

Book Reviews

Peter Brooks. *Realist Vision*. New Haven:
Yale UP, 2005. 255 pp. \$27.00.

A new book by Peter Brooks can expect to find a wide audience. Over the course of his career as Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Yale, and now as Professor and Director of the Program in Law and Humanities at the University of Virginia, Brooks has written books that typically explore a broad range of works from the French, English, and American traditions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In a trajectory that runs from early classics like *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976) and *Reading for the Plot* (1984) to more recent works like *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling* (1994) and *Troubling Confessions: Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature* (2000), Brooks has continually extended his range, incorporating consideration of ancillary fields, such as visual art, psychoanalysis, and law, into his arguments. His work is perhaps better described as comparative than as interdisciplinary, however, in that he explores these disparate materials through a sensibility that remains primarily, and elegantly, literary. This is certainly true of his most recent book, *Realist Vision*.

Realist Vision examines selected English and French novels from the nineteenth-century realist tradition, as well as the works of several realist painters, including a few contemporary artists. This coupling of the two art forms illustrates Brooks's opening assertion that realist literature "makes sight paramount—makes it the dominant sense in our understanding of and relation to the world" (3). Brooks argues throughout that realism is an inherently visual genre, and his comparison of nineteenth-century novelists to artists like Courbet, Manet, and Caillebotte suggests an affinity in their shared emphasis on "the observation and representation of persons and things" (71). Brooks describes the realist project as that of "modeling for play purposes," creating a "parallel reality" (2) that, he suggests, "uses carefully wrought and detailed toys" (3) to create hypothetical worlds and see how they work.

This sense of play is examined in a chapter, "Balzac Invents the Nineteenth Century," which credits Balzac with giving a tangible form to the spirit of the period through his depiction of Paris and its people. Brooks focuses on *Illusions Perdue* (*Lost Illusions*) as a central text for understanding the emergent capitalist economy of the period and its effect on representation, self-representation, and human character. In that novel, he argues, money becomes a linguistic sign without referent that creates illusions and obscures reality.

Dickens is seen as employing a kind of "nonrepresentation" (40) in *Hard Times* that plays with the novel's most serious issues by "turning all issues, facts, conditions, into questions of style" (44). Whether it is a contrast between the eloquence of Stephen Blackpool and the bluster of Bounderby or between the world of the circus performers and the world of Gradgrind, contrasts are turned into metaphors and emblems that allow Dickens to stage conflicts without resolving them. In that sense, the novel's "incoherences and failures of representation" make it stand apart in Dickens's work as "a project not wholly mastered" (53). On the other hand, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* is seen as a quintessentially realist narrative in its emphasis on tangible details, its "foregrounding of the thinginess of the world" (58). Brooks describes Flaubert's novel as being like a Breughel painting in that "nothing is missing," everything is complete within the world of the novel itself (70).

The sort of close reading that Brooks applies to these novels is exercised just as convincingly on several of Courbet's paintings, specifically *Burial at Ornans* (1849), *The Stonebreakers* (1849), *The Bathers* (1853), and *The Trout* (1872). Brooks compares *Burial* to *Madame Bovary* in its "realist vision," suggesting that Courbet's "challenging and somewhat indecipher-

able composition and painterly style” are similar to Flaubert’s use of style indirect libre in their capacity to “make us pay attention without providing a firm orientation to our attitudes and evaluations” (77). He ends his chapter on Courbet with a brief discussion of photography and the way in which its unique ability to create a record created a sense of competition with realist painting.

Brooks’s discussion of George Eliot focuses, in a choice that he admits may seem “perverse” (98), on the novel *Daniel Deronda*. Though less often lauded for its realism than earlier novels like *Adam Bede* or *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda*’s emphasis on looking and spectatorship allows it to fit neatly into Brooks’s thesis. Brooks’s examination of the novel does cover some familiar subjects thoroughly discussed by other critics: jewels, hysteria, music, theatricality. But he offers a new perspective on Eliot’s realism by suggesting that the novel’s tension between moral choices and socioeconomic constraint is one of the pressures that leads the novel to spin out of control. In *Daniel Deronda*, Brooks claims, “the Victorian novel both achieves and explodes itself.” (111)

Turning to Zola, Brooks notes that the current revival of interest in Zola’s work may be due to postmodern fascination with nineteenth-century Paris and “the phenomenology of the urban landscape” (113). *Nana* (1880) is Brooks’s primary example in an analysis of Zola’s style that suggests he has a tendency to allow his descriptive prose to separate into two distinct layers: “detailed sociological presentation on one hand and mythic and allegorical evocation on the other” (120). Over the course of the novel, *Nana* herself is transformed from a realistic depiction of a specific social type to a mythic and symbolic figure who threatens the novel’s claim to realism.

Like other critics, Brooks associates realism with urban life and emerging modernity, and in a chapter titled “Unreal City: Paris and London in Balzac, Zola, and Gissing,” he looks at themes and images that characterize fin-de-siècle Paris and London as monsters, as organisms, and, most importantly, as theatres for “commercial transaction,” the defining activity of late nineteenth-century urban life (140). To the realists, the city becomes an “object, a space, a map” to be explored (147). It offers a more intense form of experience, a place to engage in the realist quest to “know and detail the environment in which ordinary experience unfolds” but also to recognize that “vision alone is inadequate, that sight triggers the visionary” (147).

Paris, as the “figurable city par excellence” (149), was a subject for many “painters of modern life,” and Brooks uses Manet and Caillebotte as

examples of artists whose attachment to the urban leads them to depict everyday Parisian activities as theatrical spectacles replete with meaning. Brooks's acknowledged indebtedness to art historian Michael Fried's *Absorption and Theatricality* is evident in his reading of paintings by both artists as being preoccupied with the relationship between the picture space and the audience's space. In the end, he sees these painting as being about "the illusionism of reality (and the realism of illusions), about how the flat surface of the painting can only represent other surfaces" (179).

Not surprisingly, given Brooks's earlier work on Henry James, the chapter on James is one of the book's best. Brooks focuses primarily on a short story that many critics have recently found of interest, "In the Cage" (1898), as well as on the late novella, *The Jolly Corner* (1908). In his exploration of the hermeneutics of realism, the relationship between "knowing" things and things known, Brooks finds in James a strong sense of "the responsibility of the novelist to the real" (197). The many Jamesian characters who engage in a "quest for enlarged knowledge" are, in his view, engaged in a quest to discover the real and to distinguish it from illusion.

Realist Vision concludes by extending itself into the twentieth century. A chapter on "Modernism and Realism: Joyce, Proust, and Woolf" traces a lineage from realism through modernism that attempts to explain how the realism of things became the realism of experience. Brooks sees Woolf as contrasting a realist vision that is "rigid and exteriorizing" with the subtleties of inner consciousness (210). In a final chapter, "The Future of Reality," Brooks returns to his metaphor of realism as a form of play to talk about twentieth-century fiction, in particular the work of Jorge Luis Borges. In Borges, Brooks claims, we see an affirmation of the claims of nineteenth-century realism, a recognition that "fictions that separate themselves wholly from the real, that close themselves hermetically in a realm of fantasy, risk becoming the most totalitarian of fictions" (215). Like the nineteenth-century novelists, Borges strives to maintain "an accurate relation to the real," and this is also a preoccupation of several contemporary artists, such as Lucian Freud, discussed in Brooks's conclusion.

Realist Vision is an expansive and stimulating book that illuminates our understanding of the relationships among some major authors and artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Brooks enjoys the prerogative of the distinguished critic to focus on his own analysis rather than spending undue time citing other critics; while there may be moments when one feels such contextualization would be helpful, the essays were originally written as lectures delivered at Oxford and Yale, and the absence of other voices makes the author's voice all the more personal and compelling.

Brooks describes the people and things represented in novels as “tokens in a game played in earnest with the world” (229). The reading of fiction is a game he himself plays very well.

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Carol Watts. *The Cultural Work of Empire: The Seven Years' War and the Imagining of the Shandean State*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. 335 pp. \$65.00.

The Cultural Work of Empire: The Seven Years' War and the Imagining of the Shandean State is a complex and challenging book, densely written and hard to summarize, claiming to map hitherto unrecognized links between “the cultural work of empire” and the writing of Laurence Sterne. What, you might ask, is the cultural work of empire? Watts says, “[I]t’s the general process of subject formation” and “a broader penetration of an instrumental rationality connecting governance and the flows of public culture” (13). If that sounds abstract, it is. Cultural work of empire is the idea of the imagined state conceived, performatively, as the political form of social life, at home as well as abroad: “It is my view [writes Watts] that the long process of abstraction of the modern state takes an intense cultural turn at the mid-point of the eighteenth century” (11). In particular, the Seven Years’ War (1756–63) brought about significant changes in the idea of the state and the subjectivity of the individual and consequently animated the literature of the day. The account here of the cultural work of empire uses a wide array of eighteenth-century writers, thinkers, and artists (the list is a long one), but Watts maintains, nevertheless, that “This is a book about the work of Laurence Sterne” (17) because Sterne’s proves to be a significant repository of political ideas, so much so that the publicly imagined idea of the state at the middle of the eighteenth century can even be said to be “Shandean.” Watts obviously enjoys suturing (one of her favourite words) such abstract ideas to literary texts, and following her is not always easy as we negotiate the book’s sixty-eight sections, 799 footnotes, and thirty-three pages of bibliography, and an argument that, to use Carol Watts’s own cinematic metaphor, one minute treats us to a close-up of a text and the next minute offers us a “crane shot” swooping down from above (19). It’s during the crane shots that a reader might well lose focus because Carol Watts has a love of difficult words. The question is if the struggle to understand her is worth the effort. I would say, on balance, it is.

Carol Watts wants to keep the horizon of *Tristram Shandy's* modernity in view at all times by continually juxtaposing eighteenth-century sources and modern-day theoretical ones. Intellectually we are kept on our toes as Watts choreographs the many connections between the cultural work of empire and her chosen texts, chief among which is *Tristram Shandy*. In the first chapter, for example, we consider *Candide* and *Rasselas* (both appearing in the same year as the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*). *Candide* is shown to be an “uncompromisingly political” book while the attempt to read *Rasselas* as an allegory of imperial Britain revealing “dimensions of the cultural work of empire internal to Britain at this time” is less convincing. As Watts explains repeatedly, the cultural work of empire is as much about internal colonization as planting the flag and administering countries far from home, so Watts segues easily into the locally hewn *Tristram Shandy*.

It might surprise readers of Uncle Toby, though, to learn that “he is an agent for imperial violence, economic gain” (80), and it might provoke skepticism to learn that he is “an imaginary, and yet literal, configuration of the nature and cost of social labour in the crucible of empire” (98). But however extreme Watts’s conclusions (Marx is evoked in the final line of the chapter), her analysis of the figure of the military veteran as a sacrificial victim of the pursuit of empire defines Toby as part “critique,” yet part upholder, of the sublimity of war re-enacted with energy on his bowling green:

His effeminacy resembles on the one hand a kind of impotence, a weakness and naivety ... the consequence and symptom of the economic interests he is made to serve. Yet that effeminacy is then recast, on the other hand, as a moral strength ... a source of social cohesion and fellow-feeling in a world where a notion of community is under threat due to the invasion of those very interests. (96)

He is thus a Whig apologist for the larger abstract economic forces unleashed by the Seven Years’ War, and he becomes a cultural “totem.” Sterne’s “narrative forces the reader to confront the historical contradictions of the mid-century, even as Toby offers his affective apologia” (98). If we find talk of Toby as “an imaginary, and yet literal, configuration of the nature and cost of social labour in the crucible of empire” (98) strained, there is nevertheless much here that is new and helpful in understanding Sterne’s handling of the military veteran.

A simple summary of the argument of each chapter is not possible (beware of the one attempted summary on the dust jacket of the book). Suffice it to say that Watts soon has her finger on the pulse of Walter's misogyny, linked as it is to the idea of the state espoused by Robert Filmer. The sexual politics of bastardy that ripples through the Shandy family has important consequences for the traditional, paternal sense of order that Walter embodies. He is a Filmerian patriarchalist espousing Tory principles of the nature of government (viewed by Locke as a form of castration). Slop, Toby, and Walter combine to castrate Tristram and prove the failure of mid-century Filmerism. After the argument moves into the financial underpinning of the political world and the connotations of sexual deviancy associated with it, the third chapter ends triumphantly with an impressive reading of the political allegory of "Slawkenbergius's Tale" justifying Watts's extended discussion of the priapic radicalism of John Wilkes earlier in the chapter.

