

Book Reviews

Alexander Dick and Angela Esterhammer, eds. *Spheres of Action: Speech and Performance in Romantic Culture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2009. 306 pp.

What? No Keats? No Blake?

Perhaps we can justify Blake's absence in a book about language, performance, and agency during the Romantic period. With all that obscure mythmaking, prophetic mysticism, and eccentric art, Blake arguably remains the "odd duck" among the flock of canonical Romantics. But back-to-your-pill-boxes Johnny Keats seems autumnally ripe for a speech-act picking: his all-too-short writing career was an excruciatingly self-conscious struggle between the private and public voice, and his fragile sense of poetic worth was compromised by a tradition he often felt too big—and exclusionary—for him. One simple question lurks everywhere in his work: What voice can I assume that will give me enduring poetic power? But no whisper there is of Keats (or Blake) in this otherwise remarkably diverse and often engaging collection of original essays.

From nitpicking about who has been excluded, there may be inclusionary issues in the large, perhaps too large, guiding principles behind *Spheres of Action: Speech and Performance in Romantic Culture*. To exam-

ine poetry, drama, fiction, theatre, politics, journalism, legal texts, public speaking, walking, gestures, clothing, laments, elocution, orality—not to mention history—under the umbrella of “performance,” “performativity,” and “speech acts” may be to compromise the explanatory powers of such theoretical terms. What isn’t a speech act or a performance? To write, as the editors do, that “language is a form of action” may be to rehearse an all-too-familiar gloss.

The disconnect, then, between the more theoried introduction and the more practised contributions is discernible in that many of the ten essays have little or no engagement with the likes of Judith Butler, J.L. Austin, and John Searle. Thus terms like “performativity,” “speech acts,” “identity,” and “agency” could be vacuumed out of some of the essays with no loss to their critical insights.

The volume’s stated purpose is to “liberate” the “bastilled tongue of Romanticism so that it may sound again.” “Liberate”? From whom or what? The implication that the Romantics were a muzzled bunch of dell dwellers does not ring altogether true. The journalists, pamphleteers, preachers, politicians, and dramatists of the era were an exceedingly noisy bunch who operated in an expanding (and often lucrative) public sphere, which was perhaps the first era where we might slide in the notion of mass culture. And then there were those loquacious poets—Coleridge with his conversational cadence and supernatural balladmongerings; Wordsworth’s not so tranquil words about language rising out of feelings and experience, not to mention his belief in poet as a “translator” adopting “the very language of men”; Byron’s imperious and ideologically challenging verbal and public gestures, and what M.H. Abrams long ago called “an ironic counter-voice” that uncomfortably splits open the age; and, of course, there’s Shelley, who ventriloquizes just about every object or idea he encounters, though better known for his radical, high-flying, and legislating voice that yearns for mankind’s ear. All this wrestling with voices, styles, and forms suggest strong soundings indeed. Is there something to be gained by saying that their “words act”? The editors note that “Romantic culture is a performative culture” because it “grants efficacy to verbal utterances; it is conscious of ... various forms of social and political representation; it cultivates performance, on and off the stage, as constitutive of identity.” Once more, does any of this go, so to speak, without saying? We get it: “Romantic culture” grants language cultural powers.

All of this may sound a bit cranky, which is too bad. It just may be that the introduction works a bit too hard to spin everything around “performativity” and its attendant lexicon when it didn’t really have to. I say “too

bad” because the chapters in the volume are full of valuable and original insights, especially in the historically based essays that place us squarely in a Romantic milieu. We get smart, lively, and extended portrayals and analyses of how, for example, actors acted, walkers walked, lecturers lectured, and how one of the most important politicians of the age cried in Parliament. On the more interpretive side, there are many noteworthy and challenging readings. Noting the somewhat forgotten importance of Thelwall’s elocutionary theory, practice, and strategies takes us back to the influence he may have had on some of his more famous contemporaries. We get to see, too, the relationship between the lament and the elegy via Wordsworth, and we are led through complex tie-ins with the rise of the commercial undertaking industry. Likewise we encounter the discursive and ethical complexity in how Shelley’s *Cenci* politically intersects with a well-known blasphemy trial. Valuable light is shed, through Staël and Kant, upon the systematically indeterminate and seductive cosmopolitan nature of Byron’s *Don Juan*. And then we get a powerful rereading of *Frankenstein* that reminds us of how Rousseau’s social aesthetics of resentment and victimary identification figure centrally in the novel’s successive monstrous narrators. All good stuff. All great connections.

