
Reports and Reviews

Peter Childs, *The Essential Guide to English Studies*. London: Continuum, 2008.

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Written by a fine critic of English fiction, *The Essential Guide to English Studies* is a handbook that many an aspiring university student will find useful: the book offers a very readable outline of Anglophone literature as it is taught in third-level education. In a well-structured manner, it points out the differences between secondary school and higher education, thus allowing potential students of English to know what sort of approach they are to expect in university. The guide is ideally suitable for pupils who are anxious about entering university: it goes through every possible step, taking the freshman by the hand, in both an eye-opening and a comforting way, explaining jargon and offering encouragement and wise guidance.

This handbook deals more with the practicalities of finding one's way through the university system than with theories of literature or literary history. In a highly informed manner, it offers statistics and facts about the status and nature of English studies today in a British context (which sometimes entails pointing out the differences between England and Scotland, for instance). Peter Childs's guide is not only informative in itself; it also indicates which internet resources offer additional information and services for each aspect, from registration to Victorian literature and beyond.

In the section dealing with literary theory, the author presents what he calls the 'traditional' approach to literature in six key points. As in the rest of the book, Childs is at pains to make complex points clearly and simply. The author offers alternative approaches to the traditional ones enumerated in an engaging manner by dwelling on the conflictive ideologies at work in the contexts of such novels as *Emma* and *Jane Eyre*. While Childs's points are always subtly made, however, it is a pity that some of the traditional approaches mentioned are not questioned in a more systematic way. The notion that 'meaning lies with the author' and that 'The novel or poem has varied meanings to different readers but there is only one true meaning --that which the author intended' is never re-examined at a later stage. This very Sartrean view of the author as a God who knows everything there is to know about his text is never debunked or questioned. A more comprehensive presentation might also have explained the intentionalist fallacy and the possibility that certain things might escape a writer's notice, even when the author is highly self-conscious. Likewise, the second point, according to which 'popular literature is that which is ephemeral and merely contemporary, whereas good literature conveys and embodies timeless qualities and values: it is that which communicates universally and transcends its time of writing,' goes

uncommented in Childs's subsequent remarks. A simple remark about the importance of popular culture in the rising branch of Cultural Studies, the notion of marginalized genres, and the increasingly blurred boundary between high and low culture in general seems necessary here so that students avoid perpetuating the outdated idea that the distinction between good and bad literature is an easily resolved issue. The main point to make would also have been that literary value is not always the most important issue at stake in the context of literary history.

One might also object to the unnecessary presentation of the pre-Modernist idea that 'a good poem or piece of prose is one with a unified whole meaning in which all the parts fit together'. While it is ultimately to be regretted that these traditional points are insufficiently queried, it is likely that the author of this manual did not wish to put the absolute beginner off by entering the theoretical debate in detail. Childs's discussion of theory does include some clear-sighted presentations of gender, class, colonialism and textual theory, nevertheless.

In the third section of his guide, the author examines how English contributes to the economy, offering an upliftingly Arnoldian view of the value and role of literature and language in society.

Section four offers ideas in career guidance, pointing out the job opportunities that the study of English can fruitfully enhance. Childs argues rather convincingly that the employability of English graduates is strong.

Part two of the guide gives students sound advice on the managing of their coursework, ranging from essay writing to note-taking, research facilities, creative writing, grammatical and orthographical precision. The last few pages of the manual enclose a comprehensive glossary and a number of basic (but no doubt useful) grammar exercises.

On the whole, *The Essential Guide to English Studies* may not be essential reading for every student but it is a thoroughgoing, crystal-clear vade-mecum for the slightly lost, slightly bewildered novice in search of solid, sound advice. Every career-guidance centre and library, in both secondary and third-level education, should have a copy of this book.

Ray Siemens and Susan Schreibman, eds. *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.), 620 pp. ISBN 978-1-4051-4864-1.

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Blackwell's *Companion to Digital Literary Studies* seeks to show how new technologies are changing the practice of literary studies. It focuses on the role of digital technology in research, largely excluding the practice of teaching. The book is a useful companion for those who have little familiarity with the use of digital technology in the discipline but also for the more experienced digital researcher, since it contains a great variety of chapters geared towards different kinds of readers. Like the *Companion to the Digital Humanities*, this

collection is a pioneer among printed media in its subject matter. However, the chosen medium for the publication, a 620-page volume published by a scholarly publishing house, does present some friction with its subject matter. Digital literary studies develops quickly, and most of the chapters seem to have been written in 2006, thus per definition missing out on the most recent developments in the field. Also, hyperlinks are of course non-clickable in a book publication (as in this review), and when typed into a browser, these links sometimes turn out to be dead links already, due to the dynamic nature of the web.

The volume's thirty-one chapters are divided into three sections: traditions, textualities, and methodologies. Viewed from a gender perspective, the list of authors suggests that digital literary studies is primarily a field of male academics. For although the book's editors are nicely balanced in terms of their sex, thirty-two of the chapters' authors are male, and only seven are female. This gender bias might have been something to comment on in the editorial introduction, especially since major authors in the field, such as N. Katherine Hayles (*How We Became Posthuman; Writing Machines; and My Mother Was a Computer*) and Janet Murray (*Hamlet on the Holodeck*), are indeed female.

Organized according to disciplines and historical periods, the 'traditions' section gently leads the reader into the world of digital literary studies. Chapters on classical, medieval, early modern, eighteenth-, nineteenth-, twentieth-century and contemporary literature provide an overview of what is available in terms of electronic bibliographies, online texts, databases, project sites, e-journals, and weblogs. Authors in this section do not only describe how literary studies have become digitalized, but also show how the new media have affected our understanding of literature itself. Dirk van Hulle in his chapter on twentieth-century and contemporary literature, for example, writes how a hypertext version of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* has drawn attention to the importance modernists attached to the writing process. Similarly, Matthew Steggle after an expert overview of the use of new media in early modern literary studies argues that the next big thing might be the application of contemporary ideas about information revolutions to the period. Renaissance works "could be read not as a single linear narrative, but as information-retrieval systems deploying an array of hypertextual features such as indices, marginalia, and illustrations" (98). He mentions *The Renaissance Computer* (2000) as a pioneering work in this field, but regrets that little work has appeared since. I think the field is less dormant than Steggle suggests, especially when online publications on the subject are taken into account – as they should be in a book such as this. Tatjana Chorney's "Interactive Reading, Early Modern Texts and Hypertext: A Lesson from the Past" (2005) on the Academic Commons (www.academiccommons.org) is a perfect example of this kind of work. Other chapters, too, may occasionally be seen to take a rather non-digital approach to their subject. Dave Mazella in a blog review on *The Long Eighteenth* remarked that Peter Damian-Grint's chapter on eighteenth-century digital resources works with "text-based notions of authorship and the transmission of scholarly authority, a set of assumptions unsuited for describing the strengths and weaknesses of web-based scholarship" (<http://long18th.wordpress.com/2008/09/09/blackwell-companion-to-digital-literary-studies-online/>).

The 'textualities' section focuses on new technologies and practices of reading, on interactive fiction and its potentialities for narrative, on digital games and online worlds and their creation of a new embodied subjectivity in narrative. The first three chapters' shared concern with the effects of new media on material reading practices does not always make clear how the focus of one chapter differs from the next. One chapter's interest in the question how "digital media affect the experience of fictional worlds and the practice of fiction" (Marie-Laure Ryan's "Fictional Worlds in a Digital Age," 250) and another chapter's thesis that "since the electronic hyperlink was born, many new innovations have continued to transform the nature of storytelling space and our expectations of it" (Carolyn Guertin, "New Narratives in a Postnarrative World," 233) might overlap a little. Nevertheless, this section of the book takes the reader on an intellectual tour of digital literary installations, digital poetry, digital games, modding and MUDs. Nick Montfort's chapter on interactive fiction (IF), in which the reader types in phrases to command a character with writing and receives written descriptions of what happens to the character, is particularly thought-provoking. His argument that IF should be considered alongside higher-brow traditions such as hypertext fiction and digital poetry is utterly convincing. The final chapter in this section examines the role of weblogs in digital literary studies. Although Aimée Morrison writes that "many very worthwhile blogs [...] offer information of use to the literary studies community [...] offering opportunities of rich interaction among blog-readers and blog-writers" (383), she adds that these are to be found particularly in humanities computing, and thereby ignores valuable blogs in our discipline. (See www.academicblogs.org for a long list of flourishing academic blogs in literary and cultural studies.)

The final section of this collection presents a range of methodologies offered by the new media. This is perhaps the most technical section of the volume, which leads the reader through unfamiliarly abstract models of the study of literature. Willard McCarty's chapter on modeling, for example, proposes that we begin with a theoretical model of personification that we might call T. Then, "we build a model by analyzing personifications according to the linguistic factors that affect their poetic ontology" (397). These factors might be grammatical, such as the proximity of certain verbs. How does the model work? Well, "it goes like this. Entity X seems to be personified; we identify factors A, B, and C provisionally; we then encounter entity Y, which seems not to qualify even though it has A, B, and C; we return to X to find previously overlooked factor D; elsewhere entity Z is personified but has only factors B and D, so A and C are provisionally downgraded or set aside, and so on" (397). If this seems a little mechanical, McCarty is the first to admit that the imaginative language of poetry does not thrive in such a model. Similarly, James Cummings in a wonderfully informative chapter on the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) argues that texts do not have an unproblematic objective existence, and that it would be impossible to be other than "incomplete and perspectival" in the encoding of literary texts (459). This nuanced approach to the use of digital methodologies in the study of literature makes this section a real addition to the field.

As Alan Liu's opening chapter promises, this volume does not offer a facile modernization narrative: it considers the advantages of the use of digital technology as well

as its disadvantages. The authors of the chapter on e-Philology and the classics, for example, warn that publishing institutions can “constrain the fundamental moral right of academic authors to reach the broadest possible audience, and restrict scholarly activity” (37). They offer open source licensing and open access publications as a solution to increase transparency in the humanities. If Matthew Steggle thinks back to his struggles with microfilm to conclude that “EEBO is simply a faster, better and more flexible way to get at the images originally committed to the microfilm” (90), then Peter Damian-Grint is more critical of the influence of these digital resources when he makes the qualification that *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* (Thomson-Gale) is a “wonderfully rich resource – at least for those whose institutions are able to afford it” (109). Visiting scholars can freely consult the collections on microfilm – what happens when these collections become obsolete?