In chapter 4, her reading of Sterne's famous passage on the "poor Negro girl" (*Tristram Shandy*, 9.6 747–48) is situated at the end of a prolonged (and abstract) discussion of the changing ideas of friendship and "women's time" linked to the re-imagining of the state. Watts sees sentimentalism as a means of forestalling any radical social implications of sentimental fellow feeling for suffering human beings (especially slaves). Her way into this part of the argument is through a discussion of the relationship of language and the imperial project. What happens, she asks, when a slave, like Phyllis Wheatley, masters the discourse of civic virtue? Does this mean that she gains admittance to the culture that was inculcated in the grammar books and taught to young gentlemen and young ladies? The discussion surges past Sterne, who is adjudged to point the way forward through his friendship with Ignatius Sancho, to the beginnings of radical thinking in the poetry of Phyllis Wheatley (notwithstanding some evidence to the contrary). Sterne's "politics of pity," argues Watts, is a precursor of the radical and revolutionary thinking that was to come, but he was not, himself, a radical thinker.

The chapter on "Poor Maria" is one of the most ambitious. Even Watts wonders aloud if the weight she lays on Maria is too much for her to bear: "[T]he magdalen became so ideologically potent in such a nationalistic climate, a moral and sexual figure through which it was possible to fantasise the rescue and protection of the domestic realm, the support and simultaneous refusal of the consequences of empire" (208). Watts explains that Sterne altered his second account of Maria (in *A Sentimental Journey*) in a way that not only captured the imagination of his readers but pointed

to eventual radical changes in the way women were perceived. Maria is therefore a site of struggle, a vision of imaginative autonomy and yet sentimental dependence. Watts leaves Sterne standing in all his “sensual cynicism” and lasciviousness as her argument once again surges past him to chart the many Maria imitators and to glimpse a new order for women in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft.

The final chapter explicates Sterne’s “helium filled,” astonishing, and open display of emotion in the *Journal to Eliza* by an extended discussion of the British imperial experience of India and the meaning of Sterne’s characterization of himself as a Brahmin figure, a recognized touchstone of humanity in the 1760s. According to her earlier summary of it, the “very scene of empire” is internalized in Sterne’s “fantasy of impossible freedom and love” (18). The contextualizing of Sterne, Eliza, and India is much more interesting than the actual key that Watts uses to unlock the anxiety-filled *Journal to Eliza*. Her use of Roland Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse* pushes the argument once again toward the abstract. Sterne’s open vow of love scandalized his contemporaries, and he doesn’t emerge unscathed from the display. Watts favours Eliza even though her glimpses of freedom for herself as a woman are eclipsed by her entrapment, first by Mr Draper, then by Sterne, whose wife and daughter blackmailed her after his death, possessing as they did his letters to her. For Watts, Eliza becomes one with the imperial project afoot in India, and Sterne’s memoir in her name highlights a peculiar lack of reciprocity at the core of his project (she implies it was market driven).

Up close with a text, Carol Watts can, indeed, wrestle new implications from Sterne. What is questionable is why she has chosen to pitch the linguistic register of the book so high. She is attached to certain words: “ventriloquated,” “gestics,” “aleatory,” “deracination,” and “calculus” come to mind. Other word choices go over the top: “homeostasis,” “homologous,” “affective semiosis,” “heterotopic,” “affective metaphors,” “fort/da,” “epistemophilic pleasures,” and “apparatchik” are examples. The linguistic register of the book might be a sign of the times. I hope not. Nevertheless, it is sure to discourage some readers.

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Lorraine York. *Literary Celebrity in Canada*.
Toronto: Toronto UP, 2007. 192 pp. \$38.00.

Lorraine York's *Literary Celebrity in Canada* (2007) is the first book in an emerging field of study. It's a book of opening gestures that will be important for having identified, sometimes inadvertently, many of the problems related to studying, embodying, and buying into literary celebrity in Canada. York argues that "we need a theory of literary celebrity" that doesn't simply conceive of a widely recognized author as "the high-culture personality artist" or "the crass-minded potboiling best-seller hack" (21). Her theory puts that author on a line between the poles, and she appreciates the difficulty of balancing there. Ultimately, she disagrees with the "sour" (8) opinion of literary celebrity as superficial and elitist. York succeeds in showing (and in promoting) literary celebrities as people who must anxiously negotiate the public disclosure of their private lives and contend with debates about their superficiality or authenticity. Her conclusions are general, partly because of the breadth of what she considers: poems, novels, biography, awards, the tourist industry, reviews, radio interviews, other journalism, and the fundamental scholarly debates about celebrity. York's book is not written as an exposé, but it nevertheless peeks behind the curtain at the machinery that produces literary celebrity.

York refers in her introduction to "the ideological ironies of the very concept of literary celebrity" (13). It's driven by capitalism, enabled by publicity, and yet those who embody it are often reluctant—authentically or otherwise—to sacrifice their privacy. Furthermore, authors hardly ever have the glitz, the glamour, and the exposure in the media that we associate with celebrity. Literary celebrity seems to be "a contradiction in terms" (170). The notion that Canada could support literary celebrity is (to some) an even more unbelievable stumper, but York shows that it does and has, though the first instance of such widespread recognition for Canadian authors is a subject of debate.

One of the difficulties in determining the historical beginning of literary celebrity is that it's often confused with literary fame. As most critics do, York uses terms such as celebrity and fame interchangeably, though Chris Rojek and Tyler Cowen have suggested that celebrity has a significantly shorter duration than fame. York argues that duration is "slightly beside the point" (26) and that the "effects" (26) of fame or celebrity are more important, but what if the effects depend on the duration? Arguably, her conclusions about literary celebrity—that it is an uneasy and conflicted status—are the result of thinking about two related but differ-

ent phenomena as if they were the same. Authors who want careers tend to seek fame (“being talked about” in the “good sense,” as per the *OED*); sometimes, celebrity is what they get. Andy Warhol’s “fifteen minutes of fame” is celebrity. Time is relative in that distinction, but if the experience of celebrity is worth considering—which it is, as York says—then something more could be said about the intensity of widespread recognition that comes and goes. Something could also be said about how media would need to interact to change someone’s status so rapidly, whether from celebrity to fame or from celebrity to obscurity.

I had always thought of celebrity as a function of film and television, so I agreed with what Graeme Turner calls the “standard view” (10): that it is generally a twentieth-century phenomenon. York’s book helped to convince me that the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century mass-market of books, newspapers, and public readings was sufficient for the creation of celebrity, or at least its unmistakable prototype, for writers such as Pauline Johnson, Stephen Leacock, Mazo de la Roche, and Lucy Maud Montgomery. York compares these writers with later ones, suggesting that Leacock and Michael Ondaatje responded similarly to celebrity by carefully protecting their privacy and that “the canny interventions of Margaret Atwood into her own celebrity representations find their historical precedent in the clear-eyed awareness of [...] Montgomery” (167). I was interested to read about the “interventions” that these writers staged to counteract or exploit problematic aspects of their celebrity; their actions prove that literary celebrity is not simply a byproduct of the media. I was also hoping, however, to find a general history of how the media created literary celebrity in Canada in York’s book. At 174 pages, it’s not detailed enough.

Despite its title, *Literary Celebrity in Canada* “casts doubt upon the notion of a specifically Canadian approach” (3) to such widespread recognition. York’s own approach to nationality isn’t comparative, but she finds theoretical support for what might be called a nation-neutral argument. She mentions, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the field of cultural production, though I expected such a theory to produce the opposite of her conclusion. Shouldn’t Canada’s distinctively interrelated conditions for the production and reception of books—such as vast space and accordingly high distribution costs, small population and much smaller readership, relatively minor opportunities for cross-marketing in other Canadian media, and necessary support from government for the arts and education—lead to a “distinctive mode of Canadian literary celebrity” (166)? York doesn’t seem to think so, even though she quotes

Nick Mount's study of the late nineteenth-century "exodus" (34), to New York, of Canadian authors who pursued fame (33). Doesn't their departure mean that literary celebrity was different there?

A few years ago, I read an article by York ("He Should Do Well on the American Talk Shows': Celebrity, Publishing, and the Future of Canadian Literature") that led me to expect her future book to focus on promotion and thereby make claims about literary nationalism. In her book as in her article, she suggests that literary celebrity in Canada would not be possible without literary awards that bolster enthusiasm and manufacture prestige for Canadian authors. Because that line of inquiry is based on economic and cultural-material circumstances that often differ from those in other countries, it might have produced a more compelling argument about either the presence or the absence of a national "mode" of literary celebrity. In her book, however, York doesn't show how these circumstances relate to each other. Someone could analyze the Canadian system of literary awards—its number of applicants and nominees; the affiliations of its judges and winners; its presence on television, radio, and newsprint; the monetary value of its prizes; its sources of funding; its effect on book sales—and make some interesting comparisons with the American system or its supposedly free market. York could continue her research in this vein and reach the heart of issues that merit sustained analysis.

In the second half of *Literary Celebrity in Canada*, York considers the careers of Atwood, Ondaatje, and Carol Shields; she also briefly examines some representations of celebrity in their work. York's suggestions about their experiences and representations of celebrity are especially interesting to me because my own research is on that topic. She states that "fame [or celebrity ...] is a much more powerful force in the history of Canadian literature than has been suspected, and its possessors have not been blasé about or unaffected by its workings in their careers and lives" (34). In particular, she argues that the representation of fame or celebrity as a "destroyer" was already "stereotypical" in "turn-of-the-century Canada" (42). Atwood, Ondaatje, and Shields tend to reinforce the stereotype. Although their careers benefit from their widespread recognition (as do their personal lives, to some extent), they represent it negatively. Atwood, for instance, pre-emptively and ridicules the public construction of her image through comic strips on her website (102). Ondaatje calls celebrity "a razor in the body" (quoted in York 140) in his poem "Heron Rex." Shields writes *Swann*, a novel in which a poet's celebrity is both created and exploited by publishers and academics for their own sake (152–53). Why do these negative representations persist, and what is their advantage or value?

York comes to a critical impasse in concluding that the experience and representation of celebrity amounts to “negotiations” (175) about citizenship, privacy, authenticity, gender, ethnicity, or any of the other embroiled factors. Her book reveals an encouragingly wide range of interests and insight, but because these factors rarely become subordinate or assiduously connected to any other the overall argument is compromised. As the first book on the topic, however, *Literary Celebrity in Canada* establishes a much-needed precedent for future studies by York and others.

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Stephanie S. Halldorson. *The Hero in Contemporary American Fiction: The Works of Saul Bellow and Don DeLillo*. American Literature Readings in the 21st Century Series. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007. 223 pp. \$79.95.

Tuning in to CNN, I happened to catch the story of a middle-school kid in the Midwest who was riding his usual bus home when he noticed the driver had slumped over the wheel. Thinking quickly, the youngster commandeered the wheel and, with the help of a friend who worked the brake, pulled the bus off the road to safety. CNN had dubbed the kids “School Bus Heroes.”

Heroes?

It is not to diminish the kids’ gutsy actions, but when it comes to heroes, contemporary American culture suffers from an embarrassment of riches. Like other terms that once held privilege and gravitas in the American imagination—like “visionary,” “soul,” “prophet”—the word “hero” has been so widely (mis)appropriated as to have become devaluated, even

diminished. Twenty-four-hour news channels routinely elevate cancer researchers, firefighters, soldiers in harm's way, missionaries in remote postings among the poor and diseased, muckraking journalists, patients who overcome disabilities, celebrities who raise money for disaster victims, athletes who make late-game plays, convenience store clerks who thwart late-night burglaries, and, well, two kids who pull over a school bus—it goes on and on. Far more disturbing, of course, is the suasive power of fantasy heroes. For those under, say, twenty, heroes exist in an entirely symbolic landscape, in pretentious graphic novels (read: comic books), cheesy summer action flicks, multi-volume fantasy epics, animated movies, and, supremely, video games. We begin to lose the dimension of the authentic hero, that rare iconic figure, subtle and nuanced, able to give voice and direction to a culture's evolution, to embody a people's greatest aspirations and its noblest failures.