In the end, one implicit result of this worthy collection reminds us that the centre of English Romanticism was, arguably, Regency London, rather than the Lake District. People as much as daffodils tossed their heads in zeitgeist’s breeze.

G. Kim Blank
University of Victoria

Gregory M. Pfitzer. *Popular History and the Literary Marketplace 1840–1920*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008. xiv, 469 pp.

In the genre of popular history, as absorbingly explored by Gregory Pfitzer, narrative is paramount. So, first, the story. Around the mid-nineteenth century, a mass readership came into being in the United States: technological advances in papermaking and printing made economies of scale possible, rapidly expanding transportation networks facilitated country-wide distribution, and expanding literacy rates meant that a large segment of the population was ripe for print culture. Among the cultural gatekeepers who vied to harness this public to their purposes was the writer, editor,

and literary critic Evert A. Duyckinck. He gathered around him a tight circle of New York literati, a social and intellectual elite variously known as the Tetractys Club and the Young Americans. Aiming to shape a distinctive American literary identity, they worked at influencing the reading of the masses, especially America's growing middle class. From 1845, Duyckinck produced compendia of cheap editions—the *Library of Choice Reading* and *Library of American Books* published by Wiley and Putnam and *Home Library* by I.S. Platt—at twelve and a half to fifty cents per paperbound volume. Explicitly paternalistic and nationalistic, Duyckinck's group recognized American history as a primary resource for forging a unified identity. In their estimation, the best historians were the novelists and poets who could bring alive the spirit of the country. Duyckinck's libraries made little distinction between history and romance, and he particularly promoted William Gilmore Simms and Washington Irving as storytellers whose freewheeling movement between fictional and historical materials created a compelling, moralistic vision of the nation.

Soon self-proclaimed “popular histories of the United States” emerged as a distinct genre within the literary marketplace, exploding in sales after the Civil War. Among the best sellers were Philadelphians George Lippard and John Frost—both popular novelists prior to their forays as historians. In 1849, *Godey's Lady's Book* dubbed Lippard “unquestionably the most popular writer of the day” (quoted 55), best known for his sensational exposés of social elites such as *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall* of 1844. The combination of narrative ordering strategies and nationalistic imperatives produced distinct patterns in these histories: an emphasis on sensational events and mythological moments (such as Lippard's story of the Liberty Bell tolling at the signing of the Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776); clear distinctions between heroes and villains; adherence to a structuring principle, such as providence or liberty; and a nationwide scope which encouraged both a sense of ideological unity and cross-region sales. Popular as they were, these historians were not to Duyckinck's liking; they were of the wrong class, wrong literary style, and wrong geographical location. In their advertising and sales techniques, Duyckinck and his publishers sought to distinguish between two versions of “the popular”: on the one hand, their inexpensively priced volumes “where the moral is superior to the mere story” and, on the other, “cheap and nasty” publications which were sensationalistic and vulgar (quoted 56)—between, in Pfitzer's words, were “the high-minded populism of Irving and the base offerings of Lippard and Frost” (59).

There was another contender in the contest to shape the American people's history, one which did not care for Duyckinck's fine distinctions but damned "popular history" *tout court*. This was the "new breed of professional historians" which coalesced after the Civil War (61). With notions of scholarly rigour shaped by realism, positivism, and Darwinism, the professionals demanded "that historical study conform to standardized rules of operation centered on objectivity and the scientific pursuit of factual knowledge" (61). Scholarly hostility to the blurring of fiction and history was voiced as early as 1846 when Harvard professor Cornelius Felton urged readers to reject Duyckinck's *Library of American Books* in favour of trained minds "stored with facts and dates,—the more numerous the facts, and the more precise the dates, the better" (quoted 66). With these principles guiding the pursuit of "historical truth" (67), this level of hostility to popular history, and the conviction that literary skill was not a perquisite but an obstacle to good history writing, the American Historical Association was formed in 1884.