“As time goes by,” writes Christian Vandendorpe in his chapter on reading on screen, “the printed book will have more and more difficulty meeting the expectations of most readers; i.e., that all texts should share the characteristics of digital documents: ubiquity of access, fluidity of copy-paste and exchange operations, integral searchability, participatory interactivity and hypertext links” (213). In this light, it is certainly good to know that this *Companion to Digital Literary Studies* is freely available online at www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/DLS. There, readers can copy-paste, do an integral search, and click on all the hyperlinks mentioned in the book, as well as those in the useful annotated overview of selected electronic sources compiled by Tanya Clement and Gretchen Gueguen. The only characteristic from Vandendorpe’s list sorely missing in the online version of the companion, is participatory interactivity. A link to send a mail to an editor is by no means the only opportunity digital technology offers in this respect. Fortunately, a lively discussion on the book is already taking place in the literary blogosphere.

Peter Brown, ed. *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350-c.1500*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. xvii + 668 pages. £ 85; ISBN-13: 978-0-631-21973-6, paperback ISBN-13: 978-1405195522.

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Many generations of students of English literature have grown up with the single all-encompassing textbook that was available to them (and affordable), A. C. Baugh’s *A Literary History of England*, which first appeared in 1948.²⁵ But since the days of Baugh and his co-authors so much has happened in the field of literary studies that such a one-volume survey

25 Of course this observation does not detract from the value of the thorough and much more detailed volumes in the famous Oxford and Cambridge histories of English literature, but these could usually only be consulted in a library.

has become completely impracticable, indeed unthinkable.²⁶ In its stead we have seen the development of the 'Companion to' series, which range from companions to broad fields like drama, to volumes limited to one author, like a companion to Shakespeare or Dickens. Also students of the English literature of the Middle Ages have been well served by this new trend. In recent years we have seen the publication of companions to Anglo-Saxon and Arthurian literature, to romance and to Chaucer, and to numerous other subjects, as part of a publisher's 'Companion to' series or as stand-alone books. As a result the student interested especially in Middle English literature now has a number of options. Ten years ago, in 1999, we saw the publication of *Medieval English Literature*, the first volume in New Cambridge History of English Literature, edited by David Wallace, with 31 essays by different authors, followed by James Simpson's *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, volume 2 in the Oxford English Literary History and covering the period 1350-1547 (2002), to which in 2007 was added the book under review, while since then another single-author survey has appeared: Christopher Cannon's *Middle English Literature* (2008). Although it is not the place here to make an extensive comparison between these four books, a few features shared by them should be mentioned. In the first place there is much more attention for the cultural and historical context, and consequently for the non-English writings of the period in Britain (Latin, Anglo-Norman and the Celtic languages). Another striking difference with earlier works is in the prominence assigned to the fifteenth century and the transition to the post-medieval era, a change in attitude that was also discernible in Derek Pearsall's anthology *Chaucer to Spenser* (1999), and whose origin may at least in part be traced to the groundbreaking book by John Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (1971).

Peter Brown, the editor of the present book, is well aware that his is not the first publication of its kind, and in the Introduction he deals extensively with the two works by Wallace and Simpson, and with possible objections to his own undertaking. Probably most important is the difference in organization. As Brown writes: "The structure is that of a funnel. The book begins with sections that have the broadest circumference, and continues with others that have gradually diminishing frames of reference. The subject matter narrows until the final, and longest, section deals at length with individual texts" (5). This structure shows from the section headings and those of their subsections, in which authors' names or titles of individual works appear only in the final chapter. In all there are 38 essays, grouped into seven main parts (or sections): Overviews, The Production and Reception of Texts, Language and Literature, Encounters with Other Cultures, Special Themes, Genres and Readings. Among the Overviews there is an excellent introduction by David Raybin to the various critical approaches of the past 20 to 30 years, but with a practical twist: "my focus will be less on how writers [i.e. theorists – EK] define their methods than on their practical performance of those methods" (10). Particularly instructive I found Part III, "Language and Literature", with two papers by Donka Minkova dealing with "The Forms of Speech" and "The Forms of Poetry" respectively. For all those who have not received any training in the history of the language or of prosody, these chapters provide a welcome and sound

26 A fairly recent, brave attempt at such a survey, but in my view not a very successful one, is Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (1994).

introduction to the technicalities of Middle English verse. In the subsections of Part IV, "Encounters with Other Cultures," a real difference with Wallace's book shows up. Since the latter's work deals with the entire Middle English period, his parallel chapter, "Writing in the British Isles," has subsections on writing in Wales, Ireland and Scotland. Brown's *Companion*, dealing with the final 150 years of the period only, has contributions with titles that show a clear shift of concern: "England and France," "Britain and Italy: Trade, Travel, Translation," or "Jews, Saracens, 'Black Men', Tartars: England in a World of Racial Difference."

On the whole the essays in this volume are a pleasure to read, with helpful subtitles introducing a change of topic, and ending with a paragraph of conclusions followed by cross-references to other sections. Most of the sections were written by established scholars, but Peter Brown is to be commended in that a number of young people were also invited to contribute. Perhaps the most alluring feature of the book is that even on such – at first sight – worn-out subjects like "Middle English Romance" (by Thomas Hahn and Dana M. Symons) the authors come up with refreshing views or new lines of approach.

According to the blurb on the volume's wrapper the *Companion's* intended readership are students, but members of the teaching staff will be quite satisfied with what contributions on fields outside their own specialisation have to offer as well.

David Paroissien, ed. *A Companion to Charles Dickens*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.

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It is no exaggeration to say that Blackwell's companions to literature and culture have become a reference point that sometimes surpasses the Cambridge and Oxford University Press equivalents. This steadily growing collection has now been graced with a companion to Dickens that provides wide-ranging, in-depth commentaries: the first part of the book offers a complex and varied approach to the autobiographical nature of Dickens's work and to studies of his life. It then proceeds to contextualise Dickens's oeuvre by grounding it with respect to eighteenth-century literary culture. Dickens's interaction with popular culture is also dwelt on at some length. The chapter on Dickens's approach to the Gothic will be considered of great value to those interested in charting the development of the genre in the nineteenth century. Outlining Dickens's impact on late-Victorian practitioners of the urbanised, London-based Gothic mode, Robert Mighall also gives a masterful reading of Dickens's domestic Gothic in *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations*. Mighall's discussion of Miss Havisham's "studied self-Gothicization" makes for a particularly stimulating account of the novel in which this character appears.

This section of the Blackwell *Companion* also contains an invigorating discussion of the illustrations that accompanied nearly all of Dickens's works, and an appraisal of his use of language. Although this last chapter provides an interesting overview of Dickensian name-

coining, examining the origin of such names as Merdle (from the then current usage in English of the French word *merde*, meaning excrement) or the names of Dickens's clone politicians and lawyers and their etymological debt to the verbs *muzzle* (to confuse) and *chisel* (to cheat), it passes over such puzzlingly lewd examples of onomastic as Master Bates in *Oliver Twist*. This chapter also gives the reader a stimulating perspective on the author's use of dialect and American English as well as his debt to Shakespeare and the Bible. A longer chapter might have been able to include an exploration of Dickens's comic and satiric use of rhythmic punning that anticipates Samuel Beckett's linguistic absurdism in lines like the following: "By degrees, I became calm enough to release my grasp and partake of the pudding. Mr Pumblechook partook of pudding. All partook of pudding" (*Great Expectations*).

The third part of the book skilfully explores the historical features of Dickens's novels, offering highly informed overviews of such topics as reform, gender, technology, Christianity, law, and Victorian foreign policy. Students not cognizant with Dickens's fervent Unitarian church-going will learn that he wrote *The Life of Our Lord* to explain the teachings of Christ to his children. The chapter devoted to gender studies of Dickens is particularly informative, comprehensively ranging over various responses to Dickens's women from the early critical view of Dickens as sentimental, patriarchal, and sexist to psycho-analytical readings of Dickens's obsession with Nancy's murder in his dramatic readings of *Oliver Twist*. The irony of seeing Dickens as the Dean of Domesticity in the light of his own domestic turmoil is also raised by the author of this chapter who then goes on to underline the newly-emerging discipline of masculinity studies in the field of Victorianism, examining how men laboured under the pressures of the Utilitarian work ethic, and stressing how late Victorian fathers were more distant than early Victorian ones due to the increasingly gender-essentialist pressures of industry. Although issues such as Dickens's well-known narrative hostility towards biological mothers is presented in a lively way, the absence of a distinctly personal approach to the matter of gender in this chapter can leave the reader with the sensation that the study of this issue in Dickens criticism has worn itself out. By contrast, "Postcolonial Dickens," the chapter that clinches the book, allows this aspect of Dickens to seem more fruit-bearing, illustrating the ongoing reworking of Dickens's novels (mostly *Great Expectations*) by postcolonial writers such as Peter Carey, Salman Rushdie, and V. S. Naipaul.

The last two sections of the book devote one chapter to each one of the author's novels, providing a detailed consideration of their publication history as a preamble to a strenuous presentation of the novels that both summarizes previous critical appraisals and delivers fresh insights. Anne Humpherys's chapter on *Hard Times* is a particularly perceptive account that redeems the novel's lesser critical standing. Humpherys points out that the tendency to view *Hard Times* as politically reductive and aesthetically flawed (mostly because of its over-thin characterisations) is in great part caused by the conditions in which Dickens had to publish it: the limitations imposed by short weekly instalments were irksome to an author who had grown used to the longer monthly format. In Humpherys view, this compressed format also had beneficial effects in that it forced Dickens to minimize his use of

authorial commentary by making it implicit and thus more creative. Humpherys adroitly demonstrates how Dickens's attack on Utilitarianism is tempered by Sissy's resistant goodness at the heart of the industrial world. The chapter also interestingly observes how an allegorical interpretation of certain characters is sometimes at variance with a realist reading of them and how this affects the reader's neo-Victorian desire for felicitous closure.

The final part of *A Companion to Charles Dickens*, which deals with Dickens's reputation and influence, is inevitably slightly redundant after the wealth of essays that sometimes look forward to this aspect, although the chapter on Dickens's influence on postcolonial literature is enriching as it also extends to poems by Indo-Guyanese Canadian authors such as Cyril Dabydeen and Dickens's appropriation by film culture.

All in all, this companion is a delightful book that makes a seaworthy read for both lecturer and student alike. It consistently displays an excellent blend of highly-specialised material and the essential bread-and-butter features of the topic under study, a fine balance that is not always to be found in other companions on the market.