Of course, what has noticeably given way in any discussion of heroes in the last generation or two is the privileged position literature once held and its role in the American experiment to define the distinctly American hero. Books? Unless they are set in alternative universes with enchanted unicorns and magic stones, books ... well, in these latter days of the Age of Reading, being a good reader has the same quaint nostalgia of being, say, a good butter churner. But before we eulogize literature and surrender to the coaxing pull and easy argument of image technologies, you might pause to consider, indeed relish, the breadth and reach of the implications of Stephanie S. Halldorson's probing study, a striking reminder that contemporary American literature, seriously conceived and passionately committed to its cultural moment, can still, even in these dreary post-post-whatever-we're-in era, rise to the occasion, can still define for its era the parameters of its highest aspiration, and can still engage without simplification the implications of the American endeavour even as it is being played out, reclaiming the grandeur of the kind of heroes who, unlike the faux-heroes that pop up seasonally at the Cineplex or daily on CNN, are subtle, nuanced, provocative, and who invite us to engage our cultural moment and the implications of where we all stand, characters who prick us, intrigue and perplex us. Halldorson reminds us early on that Pynchon's shabby schlemiel, which has become the dominant manifestation of contemporary American literary heroes, need not be the last word. We are, as it turns out, better than that. Contemporary heroes, in an intricate dynamic with those legions of non-heroes, struggle with their identity in an endless process of definition and redefinition (unlike ancient heroes who undertook a single grand journey); they defy the status quo, asserting

both intellect and heart amid and against their vacuous culture of ashes and shadows, images and surfaces.

For scholars of postwar American fiction, Halldorson's study rescues two towering figures from their own critical legacy. Saul Bellow has become decidedly old school, unjustly marginalized amid the hip academic excesses routinely lavished on much lesser novelists who, engendered by countless hip writing programs, write endlessly hip novels about—what else?—writing endlessly hip novels. Bellow has become that august figure to whom we nod respect but whose novels fail to excite the kind of nifty investigations of current literary critical theory—after all, Bellow's are that most dreary and fusty of genres, novels of ideas. And for far too long DeLillo has been routinely sequestered with Pynchon despite the argument made so eloquently here that unlike Pynchon's precious and enclosing narrative experiments that merely liberate a fanatic reader to map their labyrinthine excesses, DeLillo is a cultural anatomist as well as a deeply spiritual—even religious—writer. He has always been engaged by his cultural moment, his novels never excuses for their own creation. Bellow and DeLillo—this is a brilliant pairing and one seldom pursued. Using Bellow and DeLillo as representative voices, Halldorson fashions an important reading of the two successive postwar generations, a model that never feels forced or clumsy and that demands reconsideration not only of the other works by both writers but of the entire argument of a postwar American literature.

Of course, therein lies a problem: the argument Halldorson offers here is at best a first premise. The argument leaves to us the challenge of extending the template beyond the reach of her four titles. Her references to the other works of both writers is scanty and on the whole not terribly helpful. Indeed, she appears entirely unaware of DeLillo's critical new directions since *Underworld*, which is of course an element of DeLillo's moving response to the anxiety of a post-September 11th world. That cultural calculation should surely have been part of Halldorson's analysis—given her far-reaching use of other historic events, the dramatic changes in DeLillo's sensibility (the sharpening of his religious/spiritual argument) surely qualify the argument he made nearly two decades ago in *Mao II*. More to the point, given the breadth and promise of the title (which surely should have been made less grand sometime during the manuscript preparation), Halldorson stays remarkably uninterested in even mentioning the application of her theory on the hero—perhaps a closing chapter might have been added that would have tied her theoretical model to the range of characters who might easily have helped make her argument

more substantive. Where is Yossarian, Eddie Holman, Harry Angstrom, Sethe, Grady Tripp, Oedipa Maas—the range of characters that would fit within her rubric is far too fetching to have been so entirely avoided. What we have here is the kind of textual analysis that will help critical work on these four works—helpful and then some—but the larger application, that is left curiously untouched. Thus, the argument can seem claustrophobic, too tidy, largely because it so carefully selects such a tight set of texts. An argument could surely have been made to better contextualize her theory of the hero, to place it within a larger reading of postwar American fiction and help direct what now must be follow-up work to her premise.

Within the narrow scope of a review, it would be a disservice to highlight particular points in an argument that is so subtly made that it begs to be read and reread. Virtually on every page Halldorson stuns us with a kind of observation that requires pause and rewards consideration without catering to the low-octane pop culture arguments that often sustain discussions of contemporary heroes. Here is a work blessedly free of theoretical jargon but clearly informed by an exhaustive consideration of both Bellow and DeLillo critical arguments (not an easy task as both have generated much secondary work). Halldorson's prose is not merely accessible, free from the self-aggrandizing clutter of much academic writing, but is at times lyrical (not surprisingly, she is an accomplished fiction writer). But style never detracts from content. Halldorson anchors her argument in the tradition of the American Hero that she demonstrates was first argued within the intimidating challenge of Emerson. Then, in four exemplary characters—Eugene Henderson (*Henderson the Rain King*), Arthur Sammler (*Mr Sammler's Planet*), Jack Gladney (*White Noise*), and Brita Nilsson (*Mao II*)—Halldorson creates a persuasive template for defining how postwar American heroes have confronted without flinching the implications of contemporary moral, social, and cultural chaos. As Halldorson points out, neither Bellow nor DeLillo tolerate the simplification of heroes so much a part of an American culture they both see as surrendered to depthlessness and momentary pleasures, spiritually exhausted, and blithely unconcerned with history. These characters confront those grander cosmic dilemmas that the rest of us happily ignore: the limits of autonomy, the necessity of community, the reality of mortality, the need for belief, and the threat of anarchy—intellectual, spiritual, and moral. Narrative is for both writers a protocol for reclaiming depth, for reclaiming risk, for reclaiming exuberance (although far more muted in DeLillo), and for reclaiming at least the belief in belief against the late-century sense of generic existence, quiet pointlessness, and absurd death. Her analyses

of the four novels is refreshingly old school, close and considered, taking genuine care with the intellectual and intuitive interaction that has always been the art of close reading. She is a reader's reader. She builds her readings with exceptional care—her lengthy take on Sammler (long the bane of Bellow critics as the snarky and vituperative exception to his compassionate and humane vision) is exceptionally strong and should serve to redirect Bellow studies.

Her work with DeLillo is intriguing—centring *Mao II* on the apparently secondary character of the Swedish photographer makes for an unnerving reintroduction to a text that has, over the last several years, been worked over by droves of earnest exegetes, me among them. The reading of *White Noise*, however, because of its long-standing position as DeLillo's defining text and hence the subject of analyses far more developed than Halldorson's, seems lightweight. Here her careful resistance to theoretical arguments may be a problem as DeLillo so clearly tests those language theories so much in the air in the 1980s in a novel centred on how language can (and cannot) confront death. Her reading of the novel's closing is, at best, problematic—Halldorson never approaches *White Noise* for what it so obviously is, a pointed and caustic satire, and, as the pivotal character of a satire, Gladney himself is not burdened with the expectation of an epiphany. Halldorson appears to assume that Jack is a character, but Gladney is not convincing as a father or a cuckolded husband or even as a professional facing a midlife crisis. Halldorson's model works best with those word chords designed to be perceived as characters, psychologically rounded and generally sympathetic. Gladney is a posture, a case study in the contemporary anxiety over death. Halldorson's insistence on treating him like one of Bellow's characters or even like DeLillo's own characters in the later *Mao II* is clearly the study's weakest moment. Perhaps a stronger review of DeLillo's career-long investigation into a variety of spiritual expressions—both Eastern and Western—might have given Halldorson a clearer take on DeLillo. As the guiding authority of the satiric indictment, DeLillo is himself far more grounded in spiritual sensibility than to settle for what Halldorson claims is Gladney's ultimate viable position, that belief in belief is sufficient. DeLillo has important reservations about what his character "learns"—and that more nuanced reading might have helped Halldorson make her case.

But that said, here is an important argument that insists in a time of dime-a-dozen heroes that the authentic vision of the heroic argument is still very much a part of the American imagination, that American novelists are still gifting characters with the chance to find their way to an enno-

bling vision, and that, in turn, we as readers can return to contemporary narrative to find our way to the possibility of heroism. That, for Halldorson, is the ascendant vision of these latter-day writers, blessing their cultural moment with a difficult but genuine hope.

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Kerry McSweeney. *What's the Import?: Nineteenth-Century Poems and Contemporary Critical Practice*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2007. \$75.00.

The bold “aim of this book is to help restore a balance to the critical study of nineteenth-century poetry” (7) through new readings of familiar nineteenth-century poems that stress the aesthetic or “intrinsic” qualities of poetry. This form of reading is intended to point up problems with “contemporary critical practice” that focus too much on interpretations of meaning and not enough on formal qualities that determine reading experience. This accessibly written book, of course, cannot possibly achieve this aim, in the first case because it is unlikely that any single book could accomplish this kind of revolution in literary critical practice. It cannot achieve this aim in the second case because of the lack of rigour that characterizes its engagement with the discourse it seeks to alter and that sometimes characterizes its readings of the poetry itself.

The strength of this book is its original, close readings of familiar nineteenth-century poems that stress the aesthetic experience of reading them. Although the terminology that drives the readings is unnecessarily vague (“resonant,” “flawed,” “important,” and “better” are characteristic examples), McSweeney’s meaning is generally clear to anyone familiar with this blend of new criticism and generalized artistic evaluation. Readings of Dickinson, Hopkins, Hardy, Whitman, and Browning cover writing from the entire century and are not limited to a narrow national focus. One of the most intriguing readings argues against standard interpretations by claiming that the ending of Whitman’s “The Sleepers” “is both an aesthetic and ethical flaw that makes it idle to speak of the poem as a masterpiece” (73). McSweeney argues that, unlike dreams, the poem ends with a resolution and with a “saving message” that is written “at considerable qualitative cost to the poem” (83). The book also includes critiques of lesser known poems, such as “An Irish Picture” by J. Stanyan Bigg. The poem’s reliance

on conventions and stereotypes, it is argued, are ethical flaws; McSweeney takes this as an opportunity to question if ethical flaws are the same as aesthetic flaws. The point of all of his close readings is to provide an object lesson in the value of the particular kind of critical-aesthetic reading McSweeney practises.

The weaknesses of the book, unfortunately, undercut the value of these readings. For instance, one would expect from a book that intends to critique contemporary critical practice a detailed history of that practice. But there is no sustained—or even minimal—account of the contributions or purposes of the work of major schools such as poststructuralism, feminism, queer studies, Marxist dialectical historicism, or any others. There is virtually no mention of the most influential thinkers, such as Derrida, Bourdieu, Jameson, Kristeva, D.F. McKenzie, and Butler, which would have balanced the book's general focus on canonical poetry. The bogeyman of “cultural studies” is raised, or so it seems to me, only as a shadowy spectre of those things inscrutable people do in what used to be the comfortable, genteel halls of gentlemanly literary discussion. The intriguing and even exciting argument that “interpretation of meaning” is too dominant in literary criticism motivated much of my reading of the book, but by the end there was no substantial engagement with the problems of this dominance and no articulation of the real purposes behind it.

More strikingly, in a book that is meant to propose an aesthetic turn in literary criticism, there is no sustained engagement with the concept of the aesthetic. Certainly at least a chapter should have been devoted to explaining the decline of aesthetic readings in literary criticism and to marshaling the significant number of allies McSweeney could call on to make his case (there was, for instance, a significant turn to aesthetics in rhetoric in the 1990s). At least Gerald Graff's argument in *Professing Literature* should have been engaged to explain the institutional history of the shift McSweeney counters, and most certainly Bourdieu's arguments in *Distinction* and *The Field of Cultural Production* should have been raised, looming as they do over the entire book. This lack of background knowledge manifests itself very seriously in the vagaries of the aim of the book, which is “to help restore a balance” to critical practice. “Help” is not a particularly consistent term given the reactionary tone of the book, “balance” is not defined in any specificity, and the prelapsarian moment to be restored is never identified.

To some extent, many of these problems have to do with the book's subtitle—it would presumably take a whole book just to define exactly what “contemporary critical practice” is. It is not, certainly, what is engaged by

this book. The well-crafted short notes section contains a few references to recent scholarship, but in the bibliography there are only about fifteen references to scholarship written since 2000, as opposed to (about) sixty-six references to the 1990s, seventy-three to the 1980s, forty-two to the 1970s, twenty-five to the 1960s, and a handful to earlier works. Not only, then, is the book generally writing to a situation that obtained for the most part in the mid-nineties, it does not, as mentioned above, detail the nature of that situation or engage with its most important issues and purposes.