These tensions and struggles played out for the rest of the century, which Pfitzer calls "an important transition era in the history of historical studies" (71). In a series of fascinating case studies, he explores individual careers which embody the negotiations and contradictions at the heart of popular history-making. First we hear poet laureate William Cullen Bryant and journalist Sydney Howard Gay wrangling over their collaboration on *Bryant's Popular History of the United States* as what had seemed an ideal combination—Bryant's poetic, theatrical storytelling and Gay's dispassionate scientism—emerged as almost irreconcilable difference. John Clark Ridpath resigned his position as an Indiana college professor to merge objective science and subjective narrative in his wildly popular American and "universal" histories which traced "the underlying principles of human development operating at the heart of history" (159). Snubbed by the AHA for his metahistorical generalizations, Ridpath found community among the Indiana literati of the Western Association of Writers and as an advocate for the labouring classes. Another Hoosier, Edward Eggleston, brought his skills as local colourist and realist novelist to the "New History," precursor to social history, which valued the details of everyday life. Eggleston successfully bridged the gap between popular and professional—despite his lack of educational credentials, his method won him election as president of the AHA in 1900—but his aim to comprehensively cover the history and life of America's common people defeated him. After "more than twenty years of nearly endless research," he died, having completed only a tiny part of his project (226). Edward S. Ellis was

a bestselling dime novelist who launched his career as a popular historian by borrowing heavily back and forth between the two genres. While his dime fiction incorporated some of his historical passages, his histories employed dime-novel techniques of melodrama, graphic violence, and formulaic repetition. Ellis won a huge public, including young readers, and, although he was excoriated by professionals, his attuning of history to contemporary priorities proved prescient of a distinctive American strain—what Van Wyck Brooks later dubbed “the search for a usable past.” Finally, Julian Hawthorne, son of Nathaniel and a novelist absorbed with the creative tension between the ideal and the real, sought to reach a great public with histories of America’s spiritual growth. More than anything, Hawthorne’s sad tale of delusion and failure suggests the fundamental impossibility of hewing to a spiritual vision within the intensely material conditions of the literary marketplace.

The rich archival detail and discriminating analysis which Pfitzer brings to these stories make this study an important contribution to history of the book scholarship, popular print culture studies, and historiography. Approaching popular histories “as historical artifacts and cultural agents” (7), he illuminates the ways in which complex philosophical issues over how to know and tell the past were “anchored in the day-to-day practical business of writing and publishing as experienced at all levels of the production history of popular books” (15). The legwork which has gone into reconstructing marketplace conditions—advertising and sales methods; interventions by editors, publishers, and reviewers; fights for international copyright—is painstaking and inventive. Among other materials, Pfitzer has combed dry bibliographies for evidence about the struggle to control public reading and traveling book agents’ manuals for revelations about how marketing responded to community hierarchies and shaped popular expectations. These conditions manifestly impacted the writers’ task. After Bryant’s death, for example, Gay struggled to accommodate his accessible but rigorously researched work to Scribner’s production schedule, which was in turn pressured by the publisher having presold the complete *History* by subscription, fifty parts at fifty cents each.

Pfitzer is also a talented reader of texts, whose close analysis of these little-remembered histories bears out Hayden White’s theories about the narrative structures underpinning the discipline of history. Pfitzer mines manuscripts, editorial and personal correspondence, and published histories, fleshing out the ideological commitments of stylistic details. He undertakes, for example, line-by-line comparisons between Ridpath’s 1876 *Popular History of the United States* and its revision into

the *People's History of the United States* twenty years later, tracing the relationship between the author's developing interest in universal laws, his downplaying of heroic individuals, and his increasing respect for racial difference. In all these ways, Pfitzer deeply historicizes the complexities of commercial culture, perennial contests over "the popular" and definitional debates about "cheap books," consistently reminding us what was—and remains—at stake in terms of cultural power.

Christine Bold
University of Guelph

Peter Mahon. *Imagining Joyce and Derrida: Between Finnegans Wake and Glas*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. 405 pp.

Intrigued by Coleridge's distinction between *fancy* and *imagination*, James Joyce reckoned he did not have the latter. Heidegger later effectively blended what were for Coleridge two faculties—conception and intuitive arrangement—for his definition of "imagination," and Jacques Derrida was in his turn compelled to wonder whether or not he was by these lights imaginative. Yet waiting to be written, a capacious history of the imagination, of how the imagination has itself been imagined, would surely give no little attention to these writers and thinkers.

