

Book Reviews

Alison Keith and Stephen Rupp, eds. *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Modern Europe*. Publications of the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, Essays and Studies 13. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2007. 350 pp. \$37.00.

As its title suggests, this collection of essays examines the influence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in pre-modern and early modern Europe. The fifteen essays gathered here are arranged in roughly chronological order, and while the majority of these essays concentrate on the influence of *The Metamorphoses* in literature, a few essays explore Ovid's influence in other realms such as art, alchemy, and demonology. More importantly, while these studies acknowledge the historical and/or social factors that shaped these evolving interpretations of Ovid, nearly all of the authors provide us with a close reading of *The Metamorphoses* in its original context. In fact, this sort of intertextuality is one of the collection's primary strengths, as it renders current Ovidian scholarship accessible to readers from a variety of fields without requiring them to stretch to the very limit of their interdisciplinary skills.

In the introduction, Keith and Rupp trace the reception of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from his contemporaries to Ausonius, carefully noting both admiration for and condemnation of this influential work. Here, the variety of criticism stemming from Ovid's contemporaries, who simultaneously criticized the poet's narcissistic self-indulgence in rhetorical witticism while reserving praise for his interwoven narratives and the sheer scope of the poet's mythical encyclopedia hint at some of the complexities that face the modern Ovidian scholar.

Coulson's essay on the variety of medieval commentaries on Ovid in cathedral schools opens the section on medieval interpretations of Ovid and represents an important addition to the existing body of knowledge concerning the manuscript tradition. Subsequent chapters concentrate on the Christianization of Roman ethics and morality in the *Ovide moralisé* (Desmond) and the notion of metamorphosis in the works of Christine de Pizan (Akbari, Zalamea). Akbari's essay on metaphor and allegory in the *Mutacion de Fortune* is particularly instructive because she demonstrates how the very notion of metamorphosis was framed by medieval commentaries on Ovid. To round out the section on pre-modern readings of Ovid, English literature is represented by Chaucer's rewriting of Ovidian myth (Fumo) and the relationship between poetry and political discourse in John Gower's *Confessio amantis* (McKinley).

The transition to Renaissance literature and poetry is accomplished by two provocative essays on Ovidian influence on contemporary cultural constructs, specifically alchemy (Willard) and demonology (Fox). Taken together with Perlman's study on Michelangelo's use of Ovidian imagery in *Venus and Cupid*, these three chapters serve as an ample demonstration of the breadth and depth of this collection. The Renaissance tradition is richly represented by an analysis of the notion of selfhood and poetic authority in Petrarch via the myth of Narcissus (Zak), and a chapter on the Diana and Acteon myth in both Petrarch and Maurice Scève echoes the earlier treatment of this tale in the fourteenth-century *Ovide moralisé*. In a second essay on Diana and Acteon, Nazarian deftly explores the opposition between the fragmentation of Ovidian myth in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and the integration of that same myth in Scève's *Délie*, thereby leaving the reader to ponder both the plasticity and the validity of interpretations of Ovid, as well as the ambiguous nature of metamorphosis that underscores Ovid's work.

Two chapters of this collection focus our attention on Ovid's influence on early modern Spanish literature, represented by Cervantes's subversion of Phoebus and Phaeton in *Don Quijote* (McCaw) and Luis de Góngora's

use of Ovidian imagery in the baroque poem *Soledades*. The final entry in this volume, on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, serves as both an independent chapter and a conclusion; Kilgour is to be congratulated for managing to interweave her treatment on the dual nature of change as either static or fluctuating with the principle themes of several preceding chapters without being overtly didactic.

"As well as being a source for individual tales, the *Metamorphoses* has served as a spur to thinking about metamorphosis itself and its relation to the process of artistic revision" (Kilgour, 267). Indeed, this collection is devoted to demonstrating the pervasive influence of the *Metamorphoses* on Western thought from its beginnings in classical literature to the Baroque. It is well produced, providing the reader with an index, a bibliography, and a table of illustrations. Moreover, in tracing the Ovidian tradition in England, France, Spain, and Italy, the editors have created a volume that mimics the scope of the *Metamorphoses* itself. Although this collection would be useful for this reason alone, it is not only comprehensive but remarkably cohesive. The essays within are not limited to individual myths but explore a variety of tales drawn from the different books that comprise the *Metamorphoses* in their dialogues between classical scholars' interpretations of Ovid and those of the early modern scholars who have shaped our own notions of Ovidian myth. In short, while pre-modern and early modern readings of Ovid are always complex, the editors have ensured that contemporary Ovidian scholarship is not.

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Peter Melville. *Romantic Hospitality and the Resistance to Accommodation*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2007.
210 pp. \$65.00.

