

Reviews

Tamsin Spargo (ed.), *Reading the Past*, Palgrave 2000, pp. xii + 200, £14.99 pb.

This is one of four 'Readers in Cultural Criticism' published so far under the general editorship of Catherine Belsey. The other three are on *Posthumanism* (Neil Badmington), *Reading Images* (Julia Thomas) and *Gender* (Anna Tripp).

Reading the Past is clearly the course-book for Tamsin Spargo's course on 'debates about the past within the practice and disciplines of History and Literature'. It explores how the past is constructed (and deconstructed) by modern cultural criticism as well as the many implications of the act of reading. It presents the usual elements of an undergraduate course guide. The substance is an intriguing and eclectic range of texts (nearly all extracts from longer works which are fairly readily available). There are introductory notes to each of variable incisiveness (but which may serve some students as a substitute for reading the text itself). At the back we have a selective 'glossary' of both hard words (we are told about *anamorphosis* but not *aporia*) and key characters (including Wilhelm and Josef Dietzgen but not Gabriel Garcia Marquez). Finally there is a rather idiosyncratic (and in some cases tired) set of 'suggestions for further reading' (G. R. Elton's *The Practice of History* is there, but not Richard J. Evans's much more up-to-date and stimulating *In Defence of History*).

Among its strengths is a sound and accessible introductory chapter. This opens up the issues well, and includes an intriguing commentary on the perceived conflicts of science and the imagination in different eras (as History has taken a 'sometimes dizzying linguistic turn' literary studies have frequently returned to history). Each of the extracts makes a point, although few comment on each other (an exception is the debate between Stephen Greenblatt, Jürgen Pieters and Jean-François Lyotard on Holbein's *The Ambassadors*). Some are not as self-contained as the editor might

prefer (for example, Shoshana Felman's chapter on Camus' *The Plague* promises but never delivers a comparison with the later novel *The Fall*). There's some welcome humour (in Leszek Kolakowski's 'Emperor Kennedy Legend'). Some of the juxtapositions are arresting, including the master-stroke of preceding Keith Jenkins's punk-rocker post-modernist 'Why bother with history?' with Walter Benjamin's golden-oldie materialist 'Theses on the philosophy of history'.

For the student who stays the course without the prescribed examination these readings would help as preparation for almost any general paper-style test in historiography. They might also open up some new and refreshing lines of investigation and further study. As a fairly widely spread, surface-level anthology, the book by itself will not add much to the reader's understanding of specific periods, topics or primary texts.

Spargo's is a course I would like to take. It presents a set of readings I would be happy to recommend to students. It costs £14.99 for a study-pack which most universities (after appropriate copyright clearance) would supply to their students for the price of the photocopying.

University of Brighton

David Watson

David Jarrett, Tomasz Kowalewski and Geoff Ridden (eds), *Packing and Unpacking Culture: Changing Models of British Studies*, Copernicus University, Torún, 2001, pp. 270, £4.

This multifarious collection of Culture Studies, English and Polish, derives from academic initiatives of the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in a conference held in Poland in 1998. The editors feel it necessary to make clear that the essays are not 'constrained by Marxist determinism;' their authors do not dismiss Marx, but rather view him as too important to be abandoned to doctrinaire formulae. On the other hand they may be said to suffer at times from a different ailment, that of modern academic jargon. Someone – a woman – is quoted as telling us that 'The modernist concept of single and alienated otherness is challenged by the postmodern questioning of binaries that conceal hierarchies (self-other) ...' – and so on (p. 50).

On more accessible ground we have an interesting account by Geoff Ridden, one of the editors, of contemporary performances of Shakespeare in Belgium, Germany, and Poland. Two English essays and one Polish make up a section on 'Travels', or exploration and discovery. Tadeusz Rachwal is well worth reading on Carlyle and his estimate of the 'Nigger', as part of a primitive world, destined to remain primitive and eat pumpkins until the high-minded Briton brings his gospel of Work to bear on it. Tim Youngs writes of the nomad, as 'an almost omnipresent feature of modern travel writing and its criticism' (p. 106). Francis Curtis is concerned with the maritime world of round about 1800, before modern electronic navigation came in. One curiosity he fishes up is a north-bound fishing-crew's fear of the iron nails used in the building of their boat, because if they get too near the North Pole its magnetic force may draw all their nails out (121).

A group of articles labelled 'Multi-Cultural' begins with one by Mary Condé on writings of Indian women now living in Britain. She points out that novels about India as one country can be written only in English, since any provincial medium

would limit them to fields of only local interest. Neil McCaw raises the question of how 'Irishness' can be integrated with British cultural studies. Hitherto, he holds, 'the implicit Irish dimension of British experience' has been slurred over. The rioting in *Barnaby Rudge*, for instance, shows no recognition of its 'broad-based anti-Irish feeling' (p. 144), and Mrs Gaskell ten years later was likewise reluctant to take account of Irish problems. There may still be lessons about them to be learned from Bernard Shaw and *John Bull's Other Island*.

K. Knauer begins with 'the Kuhnian shift in paradigms', and leads the reader to Derrida. More helpfully Tim Prentki, after a first visit to his fatherland, remarks that England still contains a 'multiplicity of cultures'. He very sensibly laments the way Britain, or its government, goes on clinging to American coat-tails, to keep up the illusion of still being a country of importance. Essays follow on English juvenile storytelling, and popular culture at large. Agnieszka Ksiazek makes a good point of how the New Affluence has benefited especially working-class women, blessed now with cars, more modern houses, and more knowledge of domestic science (p. 241). We should expect much from them.

University of Edinburgh

V. G. Kiernan

Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practising New Historicism*, University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp.ix + 249, £16.00; **Peter Childs**, *Modernism*, Routledge, 2000, pp. xi + 226, \$8.99 pb.

Perhaps the most pressing question as regards the new collection of essays from Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt is do these writers know what they are doing when they are 'practicing new historicism'? As they themselves say, that which they are practising does not constitute 'a repeatable methodology or a literary critical program'. They add: 'So we sincerely hope you will not be able to say what it all adds up to; if you could, we would have failed.'

Arguably the best way of engaging with this is by noting the shift from *The New Historicism* in H. Aram Veese's landmark 1989 collection of essays to this current volume which similarly offers a representation of state-of-the-art criticism in its field. Along the way the definite article has been put under erasure, so that 'new historicism', as Gallagher and Greenblatt now have it, signifies as a floating signifier. This is a key move. As is the way of these things, the floating signifier becomes a means by which socially mobile intellectuals might articulate their political disillusionment so as to promote greater social democratization. It is all strongly reminiscent of President Clinton's 1996 'triangulation' strategy, and of the Third Way in Britain. Flatly opposed to American New Criticism the new historicism seeks to make its way between and beyond Marxism on the one hand and deconstruction on the other. That democracy grows depoliticized in the process does not seem to matter. Nothing but a tamed democracy suits neo-liberalism better.

Gallagher's and Greenblatt's essays are superb forms of literary criticism and cultural analysis; acute, fine-grained products of deep scholarly integrity. They comprise paired pieces on the interest and significance of anecdotes in literary history, on eucharistic doctrine in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Greenblatt), and on

nineteenth-century materialism (Gallagher). A commitment to particularity is what emerges above all, here, manifested in terms of the discovery of complex or hidden intertextual links within and across individual essays: woven together are anecdotes, paintings by Joose van Gent and Paolo Ucello, *Hamlet*, *Great Expectations*, and imagery of bread, potatoes and the dead. But what also emerges through repeated testimony is the apparent inability of Gallagher and Greenblatt to produce genuinely collaborative work with other new-historicist practitioners, principally the editorial board of the journal *Representations*. Despite the recurrent desire to make collaboration work disagreements arise around an 'unrepeatable' methodology. Stars appear in this direction instead; Gallagher and Greenblatt perform a 'duet and dialogue of great virtuosity' (dust-jacket). This is why the new historicism always fails in the way that it does. Do these writers know what they are doing? Of course they do.

Peter Childs rightly emphasizes the preoccupation with abstraction as a defining characteristic of modernism; Gallagher's and Greenblatt's dislike of abstraction is indicative of their post-modernism. In Childs' book the orthodox view is reiterated of how modernist writers 'struggled ... to express the sensibilities of their time ... in a compressed, condensed, complex literature of the city, of industry and technology, war, machinery and speed, mass markets and communication, of internationalism, the New Woman, the aesthete, the nihilist and the flâneur'. In a way paradoxically an accessible modernism is what is chiefly important here; particularly effective use is made of shell-shock as an explanatory metaphor. Resolving itself into an essentially thematic presentation of its subject Childs' study comes to resemble nothing so much as Tate Modern (another place, evidently, where the definite article is under erasure). Its themes are those of 'Freedom and Gender', 'Epistemology and Narration', 'Identity and War', 'Symbolism and Language'; as though further evidence were needed of modernism having become a kind of aesthetic equivalent of Selfridges. The outcome is that it is all the harder to imagine how literary and artistic forms described as modernist could have been at once difficult and explosive.

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Gary Farnell

Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, Manchester University Press, 2001, pp. xi + 195, £9.99.