Richard Brown, ed. *A Companion to James Joyce*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

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Blackwell's *Companion to James Joyce* is part of a series entitled 'Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture' offering "comprehensive, newly written surveys of key periods and movements and certain major authors, in English literary culture and history" (publisher's blurb). Significantly, the volumes provide "new perspectives and positions on contexts and on canonical and post-canonical texts, orientating the beginning student in new fields of study and providing the experienced undergraduate and new graduate with current and new directions, as pioneered and developed by leading scholars in the field." Blissfully ignorant of the term "post-canonical texts," I googled it on 12 December 2008 and was awarded with 481 results. Most of them had to do with Buddhism and the 'Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture' series. The term "post-canonical texts" is certainly not as canonical yet as the term "canonical texts." More importantly, however, in the Blackwell blurb it doesn't seem to be more than a buzzword, eagerly expecting to be – well, canonized, really. With volumes on Chaucer, Twain, Whitman, Faulkner, Dickinson, Dickens, and Joyce I'm not sure that the Blackwell approach is the way to go about a proper canonization process of the term though. Even titles like *A Companion to Digital Humanities* or *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies* don't look more promising in this respect. So the question remains, what are "post-canonical texts" in a series dedicated to canonical texts?

To what extent does the *Joyce Companion* live up to the expectations raised in the blurb – expectations raised even further when thumbing through table of contents and index? Obviously, volume editor Richard Brown has managed to interest an impressive number of seasoned as well as fine young scholars in his project. Space limitations do not

allow me to assess each and every single essay of the 25 collected here, but assuredly most of them, even if some of them tread rather familiar ground, are well-written and illuminating, and can be expected to offer “the beginning student [...], the experienced undergraduate and new graduate” exciting forays into terrains that the scholars are intimately familiar with. It is a treat to read Richard Brown on Molly’s Gibraltar, Declan Kiberd on Homer and Joyce, Jean-Michel Rabaté on “The Joyce of French Theory,” Brandon Kershner on Joyce, music and popular culture, and Daniel Ferrer on genetic studies.

The Blackwell companion is an important contribution to Joyce studies, even if it remains open to debate whether it is to all intents and purposes a Joyce *companion*: there are a number of essays here that seem to collide with or escape the “companion” concept. I mention in particular Eishro Ito’s article about Joyce and Japan, Krishna Sen’s about “Joyce’s Interface with India”, and David G. Wright’s about Joyce and New Zealand. All three are sensible and interesting contributions, particularly in the light of post-colonial studies as well as for students and specialists from the countries in question, but they are really too specialised to have warranted inclusion here: one starts to wonder, if there are pieces about Joyce “in” New Zealand, India and Japan. And where are their counterparts about Joyce “in” the Philippines, China, Australia? Surely such articles belong in a different type of publication, in a monograph dedicated to the role or reception of these locations in Joyce, in the type of monograph envisaged by Richard Brown himself in his introduction to this Blackwell Companion as “a world encyclopedia of Joycean receptions and responses” (10). Brown also suggests that there is a “need” for such an encyclopedia, “a need to which this present volume can only gesture” (6), but the gesture, in the guise of the contributions by Ito, Senn and Wright remains half-hearted. Exclusion of these, in the present context rather marginal essays might also have made this collection less prohibitively expensive.

Brown divides his companion into three sections: (i) ‘Re-reading Texts’; (ii) ‘Contexts and Locations’; (iii) ‘Approaches and Receptions.’ Confusingly, John Nash’s inventory of the reception of Joyce in Ireland between 1900 and 1940 is placed in the ‘Contexts and Locations’ section, whereas Derval Tubridy’s foray into the connections between Joyce and Irish poetry is to be found in the ‘Approaches and Receptions’ portion. Be that as it may, both contributions add significantly to our understanding of the intimate bonds between the author and his home country, now and in the past. I find Tubridy especially convincing in her assessment of the linguistic power that Joyce still wields in Irish writing and how important themes from his work tend to reappear all the time in modern Irish poets’ words.

‘Re-reading Texts’ starts with a contribution by Vicki Mahaffey on *Dubliners*, which starts promising and comprises in itself an ingenious reading of the short story collection, but at times seems to make too much of too little. Arguing that Joyce, “in the wake of Homer, understood genuine hospitality as something very different than what is presented in ‘The Dead’” and calling on the paradoxical root meanings of Latin *hospes* and Greek *xenos* (both meaning ‘friend’ and ‘stranger’), Mahaffey contends that it is “striking that the Misses Morkan practice such a different form of hospitality than the one that shapes the events of the *Odyssey*. *No strangers are to be found at the party* in ‘The Dead’; on the contrary, ‘Everybody who knew them came to it, members of the family, old friends of the family, the members of

Julia's choir, any of Kate's pupils that were grown up enough, and even some of Mary Jane's pupils too.' [...] The exclusion of strangers is further stressed when Gabriel, before he begins his speech, thinks that 'People, perhaps, were standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows and listening to the waltz music'" (28; emphasis mine). The exclusion of others, the ongoing battle between absence and presence, between the past and the present are certainly themes in 'The Dead', but the inclusion in the annual party celebrating Twelfth Night of "strangers" would surely have been rather absurd. If anything, Joyce didn't need strangers present at the Morkans' party; there are a number of significant non-strangers present at the party, who, as the night progresses, become strangers to the others as well as to themselves. One thinks of Gabriel. One thinks of Gretta. It is not striking at all "that the Misses Morkan practice such a different form of hospitality than the one that shapes the events of the *Odyssey*": circumstances are different, Joyce's goal was different and I daresay, so was the Misses Morkan's. They are fussy, that is all.

John Paul Riquelme's 'Desire, Freedom and Confessional Culture in *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*' is as profound and entertaining as one might expect from the most recent editor of *Portrait* (his splendid Norton edition was published in 2007). Maud Ellmann's '*Ulysses: The Epic of the Human Body*' offers a number insights that may certainly help the undergraduate on his or her way through the bodily density that is *Ulysses*, but by the end of her essay it becomes rather fanciful: "In Freudian terms, Stephen's preference for urination could be understood as a symptom of ambition" (59), and: "In 'Penelope' it is Molly who unweaves her portrait as a frowsty frump (this how she is presented in 'Calypso', a self-serving distortion on Bloom's part to justify his sexual inadequacy) in order to reweave the inviolable body out of words. One of Freud's more outrageous propositions was that weaving was women's sole contribution to civilization, invented to conceal their 'genital deficiency' [...]. But Joyce, by associating Molly with a weaving spider, its eight legs represented by her eight long sentences, pays tribute to the "weaver" who enabled him to write *Ulysses* without starving – Harriet Weaver" (68). Finn Fordham's '*Finnegans Wake: Novel and Anti-novel*' is a brilliant introduction to the *Wake*, systematically mapping out the most important stepping stones towards, or perhaps rather alongside a first (re-)reading of Joyce's book of the night. Fordham puts to the fore in most excellent ways the ironic dynamics of the book and of its critical reception, the "dramatic conflict between rival romantic conceptions of knowledge: between the Romanticism of enlightenment, in which a heroic knowledge can be a powerful subversion of all that one once held to be true, and the anti-enlightenment Romanticism in which knowledge is demonized for being that which forces splits between subjects and objects, between humanity and the natural universe" (87).

Fordham's fellow-Wakean Geert Lernout opens part 2, 'Contexts and Locations'. His 'European Joyce' is, unsurprisingly, most enjoyable and informative. Bloom's way of thinking teaches us that he is "a socialist and a secularist, who will publicly argue against religious and nationalist bigotry, if need be. In a way Bloom, more than Stephen, represents Joyce's own political and ideological position. As a relative outsider to both the church and the nation, he can comment on both, but from a distance that is unavailable to Stephen" (100). This is the stuff that proper companions are made of. In a few elegant strokes, Lernout

paints a portrait of Joyce as a Europeanised Irishman stroke ever-Hibernian European. Worth mentioning as well: an important irony in the future of *Wake*-studies, as Lernout points out in his final subsection, is that “[p]eople like Joyce and Beckett who could read Latin, French, Italian, and German are a dying breed in Ireland, in the United Kingdom, and in the countries on the European continent where only English has survived as a second language. Whereas the interest in English has created a larger market for Joyce’s earlier works, future readers of *Finnegans Wake* all over Europe will need more and more annotations and translations” (106). Personally, the only thing I miss here is a further refinement on the paradoxical nature of the combination of “translation” and “*Finnegans Wake*.”

I have already mentioned John Nash’s excellent essay; similarly, John McCourt’s concise and as always insightful assessment of Trieste as Joyce’s ‘home from home’ (after all, ‘t was where he ate his liver) will offer starting and more seasoned Joyceans much needed information. McCourt’s is more than a summary of his *The Years of Bloom: James Joyce in Trieste, 1904-1920*, published in 2000; significantly, he offers a brief survey of recent studies of Joyce’s (time in) Trieste.

‘Joyce and German Literature: Reflections on the Vagaries and Vacancies of Reception Studies’ by Robert Wenginger is an intriguing study of the German reception of Joyce. Taking into account both German influences on Joyce and Joyce’s influence on German literature, surprisingly, as the author acknowledges, most of the evidence that Wenginger uses is conspicuous by its total absence. Gustav Freytag’s blatantly anti-Semitic 1855 novel *Soll und Haben*, an edition of which is owned by Leopold Bloom, provides a red herring that Wenginger takes some time to fillet, with smelly, yet tempting results: “Ironically, in *Ulysses* Joyce reverses this numerical imbalance: *his* novel parades precisely the ‘single honest upright Jew’ [quotation from the preface by Chevalier Bunsen’s in an 1858 English translation of Freytag’s novel] who in Freytag’s novel is so conspicuously lacking” (142). Similarly tenuous, yet eye-opening connections are established between Joyce and Böll and Joyce and Rilke. In conclusion, Wenginger suggests that he “hope[s] to have shown that, despite the fact that we know of no direct factual link between Rilke and Joyce’s lives or their oeuvre, a comparative reading of their work can shed considerable light on the period and its intellectual heartbeat” (153). More importantly, perhaps, Wenginger’s method, by extension, seeks to kindle an intriguing branch of intertextuality studies: “the intertextual vistas opened up for interpreters by the study of less palpable and non-causal connections like those between Rilke and Joyce serve as useful counterparts to the interpretations produced by a more traditional approach premised on causal relationships” (153). Much as I enjoy Wenginger’s approach, it brings us dangerously close to the margins, as I see it, of Joyce studies. In a companion to Joyce it seems strange that an analysis of ‘absence in’ Rilke and Böll deserves so much ink, whereas Arno Schmidt or his *Zettel’s Traum* remains unmentioned. I have already expressed my reservations about the significance in this companion of the contributions about Joyce ‘in’ India, Japan and New Zealand; similarly, Wenginger’s in itself interesting contribution essentially marginalises Joyce as an excuse to ride a private hobby-horse.