It would seem that everything about hospitality makes everyone involved uneasy. Not surprisingly, because the difference between hosts and guests, like all differences, is apparently predicated on, and risks falling back into, an indescribable violence. This would be enough, of course, but it surely also contributes to the general discomfiture that every aspect, feature, or term associated with the hospitable has a troubling tendency to undermine itself, to be its own opposite. If hospitality is also, as it were, hostility, it isn't really what it is. Peter Melville makes this general claim with some insistence in his selective survey of writings on the subject by eminent Romantics: "The texts of Rousseau, Kant, Coleridge and [Mary] Shelley

theorize the *failure* of the hospitable relation from a suspicion that, after all is said and done, hospitality is itself structurally impossible” (12–13).

This deconstructive approach picks up from Jacques Derrida’s late work on the topic of hospitality and is informed as well by Emmanuel Levinas, Tilotama Rajan, Paul de Man, Julia Kristeva, Walter Benjamin, and Jacques Lacan, among others. Melville asserts a “two-pronged thesis. The category of the Romantic stranger, or guest, points to ‘an *internal* difference that constitutes’ the host’s own self-dividedness. The scene of Romantic hospitality doubles as a scene of self-welcome.” But, on the second prong, this at the same time also unhelpful guest “unsettles” the host, “frustrating its reception of difference as self-difference” (9). (Melville as guest, host, other, or subject, seems at times to be a person but has a tendency to become an “it.”) The two prongs, in short, suffer the same fate as any other binary under this kind of scrutiny.

Chapter 1 engages in “Unsettling Rousseau,” discussing *Emile*, the second *Discourse on Inequality*, and the late prose poem, *Le Lévite d’Ephraïm*. Melville plausibly claims that “the place of the guest-host relation in Rousseau’s work is as troubled—indeed, as unsettled—as was his own personal experience of hospitality” (24). This seems ultimately to be good. We learn, through Rousseau’s writings, that “if there is a violence necessary to the practice of welcoming the other, then hospitality becomes ethical precisely when we acknowledge its impossibility. It is then, and only then, when we can begin, without ending, to be responsible to and for the exclusions by which we proceed” (47). This is announced as one of the theses of the book and is indeed repeated in similar terms.

Chapter 2 discusses Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* and *Perpetual Peace*, also late works. “If hospitality makes Rousseau uneasy, then the same could be said for Immanuel Kant” (61). And is “a kind of auto-deconstructive thread runs through” Kant’s scenes of hospitality, which mainly focus on dining, “insofar as each contains its own impossibility” (61). Kant in this respect resembles Derrida, for “at the heart” of the latter’s “inquiry lies an uncertainty as to what eating means. Does one consume a plant, a painting, or another person?” (65). The present review will have achieved little if it does not allow its readers to identify a fairly familiar critical method they will tend either to find productive or not. Let us not quibble with either predilection. But it might be observed that Melville at times seems to strain the technique, even by its founder’s standards:

“Men of taste” in the *Anthropology* “are not only interested in having a meal together but also in enjoying one another” (187). The main course of the good meal in good company is the company itself. The dinner party appears “only as a vehicle” for “social enjoyment,” says Kant, and as such is essentially anthropophagic or *cannibalistic* in nature (187). (67)

The phrasing and page references here might lead one to wonder if Kant actually said something like this. “[E]ssentially ... *cannibalistic*?” Of course, he didn’t. Mary Gregor’s 1974 translation of this passage—Melville uses that of Dowdell, 1978—has “but to enjoy one another’s company” (144). Derrida may not have known what eating means, but as Melville perhaps unintentionally concedes he was at least circumspect enough to speak of “symbolic” anthropophagy (67) rather than the *essential* sort. Indeed, he was somewhat chary of essences at all, one recalls.

Chapter 3 is entitled “Coleridge [sic] and the Poetics of Hospitable Failure” but restores in its text the more familiar name of this Romantic while maintaining the likewise familiar theme of his failures—in this case, needless to say, salutary ones. A letter about a mouse, several lyrics including “Frost at Midnight,” “Christabel,” “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (with wedding guest), “Kubla Khan” (unwelcome visitor from Porlock), and parts of *Biographia Literaria* are treated, with a thread of reference to Freud’s “fort-da” game. While the moral logic, derived for example from “The Rime”—“The ‘right’ choice is always also a wrong choice: something or someone is always harmed” (113)—is often broader, on the specifics of hospitality we can learn from Coleridge that “the other arrives regardless of one’s attempts to welcome, ruin or postpone its arrival. There is always another *other* within each repetition of the failed hospitable encounter” (134–35).

The fourth chapter deals with Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*, which “cautions its contemporary readers—and us—constantly to re-evaluate and revise their current hospitable practices: the other demands it, even and especially when we are least prepared to offer it refuge” (170). The paradox of the problem of hospitality for a man who really has no one to invite or exclude is played with in a Derridean way.