McSweeney's unfamiliarity with some of the most important turns in contemporary critical practice—including those that directly influence the aesthetic or “intrinsic” readings he promotes—manifests itself most revealingly in his discussion of Emily Dickinson. Here he takes on the argument that her fascicles—the objects in which she wrote her poetry—should be considered in interpretations of her poems. McSweeney would definitely prefer to stick with the mediated poems of anthologies since “one cannot know [among other things] whether the poems were purposefully or randomly arranged” (89) by the author. His argument continues:

This makes authorial intention merely a critical construct. And even if Dickinson did have a purpose in arranging her poems, it does not follow that this after-the-creative-fact activity should be exclusively privileged, especially when other clusters of her poems made by commentators have long produced unquestionably valuable insights and readings. The criterion here should surely be practical: how much a certain contextualization illuminates a poem.... When a Dickinson poem is spoken rather than read with the eyes only, stanza, rhyme, and meter become its distinguishing features, not the material form. (89)

Why arrangement is “after-the-creative-fact” is not explained and implies a limited vision of what a poem is. The vagueness of McSweeney's key terminology (“practical,” “illuminates”) has already been mentioned. For now, it is important to note that the material form of a poem does determine reading, as all print culture theorists and historians know and have demonstrated, and certainly they make up one of a poem's distinguishing features. Some familiarity with the fascicles would have helped McSweeney with the following reading of Dickinson's famous “I Felt a Funeral in My Brain”:

The poem stops when

a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down—
And hit a World, at every plunge,
And Finished knowing—then—

The last word suggests both the moment in the past the speaker lost her mind and the moment in the lyric present when the speaker abruptly terminates her utterance because she has become incoherent. (95)

Alas, in the fascicle, the poem includes another line following this end, “Crash—Got through.” It may be the case that we can produce “unquestionably valuable insights and readings” by ignoring the fascicles, but it is certainly the case that we can produce more rigorous and more valuable insights if we attend to Dickinson’s poetry’s material dimension, in the form we receive them in anthologies today and in the fascicles in which they were written.

What’s the Import?, despite its title and grand aim, will not be of interest to critics interested in the history of literary theory or critical practice. It is, however, a book that should be of interest to scholars and teachers of nineteenth-century poetry who are interested in pursuing aesthetic readings and who have not been able to find many examples of these in current critical writings. Whether or not one agrees with McSweeney’s methodology, even its problems can encourage some good thinking on what makes a poem the special thing that it is.

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Regina Janes. *Losing Our Heads: Beheadings in Literature and Culture*. New York: New York UP, 2005. 272 pp. \$68.50.

Certainly the most terrifying moment in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* is when the playing card “Queen turned crimson with fury, and, after glaring at her for a moment like a wild beast, screamed ‘Off with her head! Off—.’” The only possible reply, of course, in this topsy-turvy world is Alice’s, whose head had been expanding and shrinking in the course of the novel: “‘Nonsense!’ said Alice, very loudly and decidedly, and the

Queen was silent.” Would that all of our nightmares would so quickly vanish under our own control.

Regina Janes has provided much to make our dreams uneasy. In what is a profitable if queasy read, the Professor of English at Skidmore College and author of books on Gabriel Garcia Marquez turns to the history of the head. Quite truly to the history of the head: separated from the body, as trophy, political act, social comment, symbol, metaphor. In this book she gives us the history of the body-less head (and has left it to others to write a history of the headless body). Beginning with the archeological finds of hominid and early man’s fascination with decapitation, she sees the act of beheading as the first symbolic act, as it represents a means of understanding the notion of the integrated body and its desecration or celebration through the removal and veneration of the head. That human beings have always seen the separated head through the lens of some symbolic reading becomes a mantra in this work.

She catalogues how through the ages the severed head (and the act of severing the head) comes to take on multiple meanings in any given historical moment. Here her strength comes in an odd way from her reliance on chronology rather than on the putative themes of her chapters. For beginning her book unbeknownst with modernity, that excavates (and perhaps creates) the headhunters out of our distant humanoid ancestors, she concludes with contemporary art that deifies the head as a symbol of the repression of modernity. Between these two poles lies much that relies on our present narratives about the past.

As has been clear over the past twenty years with the debate about cannibalism triggered by William Arens of the State University of New York at Stony Brook in his book *The Man-Eating Myth* (1979): it is always whether we accept or reject the compelling narratives about the past or about those distant and exotic climes that substitute for the past. Was there cannibalism as ritual practice (good) or cannibalism as part of torture and dismemberment (bad)? What happens when the colonial powers forced the “natives” to consume the bread and body of Christ (remembering that these are Catholics—this is not a symbol) while damning them as barbarians because (they charged) they consumed human flesh? What does cannibalism mean when projected into the colonial past or seen, as does Beth Conklin, as *Consuming Grief: Compassionate Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001)? Is this separate from colonial condemnation or a response to it?

Janes is confronted with exactly the same set of questions concerning decapitation. And she manages elegantly to evaluate and accept some evi-

dence, relativize others, and seek in the world of High Culture some signs that all of these positions are possible. Thus she begins chapter 1 with a survey of the beheading practices of the Europeans (Greeks to Celts) parallel to the non-European cultures that were and are assumed to “take heads.” But here she simply assumes that the construction of the archeological record is mimetic, that it reflects actual practice and that we can refer to the meanings associated with such practices from the extrapolations of the archeologists and classicists who “create” the ancient world. By chapter 2 we have moved to the world that actually created this image, Western Europe from the seventeenth century, early Enlightenment to the age of colonialism. The odd history of decapitation in the “modern” world. We read of the use of the axe on living (Mary, Queen of Scots) or dead (Cromwell) English rulers. We read of the creation at that moment from the pen of John Locke of a notion that underpins most codes of law and conduct today: the inviolable right of every “body” to be defined and protected by law, by “inalienable rights.” We read of the history of that most modern of inventions, the guillotine, that was to spare the prisoner the pain of the badly placed blow and which, like most revolutionary and modern approaches to mercy, beheaded its inventor. That the act of beheading (like the act of hanging in the United States) continued long after other, more “modern” forms of execution (such as George Westinghouse’s Electric Chair) had been called upon as “humane” substitutes, says much about the power of the very act of beheading. Hanging was abandoned to no little degree in the United States because, like the axe, it sometimes didn’t work the first time and sometimes like the guillotine it ripped the head from the torso. Different cultures; different tastes.

In Janes’s fourth chapter we read the mottled account of John the Baptist’s head from Josephus to Freudian and postFreudian readings. Central here is the visualization of the act of beheading: again we have a fascinating set of implied contrasts. If Salome (or whatever her name is) is rapacious and sexually alluring, Judith’s sexuality is used to decapitate Holofernes to rescue the people of Israel (at least in the Western, religious art of the sixteenth to the twentieth century). Yet, when these scenes are untitled, it is truly difficult to tease out whose head is whose.

Chapter 5 returns to the world of the past by examining how cannibalism comes to be replaced by beheading in the Roman world and the world of European colonial expansion. The “primitives” don’t just eat one another; they take heads as trophies to show how much they are in need of Western culture. Here Jane evokes the spectre of the heads on the fence in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as the proof text for our “modern”

revulsion at the primitive, a primitive nature that Conrad's contemporary Sigmund Freud claimed as the legacy of all human beings. How this theme haunts postcolonial writers of Africa, such as Chinua Achebe and Ben Okri, points to the power of beheading as a literary theme in that Western culture which represents Africa as the place of the desecration of the body. And the power of writers such as Conrad to shape the sensibilities of African writers today. This is an engaging book: it makes one think— which, without a head, as Alice well knows, is almost impossible.

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Michelle Ann Stephens. *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914–1962*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2005. 366 pp. \$32.00.

One of the major objectives of *Black Empire* is an exploration of “how certain black leaders and intellectuals of Caribbean descent chose to imagine African Americans as part of a global political community during the early years of the twentieth century” (1). These leaders and intellectuals, Michelle Ann Stephens argues, were concerned with “precisely how to represent some form of black nationality.” Furthermore, she asserts, “they attempted to construct an oppositional form of black nationalism and political representation in an international imperial world that did not yet recognize black colonial subjects as national peoples” (3). Chapters 1 and 2 explore questions of masculinity and the relation of the woman of colour to the literature of a New Black World. The “masculine” under discussion includes Marcus Garvey in chapters 3 and 4, Claude McKay in chapters 5 and 6, and C.L.R. James in chapters 7 and 8. The conclusion briefly explores what the author defines as a black feminist imaginary, with a discussion of Audre Lorde and Michelle Cliff as offering alternative (feminine) interpretations of the black transnational.

Stephens begins her analysis of Marcus Garvey with a reading of the film version of Eugene O'Neill's *The Black Emperor* and offers it as both bookends and conceptual lens through which Marcus Garvey's own performance and pageantry can be interpreted. Responses to the Eugene O'Neill play and the (later) film, since the 1920s to the present, have been varied. Seen as burlesque and parody, in general terms, it has been condemned by many African American scholars and commentators

as an obsession, a fixation on the denigration of black humanity, and a preoccupation with the primitivism and untameable savagery that discourses of colonialism and white supremacy ascribe to people of African ancestry. The work also has been widely praised, mainly by white critics, as an Expressionist vehicle and as a study of aspects of the universal human condition. Charles Gilpin, the star of the 1920s play, knew critical triumph even as—it has been said—he was driven to despair and to drink by its racist elements, which he had sought unsuccessfully to change or inflect. Paul Robeson expressed regret at having accepted the film role. *The Black Emperor* was reprised early in 2006, both on the London stage and in the northeast of the United States; in the U.S., the lead role was played by a white woman actor, Kate Valk, in blackface. Eugene O’Neill’s work, then, as it engages and is engaged by questions of history, race, gender, and the human condition, remains deeply problematic and contested.

The Black Emperor, notwithstanding, offers to Stephens the point of departure for a discussion of Garvey’s “spectacles” of black transnationality. Indeed, her own title, *Black Empire*, seems designed to deliberately, or provocatively, invoke O’Neill’s work. In analyzing the performances of the pan-Africanist leader, Stephens also includes perceptions by Garvey contemporaries, C.L.R. James and Cyril Briggs—the latter being one of Garvey’s West Indian nemeses. In terms of contemporary scholarship, she draws on the writing of well-known Garvey scholar, Robert Hill, as well as that of Paul Gilroy, who repeats the view that Garvey’s movement was a part of a tradition of “black fascism” and was in some metaphorical senses a precursor of what Hitler represented (93). Chapter 7 concludes with the suggestion that Garvey’s failed efforts shared similarities with those of the protagonist in O’Neill’s *The Black Emperor*, even though Marcus Garvey’s “comic opera” created linkages among Negroes worldwide.

In chapter 3, Stephens analyzes the troubled Black Star Line project as part of the maritime context for Garvey’s own movements throughout the transatlantic, within a consideration of the sea as a gendered male space, beyond the plantation and urban cityscapes usually identified with black men. She rehearses some of the legal and political entanglements that Garvey experienced, pointing specifically to the controversies between Garvey and Cyril Briggs. She also underscores their failed efforts at alliance, which would later be echoed in the failed efforts, in the 1950s and 1960s, at West Indian federation in the region itself. She closes this part of the study with Garvey’s imprisonment and the curtailment of his “show of smoke and mirrors,” which was not allowed to erode the story of American nationalism (125).

Readings of *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo* in the two chapters that focus on Claude McKay explore the merging of black national and transnational impulses; the writer's (and his characters') refusal of heterosexual domestication; the embrace of the homoerotic; and the global drama of race war. Stephens argues that McKay also explores a national romance of race. He examines, as well, ways of imagining blackness, black male and female identities, and black masculinity and sexuality—all within a consideration of transnationalism. The writer's peripatetic life, which includes his journey from the Caribbean to the United States, his travels to France and North Africa, and his return to the U.S., makes possible his exploration of a proletarian internationalism. Stephens further explores how the novels under discussion also display the writer's own search for a literary form and language to articulate his own masculine global imaginary.

Chapter 7 begins with Paul Robeson again (as another kind of Caribbean man) in C.L.R James's play, originally titled *Touissant L'Ouverture*, which was based on his research for *Black Jacobins*. These works provide an entree into James's exploration of the Negro question. Stephens also explores the trope of the fugitive slave as a way of understanding James's concern with "reopening a space for exploring the structural location of black men *and* black women in the urban north of the United States." His *American Civilization*, Stephens argues, offers a tentative direction for black male intellectuals across the diaspora in the further development of new frameworks. Chapter 8 explores James's *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*. The work, she suggests, calls for a federation that would cross national lines and connect New World Negroes.