The ideas of *Dust*, we learn, came from Bernard Taithe, one of Carolyn Steedman's fellow editors for a new *Encounters* series from M.U.P., which, we are also told, 'will demonstrate that history is the hidden narrative of modernity.' The series is to be concerned with the new cultural history which has flourished since the linguistic turn but goes beyond it. In fact, a lot of this book has appeared before in other places and in other guises, but the material has been re-shaped. It is a very clever book and an amusing one, especially in what the author calls her less than 'respectful' attitude to Derrida. 'It is about dust. Dust is the immutable, obdurate set of beliefs about the material world, past and present, inherited from the nineteenth century, with which modern history-writing attempts to grapple; Dust is also the narrative principle of that writing; and Dust is the joke.' I think that gives the flavour of the book. Using her experience from researching cultural history in Britain and France, Steedman

produces a provocative collection of essays about the relationship between the historian and the archive. Fellow researchers will identify, in particular, with her amusing comments on the true relationship between the historian and the archive when the former is staying in a cheap hotel, with one research day left, and a newly-arrived folder of documents which she will never get through. Sometimes we are offered explicit reflections on the nature of the historian's task, as illustrated by the experiences of Steedman herself, but often we are left to draw our own conclusions, as if the subtleties of her approach would be compromised by having them summarised, or made too explicit. The back page blurb says that 'historians who want to think about what it is they do will find this work enlightening, and this book is essential reading for all undergraduates and postgraduates studying historiography, and history and theory'; but some undergraduates at least will find it puzzling.

One small thing I did find irritating (and I know this may look like personal pique) was that for all her erudition, her knowledge of the archives and of the details of intellectual and cultural history, not to mention the working and social conditions of nineteenth-century Britain and France in which she is expert, Steedman still subscribes to the idea that the modern historical profession 'established itself on a positivistic high in the middle years of the nineteenth century.' And she states this, despite the fact that she is citing Goldwin Smith in *anti-positivist* mode, when in fact Goldwin Smith was not a lone voice reluctantly recognising the drawbacks of an otherwise dominant positivism, but part of a chorus denouncing positivism. In Britain at least, though I admit France was quite different, the historians who presided over the first turn to the archives, did not do so, by and large, for positivist reasons. To be honest, I don't know if *Dust* is going to become a classic or if it is too random and inferential a collection of essays to achieve that sort of status.

Edge Hill College, Ormskirk

Christopher Parker

Pat Hudson, *History by Numbers: An Introduction to Quantitative Approaches*, Arnold, 2000, pp. 278, £45, £14.99 pb.; **Alun Munslow**, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies*, Routledge, 2000, pp. 271, £47.50, £12.99 pb.

These two books offer introductions to aspects of historical study that have been prevalent over the last twenty years, with Hudson looking at quantitative approaches and Munslow examining changes in historical viewpoints over time from the post-modern perspective. Both are advertised as preambles to the 'keywords, concepts and issues' (Munslow, p. ix), but the two books have little else in common, taking different approaches from the beginning.

Hudson's book is divided into three parts. The first expresses some of the commonly held shortcomings with, and the history of, quantitative approaches; the second introduces different approaches; and the third places econometric history and historical computing within the broader quantitative framework. In addition, each chapter contains guidance for further reading and a most useful appendix, which relates the matters discussed throughout the book to fifteen published articles. A glossary of terms is also included.

This is a much-needed modern introduction to the uses of statistics by historians, which supposes no prior knowledge of the subject. Indeed, it does more than familiarise the reader with the subject, for the third section and appendix in particular provide gateways to related areas that have their own (specialised and introductory) literature. The book is well pitched with clearly-written chapters laying the groundwork for the more specialised work, including averages, graphs, regression, sampling theory and practice, tables and time series analysis that follow. These terms tend to alarm many people, but Hudson explains the limitations and strengths of each with clarity so that even the novice feels comfortable with using them.

However, Hudson is not a zealot and makes her work relevant to wider debates about research methods. She sounds a cautious note, making the point that while statistics are rightly treated with scepticism by some historians, qualitative approaches have similar problems and historians should, above all, 'think hard about what they are doing ... be vigilant in interpreting evidence' (p. 21). This book is engaging and thought-provoking as well as simply instructive.

Munslow's book takes a slightly different perspective on its subject. The introduction provides some critical perspectives upon history today. This is then followed by an alphabetical glossary of terms, with appropriate cross-references in the text. Indications of further reading are given at the end of each entry. There is also an excellent twenty-seven page bibliography included at the end of the book.

The two questions on the back cover perhaps best illustrate the subject matter of this book: 'Is History Dead?' How does Postmodern History Work?'. The preface accentuates this; the perspective of the book is the author's own understanding of 'the post-empiricist challenge to history' (p. ix). This book therefore serves a dual purpose: it introduces modern debates in historical studies *and* it shows us the author's own understanding and preferences. It is difficult to criticise the inclusion or exclusion of some terms in the glossary. Doubtless the length of the book has imposed certain restrictions on the number of entries that can be included, to see that care is taken to explain the development of arguments from the renaissance onwards, rather than just looking at recent work. This provides for a more balanced approach to the uninitiated.

This leads to the main criticism of Munslow's work (which may be the fault of marketing rather than the author). This is advertised as an introduction. It is clearly a well-written, carefully considered work that is already provided as a course book for many students. But surely the purpose of the book should be to *introduce*; to make people 'sit up and think', even if they do not agree with what is within. The text is impenetrable to the non-expert. It is excellent at extolling the state of historical studies in 1999, but it does not set out a difficult subject in a way that will be easily understood.

Hudson does this with an admittedly more familiar subject. In their own ways, both of these books are excellent. Both attempt to fill gaps in their respective areas, but I feel that Hudson accomplishes this with aplomb, whereas Munslow's book works best with additional guidance.

Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. xii + 322, £19.95.

Despite considerable ink shed in the 80s and 90s about the meaning of 'new historicism', early practitioners of this critical genre themselves often steered clear of programmatic statements and theoretical credos. Greenblatt talked about 'cultural poetics', but never committed himself to a genre called 'new historicism'. The genre remained amorphous, like Hamlet's clouds that look now like a camel, now a weasel, now a whale. Nonetheless, it began to be written about in upper case initials, and took heat for a lack of commitment to feminist perspectives, for residual formalism, and for a lack of interest in theory. Right now, to ask if New Historicism exists is as futile as asking whether we are still at war in Afghanistan; but like that war, there can be no question but that this critical practice changed the landscape.

But now, the times, they may be a-changing - back again. Greenblatt's latest book - *Hamlet in Purgatory* - is a departure from the work that brought so much attention decades ago. The scholarship is characteristically brilliant but without his famous pyrotechnics. To be sure, many aspects of 'new historicism' remain - including an emphasis on intertextuality - but the book also suggests older forms of historicism. Two new historicist trademarks are missing: what some called 'arbitrary connectedness' and the use of the trailblazing, probative anecdote. Anecdotes and intertextual connections in this book will not be controversial, as of old. One of Greenblatt's signature moves was to begin an essay with a lesser known text and end with a privileged Shakespeare text: 'Invisible Bullets' begins with Harriot's *Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* and ends with *Henry IV*. *Hamlet in Purgatory* begins with Simon Fish's *Supplication of the Beggars* and ends with *The Tempest*.

One issue that created uproar years ago was new historicism's use of synchronic connections with little consideration of genre. In *Shakespearean Negotiations*, for example, the notion of subversion/containment linked colonial writing and the history play. The connectedness, if a bit arbitrary, was also stimulating, provocative, original. *Hamlet in Purgatory* refrains from such connections. After a detailed, rich analysis of the history of purgatory and Protestant denunciations of it, we come to *Hamlet* and find no dazzling claims and few controversial interpretations.

Greenblatt's prologue tells us of his own fascination with *Hamlet* and his pleasure in its 'magical intensity'. His very felt need to offer aesthetic confession of this order should give us pause and make us reflect on how much has changed. In addition, he provides anecdotal information on his (or rather his father's) relationship to Judaism as the 'personal starting point' for the work. The personal connection to the work that follows has a certain spectrality such that the man behind the text vanishes. Nevertheless, the prologue sets a compelling personal tone for the text as a whole.

Greenblatt begins with the early complaint of Simon Fish (1529) regarding 'suffrages': that the living would not only pray for the dead but pay for them, giving money to the church with the expectation that it would speed their loved ones from purgatory to heaven. Greenblatt establishes that Protestants increasingly viewed purgatory as a fable: 'what we call ideology, then, Renaissance England called poetry'. This 'fable' could offer cleansing, as in Hieronymous Bosch's painting (used for the book's dust jacket) of a beautiful light in a tunnel. More often, purgatory was a place of torture, whose very description, King Hamlet tells us, would put your hair on end like the quills of the 'porpentine'.

A substantial portion of *Hamlet in Purgatory* is devoted to 'The Gast of Guy', which concerns a ghost in France that returned from purgatory to talk to his widow. Greenblatt looks not only at the dead husband's intimate relation to his wife but at the institutions that became involved in the episode in its movement from bedroom to church to papal court. His analysis of Thomas More's response to Fish's *Supplication* will remind readers of the impressive chapter on More in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. More's defence of purgatory and Fish's attack suggest that 'belief' was tied to institutional, economic, and political concerns, not simply theological or philosophical ones.

The ghosts who were 'increasingly labelled as fictions of the mind' were particularly important to Shakespeare (Jonson and Marlowe were less interested). In a moving section on *Richard III*, Greenblatt revives the new historicist trope of power by relating the play to dreams from the 1930s in Germany that remind us of the 'malevolent absolutism' of Nazi Germany. Reiterating critical commonplaces about *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, Greenblatt points out that the latter play muddles any distinction between fantasy and reality. Thus while scepticism may always be present in Shakespeare's plays, it is nothing like the dogmatic rationalism of a Reginald Scot, who wants to see popular 'superstition' vanish entirely. Contributing to the power of theatre, the ghosts shape fantasies but they remain a fiction, a 'figure of theater'.