What is specifically Romantic here? Perhaps Romantic hospitality is fraught with a particularly acute set of uneasy-making (non)distinctions and impossibilities. Still, the main points developed in *Romantic Hospitality and the Resistance to Accommodation* are not much shown to be Romantic. Comparisons to the different hospitality of other periods are absent, while seemingly synchronic generalizations abound, indeed

predominate. Texts are said, for example, to realize “a fundamental truth about the other, namely, that the other is always different from what one expects and that this difference surprises and unsettles the subject” (41). This is among many fundamental truths the book seems to accept. As it also doubtless shares—however one *does* share such a thing—“a deeply unconscious intuition” of Coleridge’s “regarding the infinite recession and ‘involution’ of hospitality *as such*, into which the host forever falls like a guest into a series of welcomes—into which the host is welcomed to the hospitable relation not as a sovereign subject, but as a kind of vagabond perpetually borrowing the ‘ground’ of the other’s home” (133). (Poor Coleridge. Certain writers seem especially vulnerable to having their “unconscious” seen into and redeployed for various purposes. But doubtless he brought it upon himself.)

The book’s style alternates between high deconstructive paradox, sometimes self-consciously high, and an occasional ungainly stooping to clarity. The systematic unsettlings of the former probably make the latter necessary. It would not otherwise be required to explain, for example, that the words of the note prefacing Anna Letitia Barbauld’s “The Mouse’s Petition” are “obviously not the mouse’s words, but the words of a person who finds the mouse and who is compelled to take pity on and speak for it” (4). Likewise, of Coleridge’s letter, we know that he “knows only too well that he can hardly blame the mice for their behaviour. It is a joke, after all” (103). Such descents are something of a relief, but a more frequent problem is that the style is not oracular and mysterious enough. Often as it approaches mere intelligibility, it risks reductive or repetitive overkill. As in “Opposed to, as well as born out of, various oppositions, hospitality is structurally impossible” (17). One might better just say, with the Dutch proverb, that guests and fish start to smell after three days. That is a joke, of course.

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Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Trans. Mary J. Gregor. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.

Patricia Rae, ed. *Modernism and Mourning*. Lewisburg:
Bucknell UP, 2007. 310 pp. \$55.00.

The cover of *Modernism and Mourning* features a photograph of what is perhaps the most famous piece of Canadian commemorative art, the Vimy Memorial. The memorial is often interpreted as an example of modernist innovation, but this reading overlooks the extent to which it also draws upon an older vocabulary of mourning: the figure of *Canada Bereft* who stands beneath the soaring abstraction of the monument's twin columns resembles the kinds of statues of weeping women commonly found in Victorian cemeteries. Julia McArthur's photograph, while of a different mourning figure, nonetheless foregrounds this contradiction in a way that nicely introduces this essay collection's focus on mourning as a site that complicates the persistent narrative of modernism as a clean break with the past and interrogates the binaries (new/old, high art/popular culture, intellect/emotion) that have typically underwritten high modernist self-fashioning.

Its Canadian cover art notwithstanding, most of the essays in this book deal with British or American texts and contexts. An exception is Eric Reinholtz's discussion of death in the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca as a topic that illuminates the Spanish poet's complex relationship to Anglo-American modernism. Another is Jahan Ramazani's afterword, which describes how his readings of American, English, and Irish elegies in his book *Poetry of Mourning* (1994) were informed by his grief over the execution of a beloved cousin in Iran in 1981. Rae's book clearly acknowledges the importance of *Poetry of Mourning* as an essential starting point for any subsequent discussion of twentieth-century elegiac writing, but the essays collected here move beyond Ramazani's conclusions to address more recent developments in mourning theory. Rae's introduction contextualizes these developments, including recent work by Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and R. Clifton Spargo, by providing a cogent overview of the body of twentieth-century writings on mourning and melancholia, beginning, necessarily, with Freud's eponymously titled 1917 essay.

Vigilantly attuned to the political implications of Freud's distinction between the "normal" process of mourning and the pathological state of melancholia, the collection is provocative in its reassessment of recent efforts to recuperate melancholia as the more ethical response to loss. Building on Ramazani's reading of the "modern elegy" as quintessentially melancholic, critics writing in the 1990s, such as Michael Moon and Philip Novak, explored the uses of melancholia as a means of resisting the ideo-

logical imperatives of “normal” mourning: for them, the irresolution of melancholia provides a more appropriate way to memorialize the deaths of those (gay men, African Americans) who are already excluded from the category of the “normal” by a dominant culture that does not regard their deaths as grievable losses. Without denying the persuasiveness of these arguments within their particular contexts, some contributors to Rae’s book caution against reading melancholia as necessarily aligned with progressive politics. For Greg Forter, not only is the recent embrace of melancholia founded upon a misreading of mourning as tantamount to “forgetting” the dead, it is also curiously insensitive to the intensely painful nature of melancholia as an affect. In contrast to those who celebrate melancholia as politically liberating, Forter reads *The Great Gatsby* as an example of a text “that marshals its melancholy for conservative class and gender purposes” (244). In her essay on D.H. Lawrence’s analysis of post–WWI social problems, Marlene Briggs takes the critique of melancholia even further, arguing that the “self-alienation of the melancholic” (who remains unconscious of what s/he has lost) “can only serve conservative interests,” as it is aligned with “the irrational, unconscious forces that drive capitalism” (206). Pearl James’s essay also expresses reservations concerning the political uses of melancholia, reading William Faulkner’s novel *Sartoris* as a critique of his culture’s melancholic attachment to a Civil War notion of male heroism that silences the stories of loss narrated by the returning veteran of the Great War.