The 'Approaches and Receptions' section include a number of pleasantly original contributions. Mark Taylor-Batty's 'Joyce's Bridge to Late Twentieth-Century Theatre: Harold Pinter's Dialogue with *Exiles*' is an important reassessment of *Exiles* through Pinter's famous reassessment, his 2006 production of Joyce's play which, in Joyce scholarship, is "generally disregarded" (300). (As Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, in her eye-opening "'The Joyce Effect': Joyce in Visual Art" reminds us, Fritz Senn has long maintained, and rightly so, that artistic interpretations of Joyce's works have "a wider and more lasting effect than the sum of our critical, scholarly comments" [318].) 'Joyce through the Little Magazines' by Katherine Mullin, 'Joyce and Radio' by Jane Lewty and Luke Thurston's 'Scotographia: Joyce and Psychoanalysis' offer the outcome of recent research from which many a Joycean can benefit in their own work. My personal favourite in the companion is Luke Gibbons's "'Ghostly Light': Spectres of Modernity in James Joyce's and John Huston's 'The Dead'." His revaluation of Huston's master adaptation both takes away or at least softens much of the criticism that the director suffered at the hands of purist Joyceans when the film first came out, and provides portals of discovery some of which are due to Huston's volitional, I take it, errors, and some of which to his profound understanding of 'The Dead'. The connection Thurston establishes between Huston's direction and the "free indirect discourse" of 'The Dead' is most convincing; Thurston shows how Huston can help understand Joyce's story in ways academic discussions may fail to do. "In Huston's film," Thurston writes, "the camera operates in an unobtrusive way to make room, as it were, for an uninvited guest at the Misses Morkan's party, to intimate a barely perceptible hinterland between word and image, the living and the dead" (365).

A Companion to James Joyce succeeds admirably, both as a collection of important introductory essays and as an attempt on the part of the Joyce industry to reaffirm Joyce's central position in the cultural canon for the say next fifty years. Yes, I do feel there is a certain academic arrogance connected to this project as well. As an admirer of his works I recognize Joyce's relevance and post-himself influence, and it is always revealing to witness in other artists' works traces of Joyce (or of their visible attempts to disguise them). The way in which a companion such as Blackwell's seeks to establish Joyce as becoming "a world author of the twenty-first century" (10) says as much about the quintessential character of his cultural position, as about the industry's desperate attempt not to fall apart in the face of the equally "twenty-first century"-cultural fragmentation that it has to deal with. Much like Shakespeare before him, Joyce has become even more important for the survival and export of Western literary and cultural studies than as a writer to be studied for the sake of his written words. Exporting Joyce (to New Zealand, to Japan), is the new, dare I say postcolonial game, recolonising the former pockets of refreshing resistance to Western cultural dominance in ways that in themselves deserve a companion too. Exporting Joyce guarantees the survival of the Joyce industry.

Neil McCaw. *How to Read Texts: A Student Guide to Critical Approaches and Skills*.
London and New York: Continuum, 2008.

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“How to” is a form and an approach that is very much of our time. Self-help manuals abound in every conceivable field, a fact that is surely indicative of our belief that we can choose to do (or attempt to do) anything we want. Another characteristic of our time would seem to be a reluctance to engage in the time-consuming and rarely lucrative activity of reading. Having made this generic observation regarding the *Zeitgeist*, it is only right to acknowledge that *How to Read Texts* is a specialist self-help manual in a specialized field that most students will have chosen to participate in.

The teaching and the study of literature and language is surely all about increasing and developing awareness of how others produce texts and how we as readers react to those texts. Neil McCaw is to be praised for his forward-thinking in identifying this fact in the very first pages of the book (“Introduction: Why read about how to read”) and his consistency in maintaining focus on the need for that awareness without ever labouring the point. Also worthy of praise is McCaw’s decision to define the terms used in the book’s title at the very outset. The noun “text” and the verb “to read” are each given two pages of useful discussion in the introduction. In this way the “competing viewpoints” regarding the raw material and the activity are highlighted. Another useful thread that is exposed in this section is the concept of reading as a *creative* activity, a thread that finds its place in the weave of the book in Chapter 2, “The creative critic.” Quoting Paul Auster and Sir Philip Sidney (two writers who have used the metaphor of illness or affliction to describe the activity of writing), McCaw shows how a more “writerly” approach to reading can bring illumination and subsequent satisfaction.

Chapter 2 ends neatly with two juxtaposed readings (critical and writerly) of Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the full text of which is provided in an appendix. There are three such appendices in total, providing literary texts for analysis. The apparatus of the book also includes what in my view is an extremely useful system for undergraduate readers with “Suggested further reading” at the end of each chapter, each book listed with a one-line description of its focus – much less intimidating than the usual lengthy bibliography (or “literature-list” as I recently saw it described elsewhere), which is also duly present. Notes, very few of them explicative, are used sparingly. The one-and-a-half pages of index are similarly manageable, taking us from Adorno to Wordsworth, with italicized entries for movements and methods, from *cultural studies* to *textual intervention*.

The book’s six chapters are designed to lead the reader from an initial consideration of what it means to read critically through to considerations of various different stances and approaches that constitute the history of critical reading. The clear language used throughout together with the schematic chapter descriptions and numerous reading

exercises will certainly make this book a useful tool in working with undergraduate English-speaking students of literature. The first chapter ("Beginning from where you are – finding your critical voice") concludes with an "undergraduate questionnaire," which while perhaps slightly unwieldy in its potential for administration to students, certainly appears worthwhile in its potential for increasing students' self-awareness. (The questionnaire is wisely "revisited" in the concluding chapter.)

The rigours of close reading are granted an entire chapter (Chapter 3) and are accompanied by some discussion of the contention surrounding this approach in the history of criticism. All contention apart, however, I firmly agree with McCaw when he writes: "Whatever the decision that is made about the balance of the advantages and disadvantages of a close-reading method, it is obvious that being able to read texts in detail, and with a sensitivity to language, is a valuable skill to possess." If more of us were convinced of the value in that skill then the teaching of language and literature would greatly benefit.

Any lament about this book I feel will inevitably take the form of expressions of individual predilection for one or other type of approach to critical and reading activity and disappointment over the lack of focus on the hobbyhorse in question. The present writer, for example, has felt for some time that reader-response theory and its developments offer a particularly useful and fruitful approach, but why should I expect to find it mentioned in a manual necessarily equipped with the briefest of summaries of the history of critical method? Surely one of the joys of the activity of reading critically lies in discovering such things for ourselves. The best a teacher can hope to achieve is to help equip students for a lifetime of such exploration in reading and writing, and *How to Read Texts* is, I believe, a book written in this spirit.

Ultimately, the one thing no "How to" book can ever succeed in transmitting are the qualities of passion and perseverance necessary for making a more than average job of any pursuit – from a critical reading of *Ulysses* to playing the guitar, DIY, gardening, or cooking. Those qualities are to be found and nourished in ourselves and in our relations with the world at large – books and teachers, at the most, can only be a support, an encouragement and a guide to the application of those qualities and this book fulfils those functions admirably.

Lisa M. Steinman. *Invitation to Poetry. The Pleasure of Studying Poetry and Poetics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.

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Teaching poetry all too often involves a confrontation with students who do not like poetry or at least think they do not like to read poetry. This is in part due to the fact that poetry seems to be rather "difficult." Furthermore, the usual analysis and interpretation of poetry at school may also have contributed to this somewhat negative image of poetry analysis. It is, therefore, highly commendable that Lisa Steinman, who teaches English literature at Reed

College, offers an introduction to the reading of poetry (and poetics!) that foregrounds the pleasure one can and should derive from it. How then does Steinman go about this important business?

She circumvents, or seems to circumvent, the question of what a poem is by more or less claiming that she knows one when she sees one. Steinman thus points to a pre-theoretical consciousness that works in many, if not all, cases; and which also leads her to the wise disclaimer that she does not intend to present a comprehensive theory about poetry. She rather wants to present concrete examples of readings of poetry that will help the reader of her book to appreciate other poems that may differ in form and content from the ones discussed here.

In every chapter, Steinman uses just a few poems to illustrate her points, printing the poem in the body of her text. The selection of poems takes into account that they can be read at one sitting (or class session), which excludes epic poetry. This, however, is not really a drawback. In fact, Steinman's decision to concentrate on manageable poems (which can be discussed in their entirety in one seminar session) can be commended from the teacher's point of view, even though she does manage to smuggle in two longer poems, Milton's *Il Penseroso* and Wordsworth *Ode* in the 1807 version. Her main aim can be expressed by her comparison of "learning to think and talk about poetry to learning a language" (viii). She thus wants to encourage students to learn the language of poetry, to master the terms and concepts that one needs to become conversant in this language, to provide "tools for reading" (225).

Milton's poem also serves as a model to discuss intertextual conversations between poems or poets. Here she leads the reader gently and step by step through the poem, noting grammatical or syntactic oddities as well as strange words, like words whose meaning has considerably changed over time. To determine their meaning or at least the possible spectrum of their meanings is an interpretive necessity, so you need to check the dictionary, preferably the OED to test your intuitions about these meanings. This is especially necessary when encountering "unexpected turns or assumptions" in a poem, but it does not mean that unexpected turns do not appear in poems (29). Steinman links Milton's poem as a "night piece" to Anne Finch's "A Nocturnal Reverie" and to Wordsworth's "A Night Piece." Steinman stresses the fact that poems become richer on rereading, but every rereading presupposes a first reading that may to a certain extent be misleading.

Steinman further explores poems by Thomas Wyatt, Philip Sidney, William Shakespeare, John Donne, James Wright, William Carlos Williams, Howard Nemerov, Charlotte Smith, Robert Frost, Frank O'Hara, William Collins, Josephine Miles, Christopher Marlow, Sir Walter Raleigh, Andrew Marvell, Denise Levertov, G. S. Giscombe, Wallace Stevens, John Ashberry, and, repeatedly, William Wordsworth. For especially Wordsworth's many different poems seem to lend themselves easily to exemplary readings and offer the possibility to not just read poems but a poet (230). Steinman's book is meant to be read through from beginning to end, with the later chapters again and again referring to her earlier interpretations. This leads to a deeper understanding of the poem under discussion,

as do Steinman's comparisons of her own reading with that of other critics with whom she disagrees.

Steinman's tone throughout is personal and relaxed, yet always deeply knowledgeable. She offers her readings not as definitive interpretations but as sensitive and probing forays into the poems' textures. Her attitude is decidedly liberal in that she is willing to consider other interpretive options or contexts suggested by her students. It is not the least this feature of Steinman's style that gives a mind-opening touch to her book. Analysing poetry, in Steinman's view, offers many ways to enhance its enjoyment and to answer the question, "how did that poem *do* that?" She claims that "Poems are not fragile things" and that "most are quite capable of surviving whatever readers say about them" (90). In this way, Steinman makes room for various contexts to be applied to the reading of a poem, while sticking to the conviction that whatever theory is applied cannot really harm the poem at hand.