Hamlet, Greenblatt tells us, is ultimately about memory. His account of religious controversies over purgatory leads to an analysis of the theological nature of memory that firmly historicizes the play. The ghost's commandment, 'Remember me', reminds us of the Catholic texts featuring ghosts suffering in Purgatory who need 'suffrages' to escape. Twentieth-century psychoanalytic terms can lead us astray, Greenblatt tells us, since the link of memory and the ghost is developed in terms of sixteenth-century theology. Thus *Hamlet* even harkens back to Thomas More's *Supplication*, which displays the desire of the dead to be remembered through the prayer of the living. Catholic discourse retains an equivocal position amidst a series of contradictions. For example, the line '*hic et ubique*' is firmly rooted in the notion of purgatory but Prince Hamlet himself is schooled in Wittenberg, the hotbed of Protestant Reformation.

Examining the amusing and baffling materialist remark of Hamlet – 'the progress of a king through the guts of a beggar' – Greenblatt demonstrates that Protestant complaints about the Eucharist are deeply embedded in the text. Thus the religious discourse of the play is highly unstable; indeed, over time many people, including Shakespeare's father John, came to yearn for the old religion. Older historicist concerns are in evidence here with speculation about William's mourning for his father who died the year Hamlet was perhaps written. The book ends pursuing the idea that the fiction of the theatre served as a new 'cult of the dead', an important resource for people still holding Catholic longing. Literary critics continue this 'cult' by reading and writing about the play.

In many respects this departure from the new historicism is a breath of fresh air, combining impeccable scholarship with a personal tone. The book will not add support to the countless number of scholarly careers shaped in part by a strategic opposition to the phantasmatic 'new historicism'. With much of Greenblatt's previous work we feel as if we are travelling on new terrain. The terrain may look more familiar here but it is no less desirable a place to visit. Those of us who have ceased to care all that much about buying the latest academic commodity will cherish this work and hope for more.

Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (eds), *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*, University of Missouri Press, 2000, pp. xii + 243, £33.95.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England saw the existence of several different kinds of literary circle, as the tradition of manuscript circulation continued to function alongside publication by the new technology of printing and the dissemination of texts by the new commercial drama. This variety of cultural formations is addressed by this collection of essays, based on contributions originally given at the thirteenth biennial Renaissance conference at the University of Michigan-Dearborn in 1998.

One has to say at the outset that the collection's claim to address *Renaissance* literary circles is overambitious since, apart from a discussion by M. Thomas Hester of Donne's 'The Bait' as an answer to Marlowe's 'Passionate Shepherd to His Love', all the essays centre on seventeenth-century texts. One would have liked, for example, a discussion of manuscript circulation at the court of Henry VIII, both for its intrinsic interest – the involvement of a major cultural figure in Sir Thomas Wyatt – and as a kind of marker or starting point for the consideration of later and different formations not possible before the emergence of a print culture at the end of the sixteenth century and the development of a capitalist theatre at the same historical moment.

Nevertheless, the collection has some interesting and valuable things to say. Hester, for instance, argues convincingly that Donne's poem is a recusant response to Marlowe's Protestant praise of Elizabeth in the 'Passionate Shepherd', written for a Catholic circle perhaps within Donne's larger circle of readers – probably in the 1590s. John Considine shows that the literary circle around Sir Thomas Overbury, claimed to exist by his publisher Lawrence Lisle in the early years of the seventeenth century, almost certainly did not exist and was no more than a publishing ploy by Lisle to sell progressively larger volumes of works alleged to be associated with Overbury. Anna K. Nardo argues that Milton's advocacy in the *Reason of Church-Government* of academic societies as a recreational alternative to the corrupt drama and disorderly pastimes of the day was modelled on his experience of Italian academies in 1641–42: a kind of ideal community that was never in fact realised. And, in a similar consideration of projected communities, Achsah Guibbory discusses the pamphlets of the Quaker, Margaret Fell, in her attempt to readmit and convert European Jews in the 1650s and 60s, at a time when many Jews as well as many radical Protestants felt themselves to be living in the final messianic age.

Perhaps the weakness of the collection, though, is its limited sense of the historical context of the texts and communities – real and envisaged – that are being discussed. The seventeenth century, after all, is one of the great watersheds of English history: the culture of the 1590s is still, in many respects, a late feudal formation, whereas the culture of the Restoration is – or was soon to become – an early bourgeois culture that we can all recognise. The exemplary discussion in this respect here is that by Timothy Raylor of the Cavendish circle in the 1630s. Raylor is aware, as on the whole the other contributors are not, that the Cavendish circle extended not only, as it were, horizontally, but also vertically: it was characterised crucially and formatively, as all early seventeenth-century relationships were, by differences of social status, of class position. It emerges, accordingly, that work attributed to William Cavendish, the duke

of Newcastle and, as Raylor says, probably the most powerful man in the north of England, was drafted by him but tactfully refined and improved by his chaplain, the Oxford scholar Robert Payne. The Cavendish circle turns out to be an example of the late feudal household, characterised by radical differences of wealth and power.

The literary circle is not a fundamental concept; it is in a different category from class, ideology, or gender. And on examination, as the editors insist in their introduction, it has more than one meaning. But it is a useful concept to deploy, especially in an age which had not yet undergone the atomisation attendant upon a fully developed capitalist society. And this volume is to be welcomed not least for the stimulus it provides to further reflection on the social connections of literary production.

University of Hull

William Zunder

Michael Neill, *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics and Society in English Renaissance Drama*, Columbia University Press, 2000, pp. xii + 527, £22.00; **Nina Taunton**, *1590s Drama and Militarism: Portrayals of War in Marlowe, Chapman and Shakespeare's Henry V*, Ashgate, 2001, pp. vii + 239, £42.50.

For over twenty years Michael Neill's name has been associated with some of the best scholarship in the field of early-modern dramatic writing. His editorship of *Antony and Cleopatra* (for the Oxford Shakespeare series), his volumes on Ford and Marston, as well as his book about death and mortality in the Renaissance, have established for him a thoroughly deserved reputation. Yet it is also the case that some of his more provocative and experimental research has been published in journals and volumes of essays. This book brings together some of that research in a readable and carefully organised fashion that will be instructive to new readers, whilst reminding those with longer memories of just how important Neill's work has been. It is important to emphasise that Neill has not simply republished older material; rather he has reviewed his earlier work and framed it in the context of contemporary research and theoretical developments so that the whole volume provides not only a rich rehearsal of almost a quarter of a century's worth of debate about the relationship between Renaissance drama and history, but also engages with some of the key issues that will face critics in the future.

The range of issues under examination is impressive. Neill has written about the politics of Renaissance domesticity and the construction of the 'legitimate' in the ordering of the early modern family. He is interested in matters of race and colonialism, from Ireland to the East Indies and beyond, and the attendant issues surrounding the 'mapping' of colonial identity. He explains the enormous complexities of Tudor and Stuart historiography in a way that suggests that, given the time and motivation, he might helpfully dash off a useful guide to modern literary theory, since it seems rather straightforward by comparison. A compelling feature of the book is, however, the resolute way that although Neill acknowledges the shaping influence of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism he keeps a firm grip on the idea that history, if not an unmodulated and accessible given, is in the minds of early modern readers and theatre audiences clearly a force that will shape the political future. Modern historians

and critics, Neill implies, have a similar potential and responsibility, and the book's readers will be rewarded by this sense of critical integrity.

Nina Taunton's *1590's Drama and Militarism* is an extraordinary contribution to what many critics have seen as a neglected area of scholarship. It is hard to find dramatic texts from the last decade of the sixteenth century that are entirely free from direct representations of contemporary or historical warfare or from less direct allusion to the shaping influence of war in terms of social status, myth, or political practice. Given the historical importance of war, and its continuing presence in the modern world, it is odd, as Taunton notes, that so few full length studies have appeared on this subject in relation to late Tudor theatre. The 1590s saw the production and wide circulation of a tremendous body of prose work (philosophical tracts, military manuals, translations of foreign works) which speculated on the decline of standards in the military aspirations in the emerging centralised state that was the legacy of the English Reformation. These texts varied in their prescriptions for reform, some calling for a professional army, others for a militarization of the citizenry, and some recommending, oddly, but perhaps predictably enough, the creation of a classically-styled fighting force complete with the uniforms and weapons of the Romans. In the context of actual engagements in Ireland and beyond, these texts, however fantastic, have a practical resonance in a society still frightened by the Armada episode and driven by an increasing awareness of international politics.

Taunton cleverly meshes these texts with an extensive review of the contemporary drama, giving fresh insight into the more obvious candidates for military interpretation, such as *Henry V*, but also drawing attention to the unsettling ideas about gender, warfare and identity found in the more obscure plays of Marlowe and Chapman. Fascinatingly illustrated with examples of how militarism shaped ideas of masculinity, discipline and the practical arrangement for warfare (found, for example, in the idea of the military encampment) the theoretical framework of the book lends itself to the ideas of subjectivity associated with the work of Michel Foucault. Yet Foucault is really a kind of catalyst in this study. The book's interest lies in the materiality of militarism as a political practice based on the idea of collective bodies, rather than individual subjectivity, and tests Foucault's theory by placing it alongside a dimension that profitably suggests some limits to what many have seen as his theoretical monopoly on issues of the body, discipline and subjectivity. The book is beautifully produced, readable and instructive. What it clearly suggests is that the military theory of the late Tudors was a significant early modern discourse in that it produced and even naturalised many of the values that inform modern armies. There is a chilling sense of familiarity about this discourse: new and experimental to the Tudors, but played out across the years of modernity with dreadful efficiency and continuity.

University of Gloucestershire

Simon Barker

Leah S. Marcus et al. (eds), *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 632, £25.

History has been hard on Elizabeth I as a writer. While some critics have dismissed her translations as literal and clumsy, others have questioned whether she wrote very

much at all but she still seems to have been safer with her detractors than with admirers like George Elliott Sweet. According to Sweet, 'At forty-five she made a vow to literature. The children of her marriage to England would have to be literary children', and so Elizabeth took up the pen under the *nom-de-plume* of William Shakespeare!