While these and other essays defend the work of mourning as a means of bringing particular losses into consciousness, they do not advocate for an uncritical rehabilitation of mourning in Freudian terms. Rather, the collection is assembled under the rubric of “resistant mourning,” a term that acknowledges the ways in which modernist texts may deliberately fail to complete the work of mourning but at the same time opens up the possibility of exploring connections between modernism as a textual practice and mourning as a set of cultural practices that developed in the wake of the Great War. Mark Whalan’s essay argues that the tomb of the unknown soldier at Arlington cemetery reflected a national desire that its occupant be a white American of Anglo-Saxon descent and then shows how a poem by James Weldon Johnson “resurrect[s] the body of the African American soldier to national visibility” (87). Eve Sorum’s discussion of Ford Madox Ford’s *The Last Post* situates the novel in the context of the Remembrance Day ritual of two minutes of silence and shows how its narrative strategy of absence and ellipsis mirrors the “state-sponsored [...] silence [that] prolongs [...] trauma and exposes [...] unhealed wounds” (161). Such an

emphasis on the connections between writing and other forms of cultural production helps to question the habit of privileging high modernist texts as definitive in their responses to the war. Rae's essay references this "Waste Land myth" that identifies despair as the dominant postwar affect (215). Rae demonstrates that "a discourse of consolation *did* survive the Great War" and came under increasing scrutiny only in the later 1930s as economic conditions failed to improve and another war seemed inevitable (215). The survival of prewar mourning discourses is also at issue in Anita Helle's analysis of editorial practices at the *Little Review* from 1917 to 1920. Despite the magazine's avant-garde affiliations, Helle finds that it nonetheless contains a surprising number of poems of mourning, demonstrating that "the break between the 'corpse' languages of Victorian poetry and the modern anti-sentimental aesthetic did not happen all at once, or even uniformly among women in vanguard movements" (119).

High-modernist hegemony is further challenged in Tanya Dalziell's essay, which stresses the importance of jazz as an elegiac mode in the decade following the war's end and demonstrates how Mina Loy's poetry reproduces its "conversational mode" (111) in order to articulate a "fantasy of union" between the living and the dead (112). Stacy Gillis reads the detective novels of Dorothy Sayers as postwar texts of mourning concerned with "the ways in which families [...] struggled to come to terms with death" (187). The admission of such popular texts to the discussion of modernist mourning is one of the major strengths of this collection, since it contributes to expanding the terms of that discussion beyond the generic specificity of "modern elegy" to address the wider social and political implications of resistant mourning. Eluned Summers-Bremner's essay traces an "attachment to 'nothing'" in the interwar short fiction of Elizabeth Bowen as expressive of an Anglo-Irish identity founded upon the losses of others, namely the "Irish sense of the loss of their civilization and autonomy" (263). Andrew J. Kunka's essay shows how Siegfried Sassoon's famously bitter poems about the war elide his own earlier adherence to clichéd consolations by attributing this adherence instead to those with no direct front-line experience: women, journalists, and politicians. The question of who has the right to control the mobilization of symbols of mourning is similarly taken up in Madelyn Detloff's essay, which draws connections between the depiction of mourning as fuel for revenge in the interwar writing of Virginia Woolf and H.D. and post-9/11 uses of national grief as justification for war. The collection concludes by returning to this topic of the ethics of mourning with Jill Scott's reading of H.D.'s autobiographical novel *The Gift* as a text that envisions the possibility of

a response to loss other than aggression by positing forgiveness as an essential addition to the work of mourning.

Modernism and Mourning developed out of a seminar of the same title held at the Modernist Studies Association conference in 2003. As is common with collections of conference proceedings, the sixteen individual essays tend to be rather brief, and in some cases I found myself wanting more information. As someone who approached the book with a background in English-language literatures (as I suspect will be true of many readers) I felt that Reinholtz's essay on Spanish poetry could have provided a more thorough explanation of some of its terminology (for example, "Duende"). Helle's essay on the *Little Review* tantalizingly refers to "memoirs of the period" in which discussions of language and literature become entangled with funereal practices, but the accompanying note only lists one (122). As someone with a particular interest in the overlap of funerary and literary discourses in the modernist period, I wished that this point had been further developed. As Ramazani observes in his afterword, the intersection of literary and mortuary practice in the twentieth century is an area that is still open for critical investigation. With their sensitivity to the links between literature and material culture, the essays of *Modernism and Mourning* make an excellent start in this direction.

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Perry Nodelman. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008.
\$35 paper; \$43.95 cloth.