The conclusion discusses the Caribbean spaces of Guantánamo Bay and Grenada as sites of contemporary U.S. hegemony and includes references to the work of women writers with linkages to the Caribbean: Audre Lorde and Michelle Cliff and their exploration of the complicated relationship between home and empire, race and domesticity, identity and linkages.

The heterogeneous worlds that comprise the Caribbean and the discourse of discovery with its concomitant erasure and amnesia through which the area has been historically defined, make of the region a conundrum or even a *trompe l'oeil*. It continues to be sometimes defined in part by a crisis of identity. This construction of the region, with its roots in the history of empire and colonialism, inevitably, has also created resistances and contentions about what the Caribbean is and what it means. Stephens suggests that the discourse of the isles for which she argues, as construct and territory, resists empire both imaginatively and geohistorically (23).

Her work adds to the growing body of scholarship that shows the multifaceted and fascinating ways in which the region itself, its history, and its sometimes wandering inhabitants can be explored.

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Karin Cope. *Passionate Collaborations: Learning to Live With Gertrude Stein*. Victoria: ELS Editions. 2005. 343 pp. \$40.00.

This is a surprising book. Its title might suggest a study of works Stein created in conjunction with other Modernist artists. I anticipated, for example, that the celebrated opera she wrote with Virgil Thomson, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, would figure prominently in the book. But the term “collaboration” here, as Cope’s subtitle hints, exceeds a focus on oeuvre to encompass Stein’s most passionate personal engagements, those interdependencies marked by an intimate dynamics of “mutual support, struggle and reinforcement” (96). The principle relationships addressed are those with Picasso, Alice B. Toklas, and the reader (including Cope herself, including us).

The more startling surprise of the book, however, is formal. A quarter of the way into the book, which has proceeded in a fairly familiar critical mode, another voice emerges, marked by italics. This voice creates a productive rupture in the discursive flow of Cope’s criticism, challenging her, prodding her, encouraging her, agreeing, disagreeing, asking for clarification. Sometimes the effect is one of Socratic dialogue, sometimes the other voice asks straightforward questions (“What happened to Bookstaver?” [109]), and sometimes the voice is incredulous (“All of that? Are you so sure? Come on!” [81]).

Isn't that just a cheap way to pre-empt the reader's own critiques?

I think it allows for more expansive discussion. There’s room here for uncertainties, contradictions, changes of heart, all that’s habitually repressed in critical discourse. Cope does what she suggests Stein does: “She never summarizes her struggle. Instead, she acts it out and subjects you to it” (132). It’s collaborative, inviting the reader in.

Feels to me more like I'm eavesdropping. And as with all eavesdropping, there's a lot that's just boring, questions like, "Where were we?" (132).

I find those questions refreshing. They're elastic figures that allow for digressions.

You just like them because you've read this book while chasing after a one year old. You need help keeping your place.

Excuse me for refusing to excise my living and being and body from my thinking.

You've picked up a lot of dangerous ideas from this book.

You get the idea.

Who?

Shut up, I'm trying to return to my review. Cope's unusual dialogic foray is humorously apt, where it crops up, on the cusp of her psychoanalytic complication of Primitivism. At one point I wondered to myself—Cope's book attunes you to the myriad conversations you have with yourself in this solitary vocation of scholarship—how long is she going to keep this up? A quick flip ahead revealed the italics just keep on going, Cope finally relinquishing the conversational format only to welcome more voices into the discussion, the third part of her book appearing in the form of a play.

"What Happened, Playing with Gertrude Stein" isn't likely to be performed anywhere. At times one gets the impression it is a repository for all the research and speculation the author couldn't fit anywhere else. Much of it is comprised of lengthy quotations, Otto Weininger's requiring particular endurance. It's hard to imagine anyone but a Stein scholar taking much interest. But then, who's reading this book anyway? People who are grateful to find all these little research tidbits, people who are accustomed to reading drama on the page. It helps that Cope takes up some of the compelling mysteries of Stein's life, particularly the question of her remaining in Vichy France during the war and her "collaborative" agreement to translate Maréchal Pétain's speeches in 1942. The main characters of the play are three professional scholars who, after debating a number of intriguing conundrums in Stein studies, are recruited to perform in Stein's "Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters," which is reproduced *in toto* at the conclusion of Cope's play. By the end they are "murdered" only to rise again, laughing, a fitting finale to a work of criticism that would kill off a certain mode of constrained, humourless scholarship. What Cope is after is the provocation of our imaginations, our passions, and her formal innovations incite us to change our ways of reading and writing.

Interestingly, the most passionate and moving section of the book features a single authorial voice. It's as if the other voice has left the room for a moment, and I am finally in a tête-à-tête with the author, who recalls

the heartbreaking experience of reading the Stein/Toklas love notes in the wake of her own break up. This generous passage exemplifies the author's commitment to an honest, passionate approach to scholarship, one that avows our emotions, bodies, memories, imaginations. Cope prefaces the book by recalling the various theoretical impositions she had previously visited upon Stein, rigorously following the fashions of the academy in pursuit of a definitive account. While she doesn't admit that passion and affect are themselves actually the academic fashion of the moment, "affect" one of the most ubiquitous terms over the past few years, one forgives her this oversight when faced with her utterly original and genuinely passionate project.

After a long period of meagre critical response to Stein's work, the last couple of decades have seen the flourishing of Stein studies, to the point where one hardly expects to read anything terribly fresh regarding the oft-considered issues of Primitivism, the Stein/Picasso nexus, and the Stein/Toklas relationship. But Cope's formal eccentricities are matched by (and contribute to) her intrepid and insightful investigations. Her interrogation of Stein and Picasso's Primitivism, for example, is neither dismissive nor laudatory, instead taking it beyond a narrative of formalist borrowing to one of nuanced historical and psychoanalytic resonance. She devotes much discussion to the production of Picasso's famous portrait of Stein, delivering a compelling argument that it was Stein's presence (creative, intellectual, bodily) in his studio that sparked a radical change in his work. The scandalous implication that Stein was a crucial architect of Modern Art recalls the claim Nadine Hubbs makes in her recent work, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound*, that Stein created (via Virgil Thomson, via Aaron Copland) America's national musical idiom. Such theories begin to account for the magnetism of Stein and her works. This magnetism itself, even in its most visceral sense, is also subject to Cope's unabashed critical eye, as she sets aside the feminist taboo of devoting too much attention to the body, the appearance, of the female writer, and asks why we love to look at pictures of Gertrude Stein.

Passionate Collaborations is an eccentric necessity; it is replete with important research for Steinians and serves as an inspiring model of creative scholarship for all academics. Thankfully Cope doesn't imitate Stein's writing—such imitations are always unsatisfying—but what she does give us arouses the reaction we often have to Stein, that complex of responses that includes surprise, irritation, and pleasure.

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Amanda Hopkins and Cory James Rushton, eds. *The Erotic in the Literature of Medieval Britain*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007. ISBN 978-1-84384-119-7. \$80.00.

The essayists of *The Erotic in the Literature of Medieval Britain* ponder the meaning of sexuality in the writings of the British Middle Ages and, in so doing, they expand our conception of the erotic to consider its manifold tensions and pleasures. In genres including romance, lyric poetry, family epistles, and historiography, erotic sensibilities seep through sexuality into issues of politics, culture, and personal identity and prove the power of human desire to dismantle any ostensible cultural projections of erotic ambivalence. Sex matters, in both St Paul's procreative and the Wife of Bath's hedonistic arguments, and medieval writers grappled with the inescapable frisson inherent in writing about humanity's erotic drives.

In Cory Rushton and Amanda Hopkins's introduction to the volume, subtitled "The Revel, the Melodye, and the Bisynesse of Solas," readers find a concise overview of the meaning of the erotic in the Middle Ages. This admirable survey, relying heavily on Ruth Mazo Karras's *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others* as well as the works of such scholars as Jeffrey Richards and Karma Lochrie, provides a contextual foundation upon which the subsequent essays build. The editors claim that their collection "differ[s] from recent scholarship on sexuality and gender ... in its insistence on the subject of erotic pleasure, and its identification of a deliberate erotics in texts produced in medieval Britain" (15). Erotic desires, whether acknowledged or not, push many narratives forward, and this genital dynamic merits scrutiny for its often untamed energies and their effect on unfolding narratives.

Sue Niebrzydowski's "So wel koude he me glose': The Wife of Bath and the Eroticism of Touch" considers the intersection of textual and erotic pleasures in regard to Chaucer's lusty wife and the textual/sexual pleasures of glossing. This is not altogether new territory, as it is covered by such scholars as Carolyn Dinshaw in her "'Glose / bele chose': The Wife of Bath and Her Glossators" (chapter 4 of *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989]) and Catherine S. Cox in her "Holy Erotica and the Virgin Word: Promiscuous Glossing in the Wife of Bath's Prologue" (*Exemplaria* 5.1 [1993]: 207–37). In "The Lady's Man: Gawain as Lover in Middle English Literature," Cory Rushton catalogs Gawain's appearances in the romance tradition to highlight his erotic exploits. The critical apparatus of this essay is somewhat wobbly in several regards, including a naive assumption of heteronormative male desire among

readers, an anachronistic contextualization of male eroticism through the figure of James Bond, and an unwieldy application of film theory to medieval texts. Still, Rushton's argument about the ways in which Gawain's erotic adventures often serve political ends is intriguing, and it is to be regretted that this thesis is not as fully fleshed out as it might have been.

Corinne Saunders, in "Erotic Magic: The Enchantress in Middle English Romance," traces how erotic desire and magic mingle in the portrayal of female otherworldly figures in such romances as *Lanval*, *Partonope of Blois*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the *Morte D'Arthur*, as well as of their male counterparts in *Sir Orfeo* and *Sir Degarré*. Saunders observes the complex negotiations of gender and agency in these romances, provocatively suggesting that enchantresses "move in out of empowerment in their relations with men: magic allows them to pursue desire, yet desire also proves threatening to them" (46). Amanda Hopkins addresses clothing and nudity and their relationship to eroticism in "'Wordy vnthur wede': Clothing, Nakedness, and the Erotic in Some Romances of Medieval Britain"; she concludes, unsurprisingly and somewhat tautologically, that medieval authors of romance "were aware of the potential eroticism of their descriptions and the interplay of the erotic, clothing and nakedness" (70). In "'Some Like It Hot': The Medieval Eroticism of Heat," Robert Allen Rouse tackles the meaning of summer heat in *Sir Launfal* by considering how conceptions of the calendar merge with theories of bodily humours to construct summer as a season of heightened, yet not necessarily ennobling, eroticism. The converging of these separate spheres of medieval lore results in fresh insights about how humours intersect with weather, and Rouse's essays merits close attention for its successful resolution of these divergent energies.

The following two essays—Margaret Robson's "How's Your Father? Sex and the Adolescent Girl in *Sir Degarré*" and Anthony Bale's "The Female 'Jewish' Libido in Medieval Culture"—pay particular attention to female sexuality and its marginalized status in relation to male sexuality. Robson examines female sexual agency in *Sir Degarré*, paying particular attention to female excremental needs and male Freudian symbolism; she puts forth an intriguing interpretation of the romance as a "female fantasy" dependent upon "the possibilities for sexual adventures [and] for the exploration of the body" (93). Bale's essay pursues the ways in which female Jews serve as erotic Others in medieval Christian writings, ones who shore up Christian and male homosocial identity when they are seduced by Christian men. Bale takes his primary text for analysis from a fifteenth-century English miscellany of *exempla*, the *Alphabet of Tales*, and this narrative

depicts a Christian cleric who impregnates a Jewish woman and then tricks her parents into thinking that she is bearing the Messiah; the tale ends with the birth of a daughter and the child's immediate murder yet with the Christian faith upheld and Jewish sexuality denounced.

Sexualities and erotic acts deemed illicit are often linked to bodies described as perverse or monstrous, and the subsequent two essayists explore this trope in relation to the *Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi* and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. Michael Cichon's "Eros and Error: Gross Sexual Transgression in the *Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi*" sees sexual impropriety as unleashing animal transformations upon many of the transgressive actors of the text, which points to the ways in which eros demolishes borders between the human and the animal. From this perspective, human eroticism defines humanity when performed "correctly" yet exposes the tentative boundaries of humanity when an animal transformation uncovers the symbolic and literal beast within. Thomas Crofts, in "Perverse and Contrary Deeds: The Giant of Mont Saint Michel and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*," follows the Giant of Mont Saint Michel throughout Arthurian romance to locate his perverse genealogical position in relation to Arthur's imperial ambitions. The giant—through his rape and murder of women, through his monstrous body (including his monstrous genitalia), through his cannibalistic and uncivilized appetite—marks the boundaries of the erotically licit and perverse, but Arthur's combat with him reveals the extent to which perversity marks the bodies even of its foes.