Elizabeth I's output is huge and dispersed, and her writings present an extreme challenge to editorial practice because attribution of the poems, in particular, is always going to be dependent on tradition and conjecture. Marcus, Mueller and Rose are the first editors to bring most of Elizabeth's writing together, and their triumph of labour and intellectual engagement not only makes an important contribution to histories of Elizabeth and her reign, but also to contemporary debates about the nature of Renaissance texts and authorship. Their new edition acknowledges the fluidity of texts and contexts, and the collaborative nature of Renaissance authorship. Hence, within practical limitations, the editors reproduce texts in variant forms, and contextualize Elizabeth's works not only by arranging them chronologically, but also by including related documents. Proof that the decision to modernize Elizabeth's difficult spelling has succeeded in bringing her texts into mainstream contemporary culture came when the English national press listed this edition as one of the books of the year 2000.

Inevitably, the choices made when editing any volume bring disadvantages as well as advantages. The very first poem, 'Written on a window frame at Woodstock', is based on the text recorded by Baron Waldstein, except that Waldstein saw the poem on a wall. The amalgamation of Waldstein's text with a location drawn from other sources makes precisely the kind of composite the editors usually reject. Further, it is unclear what does and does not merit comment, while the location of a text in an early manuscript does not necessarily mean that this version should be privileged above other textual traditions. The chronological arrangement of the texts implies teleological development and the reader comes away with a sense of Elizabeth as the heroic poet-Queen. It culminates in her two most famous speeches – the one to the troops at Tilbury (no. 19) and the Golden Speech (no. 23). These speeches are famous because they are good, but also because they were pressed into service in subsequent political battles – the Golden Speech has embodied the principles of limited monarchy at its most reasoned and benign. Yet Elizabeth's famous moderation was often an impression created by indecision and ambiguity which were themselves weapons of political manipulation. Simply by printing the Golden Speech before the parliamentary petition against monopolies to which it responds, the volume privileges Elizabeth's point of view. Of course, this is a collection of Elizabeth's works, but the majority of the contextual documents from the 1590s deal with external threats to England, and sideline the very real disaffection at home. There is also very little to show how less elite constituencies contributed to the structuring of Elizabeth's voice. History is moving away from the top-down approach to acknowledge the role of varied social and economic forces. The collected works of Elizabeth is inevitably top-down history, but her status as an honorary dead, white male accounts for the curious distaste with which many feminist scholars have treated her writings. The editors use their illustrations very cleverly to remind the reader how messy the original texts actually are, but the illustrations could have been exploited more fully to loosen the image of Elizabeth, and to acknowledge the material variety of her texts – of her symbolic garments and her embroidery, for example. By presenting texts as documents and documents as texts, the edition blurs the fact that different kinds of writing

require different reading practices. I suspect that it is the poems that will suffer most, as their speakers will be conflated with Elizabeth. In the notes to the poem, 'Now leave me and let me rest' (no. 11), the editors affirm that Elizabeth's poetry is private, even secret, so that manuscript attribution is not to be expected. However, Elizabeth's poetry and prayers are not purely private but equivocate on the boundaries between private and public, inner and outer. While her texts may not have circulated, the fact is that what she wrote was made available for public consumption, and her writings are characteristic of Elizabeth's self-presentation in that they are the productions of staged reticence. The path from her texts into her innermost thoughts is a devious one.

The range of the volume certainly does give a more accurate and complex picture of the nature of sovereignty. The focus on Elizabeth's devotional works moves away from the liberal humanist historiography of the Renaissance that traces a crude process of secularization, and the epistolary exchanges between James VI and Elizabeth reveal that neither Elizabeth, nor England, were discrete self-sufficient entities. But the exclusion of her translations into English is the one truly regrettable decision. Elizabeth responded to continental models of sovereignty and the translations would have made this clearer, as well as disrupting our periodizations by revealing the persistent importance of a Henrician intellectual context. They would also reveal her ties to other women, especially a community of reform-minded, royal authoresses that includes Katherine Parr, Anne Boleyn and Marguerite of Navarre. Apart from the length of many of her translations, the reason given for excluding them is that they are readily available in other editions. In fact, with the exception of Marc Shell's edition of *Elizabeth's Glass* (1993), this is not true, and Caroline Pemberton's pioneering edition of 1899 is unreliable, although an edition of Elizabeth's translation of Boethius is in preparation. The omission of a large section of her output impairs our understanding of her authorship and inadvertently perpetuates modern prejudices which marginalize translation, making her authorship more palatable, but distorting it. The forthcoming companion volume, which will include unmodernized transcriptions of Elizabeth's texts, could have been devoted to her translations. Incomplete though it is, Marcus Mueller and Rose have produced a real milestone in our understanding of the roles Elizabeth played in her own culture, and the roles she continues to play in our own. The last concerted efforts to edit any of the texts gathered here were made in the 1960s. Elizabeth has had to wait a long time but, thanks to this volume, her texts will start to get the kind of attention they deserve.

Queen's College, Cambridge

Georgia E. Brown

Leeds Barroll, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001, pp. 220, £28.50.

Anne of Denmark (1574–1619), Queen of James VI and I, has always been something of an enigma; a shallow and pleasure seeking creature whose religious beliefs were ambiguous. She has been seen traditionally as a woman who held very little influence over her husband, except, perhaps, with regard to the question of her children's marriages.

In this book Barroll seeks to redress this by reversing the twentieth-century view of the Queen and moving the emphasis for change placed solely on James VI & I away from the King and on to Anne (Anna). He attempts this by dispelling what he sees as two central predispositions: first the view of James as a 'power that directed the shape of court politics' and second the idea that the queen was not an 'appropriate subject for serious scholarly investigation.' He seeks to introduce a polymorphic body composing several constituent parts of which the Queen is to be seen as a major component and places the queen in a cultural context by associating her more deeply with court masques and examining her system of patronage.

In demonstrating Anne's substantiality and dispelling the myth of her frivolity Barroll associates the Queen with the development of high court culture. He does this by introducing Anne as Queen of Scotland; a woman of substance with a strong sense of her position; a woman who exerted political influence. This is not the woman portrayed by the narrative of her years in England. Anne appears to have ceased any overt political activity once she reached England. This was due, in part, to James's separation of the Scottish nobles into those who were to go to England and those who were to remain in Scotland. With the majority of her coterie remaining in Scotland Anne was forced to reinvent her royal identity during the early years in England.

How then does Barroll see this reinvention? In the first instance he argues, quite convincingly, that, in the court of the Queen Consort, could be found the ideal situation for the development of a 'local habitation' for those members of the aristocracy distinguished by their patronage of the arts. Furthermore, Barroll argues against the traditional idea that the masques of the early Stuart court were configured solely to celebrate James VI and I. He suggests that, as Anne was selecting for participation in the masques, ladies from her own, legally defined, court, the masques could also have served the additional purpose of reaffirming Anne's own identity as a Queen of some substance, and of aligning her with the future King of England, Henry, Prince of Wales.

Strangely, Barroll chooses to place a discussion of Anne's perceived Catholicism, an important issue when examining her court and her patronage system, in an appendix. There was considerable talk regarding the Queen's religious beliefs and the suspicion that a Catholic court existed within the Royal Household drew Catholics to her. However, Anne's religious beliefs were, at best, ambiguous. Even before her arrival in England rumour had it that she was 'well inclined' towards Rome; a fact which led to a concern that there could be Papal influence on the King's policies and that the Queen would seek to influence her children over matters of religion. In Scotland Anne had sought the company of Catholics. However, her conduct in London was discreet enough to confuse commentators and throughout her life she attended the services of the Anglican church just enough to enable the government to claim that she was never a Catholic but merely objected to England's puritanical strictness. Nevertheless, Anne was viewed as a champion for the Catholic cause and kept about her a sufficient number of Catholics to confirm this view.

This study preserves its argument carefully. Barroll's conclusion is convincing: through Anne of Denmark's search for royal status, England was provided with a home for, and a patronage system conducive to, the creation of a rich and varied tapestry of arts.

Thomas N. Corns (ed.), *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp.vi + 316, £40.

When in 1632 the Edinburgh preacher William Struther contemplated the ‘image’ of kings ruling their estates, he remarked that ‘people cannot always see the person of their kings, but they may guess at their disposition by [the] manners of their court’ (quoted, p. 303). Charles I was the first king of England to try to subject the ‘disposition’ of his monarchy to comprehensive royal control. He was in a sense the first media-king. But he did not control all media, for as Joad Raymond notes in his essay on popular representations of the king, Charles was the first English monarch to be ‘portrayed by a popular press beyond his control’ (p. 47). Anonymous, popular depictions in broadsides and newsbooks in turn influenced the writing of elitist historians such as Clarendon and Hobbes. Representations of Charles I enjoyed an extraordinary after-life: the King ironically became a Jacobite icon of royal martyrdom, as Laura Knoppers shows.

