. Msiska's research contributes here builds on a vast body of scholarship in African studies to perform an empathic, close reading of Soyinka's vision of African identity, articulating what stands out as a convincing article of faith. The book marks several refreshing departures from conventional, polarised approaches to Soyinka's discourse of identity, overly concerned with his position between tradition and modernity. The main strengths of the endeavour lie in the well-argued case Msiska puts together about the pivotal role of metaphoricity in Soyinka's writing and the of the articulations between the anxiety of empire and self-writing. These open up new vistas of and offer interpretive tools for a refined understanding of Soyinka's contribution to African scholarship that does justice to both the poetics and the politics of his work. Examining the metaphysical-mythographical substance of Soyinka's writing, Msiska provides a telling account of Soyinka's position in the dispute between the nativists and the internationalists. It evidences the potential to regenerate and revitalise both Soyinka exegesis and the project of postcolonialism. Intended for a specialised audience of postcolonial, subaltern studies theorists and Africanists, the book is certain to find a receptive audience in graduate cultural and literary studies students.