The Hidden Child: Defining Children's Literature is a definitive discussion of the field and genre of children's literature. Anyone who has studied children's literature or has a professional interest in any of the related fields that deal with this complex subject knows that attempts to define what one is dealing with are central and continual and yet answers remain curiously elusive and unsatisfactory as they require seemingly endless qualification and reconsideration. This factor explains the length and circuitous nature of Nodelman's book and its necessary density in many parts.

Trying to define children's literature is how we all start out in the field; *The Hidden Adult* is a testament to the wide-ranging and ongoing nature of such work—in Nodelman's case, the culmination of nearly four decades of prolific scholarly work. Beverly Lyon Clark's statement that "*The Hidden Adult* is arguably his magnum opus" neatly sums up the significance and authority of Nodelman's latest critical contribution. While Nodelman strives to be as clear and accessible as possible, his *Pleasures of Children's Literature* is the better starting place for the uninitiated. *The Hidden Adult's* primary audience is those familiar with or working in the field, as such a discussion demands: it is thorough and comprehensive, particularly the third chapter in which Nodelman engages the major debates and their related concerns that have brought us to the current moment in children's literature studies. He situates his exhaustive discussion within the broader theoretical context of literary studies and production, drawing on well over four hundred sources and focusing on aspects he argues shape both the field and the genre, which are informed by a matrix of adult social forces forever jostling to maintain some control over the other, the child. The wide-ranging discussion throughout the book is helpfully signposted with subheadings and frequent reminders of the point(s) being presented or brought forward from an earlier section.

Nodelman approaches his formidable topic in an original and effective fashion over four chapters. In the first, "Six Texts," he works through close readings of Maria Edgeworth's "The Purple Jar" (1801), Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Hugh Lofting's (unexpurgated) *Dr Dolittle* (1920), Beverly Cleary's *Henry Huggins* (1950), Ezra Jack Keats's *The Snowy Day* (1962), and Virginia Hamilton's *Plain City* (1993), a project that uncovers the common ground these divergent texts share. Nodelman notes that "texts identified as 'children's literature' [are] included in this

category by virtue of what the category implies, not so much about the category itself as about its intended audience,” which makes it a “highly unusual” category (3). Though the involvement of adults in all aspects of children’s literature is in plain view, it is amazing how easily adults themselves lose sight of this basic critical factor in the production and reception of “children’s” books (read books *for* children). Nodelman’s aim is to expose the hidden adult at every turn along with such inevitable ironies as the “second, hidden text,” which he calls a “shadow text” (8) that “say[s] less than it hints at” (9), yet which can result in child readers “understand[ing] more than is actually said” (9). In this first chapter, the fundamental issues, revisited throughout the book, of binary opposition, of ambivalence, of the doubleness of home and away, and of variation are established—all of these hinge on the opposition of child and adult without which there would be no such thing as children’s literature. The forty-five shared characteristics examined are helpfully listed in point form at the end and then reformulated in paragraph form at the end of chapter 3.

Chapter 2, the shortest of the four (forty-five pages), “[e]xplor[es] [a]ssumptions” and embarks on the central argument that children’s literature is a genre. Initially Nodelman seems to be saying that the genre contains the field rather than the other way around, but this is resolved in the explanation “*genre* refers to the evidence of the nature of the field inscribed in the texts produced within the field” (124). Ultimately, the greater field of children’s literature is comprised of many smaller fields, just as the overall genre of children’s literature is made up of many individual genres of writing (127–32), culminating in the provocative claim that children’s literature’s “very existence as a genre implies the act of censorship” (132). In this chapter, the sort of auto-ethnographic approach Nodelman takes to the “impossible” task of definition stands out as he fully details his thought process in choosing the books and analyzing their shared characteristics across time and (Anglophone) cultures. For example, “And while I am aware of the possibility that I have misled myself by applying a schema derived from more recent texts onto the earlier ones, I sense that something more significant and less personal is happening here” (116).

Chapter 3, “Children’s Literature as Genre,” gets down to the particulars of defining a confusing genre. There is no simple answer, but there are leading questions: “[W]hat if all the differing definitions suggest some part of the more complex truth? What if the contradictions of the definitions are suggestive of contradictions—or possibly, paradoxes—inherent in the genre itself? What if children’s literature as a genre represents the complex field of shifting position-takings of the field that engenders it?”

(137). By re-visiting and expanding on some of his earlier work—twenty entries from 1985 to 2008—and critical responses to it in light of his current purpose, as well as drawing on earlier and ongoing scholarship regarding class, gender, subjectivity, and narration, among other topics, Nodelman makes his answers to the aforementioned questions seem like the co-ordination of a collective effort—this method further supports the complex combinations of ideas that inform the field and genre, contradictions and all, and form the common ground upon which all these forces coexist. One example of this method is his discussion of how children’s literature “works to colonize children by persuading them that they are as innocent and in need of adult control as adults would like them to believe” (163). Here Nodelman is in conversation with Jacqueline Rose, Roderick McGillis, John Stephens, Valerie Polakow Suranski, Mavis Reimer, Edward Said, Lillian Smith, James Kincaid, Lord Cromer, Paul Hazard, and himself (163–69). He argues that

Just as the constructions of the Orient that emerge from an outsider’s perspective focus on the mysterious unknowability of the alien other, so, too, do the constructions of childhood found in adult thought about children and often, consequently, in children’s literature.[...] The more people say about what they understand, the more they understand that they can’t understand. (165)

Nodelman does not seek consensus; he strives to make sense of the often conflicting viewpoints, and this is the strength of his work, whether one agrees with his position takings or not.