This phenomenon, as much as the interconnectedness of royal imagery in *all* media, forms but one of the subjects of the present collection of essays, a book that all students of Caroline political culture will want to consult. The contributors include ten critics of English literature, a music historian, and an historian of Caroline politics, Kevin Sharpe, whose ‘Afterword’ constitutes a brief guide to the sources underlying the reconstruction of Charles’s image. For his essay on the same subject in *The Historical Journal* [43: 2 (2000), 383–405], Sharpe borrowed the findings of contributors to *The Royal Image*. Sharpe points out that historians have too often ignored some very rich veins of evidence in poetry, drama, accounts of royal processions, the language of contemporary political discourse, records of judicial proceedings, military escutcheons and banners, royal devotional practices, and objects close to the King’s sacred body, including Charles’s household stuff, which was part of ‘the material culture of majesty’ (p. 303). Visual sources constitute the most important type of non-written evidence, and in *The Royal Image* John Peacock usefully surveys a representative sample of coins, medals, prints, sculptures, and paintings. Although Peacock fails to do justice to the imperial iconography so evident in the examples he cites – he does not mention Roy Strong’s indispensable 1972 study of van Dyck’s *Charles I on Horseback* – his discussion of a studio copy of that painting nonetheless shows how such copies disseminated court-generated imagery to the houses of gentry and nobility.

Like paintings, literary works constitute special ‘texts’ that can often be made to reveal heretofore unnoticed political realities. In popular plays written after 1650, for example, the speeches given to the ghost of Charles I served to ‘teach the people politics’, according to a contemporary observer (quoted, p. 299). The most important and least understood text is *Eikon Basilike* (literally ‘the Royal Image’), a work purportedly penned by Charles himself – it was published soon after his execution in January 1649 – in which the king is portrayed as suffering martyr. Milton’s *Eikonoklastes* (1649) was the new regime’s officially-sponsored, blasting reply. If, as Sharon Achinstein says, Milton drew upon stock-in-trade anti-popery for his rebuttal, his mistake was to attack *Eikon Basilike* as if it were a single-author work. In the most provocative, suggestive essay here, Elizabeth Skerpan-Wheeler argues persuasively that *Eikon Basilike* was ‘a “text” in the current, critical sense of the word’, a collective effort which should be

read as the sum of 'its accretions, illustrations and the experiences of its various readers' (p. 136). The *Eikon Basilike* was a new type of political propaganda, inviting readers' active involvement. but when readers became participants they democratized Charles's image, with the paradoxical result that the King's book 'signals the end of the royalism it celebrates' (p. 136).

Readers of *the Royal Image* can participate vicariously in what Jonathan Wainwright convincingly argues was *the foremost* expression of Caroline court culture – music (which Sharpe unaccountably ignored). Assistant choir trainer at York Minster, Wainwright is also director of Concertare, whose CD, *Queen of Heavenly Virtue – Sacred Music for Queen Henrietta-Maria*, projects the ethereal Italianate splendour whose imported aesthetic helps explain why so many came to believe that Charles I had subverted the true image of English kingship.

College of William & Mary

Dale Hoak

Stanley Fish, *How Milton Works*, Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 616, £23.95; **Jameela Lares**, *Milton and the Preaching Arts*, James Clarke & Co., 2001, pp. 368, £40.00.

Stanley Fish has no need to be cautious or modest, and is not. His position is clear and his targets clear and named in the early pages of this book. If you subscribe to the views of Lucy Newlyn, David Mikics, Catherine Belsey or John Rogers, then this is not a book for you.

Fish wants to argue for a single template, or more accurately a series of interlocking templates, behind all of Milton's poetry and behind some aspects of his prose. Fish ranges widely in each of the early chapters, so that the reader can easily feel that s/he is not going to be given a single interpretation of *Comus* or of *Paradise Lost*, but, instead, that individual works are to be returned to again and again.

In fact, after that introductory flurry, the book does operate on a more or less chronological basis. It offers close readings, and often stimulating close readings of the shorter poems and of passages from some of the longer poems, and it hones in on some passages from the longer poems and the prose works for a similarly acute scrutiny. In typical Fish fashion, it is full of questions and will furnish teaching material for a generation of scholars teaching Milton to their sometimes reluctant students: the questions on *Comus*, for example, are provocative and will no doubt wake the sleeping dragon of the undergraduate mind. Is it possible that the Attendant Spirit and *Comus* have missions so similar that they might have been played by the same actor in the first (and the only 'authentic') production? Does the posture of reluctance assumed by the Attendant Spirit represent a posture which will be fundamental to Milton's work throughout his career?

This is an accessible and readable book, but I wonder whether it is really the book which the quotations on the dust jacket suggest it might be? I can, in part, agree with Frank Lentricchia that this is an impressive work of literary interpretation, but my reservation might be that we have moved beyond interpretation as the purpose of criticism. Is it reasonable of Fish to present a reading of *Areopagitica* which is premised on a reaction to a conference held in 1944? Leaving aside the years that

have passed since that date, might there not have been a particular agenda driving such a conference at such a time? The emphasis on interpretation almost seems to exclude the consideration of history: one looks in vain for any consideration of how Milton might have wished to represent himself in such a volume as *Poems 1645*. The index includes no entry for any discussion of this volume as a volume in its own right.

In contrast, Jameela Lares's work is thoroughly historicised. It is the most detailed study of the place of preaching in Milton's life and work. It has an admirably clear introduction in which key terms are defined with proper precision, and then goes on to examine Milton's decision not to enter the ministry, in a very careful scrutiny of his biography, with detailed reference to his early writings. In particular, she examines the oaths which Milton would have taken at Cambridge. The remainder of the book is taken up with Milton's part in the Smectymnuan controversy and with a detailed reading of the troubling last two books of *Paradise Lost* and of *Paradise Regained*. Lares's thesis is that Milton, in foregoing the ministry, did not give up preacherly ways of thinking and expression, and she argues this convincingly, demonstrating that the discourse of preaching is as relevant a context in the study of Milton as is his use of classical models and genres. This is an impressive work of scholarship, with an extensive bibliography. My one cavil is that quotations from primary sources do not always carry the title of the text on the same page: the information is there in the footnotes, but it would often be preferable not to have to go there.

King Alfred's College, Winchester

Geoff Ridden

Bill Overton (ed.), *A Letter to my Love: Love Poems by Women First Published in the Barbados Gazette, 1731–37*, Rosemont Publishing, 2001, pp. 155, £27.

These 41 poems written by one or more English women fall into two sections. The first 26 poems form a sequence and plot the development of a love affair between the author and a gentleman who at the time of publication had been living in Barbados for some years. The other 15 poems, also presumed to be by women, may or may not be by the same woman.

What distinguishes these poems and makes Overton's role in republishing them so important is their quality. They have a freshness and display a lack of inhibitions that is not what one might expect from an eighteenth-century woman poet. 'It destroys the myth that eighteenth-century verse is characteristically formal and lacking in passion'. As the editor claims, these poems constitute 'the best love poems of passion of their period'. But he goes further in claiming them as 'the most vital and interesting sequence of love poems in English between Shakespeare's sonnets and Hardy's *Poems of 1912*'.

The authorship of the poems remains uncertain. Phyllis J. Guskin has claimed all the poems are the work of Martha Fowke. Born in 1689 she was well known in London and by the 1720s was a member of a literary circle that revolved round Aaron Field. According to the editor of the *Gazette*, she 'made a considerable Figure in the *Beau Monde* at home', and had 'long distinguished herself amongst the finest writers in poetry'. In 1736 she died. The identity of the man to whom the

26 love poems were addressed is also uncertain. A number of possible names have been suggested.

The nature of the poetry suggests a degree of assurance and independence. When in poem 13 she fears she is losing her lover she is not prepared to wait for his love to return.

Grow a more obsequious Lover,
Or no longer think of me.

In the World I may discover
Something that may charm like Thee,
Or I'll live without a Lover;
If not thine, I will be free.

She argued that many writers of love poetry including Donne, Cowley, Waller, Lansdown, Congreve, Addison and Prior, lacked tenderness, a quality, as she demonstrates, essential in love poetry. She responds angrily to the accusation of some of her contemporaries:

I'm incorrect, the Learned say
That I write well, but not their Way.

She makes it clear that she is not prepared to give up her freedom to write as she wishes for the 'kind of fame gained by following fixed rules and methods'. She wrote because she enjoyed it and as Overton comments this 'perhaps is her most subversive point'. Her love poetry is written with an 'air of spontaneous, excited speech'. It makes for great intimacy in the way she depicts the relationship between her lover and herself.

Whether the work of Martha Fowke or another it is splendid to have these poems made accessible.

Sibford Ferris, Oxon

Bridget Hill

* Sadly, Bridget Hill – a long-standing supporter of, and contributor to, this journal – died not long after submitting this review. *ED.*

M. O. Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. xiii + 271, £40.

The starting point of M. O. Grenby's interesting first book is that a lot of attention has been devoted to the Jacobin novel by Gary Kelly and others. Less is known about many of the writers who took the opposite side in this literary war of ideas. For a start, argues Grenby, even those such as Marilyn Butler who have recognised the significance of the Anti-Jacobin novel fail to realise just how widespread it was. Grenby suggests that there were probably around fifty explicitly Anti-Jacobin novels: explicit in the sense that they saw themselves as being directly engaged in political issues. Yet he also argues that there were probably about the same number again of novels which can still be called Anti-Jacobin as well, even though they may have often

used the events of the French Revolution (sometimes displaced on to other historical periods) more as a scenic backdrop rather than as the occasion for ideological posturing. By sometimes extending his search beyond the 1790s and well into the early years of the next century Grenby arrives at a figure of around two hundred novels. He admits, with commendable modesty, that there may well be other novels which have not been caught in his research net.

This is not, by its own admission, a book about whether Jane Austen and other well-known writers can be placed in the Anti-Jacobin camp. Although there are occasional and often interesting references to such writers, the main emphasis here is on unearthing either marginalised or else forgotten writers. Some of these writers may in fact be known to a few specialists in the field and yet Grenby's project is to say that they ought to figure more prominently in the general studies of the period.