In the course of her discussion, Steinman offers working definitions of different modes of poetry. Concluding her discussion of tone and diction, for example, she points out that a mode such as elegy can both describe a theme and a tone of voice. Elegies can be said to "concern themselves with loss or absence but find consolation or presence at the end," whereas odes function as the opposite to elegies: "they are poems that concern themselves with presence or praise, but find loss or absence" (142). These are working definitions that quickly turn out to be insufficient but provide useful starting points for making sense of poems that may not even be called elegies or odes.

The issue of intertextuality is taken up again in Steinman's chapter on traditions, legacies, and individual talents, alluding to T. S. Eliot's famous essay. Without subscribing to Eliot's poetics, Steinman still urges us to "pay more attention to poems that later poets have revisited" (215). Reading poems in light of contemporary problems is not precluded by this approach but Steinman cautions that one should "at least try to hear the way poems speak also to and from other cultures and eras than your own" (223). In her final chapter Steinman wraps up her analyses by problematizing the way anthologies tend to construct standardized periods and by offering suggestions for further inquiry, turning the readers loose to pursue their own questions and "to engage in conversation with a variety of poems" (232).

Every chapter concludes with a list of "terms used," meaning concepts such as alliteration, anadiplosis, chiasmus, gradatio ascendus, and many others that most likely will not be familiar to students. This is followed by a suggestive list of "other poems that might be read" from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century as well as a brief but well-chosen selection of "useful further reading."

Teachers of poetry in English will be glad to have Steinman's well-written and incisive book at their disposal – together with other pleasurable books such as Stephen Fry's incomparable *The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking the Poet Within* (London: Hutchinson, 2005), or Camille Paglia's engaging collection of short close readings of 43 poems in English, *Break, Blow, Burn* (New York: Pantheon, 2005). Together with books like these and a more comprehensive anthology, Steinman's book can be recommended as a useful course book.

There's a good chance that it will help teachers to extend to their students an invitation to poetry. Hopefully, they will not decline it.

B.W. Lindeboom, *Venus' Owne Clerk. Chaucer's Debt to the Confessio Amantis*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007. ISBN 978 90 420 2150 1.

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21 July 2004 marked an important change in Chaucer studies. On that day Lynne Mooney delivered a paper at the New Chaucer Society Conference in Glasgow, in which she gave a name and a biography to Geoffrey Chaucer's "Adam Scryvein," the scribe responsible for both the Ellesmere and the Hengwrt manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*, and for a number of other manuscripts of Chaucer's and Gower's works. The hypothesis, subsequently published as a long article in *Speculum*, was supported by a painstaking computer-based comparison of different hands and signatures in a number of contemporary manuscripts. With all its implication for the history of manuscript transmission and the redefinition of Chaucerian authorship, Mooney's work has determined a new approach in Chaucer studies. It also forms a starting point for the thesis underlying B. W. Lindeboom's *Venus' Owne Clerk*, an analysis of Chaucer's work, and especially of the *Canterbury Tales*, in the context of its then contemporary English literary and political milieu.

With the help of Mooney's identification of the scribe, Lindeboom formulates the hypothesis of a situation of great closeness and friendly rivalry between Gower and Chaucer throughout the latter's composition of the *Canterbury Tales*, envisaging this work as springing from a sort of literary challenge between the two poets, an answer to the *Confessio Amantis*. In both cases the result would then be a confession, religious as well as literary, which includes a survey of the Seven Deadly Sins. Though Chaucer's work obviously remains incomplete, this plan would help to explain obscurities and inconsistencies, as well as the similarities in structure between the two works. The spirit of competitiveness between the two poets is expressed in a literary form that Lindeboom considers not unlike that of the sixteenth-century Scottish *flyting*, a competition between two poets that is expressed in verse. The comparison raises some problems: the *flyting* was a very pointed, personal, often abusive attack, and it constituted the essence and main part of what was generally a rather short text. Besides, Lindeboom betrays one of the main weaknesses of his book, that is, his little acquaintance with the Italian literary tradition to which both Chaucer and Gower were indebted: rather than evoking a Scottish genre still far from its full flourishing, or alluding obscurely to analogues "in areas as distant as Iceland, Provence and even the Arab world" (62), he might more easily have evoked the tradition of the Italian *tenzone*, preceding rather than following the experiences of the Ricardian poets and involving writers certainly known to Chaucer at least, such as Dante Alighieri (it should be added that Dante, though mentioned as an "illustrious predecessor" of Chaucer, does not make it to the rather haphazard index). Even with the support of this analogue, however, it is difficult to read as

the equivalent of a *flyting* a competition that involved such bulky volumes as the *Confessio Amantis*: such a competition could not but be extended over a very long time – witness the unfinished state of the *Canterbury Tales* – and each competitor could hardly expect an answer within a reasonable space of time. Lindeboom's attempt to get over these objections – supposing, for instance, that the *Confessio* might have been presented as “a selection of highlights” (61), or that Chaucer would be expected to produce his response in the traditional twelve months and a day – does not appear to be based on evidence.

The hypothesis on the ongoing contest, however, goes some way towards explaining the changes so evident in the structure of the *Canterbury Tales*, and offers the fascinating perspective of an interrupted work in progress. Lindeboom explores these possibilities by focussing on a number of Chaucer's pilgrims, such as the Sergeant of Law, analysed in chapter 3 (123-46), prompting the suggestion that he may have been “a tongue-in-cheek portrait of Gower” (123). Once again the trouble is that, though considerably fascinating, the critic's construction rests on a very weak basis: as Lindeboom himself acknowledges, “proof, of course, [is] a different matter” (136). at times, Gower and Chaucer offer instances of uneasy cohabitation in the modern medievalist's mind. Their uniquely shared status – both figures of some relevance at the court of Richard II, and indisputably the two literary masters of the English fourteenth century – forces critics to take into account the possibility of intellectual friendship and exchange between the two, and to work not only on their common background, but on their supposed interaction. This may partly be due to the lack of evidence on other, contemporary English writers who may have left fewer or less interesting traces. It should, however, be considered that neither worked in a vacuum, and that even their supposed collaboration, or rivalry, should be analysed in a wider context.

The usefulness of this process is made clearer in chapter four, focusing on the Wife of Bath (147-225), one of the central characters of Lindeboom's thesis, since she is also the protagonist of chapter 5 and 7. The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale are seen as “specifically composed as an answer to Gower” (148), a sort of Chaucerian testament of love, bringing together all the main strands of the *Confessio Amantis*. Chapters 6 and 8 are devoted to the Pardoner, showing the many analogies of this character with the Wife and highlighting the use both make of genre conventions. The tales of both pilgrims are read against the Parson's: the critic here provides an interesting point-by-point comparison, particularly rewarding in the case of the Pardoner's Tale. What is suggested in the concluding chapters 7 and 8 is that the Wife's and Pardoner's prologues and tales work along the lines of the medieval sermon: this is a fascinating and at times quite convincing hypothesis, though once more a wider use of contemporary texts (and perhaps a more stringent comparison with the *Confessio*) would have been welcome. Lindeboom's conclusion is that his book presents “a Gower-inspired new approach” to the *Canterbury Tales* (437), but his final statements clash with his own hypothesis, and in the end he seems uncertain of what to do with the main touchstone, the Parson's Tale. As the comparison proves at times ambiguous or unrewarding, the critic suggests that Chaucer may have written the Parson's Tale quite early on in his process of composition and then never returned to it, so that when he composed the Pardoner's and Wife's tales he was using the Parson's, as it were, from memory, thus being occasionally at

fault over details. Though there is no doubt that the medieval art of memory was far more developed than we can imagine or assess (Lindeboom should have consulted Mary Carruthers' seminal work on the subject), it beggars belief that the writer would not possess a copy of his own work, especially as he was known, among other things, for his impressive library.

Lindeboom does realise the shortcomings of his theory, and scrupulously points them out, regretfully noting for instance that the Pardoner's Tale has no counterpart in Gower; that, he surprisingly comments, "would have been a most convincing piece of evidence" (160). By the same token, he tends to overemphasize what he considers proof of his theory: for instance, noting an identical phrase between line 222 and 391 of the Wife of Bath's Prologue, he gleefully comments: "What we have here is a good clue [...] this can hardly be coincidence [...] here is the smoking gun" (250). The enthusiastic tone undermines rather than strengthens his point: as the phrase repeated in the two lines is simply "they were full glad," surely a common line-filler in Chaucer, the over-statement does not help.

As noted above, one of the main weaknesses of the book is its almost exclusive concentration on the English (and occasionally the "British") cultural milieu. Allusions to Chaucer as "the only medieval author who is truly capable of moving us directly" (235) are almost embarrassingly insular, and do not help the progress of critical analysis. A more striking instance occurs in chapter 5, in which a long section is dedicated to the Black Death as informing Chaucer's attitude: it is surprising in this section to find no reference to Boccaccio and his *Decameron*. Even Augustine on the Seven Deadly Sins is cited via D. W. Robertson (Augustine's works do not appear in the bibliography, even if the discussion on some of the doctrinal points he makes is detailed). On the other hand, the critic makes statements to the effect that the *Confessio Amantis* reflects "continental practice known as *Fürstenspiegel*" (237) without showing any awareness that the *Fürstenspiegel*, or mirror for princes, was becoming a major genre, both in English and Scottish literature.

On the other hand, Lindeboom's analysis constantly engages with the previous critical literature on the subject, taking up suggestions and hypotheses advanced by previous scholars. This on-going dialogue gives depth and background to his work, but sometimes runs the risk of dimming its focus, and bogging down the argument. Gowerian and especially Chaucerian criticism is a daunting *mare magnum* that receives hefty contributions every year – a more selective approach to previous criticism (especially when hypotheses have already been confuted or proved untenable) might have helped the reader to keep in mind the true objective of this book. For the same reason, it would perhaps have been preferable if Lindeboom had engaged more with manuscript evidence and relied less on secondary sources. In fact, there is no trace of manuscript analysis in the book, and manuscript sources are not cited in the final bibliography, which is oddly and rather unhelpfully divided between "Authors or Works Cited Twice or More" and "Other Works Cited." As for the critical bibliography, though a number of times Lindeboom claims that what he notes does not appear in Chaucerian scholarship "to my knowledge," one cannot help noticing some significant gaps. Some of the most significant scholars who have written on the *Canterbury Tales*, from Charles Muscatine to V. A. Kolve, are never mentioned; nor are

the more recent studies by David Wallace, which might have helped set the English texts in a much-needed European dimension. On the other hand, Lindeboom gives up consulting a classic such as the Morris-Skeat edition of Chaucer, declaring himself “unable to trace it.”