The opening of the fourth and final chapter, “The Genre in the Field,” provides a clear summation of the complexity of the field and of what Nodelman seeks to address:

[C]hildren’s literature is *not* simple. The most rudimentary of baby books comes to exist and has meaning only within a complex of assumptions about books, about babies, about books for babies, about language and visual imagery, about education, about pleasure, and about the economy and the marketplace. Children’s literature is a field within a field (the field of literary production) and is inextricably intertwined with other fields (particularly the fields of education and librarianship). The characteristic generic markers I have been exploring result from many forces working at once: the history and practice of literature and literary production; this history of ideas about childhood in general and of children’s literature in particu-

lar; the history and practice of literary criticism and theory both in general and within the field of children's literature; the history and theory of other discourses and disciplines of childhood (developmental psychology, child psychology, and so on); educational theory and practice; the business of publishing and marketing books in general and books for children in particular; the nature of the economy and the ideology of culture—perhaps even the nature of capital and of modern subjectivity in general. (245)

In addition to further discussion of these topics, this chapter deals with specific issues or texts such as Canadian publishing, Peter Rabbit, and the claim that the Harry Potter series functions as a “macrocosm of children's literature, a type of the genre as a whole” (328) that exemplifies “the ideological ambivalence of children's literature as a whole” (338). In short, whereas “Children's literature is literature that claims to be devoid of adult content that nevertheless lurks within it” (341), *The Hidden Adult* is serious adult analysis that not only claims that such lurking is vital to the very existence of children's literature but persuades us that ambivalence is a fine thing, not a problem.

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Ian Rae. *From Cohen to Carson: The Poet's Novel in Canada*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2008. 388 pages. \$85.00.

The poet's novel holds a rather liminal position in Canadian literature; in some ways, it has helped to shape the Canadian canon, as poet's novels by Michael Ondaatje, Daphne Marlatt, Leonard Cohen, and others are regularly taught in English departments across the country. These texts helped to substantiate postmodernism in CanLit, providing an alternative in Canadian fiction to the realist tradition epitomized by Hugh MacLennan and carried on by Mordecai Richler, Alice Munro, and a great many other Canadian fiction writers. On the other hand, the poet's novel has also come under considerable attack in recent years, with critics such as David Solway and Stephen Henighan attacking the poet's novel as lacking in structure, as needlessly metaphorical, and as overly fragmented. In his careful study of poet's novels in Canada, Ian Rae works to discount these attacks by arguing two intertwined points: that critics of the poet's nov-

els have unfairly viewed the texts according to the conventions of realist fiction and that Canadian poet-novelists have crafted a distinct style of literature with its own subtle set of conventions.

At the heart of Rae's discussion is the relationship between the poets' poetry and their fiction. Rae sets the stage in the first chapter, as he examines a narrative progression from lyric poetry to serial poetry to long poems, arguing that "as the long poem attempts to novelize the traditional lyric sequence by introducing competing voices and styles, it has radically transformed concepts of narrative coherence and sequence in the Canadian novel by adapting the devices of contemporary poetry to prose fiction" (3). The resulting poet's novels therefore reject the causal connections of realist fiction, instead "modify[ing] serial strategies to create narratives out of seemingly discrete units. These units [...] are primarily connected through patterns of iteration (of diction, symbolism, and myth)" (25). Rae goes on to argue that the poet-novelists hold their narratives together through a series of devices that provide a narrative framework; these frames, however, also simultaneously point out their artificial and subjective nature, thus providing the narrative with a frame that unframes itself. Rae uses the term *(un)framing* throughout his study to refer to this double move of presenting while refuting.

Rae moves from this more theoretical discussion to discussing specific examples of the poet's novel in Canada. He devotes each of the following five chapters to a particular poet's novel, focusing on how each performs its act of unframing. The first poet's novel Rae examines is Leonard Cohen's *The Favourite Game*, which Rae convincingly shows is both heavily indebted to and also written against A.M. Klein's *The Second Scroll*. The chapter also goes on to provide careful exegesis of the novel, while explaining the narrative relationship between the novel and Cohen's own poetry, all the while arguing that Cohen works in his novel to (un)frame the narrative. This basic template reoccurs throughout the following chapters, as Rae looks at, in turn, Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* (which (un)frames the poetic series), George Bowering's *A Short, Sad Book* (which (un)frames the serial novel), Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic* (which (un)frames the quest narrative), and Anne Carson's *Autobiography in Red: A Novel in Verse* (which (un)frames myth). The study ends with a discussion of Ondaatje's *The English Patient* and Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*, both of which Rae uses as bulwarks against the attacks on the poet's novel by several critics.