According to some historical models, perhaps most notably those derived from E. P. Thompson and his followers, it is no cultural accident that the Anti-Jacobin novel reached its high point roughly between 1798 and 1805. This was a period, so this particular story goes, of revolutionary underground movements and imminent threats of possible successful insurrections in both mainland Britain and Ireland. Grenby tells a different story. British Jacobinism was to all intents and purposes a busted flush by the end of the decade. This in turn means that Anti-Jacobin novelists could indulge in a certain amount of triumphalism. They were writing the propaganda of the victors after the war on the home front was, by and large, over.

William Godwin and his new philosophy figure prominently in the Anti-Jacobin demonology. His opponents were not, according to Grenby, engaged in an intense and uncertain struggle with a powerful enemy. They were rather dancing triumphantly on his grave, as well as on those of Mary Wollstonecraft and his (and her) other associates. There was thus no need to engage at all seriously with the new philosophers: caricatured references to a few of their catchphrases and a quick reminder that they had wanted to destroy sacred institutions such as family and marriage was enough to turn the trick. Indeed, any serious engagement ran the risk of falling through the trapdoor into Jacobinism itself because it might require involvement in rational (or philosophical) as opposed to more intuitive arguments.

The British Jacobins may have already been routed and yet alongside the triumphalism there was still felt to be a need to maintain a certain amount of vigilance. Women and servants might still be at risk. Grenby recounts moments in these novels when male servants after listening to their masters spouting radicalism decide that it is high time for them to claim the rights of man. One of them burgles the house, another runs off with his master's daughter. Here the Jacobin or would-be Jacobin is easily represented as being simple: a dupe. Elsewhere the Jacobin emerges as a more sinister figure: a rakish rogue who is merely using the new philosophy as a mask for sexual, financial and other desires. The new philosopher is in reality often an old Gothic villain. But there were also other villains who were perhaps less easy for patriots to spot. These included those who did not espouse Jacobinism in any obvious way at all, but whose new money and selfish pursuit of pleasure threatened to destabilise a traditional society. As Grenby shows, much space is devoted in these novels to asserting the need for those with social position and privilege to be ever mindful of their paternalist and philanthropic responsibilities. Perhaps the nabobs and their kind, rather than a few philosophical cranks, were the real levellers and enemies.

Grenby's final chapter, which should be of interest to those who may not share his particular enthusiasm for these novels, tries to show how the literary marketplace operated in the 1790s. Some writers like Charlotte Smith changed sides as the decade wore on, as did publishers such as George Walker. Influential reviewers such as William Gifford and Thomas Mathias clearly helped to create a market for the Anti-Jacobin novel, not least by dismissing the Jacobins as bad writers. Yet Grenby's model of reception and reading relationships more generally refreshingly resists the notion that readers are told, in some cases coerced, into reading what they read. He reminds us that only one Anti-Jacobin writer, Elizabeth Hamilton, received a government pension and that this was only awarded after her patriotic novels had been published. Publishers, reviewers and sometimes the government itself might attempt to steer a market, and yet they were pretty powerless when it came to creating one. To grossly over-simplify Grenby's argument, readers read what they wanted to read and the Anti-Jacobin novel chimed in with, as well as helped to set, the patriotic mood. Another of Grenby's conclusions, that Anti-Jacobin writings helped to make the novel respectable, needs to be considered by those who may not have a specialist interest in this material itself.

It is not possible in a short review to do justice to some of the more detailed textual readings. Writers considered include Isaac D'Israeli, Sophia King, Amelia Opie, Henry James Pye, Clara Reeve, Mary Robinson, Jane West and Joseph Wildman. Although Grenby's book lives up to the high expectations that we have come to expect from the Cambridge Studies in Romanticism, it could (even for a monograph) have been more reader-friendly at times, given that it is often dealing with marginalised writings. A chronology as well as potted biographies of some of the main participants at the end of the book might have helped. More generally, there could have been rather more scene-setting in the main body of the argument itself. Having read Home Office papers, I am by no means convinced by the revisionist historical accounts followed in this book that the existence of radical Jacobinism after 1798 was largely a product of government paranoia (or of political deviousness). It should be clear, however, that these are not serious reservations and hesitations about a well-researched and informative book.

University of East Anglia

Roger Sales

Abigail Burnham Bloom (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers*, Aldwych Press, 2000, pp. x + 466, £71.50.

Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers is a stimulating bio-bibliographical reference work containing ninety-three short essays on selected women writers, ranging from those who are comparatively well-known to those who have received scant critical attention to date. Each entry is divided into four major sections: biography, major works and themes (including a synopsis of how the author relates to the larger issues of Victorian literature and feminist studies, how the author saw herself and what she may have intended to accomplish with her work), critical reception (both contemporary and later reception of her work) and a two-part bibliography of works by the author (highlighting works currently in print) and studies of the author. There is also a bibliography

with information on recent anthologies containing writings by these women, general works of criticism on the authors and pointers to electronic resources.

The organisation of each entry around the four major sections draws together the range of contributors in a highly coherent manner. The sections on critical reception, in particular, provide valuable starting points for those wishing to discover new writers and works to explore amongst those who are better known. Historians may find somewhat curious the categorisation of some of the women according to their main literary contribution: social investigator Clementina Black as novelist, political activist and member of the London School Board, Augusta Webster, as a poet and Emily Davies and Florence Nightingale as journalists. Nonetheless, Abigail Burnham Bloom's literary categorisation prompts a critical (re-)appraisal of these women's work. The signalling of interlocking friendships is also invaluable for scholars interested in intertextuality and those working on nineteenth-century artistic and intellectual networks.

As the editor acknowledges, in all anthologies issues of inclusion and exclusion can appear arbitrary. They also reflect the gendered, classed and racialised conditions of literary production. The time period runs from Dorothy Wordsworth to Charlotte Mew (without including either). Discussed are travel writers, letter writers, journal writers and journalists as well as writers of novels and poetry - but not short story writers (with the exception of George Egerton). Writers from Scotland and Ireland are profiled alongside those from England. There are writers of lesbian orientation (including 'Michael Field', the pen name under which Katherine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper wrote jointly) and a small number of working-class writers - but not Ada Nield Chew, whose writings led to her dismissal from work. Women writers of colour are conspicuous by their absence - including Indian Pandita Ramabai, who spent some time at Cheltenham and whose work has received recent critical attention.

The great strength of this highly readable book is its ability to engender a sense of excitement both in respect of the writing of the women themselves and the possibilities for further scholarship. As a reference book it will be invaluable for teachers and researchers alike.

King Alfred's College, Winchester

Joyce Goodman

Hao Li, *Memory and History in George Eliot: Transfiguring the Past*, Macmillan, 2000, pp. xiv + 227, £42.50.

The avowal of the historicity of Victorian culture has become a cliché. It was perhaps even so before the final years of the long nineteenth century had passed away. Thus modern critics who set out to work in this area needs to choose their words, and their focus, very carefully. In the case of Hao Li's *Memory and History in George Eliot* the broad (a word I would wish to emphasize) focus is on the interaction of communal and personal dimensions of recollection and memory as frameworks of knowledge and presupposition; it is, in many respects, what Bourdieu has called *doxa*: the often unconscious assumptions that underlie human perception and action. The context of this discussion is largely philosophical/historiographical, realised through a deluge of contextual allusions ranging across an impressive collection of thinkers from the nineteenth century back to Aristotle.

However, the effect of such a wide frame of reference is to bombard the reader with the author's erudition, and to situate Eliot's novels within an increasingly expansive discursive context. Unfortunately, as far as this reviewer is concerned, the ultimate consequence of such an unrestrained display of knowledge is to loosen the clarity of the thesis. In one paragraph alone (lasting several pages, admittedly), the ideas of over a dozen philosophers are explored, and as a result the paragraph nearly explodes with its own unresolved tensions. Not only does the vastness of the range of allusion interrupt the articulation of an identifiable context for the novels, but the breathlessness of the chapters at times works against a sharp realisation of ideas and concepts, perhaps reflecting a lack of authorial sure-footedness.

That said, there is much to be highly regarded here. The overarching assertion of an Eliot hesitantly negotiating the philosophical divide between positivism and a more spiritual romantic-historicist vision is intelligent and at times well-drawn. Similarly (and this is where Hao Li works best), the allusions to particular Victorian historical thinkers, for instance Carlyle, Mill, Spencer, and Comte begin to establish a context that is not only relevant and manageable, but one that also provides a sustainable foundation for the detailed and rigorous excavation of Eliot's fiction. As a result the chapter on *Romola* is quite excellent: dealing in depth and with sophistication with the infinite complexities of the-novel-that-would-be-historical. By situating it within evolving debates about the relationship of past to present ('does the former exist in its own right or merely as the precursor of the latter?'), for instance) Hao Li sheds fresh critical light on a text that is, along with *Daniel Deronda*, amongst the most contentious in the Eliot canon. Indeed, the allusively dense chapter on *Daniel Deronda* itself is also accomplished, offering a vibrant examination of 'national consciousness' in relation to evolving European notions of nationhood and the nation-state. The discussion of the novel is incisive and original.

Overall this is a valuable addition to Eliot studies, and criticism on Victorian historicity more generally, notwithstanding its encyclopaedic pretensions.

King Alfred's College, Winchester

Neil McCaw

Simon Trezise, *The West-Country as a Literary Invention: Putting Fiction in its Place*, University of Exeter Press, 2000, pp. xvi + 256, £42.00, £13.99 pb.