The occasional typos underline a certain hurry in the proofreading process, and suggest once more that the book might have profited from some strong editing, to streamline the whole as well as to give it more harmonious unity. A book half this length would have been far more convincing, and would have shown Lindeboom’s scholarly effort to better advantage.

C. C. Barfoot, ed. *And Never Know the Joy – Sex and the Erotic in English Poetry*.
Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006.

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The popular cult series *Sex and the City* outspokenly and without any moral restraints enters people’s bedrooms, turning sex and the erotic into a public peep show by explicitly talking about all we want to know about sex and eroticism but were afraid to ask. This collection, edited by C. C. Barfoot, represents its equivalent where sex and poetry in the world of literature are concerned.

This collection of 25 essays opens with erotic and sexual themes and motifs in early English lyrics presented with the so-called “riddling” to tackle a taboo subject. The Harley lyrics played a crucial role in defining the interplay of sex, the erotic and the literary culture of the medieval Europe, as is shown in the passages from the “Book of Genesis” that link “knowledge” to the “body” and intertwine potent attraction and danger. The pronouns of love and sex in the writings of Chaucer, who exploited this possibility for dramatic purposes, will be of particular interest to readers of Old English literature. Another paper in the book deals with the Scottish poet William Dunbar and his sexual and erotic dream allegory “Tretis of the Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo,” in which he uncovers male sexual fantasies of a masochistic kind rather than any ‘real’ truth about women. Of interest is the chapter devoted to the “Prick-Song Ditties” with its discussion of human sexual activity and the pun. Lady Venetia Digby, as portrayed in Thomas Randolph’s elegy “Cease Thy Wanton Lust,” emerges as one of the most colourful and infamous characters of the early seventeenth century, and she deserves admiration for being bold enough openly to show sexual desire and be explicit about her sexuality.

Carpe diem themes in poems by Marlowe, Marvell and Montagu deal with various themes of pregnancy: such as fear to be displaced, fear to be eroticized and an erotic joy of sex between equals, only to reveal a female dilemma: to know the pleasure of sex or not to risk the consequence of it. The paper exploring the Earl of Rochester’s “Imperfect Enjoyment” – satirizing the promiscuous male libertine by making him an impotent spent

force kneeling before powerful female sexuality – serves as a stronghold for twenty-first century feminist literature and criticism.

The Romantic period still exerts a decisive influence on the way people see and experience the world. In the landmark section devoted to this period, one paper interestingly deals with sexual expression and desire in Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, which discusses how Blake develops the argument that sexual relationships may explain the functions and failings of society. For Shelley, the sexual permeated all aspects of psyche, nature, social interaction, politics and even spirituality. Shelley was far more focused on matters sexual than many writers of straight erotica because for him sexual freedom was the epitome of democratic and republican aspirations. Bearing in mind that Keats was a true admirer of the pure Ideal and hopelessly in love with Fanny Brawne, one is surprised to learn that Keats' odes were actually founded on the sexual experience, with the appearance of orgasm in their structure. On the other hand, the erotic symmetry in Lady Mary Wroth, Mary Robinson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti had the erotic power and sexual appeal that the great male sonnetteers could never have achieved. With the image of a recumbent male body with its inner life and outer being at variance, John Addington Symonds revives Renaissance eroticism. Particularly interesting for modern literature is the discussion of D. H. Lawrence's early poetry and his impact as an erotic writer especially on the nature of erotic longing. H.D. and her poems in *Hymen* imply an erotic triangulation or the triangle motif by which she brings into focus the mother's desire for the lost daughter, the woman's erotic animation, and the daughter's desire for homoerotic union with the mother.

Sex in Tony Harrison's poetry represents a sublime act of affirmation and unification opposed to forces of repression, division, destruction, consolation and redemption for the body politic, but deriving its energy from the body erotic. Nikki Giovanni's (counter)revolutionary ethics by which she tries to (un)dress black nationalism in "Seduction" and "Beautiful Black Men" exalts eroticism and reclaims the black body with the message big, black and beautiful. Georgia Scott's poems give voice to female characters in "Singer's writing" and "The Bible." It is the voice that does not shy away from desire but on the contrary delights in the physical expression of human love. The chapter adds a deft final touch to this brilliantly edited book.

This edgy book is what the world of literature have craved for as it teaches that erotic love has always played a central role in all aspects of human life. If the twin theme of sex and eroticism in English poetry may not have been taken seriously before, this book establishes that it was a case of unjustifiable neglect.

Andrew Radford. *The Lost Girls: Demeter-Persephone and the Literary Imagination, 1850-1930*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007.

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That Greece is the cradle of Western civilization is a cliché that carries little currency in literary criticism and even in political history (certainly this cliché has harmed Greece itself by imposing a delicate and controversial pressure on its performance as a modern nation whose character has to reflect an international radiance). Nevertheless, it is indisputable that Greek myth has profoundly impacted British aesthetics, philosophy, and literary production. Radford's *Lost Girls* concerns itself with the myth of Demeter, the Greek goddess of Nature and harvest, an Earth goddess in a strong sense, who loses her beloved daughter Persephone-Kore to the chthonic Pluto, god of Hades. Radford's study makes an eloquent entrance into the literary and cultural debates relating to the mythological impact of this particular myth on British thought and literature during the Victorian and Modernist eras. The extent and quality, but, most importantly, the shifting character of the myth's impact is explored in critical discussions marked by detail and perspicacity. To reduce Radford's complex exploration to a simple comment on what *Lost Girls* is about, would fail to do justice to what this book offers to Victorian and Modernist studies.

In Chapter 1, "Excavating the Dark Half of Hellas," Radford ventures into an exploration of literary, ethnographic, cultural, and also archaeological sources in the Victorian and fin-de-siècle periods. New insights from these sources significantly revised Romantic notions of Greek antiquity as quaint, serene, and humanistic. The intrepid archaeologist Jane Ellen Harrison along with Walter Pater and John Ruskin form the main focus of this opening chapter where we observe the blue skies of an ethereal Greece change to a brooding, troubling, and unpredictable canopy. Radford elaborates on the gradual shift in Grecian discourse that ruptured the established imagery of Greece as "the epitome of unsullied and primitive freshness" (10) and encouraged radical reconfigurations of the aesthetic, cultural and literary value of classical Greece as an ideological force fashioning British thought. The second chapter is of a comparative nature, and traces the various treatments of the mythological theme of 'Mother' and 'Maid' in Victorian poetry. The discussion primarily involves Algernon Charles Swinburne, George Meredith, and Alfred Lord Tennyson, but their interpretations of the myth are framed by a critical analysis of Jean Ingelow's poem "Persephone." Radford elucidates the myth's ramifications for women's concerns especially in relation to marriage and status, and comments on how the myth has provided the inspiration and impetus to explore female consciousness.

Chapters 3 to 7 almost exclusively deal with individual authors and a range of their works: Thomas Hardy, Mary Webb (an author who does not receive enough attention in contemporary scholarship), E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, and Mary Butts. In Hardy and

Webb the young heroine is a modern Persephone who is not salvaged from the gloomy netherworld where rapacious patriarchy seeks to confine her. In Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles is tragically sacrificed in order to extinguish any promise of transcendence and the potential for transfiguration engendered by her embodiment of the Persephone figure. Radford argues that the main heroine in Webb's *Gone to Earth* faces similar struggles except that Webb is even more scolding than Hardy as she chronicles the oppression of the young Hazel Woodus. Her resistance eventually leads to her utter destruction in a place that is barren and devoid of any possibility for the hope or the joyous renewal that the Kore brings with her when she returns from the netherworld.

As he examines a number of works by E. M. Forster, Radford posits that Forster's fascination with Grecian archaeology, mythology, and symbolism does not find a bold realization in the literature that he produces. In his work there are no confident and dynamic embodiments of the Demeter and Persephone figures. Forster shies away from tracing the myth's mysterious potential and remains, instead, embarked on an ineffectual trajectory around the myth. D. H. Lawrence, however, deploys the myth in his 1920 novel *The Lost Girl* in ways that depart boldly from the literary conventions of a submissive and timid heroine to a radical reinvention of a Persephone (Alvina) who passionately explores the formidable domain of chthonic forces and defeats the stagnation of a rational world by seeking the potential signified by the underworld.

In the final chapter, devoted to Mary Butts, Radford suggests that "the god that imbues her most compelling fictions is Persephone" (275) but Butts' versions of the mythological Kore guard purity of bloodlines and protect the cultural and geographical topos against possible contamination by suspect others. "Butts waged her own war with her time, employing the Persephone myth to enrich a primitivism anchored in the aspiration to reconstruct what she saw as her rightful cultural lineage" (291), an aspiration that was disturbingly impelled by a phobia against sexual and racial others.

By offering detailed and focused discussions of specific authors and specific aspects of the Demeter-Persephone myth this book elaborates on landmark studies such as G. W. Clarke's *Rediscovering Hellenism* (1989) and Linda Dowling's *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (1994). Radford successfully sustains our interest in the book because he proceeds methodically and writes in a style that is both accessible and precise. In constructing his arguments he imbricates, to various extents, the personal circumstances and sensibility of the writers that he discusses in his analysis of their literary production and of its milieu. Often – and perhaps inevitably and predictably – the discussion turns to Christianity and its connection with pagan remnants that refuse to yield their admittedly shifting and multifarious influence to an orthodox imperative. Intriguing are Radford's discussions of the English landscape as it emerges in the literature and the relationship that literary figures (but also the authors themselves) inscribe within the imaginary fields of Grecian mythology and the topography of modern Britain under mythopoeic influence. This dimension has its fascination since it evokes the myth as literary topos but also geographical site, an evocation that is appropriate in a book that concerns itself with a mother goddess, her raped daughter, and their avatars in English literature of the Victorian and Modernist

periods. Indeed, it is intriguing to watch in this erudite study how the myth is elucidated as the site where some of the most controversial literary, and even cultural and social issues of the time are played out. And, as we watch, this site often emerges as a physical British landscape invested with passion, fervour, vitality and tradition, or, conversely, indifference, claustrophobia, and harshness, the very cycles denoted by the mythological narrative itself.

Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Cecilia Pietropoli, eds. *Romantic Women Poets: Genre and Gender*. Amsterdam and New York, NY: Rodopi, 2007.