From start to finish, Rae makes sure that his arguments are both very clearly presented and extremely well researched. He offers a series of sharp

exegetical readings of the texts, both poetry and fiction, with which he deals. There are times when Rae does get a bit carried away with exegesis, however, and at these times the study's overarching arguments tend to get lost in the details of the particular text. Still, the exegetical readings are insightful, and I think most readers will forgive these extended discussions because of the light they shed on the intricate and difficult workings of the poet's novels. Somewhat less successful is Rae's strictly teleological argument that the poet-novelists learned their particular brand of disjointed narrative from the disjunctive and paratactical nature of poetry; it's not that the argument that Rae makes is wrong but that it seems overly simplistic. Rae, for example, freely admits that both Bowering and Marlatt "produce[d] an early (and for them unsatisfying) realist novel before earning reputations as poets and returning to the novel with a renewed conception of it," but he generally disregards these early novels as abortive attempts that fail to provide any insight into the authors' later styles (7). Rae also fails to examine how several of his authors move back and forth between poetry and fiction; the result is that Rae argues for a strict teleological progression of early poetry shaping fiction that overlooks how the fiction might shape the later poetry and then re-shape the later fiction. In a sense, Rae's argument takes the form of *post poetry ergo propter poetry*, which is not necessarily incorrect, but it is a limited and limiting way of thinking of the relationship between poetry and fiction in the authors' overall careers.

A more significant shortcoming to Rae's study, however, is his inability or unwillingness to examine his own structural frameworks. In a study that takes "The Poet's Novel in Canada" as its subtitle, it seems very odd that Rae does not deal with any texts written in a language other than English. Nicole Brossard, in particular, seems to fit the narratological patterns that Rae argues for the poet's novel, but Rae refers to her only once, in passing. Likewise, with the exception of Ondaatje, Rae deals with no non-white poet-novelists, even though he mentions that both Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and George Eliot Clarke's *Whylah Falls* as poets' novels that again seem to fit his definition. Given that one of the undercurrent arguments throughout the study is that the Canadian poet's novel develops as a "response to the complexity of living in a society where cultural frames of reference conflict, inspire, frustrate, and seduce," the equation of Canada with predominantly white anglophones is a frame that Rae should have at least explained and probably should have questioned (296).

One other frame that Rae leaves unchallenged is his choice of authors. Each of the writers he focuses on fully illustrates his argument for a dis-

tinctly Canadian tradition of poet-novelists who craft their texts through an examination and dismantling of realist traditions of causal narratives. However, Rae tends to ignore the authors who do not neatly fit into the pattern he discerns. For example, Margaret Atwood began as a poet before turning to focus on fiction, but Rae does not discuss how or why her novels are not poets' novels. The same goes for other Canadian writers who move between poetry and fiction, such as Robert Kroetsch. Presumably, neither Kroetsch nor Atwood relate to Rae's study because their fiction is rather realist in nature, but I think directly dealing with the differences between his authors and these unmentioned writers who don't fit his categorizations would have helped flesh out the study. Likewise, Rae also trusts a bit too much in the frame of nationalism itself, as he doesn't discuss how the disjunctive poet's novel in Canada compares to novels from international poets such as those by Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, and others.

Even though some of its frameworks seem a bit too rigid, Rae's study offers a compelling and intelligent argument in favour of considering the poet's novel in Canada as an important and distinct sub-genre. Rae does a particularly good job of working against the detractors of the poet's novel, and he is completely correct when he states that "most Canadian criticism on the poet's novel focuses on how authors break genre conventions, and not on how they also establish them" (298). Rae's study thus does very important work by focusing on the narratological strategies that underpin these poet's novels. Moreover, the running argument that the poet-novelists in the study subtly but consistently make reference to and build upon each others' works convincingly makes a point for viewing the poet's novel in Canada as forming an important countertradition to the more accepted canon of Canadian realist fiction. Working to define and defend this countertradition, Rae's study is an engaging, intelligent, and important step toward reconfiguring the place of the poet's novel in Canadian literature.

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Brian Corman. *Women Novelists before Jane Austen: The Critics and their Canons*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2008. 326 pp. \$65.

"[T]he majority of eighteenth-century novels were actually written by women, but this had long remained a purely quantitative assertion of dominance," Ian Watts's unsubstantiated "throw-away line" in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), motivated Dale Spender's hypothesis that early women novelists were deliberately excluded from literary canons based only on their sex. Brian Corman, who tells us "[does] not believe in 'only' explanations for interesting problems in literary history" (4), was spurred to ask questions about canon making and the story of the development of the novel. The result is a "history of histories" of the novel: a survey of two hundred years of responses to the novel, with a particular emphasis on discovering how women novelists came to be excluded. Corman's chronological presentation of histories and the emergence of literary canons is an accessible, informative, and sometimes humorous study.