The title and sub-title of this examination of some half-dozen authors, whose writings on an area labelled variously 'the West Country' or 'South-west of England', reasonably describe its thrust and content. In a thoughtful Introduction Simon Trezise poses three questions: where, when, and why is (and was) the West Country? To the first, the answer is 'mostly in Devon and Cornwall'; to the second, 'from the early Victorians into the twentieth century'. To the third, because there is a book in it. Trezise has some difficulty in establishing whether 'it' is on the map or in the mind or in both. It is hardly a genuine entity. The Tamar between Devon and Cornwall is one of the great frontiers of the world. The Cornish, (lately convincingly described by Mark Stoye as *West Britons*, (Exeter University Press, 2002), and clearly not English), may have lost their language, but there is a struggle going on to get it back. They are heavily dependent upon tourists (grockles) but that they do not like, seeing themselves as

essentially 'different', with their own history and dignity. One of Trezise's writers, R. S. Hawker, vicar of Morwenstow, was so sure of that – or perhaps so unsure – that he took not only to literary fiction but to historical inventions, instant traditions, forgery and even the fabrication of artefacts in the service of a decidedly political and religious agenda. Read him on Antony Payne, the civil-war Cornish giant.

Devon, poised between two seas and looking north, east, south and west, is topographically (and, it follows, more than somewhat culturally) diverse, a situation recognised, if imperfectly, in some recent local government reforms. R. D. Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*, which Trezise observes had a shared authorship with 'Wise Women, schoolgirls, reverend gentlemen, fisher folk, doctors, travel writers and literary hacks', works splendidly for Exmoor, but would be totally awry for Dartmoor, whose people though they did not appeal to Robert Herrick, exiled there on the fringe of 'a howling wilderness', captured with their peculiar songs and stories the sympathetic ear of Sabine Baring-Gould, 'the amanuensis of the West Country' or at any rate of a fair part of it.

To fill out his map Trezise has to bring in Dorset and parts of Somerset, much as these days Devon and Cornwall radio and TV stations sometimes feel the need to bolster their news bulletins with reports of goings-on in Weymouth and Bridgwater. The truth is that Thomas Hardy and his construction, Wessex, given of late a dubious royal accolade, dilute the concept of an actual West Country. If there is no doubt that Virginia Woolf in *To the Lighthouse* invoked childhood and holiday memories of the peninsula, the novel itself does not generate 'a local habitation and a name'. Rather it transcends, and was clearly intended to transcend, mere places, going instead into 'a world of thoughts', of 'sense and feelings', there free to roam. But Charles Kingsley may have had some really particular places in mind in his *Westward Ho!*. Anyway, posterity has given him a settlement, surviving still, called, of course, Westward Ho!

Trezise offers us a great deal to ponder on in the mindset of the rather minor authors who form the core of his book. Perhaps he should have called on a few more – 'Q', say, or Henry Williamson and Eden Phillpotts. He himself turns out to be an enterprising 'travel-writer', responsive to nuances in landscape and seascape. Beyond that, he supplies a helpful appendix 'For Further Reading: Other Journeys', with apt comments and bibliographical references to reinforce the 'complex debate' that it seems is going on about the relationship between 'places outside and inside the mind'.

University of Exeter

Ivan Roots

Mary Lago, *'India's Prisoner': A Biography of Edward John Thompson, 1886–1946*, University of Missouri Press, 2001, pp.xi + 388, £33.95.

This excellent biography shows E. J. Thompson as a more notable person than most readers who have heard of him – or of his son the late E. P. Thompson – are likely to have realised. He was born into the warm but narrow nest of Wesleyan Methodism, and into a family lacking means to give him an education adequate for his talents. His widowed mother was unshakably a Methodist, which Edward, as he gradually and painfully realised, was not; he pined for the life of a poet, a man of letters. For want

of a more congenial way to some kind of higher education, he submitted to a training in divinity, and in 1910 to a post as missionary teacher at Bankura, the headquarters of a dull, unfertile district of Bengal.

Close friendships, for which he evidently had a genius, helped to fill the blank. One was a much older man, P. C. Lyon, the provincial Education minister, who found him while on a tour of inspection, and shared his unorthodox politics. Tagore was at the height of his fame when Thompson met him and was soon translating his poems, but the great man proved fickle. War broke out, and in 1916 carried him to Bombay, as an army chaplain. With the rank and file he got on very well, on a man to man footing; less so with some stuck-up Anglican clergy and officers. His feelings drew him close to the fighting front, Gallipoli and then Mesopotamia. Military planning was woefully bungled and costly. He helped to set up a field station, with dead men and dying all round; 'in the insanity and hellishness of it all burnt deep', he wrote.

He emerged from the maelstrom with a Military Cross; a different reward was the young American lady he fell in with and in 1918 married. By this time he was realising that, for him at least, mission work had become meaningless. He moved to Oxford, with a slender income as lecturer in Bengali, and, by the end of 1925, a house on Boar's Hill, with a galaxy of writers for neighbours, and before long, friends. From this base, or lofty height, he made tours of India, trying to catch the meaning of events like the Amritsar massacre, the Simon Commission, the Round Table Conferences: also to drop ideas into any receptive ears he met with. He met both Gandhi and Jinnah, and got to know Nehru. But he left India at last deeply disappointed. This was in some degree his own fault. He clung too tenaciously, as Mary Lago says, to the ideal of Dominion Status, with India one of a family of nations strung across the globe. Britain's fossilized statesmanship had left it far too late for anything like this; India had to go its own way.

Thompson was also writing a good deal. With a new friend, G. T. Garratt, he wrote a helpful history of modern India. An unexpected work of his own was a biography of that early pillar of the Raj, Sir Charles Metcalfe. With his literary pen he wrote poetry that found readers – two Indian novels, neither entirely convincing – and a valuable work on his old friend Robert Bridges, now Laureate. His last years were of cancer and suffering; he lived long enough to lose a son in World War II, as he had lost a brother in World War I.

University of Edinburgh

V. G. Kiernan

Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780–1865*, Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. 341, £49.95, £17.99 pb.

The basic premise of this original, imaginative, and challenging book is a deceptively straightforward one: 'The imagery of slavery has not been taken as seriously as it should have been'. As the author points out, despite the huge and varied outpouring of scholarly and popular works on slavery over the last thirty years or so, there has been very little serious analysis of the visual record with many books content to employ visual imagery as decorative illustration. Whilst sensibly avoiding any claims

to a comprehensive overview, Wood nonetheless offers an invaluable and fascinating examination of a vast array of visual materials ranging from high art to popular woodcuts, from ship plans to album covers. The materials included have been selected according to the criteria of 'cultural influence, popularity, and longevity' and the central aim is to understand what Western culture has chosen to project as the visual memory of slavery as well as to ask what we now see and understand. Wood does not seek to explore certain areas such as slave rebellion, the day-to-life of slaves, or the nature of the slave trade in Africa, and instead concentrates on four 'key sites': the middle passage; runaway slaves; popular imagery associated with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; and slave torture.

Throughout the four sections Wood attempts to identify the varying readings which can be drawn from the sources used and to place them in a wider cultural and political context. Chapter Four, for example, provides an insightful view into the transformation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into a tradition of Christian martyrology.

At various points in the first two chapters, such as in the discussion of the famous plan of the slave ship *Brookes* as a piece of abolitionist propaganda, or in the analysis of the use of widely available woodcuts bearing no direct relation to events in the text of the *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb*, a wealth of genuinely illuminating detail is employed to produce searching and sophisticated arguments, although in the latter case the author's admission that his reading may move too far beyond the common sense conclusion of cost as the primary determinant of the use of such illustrations is a persuasive one.

In a conclusion critical of the attempts of contemporary museum culture to 'come to terms' with slavery through 'consumer involvement' and 'client participation', Wood suggests that visual art has a unique role to play in confronting us with the challenge of understanding slavery by allowing us to *see* it in a truer light than might be the case through supposedly more factual representations.

This is a stimulating, sometimes difficult but ultimately rewarding book which, if it does not successfully prove all of its contentions, at least ensures that the reader's perception of slavery cannot remain entirely unaffected.

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Neil Curtin

Bill Jones and Chris Williams, *B. L. Coombes*, University of Wales Press, 1999, Writers of Wales, pp. 114, £5.99; **Bill Jones and Chris Williams** (eds), *With Dust Still in His Throat: A B. L. Coombes Anthology*, University of Wales Press, 1999, pp. 208, £9.99; **Michael Murphy** (ed.), *The Collected George Garrett*, Trent Editions, 1999, pp. xxix + 270, £7.99 pb.

Within the canon of working-class writing George Garrett and B. L. Coombes have been unjustly neglected. Garrett, a Liverpool seaman, has been overshadowed by the prolific James Hanley, while Coombes, an honorary Welsh miner, has suffered from comparison with the more overtly political Lewis Jones and Harold Heslop. Both authors typically began their literary careers by publishing short stories in left-leaning journals in the 1930s, but neither managed a full-length novel, which may also account for their critical demise. Fortunately, Garrett and Coombes left

a rich deposit of papers, unpublished stories and journalism which have led to the books under review, and may even furnish further volumes: Jones and Williams reveal tantalisingly that the B. L. Coombes archive at University of Wales Swansea contains a novel-length manuscript. Perhaps this novel will only be published if *With Dust Still in His Throat* sells reasonably well, in which case I would urge readers of *Literature and History* to show some solidarity and buy or order a copy with all haste.