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Over the last two decades, the textual recovery of works written by women of the Romantic period as well as a number of critical studies on Romanticism and gender have brought to the fore significant “records of woman,” to use the title of Felicia Hemans’s 1828 poetry volume. Since then the Romantic canon has gone through a necessary adjustment, expanding to include these neglected records and other genres of writing besides poetry in order to provide a more historically accurate representation of the literary and cultural productions of the Romantic period. Indeed, the map of the said era has been enriched in both variety and scope in light of the instructive fact that there were “thousands of women whose writing was published in Great Britain in the half century between 1780 and 1830” (Curran 179), many of whom ventured to enter genres which, until then, were sealed off as a male domain. Even though they were popular and influential in their time, their engagement with certain types of writing such as poetry and political pamphleteering was often disparaged, as it was deemed destabilising and unwomanly: a famous instance is Richard Polwhele’s “The Unsex’d Females” (1798), a poem which ridicules women writers who “affecting to dismiss the heart” defy “NATURE’S law” and in the end lose “their softer charms,” that is, from a male perspective, their inherited gender role.

So, how could women write poetry and still preserve their desired association with the private sphere? How could they keep a public voice and still maintain propriety? How did women writers interact with contemporary male poets and how did they deal with the literary market? *Romantic Women Poets: Genre and Gender* is a welcome contribution to scholarship in the field by responding to these and other important questions in a perceptive and energising way. The thirteen essays in this collection discuss with acumen how, by shifting the accepted generic grounds, women writers of the Romantic period, such as Anna Seward, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Helen Maria Williams, Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Joanna Baillie, Mary Tighe, Letitia Elizabeth Landon and Felicia Hemans negotiated a space for themselves within contemporary discourses of gender and authorship. As the editors Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Cecilia Pietropoli explain in their lucid introduction, this collection aims to trace the strategies through which women created opportunities for expression and,

in particular, it aims “to re-evaluate women’s rhetoric of modesty and their aesthetics of inadequacy, and recognize the intrinsic ambiguity and ironic implications involved” (3).

Romantic Women Poets is thematically organised into four parts. Part I entitled “Modes of Women’s Verse and Voice in the Romantic Period” focuses on women’s efforts to articulate their voices and accommodate their anxieties as “poetesses” by revising or transforming traditional poetic forms. Stuart Curran opens this section with an insightful investigation of the literary and sociological aspects of female friendship as revealed in Anna Seward’s poems, from those dedicated to the Ladies of Llangollen to her tributes to her half-sister Honora Sneyd. Curran analyses the literary tropes the poet employed in order to represent her idea of friendship between women, underscoring the “startling immediacy of power” and “the remarkable interiority” of Seward’s exploration of the dynamics of female friendship (21). In the next essay, Jane Stabler considers the different ways in which painting, drawing and sketching offered first generation women Romantic poets “the possibility of doubleness within a particular form” allowing them to be “bold and decorous” at the same time (24, 23). Through an examination of Barbauld’s, Smith’s, Dorothy Wordsworth’s and Ann Radcliffe’s visual representations (picturesque landscape poetry in particular), Stabler convincingly argues that their painterly techniques, though using a frame, reached beyond it and allowed women poets “the possibility of flight and fancy” (29).

Barbauld, Smith and Dorothy Wordsworth are also the focus of Lilla Maria Crisafulli’s essay which addresses the issue of female perspective showcased in their poetry. Specifically, it looks at how these women poets viewed male Romantic aesthetics, how they viewed themselves, and how they were able to mask their turning from perceived objects to perceiving subjects. Through a detailed and perceptive reading of their lives and poems, Crisafulli zooms in on these women poets’ acute though anguished gaze, making the insightful suggestion that “far from being horizontally pacified, their vision suddenly and unexpectedly takes vertical and vertiginous turns” (39). Closing this section, Lia Guerra thoughtfully traces the uneven development of Helen Maria Williams’s career as a poet and attempts to elucidate the motives behind her decision to go back to poetry in 1823 after almost thirty years dedicated mainly to novels and political prose.

Part II consists of two essays that look at women poets who worked their way out of the confines of the female sphere by responding to public and political issues, thus intruding into traditionally “masculine” topics. In what I find the most interesting essay of the collection, “Listing the Busy Sounds: Anna Seward, Mary Robinson and the Poetic Challenge of the City,” Timothy Webb offers a nuanced reading of the two women’s poetic attitude towards industrial growth and expansion of the urban world. Webb refutes the commonly held belief that women writers in this period did not engage with the phenomenon of the city and with the so-called “urban anxiety” (81) and goes on to demonstrate how challenging such a topic proved for Anna Seward whose two poems on modern Birmingham evince “the ambivalence of her own responses, her desire to recognize the importance of the industrial in environmental terms and her attempt to evolve an appropriate poetics set against a reluctance to abandon the past and its poetic models” (83). On the other hand, as Webb argues, Mary Robinson’s accounts of London are characterised by descriptive force and

energetic attentiveness to urban detail, yet they lack Seward's "intrusive moral judgement" (102). Seward and Robinson's visions of the city invite parallels with the city poetry of other contemporary men and women; without doubt, a rich topic to explore.

Moving on to a different generic area, the essay by Dorothy McMillan "Joanna Baillie's Embarrassment" traces Baillie's representation of Scotland and Scottishness in her plays and her inevitable entrance into the contemporary debates on national identity. McMillan focuses on *The Family Legend*, Baillie's "Highland play" *par excellence*, pointing out that Walter Scott's vision of Scotland as "romantic Caledon" in the Prologue to the play contrasts with Baillie's reserved attitude and embarrassed explanations in the Address which "betray the awkwardness of accommodating 'family legends' to contemporary tastes" (122). *Witchcraft*, as McMillan contends, is even more ambiguous as a "Scottish" play and raises questions regarding Baillie's affiliations.

The third section, "Genre Crossing: Verse versus Prose and Drama" opens with Beatrice Battaglia's consideration of the interspersed passages in verse in Anne Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* and their organic relation with the narrative. Specifically, the verses, as Battaglia contends, "contribute to evoking the musical dimension that is so essential in a romance" (143). Moving on from the romance to the verse narrative, Diego Saglia interrogates the homogenising yet reductive label of "introspection" typically attributed to the genre and makes a case for the variety of modes and forms adopted by verse narrative writers in Romantic-period literature. Focusing on Hemans' *The Abencerrage* and on Landon's *The Improvisatrice*, Saglia skillfully illustrates that even though the feature of the unfinished ending or romantic trace exerts a fascination on both male- and female-authored verse romances, "texts by women poets greatly emphasize the tragedy implicit in this absence of closure ... present[ing] more contentious and less easily effaced traces" (166).

Serena Baiesi moves the spotlight once more to Letitia Elizabeth Landon's *The Improvisatrice*, which she views as an instance of "literary hybridism" – a concoction of epic, lyric and drama. Baiesi convincingly argues that Landon employs this genre alternation "in order to underline the play of voices" in her poem but also in order to ascribe a protean quality to both the character's and the writer's perspective (179-80). Donatella Montini concludes this very interesting section on genre-crossing with a thought-provoking essay that examines Anna Laetitia Barbauld's literary criticism, especially her ideas on realistic writing and on the novel as "an epic in prose," an idea taken from Henry Fielding and elaborated in the introductions to her editions of Samuel Richardson's correspondence and of the anthology *British Novelists*.

The final section, "Romantic Female and Male Poets: Dialogue and Revision" brings the critical conversation about the interaction between Romantic female and male poets into fresh territory. Cecilia Pietropoli's "Women Romance Writers: Mary Tighe and Mary Hays" considers how these two women writers – coming from different cultural and ideological backgrounds, the one an aristocrat, the other a revolutionary – introduced variations to the conventions of the romance and rewrote the genre from a feminine perspective at the end of the eighteenth century. Taking as her paradigms Tighe's Spenserian poem *Pshyche* and Hay's tale "A Fragment. In the Manner of the Old Romances," Pietropoli maintains that

while “Mary Tighe [...] was mainly interested in influences and conflicts of an aesthetic nature, Mary Hays recognized the political potential of the romance” (207).

Next in this section comes Richard Cronin’s stimulating essay on two of the most popular Romantic poets in their time, Felicia Hemans and Letitia Landon. Cronin considers the cultural status of Hemans and Landon as feminine icons in the first decades after Waterloo, and grapples with the implications of their self-conscious fashioning as poetesses through a decidedly “female” poetic style. Cronin suggests that the power this style exerted on contemporary culture is also proved by the fact that early Tennyson drew significantly on Hemans’s model of domesticity and on Landon’s model of vulnerability. My only reservation to Cronin’s analysis concerns the treatment of Hemans, whose work, I believe, disrupts the gender economy more severely than it is suggested in this essay.

The paper which concludes the collection makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of women’s revision of the traditional canon, namely of the images, themes and styles of male writers. Thus, Gioia Angeletti illustrates how Anna Seward appropriates the language and imagery of her mentor Erasmus Darwin and of other literary models in some poems, yet, at the same time she recreates them and “feminizes” their themes and forms. On the other hand, Caroline Lamb’s revisionist – and largely transgressive – practice as encoded in *Glenarvon* and *A New Canto* involved, as Angeletti argues, “re-visiting and re-writing Byron’s style, dramatis personae and motifs by means of parodic overturning and impersonation” (243).

This collection is handsomely-made and well-indexed. Despite the multiplicity and disparity of topics, literary issues, and theoretical concerns posed by these thirteen essays, there are astonishingly more subtle interconnections and interactions at work than initially imagined by the reader – and this is one of the book’s greatest rewards and challenges. Taken together, the essays in *Romantic Women Poets* make a most vital addition towards the scholarly effort to establish the crucial role that women poets played in the construction of British culture in the Romantic period.

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British Literature 1640-1789: An Anthology. Third edition. Edited by Robert Demaria (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

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Robert Demaria's comprehensive anthology of British literature will be a welcome addition to the syllabus of many a course on the literature of the 'long' eighteenth century. Demaria aims his text squarely at the student-teacher market, offering a volume that is both thorough and accessible. This third edition contains a number of different texts that were not included in previous editions, as well as updated headnotes and many corrections to the texts to ensure the works are as accurate as possible.

A central concern in editing an anthology which brings together a wide range of different materials is to ensure that the texts are easily accessible and that the volume is easy to search. Demaria has chosen to organise the material by author, in chronological order, thus making the volume easy to navigate. However, in order to offer a more creative approach to accessing the anthology's extensive resources, Demaria has provided a separate thematic table of contents, ordering the material under banners such as "authorship," "friendship and same-sex love," and "race and slavery." At the back of the book is a select bibliography which points the reader towards its companion volume *A Critical Reader* (1999), where fuller guidance on secondary reading can be found. Also at the end of the volume is an index of titles and first lines, and an index to the introduction and footnotes, both of which provide useful ways for the student to quickly locate key pieces of information. Finally, before each text or selection of texts and excerpts, there is an introduction which offers a short biography of the author and a context for the pieces of literature to follow. These organisational features combine to offer a volume that is easy to explore and which helps the reader locate and experience a multitude of different texts.