In "Her Desire and His: Letters between Fifteenth-Century Lovers," Kristina Hildebrand analyzes select letters from the Paston, Stonor, and Plumpton families and finds that "men are more free than women to express affection and sexuality" (140). Simon Meecham-Jones ponders the intersection of the carnal and the holy in his "Sex in the Sight of God: Theology and the Erotic in Peter of Blois' 'Grates ago veneri'" and concludes that this titillating lyric "offers the sexual act as an ambiguous image of the (often-misled) triumph of Faith over experience in human affairs" (152); he sets this poem within the tradition of the Song of Songs and other attempts to allegorize the relationship between heaven and humanity. Jane Bliss's essay, intriguingly entitled "A Fine and Private Place," teases out the lesbian erotic subtexts of the *Ancrene Wisse*. We find here the standard paradox scholars have located in tracts for and of the religious orders, in that such texts must condemn sins that they cannot address forthrightly. Bliss's subtle reading highlights this paradox while nonetheless pushing forward the erotic subtexts of the author's stunningly visual and metaphoric language.

Alex Davis concludes *The Erotic in the Literature of Medieval Britain* with “Erotic Historiography: Writing the Self and History in Twelfth-Century Romance and the Renaissance,” in which he suggests that eroticism serves as a historical touchstone, one that can be used productively to consider shifts in literary consciousness, particularly in regard to Jacob Burckhardt’s maddening-to-medievalists theory of the individual’s “birth” in the Renaissance in his *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. Through readings of Petrarch and the preface of Chrétien de Troyes’s *Cligés*, he posits “the position of the erotic as both the very essence of the search for the classical heritage and a maddening diversion from it” (175). It is a fine essay to end the volume, but one wonders how exactly it fits into a volume eponymously dedicated to the erotic in medieval Britain?

And such is the joy and the frustration of this lively volume, in which individual essays shine like gems but the overall effect is perhaps not as uniformly intellectually sexy as one might like. The Lanval legend receives too much coverage; Chaucer’s fabliaux too little. Many notable authors of medieval Britain—John Gower, William Langland, Robert Henryson, Thomas Hoccleve—are mentioned only in passing, if at all. The foreword of the volume mentions that it was conceived at the 2002 International Arthurian Congress in Bangor, Wales, which likely explains the lopsided coverage given to romance, but then the volume should either focus on British Arthurian erotica or expand its coverage to truly represent British literature of the Middle Ages. Also, an additional round of proofreading would have been helpful in the presentation of this volume; the most egregious slip is when Rushton and Hopkins refer to Chaucer’s *Miller’s Tale* as the *Merchant’s Tale* while discussing the quotation that inspired the title of their introductory essay (10). But as with many miscellanies, a Whitman’s sampler of medieval erotica, if you will, take your pick, and you’ll likely be pleasantly surprised. As with most voluntary sexual experiences, even the disappointing ones provide momentary pleasures.

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Julia M. Wright. *Blake, Nationalism, and the Politics of Alienation*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2004. xxxiii + 230 pp. \$44.95.

Julia Wright’s study of Blake focuses on nationalism and attends to formal questions within a consistent ideological framework that privileges social heterogeneity and freedom. Starting with the largely neglected but fasci-

nating text *Laocoön*, she concludes with the great final epics, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*; in between she engages the *Poetical Sketches* and the Lambeth prophecies. It is, then, a wide-ranging study that makes large claims about the meaning of Blake's intellectual project.

The first chapter, "Blake's *Laocoön* and Classicist Theories of Art," situates Blake's innovative text persuasively within the German discussion of the *Laocoön* statue by Winckelmann and Lessing as it was mediated by Fuseli. Wright's commentary is strongest when she develops the "nonlinear" dimensions of Blake's *Laocoön* that complicate the stable points of reference in the *ut pictura poesis* discussion. Here and in other illuminated texts, Blake mixes image and writing to play them against one another both ironically and emphatically, creating multiple centres from which the reader can produce multiple narratives. Blake's opposition to classical notions of art such as Lessing's is hardly news, especially as *Laocoön* is a late text (1815–26), but Wright makes Lessing's aesthetic views paradigmatic of a nationalism which Blake contests. Critics like David Erdman and E. P. Thompson established that Blake associated aesthetic classicism with empire and class privilege. Wright's argument is that Blake's text even at a formal level defamiliarizes nationalism.

The second chapter, "Contesting National Narrative," locates the *Poetical Sketches* in the context of the antiquarian and nationalist inventions of the Gothic, northern European past to displace a classically centred national narrative. Blake's stories about the nation—"iterative, nonlinear, and antigeneric"—position the individual aslant the national plot of progressive development (33). His pseudoantiquarian poems with Nordic themes construct a prelapsarian nation victimized by repressive tyrants, while his biblically inspired Lambeth texts also invent a past for the national myth. The parody and rewriting of Genesis that is the *Book of Urizen* structures chronology in wholly nonlinear ways, decentring the nationalist myth of progressive development. *Milton* takes up the nationalist theme with the representative national figure who struggles against the dominant culture (55).

The third chapter, "Revolutionary Heterogeneity and Alienation," comments on *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *Europe*, and *America*, all illuminated works from the early 1790s. This chapter highlights alienation from community, illustrated most effectively by the extensive treatment of the flawed feminist heroine Oothoon. Wright reads *Visions* as a poem in which the reader cannot find an adequate figure with which to identify, as even the most sympathetic character, Oothoon, falls short of expectations: "In *Europe*, there is no figure with whom to identify" (87). *America's* Orc,

allegedly the symbol of and agent for revolutionary change, is a rapist. Thus Blake's work refuses to conform to a "system of simple binaries" (88).

The next chapter continues to work on *America* and *Europe*, focusing on the childbirth metaphor as a way of examining the embodiment of voice and gender in these poems. Voice, in Wright's reading, is how the female characters resist their reduction to birth machines, mere instrumental means to a greater end. As biological reproduction evokes individualistic protest, it also is a way for Blake's texts to represent commercial print culture. Rape, etching, stamping, reproducing—mechanically and biologically—are all woven into a web of association that provides readers with ways of generating opposition to hegemonic power. The lack of a centre is a virtue, for there are instead multiple sites from which oppositional heterogeneity can be produced.

The chapter on *Milton* is for the most part operating within the same interpretive territory claimed by historicist critics of the past; Blake is still largely the prophet against empire (Erdman) and the witness against the beast (Thompson). *Milton* is a poem that attacks classical nationalism at the formal and conceptual levels. The final chapter on *Jerusalem*, however, accents the ideological limitations of Blake's text, even suggesting a new kind of complicity with empire and colonialism. *Jerusalem's* use of disease metaphors participate in the topos of the vital/viral contrast, which has dangerous ideological implications, for the "vaccination" model of discourse implies rigid binaries that Blake's writing had largely avoided: "*Jerusalem* is rhetorically homologous to the works it condemns; that is, it aims to circulate and so transform the political body into something else" (147). Los's statement, which Wright makes central in her interpretation of Blake, that he must create a system or be enslaved by another's, comes to be the initiating concept for a Foucauldian and deconstructive turn: the allegedly emancipatory prophecy of *Jerusalem* is a colonizing discourse, in effect Urizenic, turning the heterogeneous into the uniform. This final chapter, which is the book's most ambitious, provides a real challenge to those who have long seen all kinds of heterogeneity in Blake's masterpiece. It is not easy to get used to Blake as the panoptical colonizer, but Wright's rhetoric could not be more clear in discussing the different groups addressed at the beginning of each of *Jerusalem's* four parts: "Like Bhabha's colonial agents, Blake divides the population with which he is concerned into different kinds that can then be controlled through means specific to their differences" (166). William Blake sahib, the colonial administrator, sipping his gin and tonic with his pith helmet on? Profit from the empire? Witness for the prosecution?

Whatever one might say about the last chapter, Wright's book is not dull, and it stirs up the pot of the Received Wisdom about Blake (she is, however, in relation to other Blake scholars, scrupulously courteous and generous, always ready with a kind word). The first and last chapters, I think, are the most interesting: the first should open up new readings of a neglected text, and the last should provoke interesting debate.

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David Schmid. *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. 327 pp. \$29.00.

Since the events of 11 September 2001, the spectre of serial murder in American culture may seem to have retreated back to the shadows, as public attention focuses on the foreign terrorist as the latest face of evil. In light of thousands of deaths resulting from one spectacular act of mass murder, amid the constant threat of more to come, the terror evoked by any given serial killer may seem minuscule in comparison. While serial murderers continue to be arrested, the publicity surrounding their crimes is split with the latest headlines from Iraq. The self-styled "mindhunters" of the FBI seem to have shifted resources from pursuing lone sex killers to the more pressing task of gathering intelligence on terror cells and disrupting heinous conspiracies to kill thousands of Americans. Even the nation's popular culture seems to have moved on; the days when Hannibal Lecter was a deliciously chilling icon of ultimate evil seem very remote indeed. However, as David Schmid argues in his book *Natural Born Celebrities*, the American fascination with serial killers both factual and fictional has not faded. Rather, the serial killer provides a multivalent template of villainy into which the figure of the terrorist can be folded to create a symbol of evil unsettling enough to enough Americans as to provide "public support for the dismantling of civil liberties in the United States and for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq" (246). Schmid documents that the categories of terrorist and serial killer are often deployed simultaneously in the popular media. For example, Schmid points out that the press in the United States often described Saddam Hussein as both a terrorist and a serial killer, and during the October 2002 sniper shootings in the Washington, D.C., area,

the attacks were ascribed both to terrorists and serial killers (27). In fact, Schmid argues, the serial killer figure may have become familiar enough to Americans to be reassuring in the post-9/11 era, to enable them to return to a time “when evil had a comfotingly American face and one did not have to concern oneself with the bothersome question of why anyone would hate America enough to want to destroy the World Trade Center” (254).

Refreshingly, given the generally high-pitched, high-stakes rhetoric of moral panic that characterizes much popular discourse, Schmid maintains throughout most of his study that he has no interest in lamenting or deploring how serial killers have become celebrities or, put another way, how the definition of celebrity has become flexible enough to allow the inclusion of serial killers. Schmid makes the case, for the most of the first two-thirds of the book without sermonizing, that in the mid-twentieth century in America, the concepts of celebrity and fame diverged. Celebrities began to be defined by superficial attributes, such as cultural visibility, rather than by the qualities of merit, talent, or achievement that had previously been prerequisites for fame. Celebrities increasingly arose from the ranks of the sports and entertainment industry—again, individuals primarily notable for a ubiquitous media presence. In part, Schmid argues, the shift occurred because of a change in demographics in America, as the culture became increasingly urbanized and immigrants began to assimilate into the mainstream. Millions of American individuals were working through complex positive and negative feelings about their identities. Identification with visible public figures became more important and immediate than focusing on more abstract intellectual concepts, such as merit. The morality or immorality of visible public figures was beside the point in such an environment. Naturally, then, certain criminals in high-profile cases also became visible, or by the new definition of the term, “famous.” Criminals could become celebrities just as easily as—in fact, arguably easier than—many other types of public figures.

Of course, a celebrity outlaw, such as bank robber John Dillinger, is one thing, and a serial killer is quite another. Part of Schmid’s argument relies on the linkage he suggests between public reaction to turn-of-the-century serial killer H. H. Holmes’s desire to accumulate murder victims and the larger cultural imperative to accumulate money. In fact, Schmid maintains that part of Holmes’s attraction to the public was that his murders were based largely on economic reasons. While orthodoxy might insist that Holmes was insane—a social outcast—the public in its secret heart believed that Holmes was merely an extreme embodiment of the same

drive to acquire and hoard wealth that motivated most segments of society. Schmid elaborates: “The overdetermined response of Holmes’s contemporaries to his crimes exemplifies a long-standing public ambivalence toward the acquisitiveness and assertiveness that defined the American ethic of success” (51). In this sense, Holmes was an insider, not an outsider. Schmid identifies a similar ambivalent attraction/repulsion in the American fascination with the “Jack the Ripper” murders in late nineteenth-century London. By turning these two murderous figures into celebrities and objects of entertainment through the rise of the mass media, Schmid concludes, Americans “could work through their fascination with these figures in more or less socially legitimate ways” (65). Since the Victorian era, then, Americans have been indulging their voyeuristic appetite for tales of true-crime mayhem through an accommodating media. Schmid’s argument still does not explain completely why the serial killer rose to such prominence, given the spate of other sensational crimes that crowd the public true-crime docket. Nevertheless, his analysis of the public reaction to the Ripper and Holmes murders is detailed and compelling.