The survey is presented in five chapters: the eighteenth century which viewed Henry Fielding's "new species of writing" as an antidote to the feminized and dangerous Romance; chapter 2 covering the first self-conscious attempts to establish a canon from 1800 to 1840; chapter 3, the critical centrepiece of the study, 1840 to 1880, wherein in the second half of the chapter Corman focuses on criticism of Behn, Manley, and Haywood, Richardson, Burney, and Austen who prove reliable indicators of critical trends; chapter 4 on the Victorians, 1880 to 1920; and chapter 5, the High Modernism and Formalism of 1920 to 1957. Each chapter begins by introducing the developing interests and trends informing "the canon-making instincts" of the critics (109) and explaining Corman's rationale for his selections of texts. The conclusion to each chapter summarizes its particular period's critical values of the novel—morality, pleasure, nationalism, realism—and its openness to early women novelists. The chapters get longer as the critical works increase for each period. The appendix of "Novels Cited" and the index of "Authors/Critics and Their Works" provide a very welcome and helpful key, making the book an accessible reference tool.

Corman's methodology in this encyclopedic survey is to examine the critics' evaluations of male novelists as well as female in order to foreground "the critical principles and personal biases informing those evaluations" (5). In this way, Corman offers a balanced and systematic appraisal of the canon-making machine, avoiding simple sexist explana-

tions like Spender's. Most interestingly, Corman discovers that a critic's attitude toward Samuel Richardson provides "an important bellwether for responses to eighteenth-century women novelists" (43). The pendulum of taste in the dialectic of the manly Fielding versus the feminized Richardson is an unusually trustworthy indicator of how a specific era will react to women novelists. A sympathetic critical reading of Richardson usually prefigures an equally sympathetic reception of women novelists. Corman's tracing of the critical rise and fall of Richardson's (and thus women's) popularity through the many quotations from the histories provides one of the main enjoyments of the book. Critics, it seems, have not always been diplomatic and objective in their judgments of literature; as quoted throughout this study, they are often personal and deliciously vicious. For instance, in 1859, at the height of admiration for Fielding's manly humour and vitality, David Masson describes Richardson as "the nervous, tea-drinking, pompous little printer, coddled [...] by a bevy of admiring women" (61); his scope is "limited" and this fault in him, as well as "the majority of modern novelists, and especially lady-novelists" greatly contracts the power of the novel (61). For Trollope, Fielding was the more preferable "sinner" to Richardson's "saint among novelists" (94); while Fielding, writes Thackeray, "couldn't do otherwise than laugh at the puny cockney bookseller, pouring out endless volumes of sentimental twaddle, and hold him up to scorn as a mollcoddle and a milksop.[...] Richardson's goddess was attended by old maids and dowagers, and fed on muffins and bohea" (95). By 1918, when there was a renewed interest in Richardson's novels, Arthur Compton-Rickett regards Richardson as the "dumpy Fairy Prince" who taught women novelists like Frances Burney and Jane Austen to write like women (130); while Norman Collins in 1932 can assert that Richardson was "the first important woman novelist in the language. His thoughts all moved in skirts. His novels are the apotheosis of vapours and virtue. He wrote as women write; only a little better" (220). Corman is not intrusive or judgmental of the many critics he includes; instead, he allows them, as above, "to point out their own limitations in their own words" (7).

Throughout his study Corman is quick to state that "no single, coherent narrative can encompass the positions of all the contributors to the [canon] debate" (56). There is an "absence of a single rigid canon" (106); however, patterns such as dismissing Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood for their licentiousness and scandal-mongering and claiming that there were no women writers worthy of mention before 1790 continue through the eras. Behn makes a bit of a recovery when, in Ernest Baker's

1903 *A Guide to the Best Fiction in English*, *Oroonoko* is retrieved from obscurity to be read as an early abolitionist novel, a forerunner of Harriet Beecher Stowe. The presentist orientation of Victorian critics tended to disregard most eighteenth-century novels altogether. They had little time for what went before them: before the perfections of Sir Walter Scott and George Eliot.

The reception of early women novelists seems always to have been associated with the critical reactions to early men novelists. It is often a matter of taste. Definitions of, and criteria for, the novel change. Traditional moral objections to anything before 1740 rejected Behn, Manley, and Haywood as well as Defoe from critical appreciation; when Henry Fielding was too coarse for the critics, Frances Burney was rejected for her vulgarity; when realism reigned, overly didactic and Gothic fiction were excluded from critical favour, taking with them Hannah More, Ann Radcliffe, Sophia Lee. The Modernist re-evaluation of Defoe's long-neglected *Moll Flanders* stimulated interest in less-than-honourable female protagonists, which finally allow the works of Behn, Manley, and Haywood to be reconsidered.

Women Novelists before Jane Austen is a valuable contribution to the history of the eighteenth-century novel as it effectively presents what has compelled the attention of different critics and readers over the ages. Corman traces for us the emergence of patterns long lost or unquestioningly accepted and the fascinating formation and slow evolutions of literary canons.

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