Demaria takes time to explain the ways in which he has attempted to resolve the editorial issues that arise with texts from this period. In seeking to ensure that his chosen texts are easy for the new student or reader to comprehend, Demaria has altered the spelling and punctuation. Throughout the poetry the punctuation has only rarely been changed, while in the prose it has been modernized to reflect common usage and aid understanding. The original representation of letters has been modernized completely. These thoughtful and cautious changes result in a range of texts which retell their original character but are still approachable for the new reader. Had Demaria chosen to include facsimile images of the title pages of a selection of the texts, the sense of the historical context of the works and the importance of the frontispiece would have been strengthened for the reader, providing a better understanding of the text.

In his introduction, Demaria summarises his principal aims and intentions for this third edition, as well as offering a concise overview of the period. Demaria's use of dates to specify the period of literature covered in the anthology allows him to avoid labels such as

“Romanticism” or “revolutionary literature.” Seeking to escape such literary classifications, his focus is on the eighteenth century as a period during which the literature was affected by significant political and literary events. Of particular note is the restoration of Charles II after which “court, foreign policy, the religious, and the situation of writers in London and the rest of Britain” changed entirely (xl), while the 1798 publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* became the marker of an epoch. The volume, claims Demaria, “rides a tide of discoveries about the eighteenth century that has overwhelmed such categories” [as classicism or the Age of Reason] (xl). Having resisted literary classification in this way, Demaria focuses on Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience* as a means of providing a framework for the texts in the anthology. He pairs the “antagonism” present between Blake’s “innocent ideal” and the “lived experience” with the current of thought that emerged from the period’s political events, in which “untested ideals won out” (xl). At the centre of this argument is placed Milton’s *Paradise Lost* which tells of the benefits of experience over the ideals and innocence of Eden. For Demaria, *Paradise Lost* stands out as a text that makes “almost everything that comes after it in the anthology more intelligible” (xliv).

During the period 1640-1789 there was an increase in the number of authors published as well as growth in the popularity of genres such as pamphlets and newsbooks. This resulted in a growing reading public which moved beyond the privileged circles of the elite classes, a process which Demaria terms the “democratization” of literature and which was at times resisted as authors aligned themselves with classical texts or produced satires on the new modes of writing. However, manuscript culture retained popularity for those authors who preferred it to the “somewhat vulgar” print format (xlii). Specifically addressed in this collection is the increasing number of female authors who were published during the era. In the eighteenth century greater numbers of women were writing than ever before, and in the anthology over a third of the writers are women who, together, contribute around twenty percent of the work (xliv). This responds to the growing desire for an increased representation of women writers and expresses Demaria’s opinion that the “rediscovery” of women’s writing is “the most important development in eighteenth-century studies in the last forty years” (xliv).

British Literature 1640-1789: An Anthology presents a broad range of stimulating literature, organised in a clear fashion with a number of different lists that offer the reader multiple ways to access and discover the texts. If there is any weakness in this volume it comes from the format of the anthology itself, which comes necessarily with the problem of attempting to encompass a vast body of literature. Exclusions must be made but these are often at the expense of the minority author whose work is considered not mainstream enough to be taught, even if it might provide the reader with an unusual perspective. In excluding such authors, the position of mainstream “canonical” authors is reinforced, but while Demaria has reduced the number of authors in this edition from ninety-three to seventy-seven, he has limited the length and breadth of texts of key figures like Milton in order to be able to include other authors, including Congreve, Mandeville, and Sheridan. Demaria’s anthology furnishes the student of eighteenth century poetry and prose with an

invaluable selection of varied texts that is representative of the broad literature published throughout the period.

Investigating Identities: Questions of Identity in Contemporary International Crime Fiction, eds. Marieke Krajenbrink and Kate M. Quinn. Amsterdam and New York, Rodopi, 2009. ISBN: 978-90-420-2529-5. pp 348.

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Investigating Identities comprises twenty critical and broad-ranging essays which interrogate various aspects of global crime fiction and the connections between identity, nationality, and culture. Focused on works published after 1980, the essays consider crime fiction from Britain, Continental Europe, the Soviet Union, the United States, South America, and Africa. Traditional literary analyses of crime fiction – like *Differences, Deceits and Desires: Murder and Mayhem in Italian Crime Fiction*, edited by Mirna Cicioni and Nicoletta Di Ciolla (2008) – have tended to consider Anglophone material or crime fiction produced by single countries. By contrast, *Investigating Identities*, in its analyses of the crime fiction of a vast range of nations, enables the reader to develop a comparative perspective on the genre, bringing to light similarities and differences, and suggesting particular links between nation and narrative, crime and culture.

The issues which are covered within this text and its essays are as diverse as their nationalities. They share the overarching themes of gender, nation, ethnicity, and culture, yet each essay approaches these issues or themes from particular culturally inflected viewpoints. The papers consider the crime fiction series; the scene of the crime; the role of folklore; articulating and disarticulating culture and identity; the genre of crime fiction and its prolific sub-genres; language and re-inscription; adaptations and appropriations; disguise and performance; memory and forgetting; post-colonialism and postmodernism in crime fiction; national stereotypes; family relations; hybridization; and borders. Above all, perhaps, these essays are concerned with politics.

I have selected those papers which I consider to be most representative of the global spread of crime fiction and which exemplify how place and race as well as gender impact and interact with the crime fiction genre. I have not included essays focused on British or North American criminography as such material is widely subjected to literary and critical analysis elsewhere.

Spanish crime fiction receives attention from Anne M. White and Shelley Godsland in “Popular Genre and the Politics of the Periphery: Catalan Crime Fiction by Women.” Concentrating on gender and language, they track cultural changes in Spain and consider the role of crime fiction in providing a democratic voice. Within the essay, ‘Language and identity’ promotes Catalan as the best vehicle for democratic speech over Spanish (castellano), Basque (euskera), and Galician (galego). Their sub-heading, ‘Transcultural re-inscription’, looks at rewriting as resistance in the work of Majorcan born Maria-Antònia

Oliver and her series featuring L'ònia Guiu. 'Rewriting the rules of the genre' demarcates the changes in Catalan crime fiction which were inaugurated at the start of the Nineties, while 'Crime fiction and Catalan identity' shifts the focus to more recent writers, such as Anna Grau (*El dia que va morir el president*, 1999) and Isabel Olesti (*El marit invisible*, 1999). White and Godsland's conclusion locates their arguments in relation to Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theorisations in *Nation and Narration*.

From a French perspective, Agnès Maillot considers "Fractured Identities: Jean-Claude Izzo's *Total Khéops*." This article offers a sociological and socio-political reading of both *Marseillais* detective fiction and Marseilles crime writers. Jean-Claude Izzo is credited as the inventor of this new school, featuring his hero, Fabio Montale and making Marseilles the heroine of the narratives. Izzo's trilogy – *Total Khéops*, *Chourmo*, and *Soléa* – were among the best-selling French-based detective novels in France in the Nineties. Maillot discusses the plot and narrative devices used in *Total Khéops* before reading the text in the context of *Marseillais* identity and notions of Frenchness in first and second-generation immigrants to France.

Crime fiction written in Russia is the focus of Willem G. Weststeijn's study, "Murder and Love: Russian Women Detective Writers." Weststeijn begins with a lengthy synopsis of the novel, *Nezhnoe dykhanie smerti* (1999), by Anna Malysheva. He explains that it is not the solution to the murder that is central to this text but rather the personal circumstances of the female protagonist/s. He questions the origins of this cultural sub-genre of Russian women detective writers and their works and demonstrates how the conventions of the love-detective story are contrasted to Russian masculine detective writing and novels. Weststeijn asserts that these love-detective novels provide a comforting alternative to the chaos of life, briefly referencing other, similar works such as the novels of Marina Serova, in support of his argument. The kind of fiction under discussion is initially reminiscent of the nineteenth-century sentimental tale and romantic fiction found in America; however, the romantic plot is here re-worked by introducing both the topic and inclusion of a lesbian sex/rape. Notions of love are reconsidered from a new, Russian, contemporary and distinctly detective-fiction centred viewpoint.

Turning the reader's attention to Africa, a location not renowned for its crime fiction, Hans Ester's "Perspectives on the Detective Novel in Afrikaans" looks at hybridization, focusing on the detective novel and a particular South African genre of fiction in the farm novel. Ester identifies the historical and theoretical background of South Africa, Afrikaans in South Africa and Afrikaans literature, before specifically considering the farm and the farm novel as an ideological space in South African fiction. Ester reads the texts in the context of J. M. Coetzee's book of essays, *White Writing*, and the fiction of Olive Schreiner, C. M. van den Heever, and Etienne Leroux. Finally, Ester explores the interconnection between Etienne van Heerden's work and postmodern theories, concentrating on *Toorberg* and *Die swye van Mario Salviati*. Ester is thorough in his analysis of Afrikaans literature, particularly its postcolonial and political significance.

Sabine Vanacker's "Double Dutch: Image and Identity in Dutch and Flemish Crime Fiction" concentrates on the thriller and concomitantly questions what constitutes a Dutch or

Flemish thriller. Vanacker comments that the phenomenon of the Dutch thriller was considered by critics and authors as an oxymoronic concept. Vanacker discusses the challenges facing Dutch and Flemish trying to position themselves within the French, English and American traditions of crime writing and the role played by publishing companies in the Low Countries. Under the heading 'Democratic, small and modest' Vanacker discusses what she claims to be the first Dutch detective writer, Maarten Maartens, who controversially wrote *The Black Box Murder* (1889) in English. He then goes on to examine other Dutch/Flemish writers who wrote in Dutch: Bob Mendes, Janwillem van de Wetering, Martin Koomen, and Tomas Ross. In doing this they find a national voice and can emphasise national characteristics. 'The Weight of the Past' considers the importance of events in the past within Dutch and Flemish crime fiction plots. 'Borders and Border Crossings' discusses Otherness and the representation of Flanders in Felix Thijssen's Dutch novel, *Cleopatra* (1998). The 'Janwillem van de Wetering' sub-section looks at the peculiar position of this successful detective writer from the Low Countries. De Wetering is a Dutchman living mainly in the United States, which leads Vanacker to consider how this affects or constructs the national identity of the audience which Wetering addresses.

Other essays in the collection approach similar issues in other countries, using crime fiction as an interconnective tissue across nations and cultures. *Investigating Identities* is comprehensive and impressive in its context/s, countries, topics, perspectives, and authors. These articles cohere into an informative whole, drawing attention to aspects of detective fiction, nation, race and gender which perhaps have hitherto been neglected. In exploring modern crime fiction across national boundaries the collection brings local and global closer together.



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