The turn of the century also saw the rise of cinema, a cultural phenomenon that Schmid addresses in his chapter “Natural Born Celebrities,” an obvious riff on Oliver Stone’s 1994 film *Natural Born Killers*. Schmid posits an almost immediate connection between film and violence, with serial killing as subject matter just a few years down the road. In this chapter, Schmid relies a great deal on a tenuous connection between the evolution of cinematic stardom and coeval representations of violence to bring in his celebrity thesis. This connection, once made, allows Schmid to further link film’s love of seriality (storylines that continue from one film to the next, stars who become instantly recognizable to the public in film after film) to representations of serial murder. Schmid makes the case that film and its immense popularity super-charged celebrity culture made it even more likely that serial killers would become as recognizable (and perhaps even emulated) as much as stars. In modern American films, Schmid highlights a structure of viewer identification that leads to identification with the on-screen serial killer at the risk of complicity in murder and the collapse of one’s own moral integrity. Schmid then astutely observes that most mainstream serial-killer films shy away from this narrative logic to provide the signature Hollywood happy ending or moralistic escape hatch by which the viewer can disavow the onscreen violence and his/her own complicity in enjoying such spectacle. Schmid makes the case for the uniqueness of his own study by saying that these films typically do not explore the culture of serial murder that exists outside of the film frame

in the viewers' own culture, or if a given film does acknowledge that outer reality it does so within a self-righteous framework that again allows for audience disavowal of complicity. Schmid then proceeds to impose a tripartite classification schema upon the vast field of serial-killer cinema: the skirmish (films such as *Kalifornia* and *Seven*), the all-out attack (*Natural Born Killers*), and the outmanoeuvre (*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*). As the names suggest, the skirmish film touches upon the subject of fame and serial murder in a cursory way, the all-out attack does so in a heavy-handed way that makes it difficult to distinguish parody from the genuine article, and the outmanoeuvre engages the viewer in an uncomfortable meditation upon his/her own potential for violence. In the former two categories, the films are examples of what Schmid calls, in a binary opposition borrowed from Devin McKinney, "weak violence," or violence without consequences because of persistent narrative disavowal strategies. The third category earns Schmid's authorial endorsement because of its use of "strong violence," or violence that forces audience reflection upon voyeuristic participation in onscreen violence. Through these framing strategies, Schmid provides a useful filter for differentiating the nuances in storytelling and theme among the serial killer movies. Yet like any frame or filter, there is at least the possibility that forcing the range of films into these simple categories is its own type of violence—a cutting off of the possibility of subversion within even the most mainstream of films.

Schmid also analyzes extensively the law-enforcement definition of serial murder during the 1980s and how that definition exacerbated or indeed even created public fear of the roving, sexually predatory, random killer. Of course, this is ground that has been extensively covered by Philip Jenkins in *Using Murder* (1994), as well as many other writers on the subject (including my own work, *Psycho Paths*, 2000). Schmid positions himself in relation to Jenkins by arguing in his introduction that Jenkins does not explore the implications of the relationship between the FBI's exploitation of the serial murder phenomenon and celebrity culture, but the distance between Schmid and Jenkins on this point seems more of emphasis or nuance rather than substantive difference. Given this, however, Schmid does present an interesting history of the FBI's "manipulation of popular culture" (74) to create villains, for example, gangsters and then serial killers, that loom large in the public imagination. Public fear of such "monsters," of course, often translates into political and economic capital for law-enforcement agencies such as the FBI. The mobility of the serial killer, in particular, provided justification during the 1980s and early 1990s for the FBI's insertion into local law-enforcement efforts to locate

and arrest serial killers through the seemingly magical tool of “profiling” or “mind hunting.”

What is of most value in Schmid’s discussion of the FBI and serial murder is his continuation of the analysis that Jenkins began back in 1994. Schmid observes that media popularity of tales of serial murder and FBI profiling served to carry the real FBI through some very lean years of scandal and spectacular public-relations failures, for example, Ruby Ridge and Waco, during the mid- and later 1990s. Of course, the ur serial killer text, *The Silence of the Lambs*, did much to create the popular perception that the FBI stood practically alone between civilization and the unspeakable evil of serial killers. Television did its part too to valorize federal law enforcement, Schmid claims, in popular television shows such as *Twin Peaks*, *The X-Files*, *Profiler*, and *Millennium*: all featuring heroic yet appealingly vulnerable profilers. Real-life profilers such as John Douglas and Robert Ressler also became media superstars. Interestingly, however, this media celebration of the law-enforcement response to serial murder paralleled a failure of the FBI to achieve much in the way of tangible results during the 1990s. Even the much-vaunted Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, or VICAP, did not produce the results anticipated for it during its inception in the “serial killer panic” of the 1980s. In spite of this demonstrable lack of results and barrage of negative publicity, Schmid notes, the FBI exponentially increased its resources and reach into many aspects of American life, largely on the basis of the FBI’s success in overemphasizing the threat of serial killers and other domestic criminal threats so that the public accepted ever more intrusive policing methods. Of course, as Schmid argues, the post-9/11 cultural climate, characterized by “fear, paranoia, and a forced acquiescence to authority” (101), has further inoculated the FBI against criticism.

Shifting tonal gears rather abruptly in the later chapters and becoming increasingly polemical, Schmid next takes on the true-crime genre and its conventions in regard to representation of serial murder. Schmid’s thesis in this section of the book is that since the beginning of American history, true-crime accounts have been the source of much public fascination because of one feature: “a preoccupation with the representativeness of the criminal; that is, whether the criminal is more appropriately placed inside or outside the community” (177). Schmid claims that the true-crime literature of the Puritan era placed the criminal inside the community as representative of mankind’s sinful nature and aspired to bring the deviant back into the fold. In the modern era of true-crime stories, however, the criminal is an individualized outsider whose pathology exempts society

from any role in the production of crime. Furthermore, in such accounts, the pathology has been deterministically present since birth, thus conveniently exonerating the larger culture from the burden of proactive social programs to reduce the occurrence of criminality. In any period of American true-crime literature, however, Schmid maintains that the criminal is invariably described in monstrous and Gothic terms, which through their very abnormality reinforce normative social structures of sexuality, family, religion, and so forth. Schmid examines the field of true-crime literature authored by Puritan ministers, Edmund Pearson, Truman Capote, and Ann Rule, among others, to arrive at these conclusions. Certainly, this is an ambitious and commendable endeavour; the topic is important. But for the proposed breadth of coverage, Schmid relies more on secondary summaries of the body of literature rather than any extended discussion of selected primary true-crime sources. For example, it would be illustrative to examine some of the Puritan sermons to which Schmid alludes, but such primary evidence is scant. Similarly, passing reference is made to Capote's *In Cold Blood* and Ann Rule's *The Stranger Beside Me*, but few other works are even mentioned, let alone discussed. This cursory analysis is in contrast to Schmid's case studies of other primary works in the rest of the book.

The book concludes with a much richer journey into comparatively less-trafficked territory in the scholarship of serial murder and true-crime literature: the demonization of homosexuality by connecting it with violence and a parallel uncoupling of heterosexuality from violence. In his chapter subtitled "Queering Serial Murder in True Crime," Schmid traces the cultural elevation of Ted Bundy to the iconic "straight" celebrity serial killer in particular as emblematic of a project designed to exonerate heterosexual men from the taint of sexual violence. In this project, Bundy's normality and apparent similarity to many straight men is configured as only a surface layer—a mask that hides the deviant monster beneath. Thus, the focus is shifted away from troubling issues of social gender construction of violence onto the aberrant personality that is supposedly the essence of Bundy, evident from birth in the bizarre incident detailed in the various hagiographies of Bundy. By contrast, Schmid goes on to argue, in an expansion of Richard Tithcott's initial work on the Jeffrey Dahmer case, that the heterosexual mainstream culture's fascination with homosexual serial killers such as Dahmer and Aileen Wuornos allows for an equivalence between homosexuality and homosexual murder and thus a demonization of the former. Even Dahmer's victims, Schmid notes, are typically depicted in true-crime literature as implicitly or even explicitly

portrayed as deserving of death by virtue of their sexual orientation. The Wuornos case is even more complicated, in that the true-crime narratives work hard to portray the lesbian Wuornos as a monster whose killing of men she claimed to be violent toward her is not a political act but a deviant one. In these narratives, then, Wuornos's male victims are presented in a positive, even virtuous light. Wuornos and Dahmer through violence play out the mainstream heterosexual's fear of what Schmid calls the homosexual abject.

Schmid's argument ends with the provocative assertion that the American celebrity culture of serial murder is at once an acknowledgement of serial killers' hold on the collective imagination and misrecognition of the national legacy of individualistic violence that these killers expressionistically represent. By continuing to demonize and marginalize the serial killer, Americans continue to refuse to own their complicity in the production of violent modes of behaviour and the subsequent rewarding of that behaviour in its most extreme manifestations with celebrity. In the years after 9/11, Americans are more insistent than ever on their "highly paradoxical notion of American innocence" (257). If for no other reason than its scrutiny of this problematic cultural project, Schmid's focus on the celebrity culture of serial killers is valuable.

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Marcia Werner. *Pre-Raphaelite Painting and Nineteenth-Century Realism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.
300 pp. \$88.95.

As a general rule, revisionist scholarship on literary or art movements seeks to disprove the established claim that a particular movement was consistently organized around a core commitment or program, some common aesthetic denominator supposedly discernable in all (or at least all major) texts belonging to the group. Texts that do not comfortably fit the mold—say, George Eliot's supernatural novella *The Lifted Veil*, penned by a major Victorian realist writer—may be regarded as anomalies that, as such, do not jeopardize the argument for unity and uniformity. The revision typically challenges this understanding by making much of such neglected (or deliberately ignored) sites of inconsistency and dissent, arguing that what earlier critics deemed anomalous or marginal in the

history of the movement is in fact central to it, in the sense that it makes all generalizations extremely problematic. Once this kind of revision becomes, as it often does, the dominant critical paradigm, it is unlikely to be challenged by counter-arguments that risk appearing methodologically old-fashioned and theoretically regressive. One is tempted to describe this irreversible fracturing of conceptual and aesthetic wholes as a sort of Humpty-Dumpty phenomenon: once broken, the movement cannot be put back together again.

This has been the fate of the Pre-Raphaelites, a group of British artists who in 1848 joined to form a “Brotherhood” with the aim of countering what they regarded as the decline of contemporary British art into conventional sentimentality, a lamentable lapse into bland, formulaic visual statements devoid of genuine feeling and artistic merit. The movement was reactionary from its inception, and its aesthetics of dissent was soon formalized in a series of published articles. According to the Brotherhood’s secretary and chief spokesperson for Pre-Raphaelite cause, William Michael Rossetti, the key figures of the movement—his brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, and Ford Maddox Brown—agreed from the start on a number of important practical and theoretical issues, most significantly the rule that they should paint directly from nature and strive for absolute fidelity to the facts of the visible world. They would observe and record nature with an “innocent eye,” as John Ruskin, the great patron of the Pre-Raphaelites, liked to put it. But a quick glance at Pre-Raphaelite art gives the impression that each member of the fraternity took this injunction to mean something entirely different, so that as a result there are as many visions of the world from the viewpoint of “innocence” as there are observers and artists. One would have to look very hard indeed to make a convincing case for a shared aesthetics in such Pre-Raphaelite paintings as Hunt’s *The Awakening Conscience*, Brown’s *Work*, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Astarte Syriaca*. The differences, on the other hand, are striking, and it seems inevitable to conclude that, no matter what the Pre-Raphaelites thought and said they were trying to accomplish together, their art shows very few traces of fraternal like-mindedness. As Timothy Hilton wrote in 1970, “to look for a common purpose in the Pre-Raphaelite painters, their admirers and followers, is to look in vain. They were thoroughly individual, and generally kept their own individuality. One would never mistake the work of one member of the Brotherhood for that of another. Pre-Raphaelitism cannot be defined; it was too various.”¹ The last three decades have not seen this

1 Timothy Hilton, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970), 9.

notion seriously challenged. The Pre-Raphaelite Humpty-Dumpty could not be put back together again simply because, according to general opinion, it was never whole to begin with.