Valentine Cunningham has noted the tendency for working-class writers in the 1930s to suffer from 'short-windedness', but there is a strong materialist case to be made for the fact that the short story was the most readily accessible genre for the budding proletarian author. As Jones and Williams show in their study of Coombes, the working-class writer lacked education, free time, cultural resources and spare energy to aspire to much more than short bursts of creativity. Fortunately, the 1930s was a period of active patronage by the middle-class 'popular front' of left-wing editors and publishers who promoted and encouraged working-class talent. Both Garrett and Coombes were mentored by John Lehmann, whose memoir *The Whispering Gallery* (1955) is a valuable insight into the political and aesthetic orthodoxies of that unique decade. Working-class writers were valued for their irresistible realism, their ability to 'drive facts into readers' minds', as a *Left Review* short story competition put it. The idea was that revelations about working-class life, particularly its woes and deprivations, would act as a political argument in itself. The proletarian short story was essentially a modified form of documentary journalism which inverted the aesthetic priorities of bourgeois realism: put schematically, work replaces leisure as the primary social canvas, and economic rather than psychological factors drive the plot. Hence one obvious value of Garrett's and Coombes's stories is the meticulous representation of the gruelling, often brutalising masculine culture of industrial labour and rough camaraderie. It does not really matter that neither author is politically didactic, as an abrasive class-consciousness emerges from the verisimilitude and the rigorous exclusion of higher social classes; as Engels put it, the best kind of realism is naturalism, where the author's opinions emerge from 'typical characters in typical circumstances'. The dehumanization of unemployment is also a strong and predictable theme for both writers: Garrett's story 'The Parish' graphically illustrates the infantilizing power of the bureaucracy of 'relief'. On the other hand, Garrett's fiction has been praised for its ability to go beyond naturalism into the Modernist realms of symbolism, irrationality and interiority. His stories have a pervasive sense of menace and existential isolation which Ken Worpole in a seminal essay labelled 'expressionism' (see Worpole's excellent *Dockers and Detectives* (1983), not mentioned by Murphy). To cite just a few examples of this effect from the *Collected George Garrett*, in 'Letter Unsigned' a trapped, possibly drowning seaman insists on writing down his predicament as the water rises; hence the act of writing is both futile and transcendent. In 'Firstborn', the hero is a sanitation worker who discovers a dead baby in a sewer. In his desperation to remove this blockage, he rips off the baby's arm. This horrific incident is a Freudian response to his frustrations at his wife's regulation of their sex life. Most of Garrett's heroes are conspicuously insecure and inadequate, emblems of alienation and post-Lawrentian Angst rather than revolution. Yet this mock-epic scepticism is a powerful critique of the class system and its invidious, destructive effects on the inner workings of the psyche (and the fact that working-class characters are shown to have psyches is itself subversive).

The books under review relaunch Coombes and Garrett for the post-industrial world: as Coombes's editors note, the working-class industries and communities which sustained his writing are now relegated to objects of historical inquiry (though it is worth reminding ourselves that this could not have been said before the great miners' strike of 1984–5). Although both authors continued to write beyond the Second World War, the bulk of their fiction was written in the 1930s, and most readers and critics will interpret their work and its significance in that context. Hence it is a pity that Jones and Williams opted for unpublished material only, as Coombes's interesting response to Virginia Woolf's famous essay 'The Leaning Tower' (1940), in which he attacks her elitist anti-elitism, is not included. On the other hand, Garrett's debunking of Conrad's *Nigger of the Narcissus* and Shakespeare's *Tempest* (included in Murphy's volume) are gems of socialist criticism.

Those of us who try to teach working-class writing as a discreet tradition will particularly welcome the appearance of new primary texts in affordable student editions. In recent years James Hanley's fiction has been reissued by Harvill, but the majority of working-class novelists of the 1930s remain out of print. Perhaps Nottingham Trent University's excellent Trent Editions series might consider reopening some of the other rich seams of proletarian fiction from this period. The following interwar authors are all worthy of republication: Joe Corrie, Lewis Jones, Harold Heslop, Walter Brierley, Frederic Boden, Jim Phelan, Simon Blumenfeld, Willy Goldman, Leslie Halward, Ralph Bates, Jack Hilton, James Barke, Frank Tilsley and James Walsh. But the first in line for reissue must be Ellen Wilkinson's *Clash* (1929), a rare feminist novel about the General Strike which was last published by Virago in the 1980s. Its reappearance is vital if the working-class literary tradition is not to ossify into an object of 'historical inquiry'.

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Ian Haywood

Jude Davies, *Diana: A Cultural History: Gender, Race, Nation and the People's Princess*, Palgrave, 2001, pp. 250, £47.50, £16.99 pb.

This is not another account of the short, unhappy life of a troubled princess but rather a broadly chronological and historically-based analysis of her representations from the moment the first images of Diana appeared in 1980 until the events leading up to her death and the mourning which followed. Jude Davis is concerned less with the historical figure of Diana than with her cultural status and iconic significance and shows how the period 1991–1997 was central in the production and dissemination of competing narratives, the most influential of which was Andrew Morton's *Diana: Her True Story* (1992).

Discussion of Diana after the Morton biography reflected a range of positions from the hostile to the supportive in relation to both the princess and the monarchy. Morton's projection of Diana as an icon of empowered femininity in opposition to a masculinised monarchy and ossified British establishment was reinforced by Diana's interview on Panorama with Martin Bashir in 1995. Davis argues that this was crucial in formalising her iconic status which was only fully activated when she died.

This study contends that the cultural significance of Diana cannot be reduced to facts of an individual life nor complicated relations of consumption and production condensed into a narrative quest for fulfilment in the princess's personal or public life (her search for love and her commitment to the victims of AIDS and land mines). Davis is in dialogue with critics whom he believes have oversimplified the relationship between Diana, the monarchy and the mass media so that the monarchy becomes merely a patriarchal monolith and the media is reduced to a conduit by which she communicated with the public. The textual and visual mediations on which *Diana: A Cultural History* concentrates are essential to our understanding of how Diana came to be perceived as the 'people's princess' and why millions who had never met her were able to sustain their illusions of intimacy and to participate in the deeply-felt rituals of mourning. Davis provides helpful discussion of gender politics and the ways in which Diana's femininity, from the deferential femininity of the early 1980s to the later assertiveness, has been problematic for feminist critics.

Diana: a Cultural History is concerned with the re-visioning of British national identity with reference to the gender, class and racial identifications which have come to be associated with Diana. Davis discusses how the romance between Diana and the Egyptian Dodi Fayed prompted the public to contemplate the possibility of a second marriage between the mother of the future King and her non-white, non-British partner thus contesting conservative attitudes to racial and national 'others'. Moreover, the ethnic diversity of the mourners shown in the BBC coverage of Diana's funeral testified to the existence of a new multi-ethnic Britain and pointed tellingly to some deep transformation which had taken place in British society.

The epilogue of this useful and interesting book (researched long before the death of the princess) points to the complexities and difficulties inherent in reading Diana as a cultural icon suggesting that this simultaneously points both forward and back. While the global reproduction of Diana's image may well have loosened the ties between Diana and British national identity, her image can also be taken as a modern reworking of the white woman in a long imperial tradition, i.e., as a symbol of what Davis terms a 'new whiteness'. This sustains a global and international role but one 'informed by an ethic of care rather than imperialist or national self-interest'.

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Maroula Joannou

Tony Tanner, *The American Mystery*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. xxiv + 242, £35, £13.95 pb.

The American Mystery brings together a selection of critical pieces on American literature from Emerson to Pynchon written by the late Tony Tanner, published previously in various places either as journal articles or as introductions to literary editions of classic American novels. There is, therefore, no single thesis as there is in Tanner's previous essays into American Literature in *City of Words* and *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men*. *The American Mystery* does, however, share the same overarching interest in America not as a 'real' place, but as a system of signs, texts, stories, metaphors, but, above all, as a product of language. Many of the articles here display this tendency as Tanner seeks out key words or phrases and then draws out the ways in which they

become metaphors for the 'reality' from which they are not simply cut adrift but which they have either displaced or constructed in the first place. In the case of *Moby Dick*, for example, Tanner focuses on the occurrence of words such as 'loom', 'wed', and 'weld' in the novel in order to foreground the way in which the novel writes a textual reality (a 'loom of Creation') that does not acknowledge any pre-existent external reality. Similarly, the analysis of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* draws attention to the textual misapplication of the word 'sterling' as a guarantee of 'reality' when its use actually draws attention to textuality, fraud, and fakery.

In his focus on language and metaphor Tanner brings to his account of American literature and culture an approach that is pervaded by deconstructionist or postmodernist methodologies, but one that is not dominated by them, not least in the fact that Tanner's criticism avoids heavily rhetorical language and is usually written in a clear and understandable style. Tanner both here and in his other works on American literature is a postmodernist more in the manner of Jorge Luis Borges (that is, a late modernist or proto-postmodernist) than Jean Baudrillard, for although he notes that the fictions that culture and society create displace reality, there is always the sense that reality exists but in an irrecoverable form. In this he is closer to the spirit of modernism not only of Borges but of Henry James (whom he discusses in several chapters) and one of the areas that Tanner notes as dominant in American culture is the real or fictional dreamers and visionaries of American literature who engage in one of several tasks: seeking to create America *ab ovo* (Emerson); attempting to express the 'reality' of America but finding that they can only do so in textual form (the characters of Melville's novels); or seeking an alternative to this 'reality', but, in so doing, creating the fictions which endow America with its reality and ideology (James, postmodern writers, and Fitzgerald's *Gatsby*).

Tanner can thus be said to occupy a tradition that extends further back than the recent phenomena of post-structuralism and postmodernism, occupying a philosophical domain initiated by Plato and identifying similar concerns with the relationships between 'art' and 'life' and 'reality' and 'fiction'. Indeed, Tanner's approach is to see America as a part of a wider tradition as a whole; his analysis of Hawthorne suggesting that America's concern with faking and counterfeiting may be a product of European culture rather than a particularly American phenomenon. Similarly, he also places specific novels or writers within larger traditions, tracing continuities across the history of American culture, even if the history he uncovers is one of flow (Emerson and the 1960s), fragmentation (Melville and the postmodernists) or, above all, fabrication and fictionality rather than a linear history of America as a physical reality.

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Fran Mason