Marcia Werner's *Pre-Raphaelite Painting and Nineteenth-Century Realism* offers a timely, thoughtful, and impressively researched rebuttal of this dominant view. Critics of Hilton's persuasion, Werner contends, were simply wrong; Pre-Raphaelitism *can* be defined: it was from its inception a coherent and consistent art movement and remained so for a number of years. In the first part of her book, Werner carefully examines a range of Pre-Raphaelite writings—journal articles, diaries, letters, biographies—and discovers much evidence for “a consistency concerning the essential nature of their goals that supports the notion of a shared ideology” (10). The second half then demonstrates how seemingly dissimilar artists and works display a commitment to a shared Pre-Raphaelite vision.

Manifest stylistic differences among the artists have obscured more important underlying sympathies, Werner contends, and the overrated role of John Ruskin in his capacity as the champion of the Pre-Raphaelite cause—his conviction that he understood the Pre-Raphaelites better than they knew themselves—is partly to blame. One must instead turn to Thomas Carlyle, particularly the lessons that the Pre-Raphaelites derived from Carlyle's “kaleidoscopic, all-inclusive vision of time, in which past, present, and future are conceived of as perpetually interacting with one another.” When viewed through the Carlylean lens, the idealization of the Middle Ages, and specifically Arthurian legends, in so much of Pre-Raphaelite art appears in a different light: not as irresponsible avoidance of nineteenth-century social problems but, quite to the contrary, a serious effort at engaging with contemporary social issues by putting them in historical perspective. This Carlylean temporality, Werner explains, is precisely what is most uniquely English, or Pre-Raphaelite, about the Brotherhood's art. Not to be confused with the Realism of contemporary French artists such as Gustave Courbet, “Pre-Raphaelite Realism has a different temporal quality. It expresses a sense of conjunction, repetition, interrelation among historical eras, and its almost hallucinatory verisimilitude and painstaking technique seem to suspend time, to evoke a compelling impression of both historical simultaneity and the current moment” (267). Just as important, and just as overlooked, is the Pre-Raphaelite debt to Comtean Positivism, especially Comte's most ardent English proponent, John Stuart Mill. The obsessive Pre-Raphaelite fidelity to observable facts, the impulse toward microscopic verisimilitude, is in accordance with the empiricist and Posi-

tivist science of the time. To understand Pre-Raphaelite Realism, Werner argues, we should close our Ruskin and open our Carlyle and Mill.

When it comes to showing how Pre-Raphaelite theory is reflected in practice, however, Werner's argument becomes somewhat less convincing. One example she gives to substantiate the claim that the Pre-Raphaelites "were committed to an art of both psychological and physical verisimilitude" (144) is a portrait of Dante Gabriel Rossetti by Hunt. The portrait "creates a mood of mystical spirituality," Werner writes, "but also reflects careful recording of Rossetti's outward appearance and psychological character as well as Hunt's response to him" (148). Frankly, Hunt's painting (reproduced in black and white in Werner's book) seems far less rich in psychological nuances than Werner would like it to be. Perhaps it is not the best example of what Werner is talking about. The argument "that observation of inner states is as much a part of early Pre-Raphaelite realism as empiricism directed toward nature" (155) finds more sure footing when we look at almost anything by Rossetti. Indeed, Werner discusses Rossetti's works for some sixty pages, while Millais, Hunt, and Brown, respectively and roughly, get thirteen, twenty-four, and sixteen pages. Rossetti was the leader of the group and so the decision to focus primarily on him makes sense. The problem is that he was also arguably the most idiosyncratic and individualistic of the Pre-Raphaelites, and it is questionable just how representative his art really is of the movement as a whole. That it is always recognizably Rossetti's is far more certain.

Werner is aware that her project goes against the grain of theoretically informed and politically charged art criticism. Eschewing "such cultural issues as race, gender, sexuality, or class," Werner explains that her work stands "in opposition to convictions widely held by scholars working in a range of methodologies." This, I think, is not necessarily a problem; the decision not to focus on certain cultural, social, and political issues is something one ought to be able to do without feeling the pressure to invent a good excuse. Aside from the valuable insights it offers on Pre-Raphaelitism, Werner's book makes an additional claim for the viability of the kind of art criticism that looks very attentively—and rarely wanders far from—the art itself. Werner admits to believing in the "the humanist assumption that art and artists and the meanings they convey are inherently worthy of study" (11). As she demonstrates, the alternative to examining works of literature and art for race, gender, or class content need not be naïve art appreciation. *Pre-Raphaelite Painting and Nineteenth-Century Realism* is certainly not historically naïve—it is far too sensitive to contemporary intellectual and cultural trends for that—nor does it lapse into the banal

appreciative mode. It seeks to understand where the Pre-Raphaelites got their ideas about art and, in doing so, focuses on what appears to have been most consequential in the formulation of their aesthetic ideology. That so many women in Pre-Raphaelite art faithfully reflect the Victorian ideal of submissive feminine meekness is thus perhaps not so much a missing chapter in Werner's book as a part of another story, a different—but not necessarily more astute—way of seeing.

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Andrew Gurr. *The Shakespeare Company, 1594–1642*.
New York: Cambridge UP, 2004. xvi + 339 pp. \$65.00.

Andrew Gurr's study announces itself as the "first complete history of the theatre company, created in 1594, which in 1603 became the King's Men" (i). It is a story that has been told before, divided as it necessarily was between the two seminal reference works known to scholars as "Chambers" and "Bentley." Gurr retells the story here with a wealth of important supporting detail; particularly welcome are his appendices listing performances at court and giving biographical details about all persons associated with the company (coyly, "Will Shakespeare" receives one of the shortest entries).

Gurr advances a number of novel claims about the company's organization and aims. He suggests, for example, that the players' preference was to perform indoors, as evidenced by James Burbage's plan in 1596 to build an indoor theatre in part of the Blackfriars monastery. The proposal was abandoned in the face of opposition from the neighbours but was revived in 1608. Gurr suggests that "if Carey and Burbage had got their plan through in 1596, the Globe might never have been built" (5). This is, of course, purely speculative, and it is refuted by the company's decision in 1613–14 (when the Blackfriars venue had been in successful operation for years), to rebuild the outdoor Globe Theatre following its destruction by fire; Gurr suggests that the path not followed, to shift to the Blackfriars exclusively, would have been the "sensible and practical option" (30). It is probably safer to claim that the company, from very early until the end, was committed to the idea of operating both an outdoor and an indoor playing venue, which made them unique among playing companies. Another unique aspect of the Chamberlain's–King's organization was that six of its

sharers, as well as owning shares in the company, after 1598 owned shares in its playhouses; Gurr points to this as “the basis for success” (31).

While putting forward many interesting arguments, some of the book’s suggestions are less convincing or fail to gain agreement because they are speculative and propose a too-authoritarian, top-down picture of the way early theatre companies actually operated. For example, in 1594 following a lengthy plague-closure and the death of one patron (Ferdinando Stanley, Earl of Derby), companies realigned and reorganized. Gurr pictures this as a new idea devised and implemented by Charles Howard, the Lord Admiral and Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain; we are told that they founded two companies, divided the best players and plays between them, and allocated to each company a specific suburban playhouse. The Admiral’s Men were to play at the Rose on the Bankside, and the Chamberlain’s Men were assigned to the Theatre in Shoreditch. This arrangement, Gurr claims, resulted in a “duopoly” (1). The first problem is that this picture is too neat and ignores that the players, patrons, and playhouse-owners all had prior involvements. Howard had been patron of players appearing at court as early as 1585 and was on tour with players of Lord Hunsdon in 1585–86. The Rose and the Theatre had been operating as playhouses—in fact, the Theatre, built in 1576 by James Burbage, was the earliest purpose-built playhouse in England. The second problem is that the “plan of 1594” is wholly unsupported by documentation; “no papers about the 1594 deal survive” (2, n1). The evidence offered for it is two Privy Council orders, of 1598 and 1600 which, Gurr claims, were a “reaffirmation” of the 1594 deal. However, the 1598 order was not a reaffirmation but an attempt to close down what the order calls “a third company who of late (as we are informed) have by waie of intrusion used likewise to play” (250). This third company was at the Swan Theatre, built on the Bankside in 1594 by Francis Langley and operated as a venue for Pembroke’s Men from then until August 1597, when their performance of *The Isle of Dogs* got playwrights and company into serious trouble. So this was hardly a “duopoly.” On 22 June 1600, the Privy Council again ordered that playhouses be limited to two and noted that the new Fortune Theatre was to replace the Rose and the Globe was to replace the Theatre (252). Clouding this issue, however, is that there continued to be three companies; Worcester’s Men took over playing at the Rose, as Gurr notes (27, 32). And three theatres perhaps became four when, on 31 March 1602, the Privy Council allowed Worcester’s and Oxford’s Men to play at the Boar’s Head in Whitechapel (Wickham 109). The problem is that the Privy Council was not consistent; it was also often ineffective, as another aspect of the 1600 order shows. It

limited the two companies to performing “twice a week and noe oftener” (251). This would quickly have bankrupted the companies, because as Gurr notes one has to assume two-hundred annual London performances per company in a plague-free year (97).

Gurr suggests that pre-1642 England was authoritarian, even totalitarian, and this leads on a number of occasions to treating the *dicta* of the Privy Council as powerful *fiats*. The problem is that, while those in power perhaps harboured the illusion of limitless authority, in fact their powers were limited by the lack of effective means to carry out their orders, often in the face of powerful local interests. Examples showing activities of traveling troupes outside London, and attempts to regulate them, will illustrate because of the wealth of documentation now available in the first eighteen volumes of the Records of Early English Drama series (about half of the total projected). About who could be patrons of troupes, Gurr writes:

In practice from 1572 the few playing companies licensed to tour the whole country had to have a lord or earl as their patron ... the number of patrons ... was effectively down to not much more than a dozen by the 1570s ... All the other patrons of companies from 1594 to 1603 were earls. It was a system of centralized control, with the mightiest in the land confining strictly to themselves and to the monarch the right to license players.” (87)

These are sweeping claims, not completely consistent as to the period under consideration. But do they stand up to the evidence? Between 1572 and 1603 the REED website indicates, besides royalty, four patrons holding no title, nine knights, forty-one barons, and nineteen earls. If you look at 1594–1603, the untitled and the knights have dropped out of the picture, but there remain twenty-eight barons and eleven earls. Another example illustrating the limits of the Privy Council’s power is the order, from before 7 July 1625, forbidding playing “in any part of England” (193, n43). Gurr claims that this 1625 closure “ensured the collapse of all playing companies other than the King’s” (110). In fact, provincial performances totaled: 1623–24 (17), 1624–25 (13), 1625–26 (12), and 1626–27 (10). Hardly a complete closure. The companies operating from 1625–27, other than the King’s and Queen’s, had as their patrons one knight, one earl, and two barons. One has to be very careful to test the pronouncements of the Privy Council against their demonstrable effects.

I have to record errors and puzzles, some trivial (such as “Shakebags” for “Shakebag,” one of the villains in *Arden of Faversham* [133]), and some more problematic. For example, Gurr spends considerable time discussing

the provincial tours of the King's Men, and emphasizes that by the 1620s there were multiple companies traveling under that name. He quotes evidence from York in 1633, where the record "named them 'the kings plaiers of the Chamber of yorke Perries Company'" (65). In fact, the relevant record reads as follows: "To Mr William Perry & others of his Maiesties players xx s" (Johnston 593). The devil is in the details, and the actual document here does not support Gurr's claim. A final example puzzles me. Gurr claims (without giving a reference) that in 1615 the Privy Council summoned representatives of the "four companies" to meet because "the royal patents had been copied and misused by companies touring around the country, so the Council wanted to cull the forgeries" (171). My difficulty is that I cannot trace any reference to this event. The document is not to be found in Chambers, Bentley, or Wickham. Further, I checked through the materials from 1615 in the *Acts of the Privy Council* and the *Calendar of State Papers*, to no avail. What does exist, in the Norwich Mayors' Court Books, is a copy of a letter written in June 1617 from the Lord Chamberlain to all mayors and county magistrates, ordering that they be on the lookout for four named groups that were traveling under forged licences (Wickham 144–45). Is this letter the source of the (supposed?) meeting? The only conclusion I can draw is that such problems could best be avoided by punctilious documentation and checking of sources, in a work whose authority is claimed as a work of reference.

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