The reader of Peter Mahon's long and dense book might well puzzle over the word "between" in the subtitle. What is between these texts? A suitably Derridian answer: *nothing*. In fact, we can profitably look at different possible meanings of saying *there is nothing between Finnegans Wake and Glas* as a scheme for reviewing this book and a way of seeing if nothing will indeed come of nothing.

There is nothing between them because there is nothing inside them. Mahon's central argument is that Joyce's book "can be read as a text that disrupts and reinscribes the philosophical understanding of the process of *mimesis*" (3). The nuance, the trepidation in that sentence gives one pause: it isn't simply that *Finnegans Wake* imitates nothing—which in itself is not a particularly novel claim, but a recurrent point of interest and anxiety within Joyce scholarship with which Mahon does not seem terribly familiar¹—but rather that it "can be read" as imitating nothing.

1 For example, although Sam Slote is mentioned in the introduction as an important example of a Joycean critic directly engaging with Derrida, his work is—in-

(Talk about hedging one's bets.)² Accordingly, Mahon reads the *Wake* for its echoes of Derrida's thinking and does so not without discoveries and rewards, although it needs to be considered that an ornithologist can read the same book for rare birds and find them. The "nothing" represented in the book is, apparently, not a lack of representation per se, since Mahon invariably writes of the book as a narrative with identifiable characters, actions, and plot.

There is nothing between them in so far as there is no history between them. Or, more precisely, there are only traces of epistemologies; no *material* history, no palpable trace of the thirty-five years between their publications, or between Hegel and Genet, for that matter.³ The circumstances, the context in which *Glas* and the *Wake* were written are given no notice here, despite a stated interest in "Vico's productive method" (that is, the concept of a method) and the "textual body" (again, the idea of a body and nothing material or tangible). This absence—this imposed nothing—at least partly accounts for the book's glaring unawareness of a considered historical understanding of modernism as a crisis of meaning.

There is nothing between them because they are one and the same. Treating the *Wake* as a comprehensible, comprehensive philosophical system strikes me as a pretty odd thing to do, not because it has no philosophical dimensions (it contains multitudes) but because the methods by which Joyce composed the *Wake* (loosely referred to but never seriously grounded with so much as a mention of the mass of textual criticism and genetic material available to show how this or that passage of text took shape) reveal a perpetual refusal of orderly or even comprehensible systems, a rejection of the "oversystematization" that Joyce confessed to Beckett troubled him about *Ulysses*.

Of all of the absences in this book—in this instance, those epistemologically "between" Joyce and Derrida—two of the most striking in this

explicitly, it seems to me—nowhere cited or discussed. The reader is referred to Slotte's "No symbols where none intended: Derrida's war at *Finnegans Wake*" (in *James Joyce and the Difference of Language*, ed. Laurent Milesi [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003], 195-207) as a starting point.

2 Mahon's prose really staggers when a single page becomes clotted with such qualifying phrases, passive, speculative, and/or uncertain as they are: "can be understood ... would appear ... would appear ... would also guarantee could be seen" (20).

3 And the imbalance of attention given to Hegel rather than Genet (the two ostensible and seemingly incommensurate "subjects" of *Glas*) is fairly stark and revealing. Mahon's interest in Hegelian thought is clearly deep; Genet seems only of interest in so far as Derrida paid attention to him.

regard are Flaubert and Blanchot. The first, whose longing to write a book “about nothing” is well-known, gets frequent nods in the *Wake*, such as this one:

With best apolojigs and merrymoney thanks to self for all the clerricals and again begs guerdon for bistrisping on your bunificence. Well wiggYWiggYWagtail, and how are you, yaggy? With a capital Tea for Thirst. From here Buvard to dear Picuchet. Blott. (FW 302.04–10)

Mahon reproduces a much longer excerpt of this section, which takes up greater space than his analysis, which fixates on this last word and the scatological theme. The shit’s there, all right, but so is the vapidness of letters, the nothing of style, the nothing at the heart of the encyclopaedic everything of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*—and the *Wake* itself. This often happens: Mahon is so quick to locate the tropes and metaphors and images that he favours (by and large the corporeal, particularly the “feminine” or excretory, and its intermittent convergences with the divine, such as the immaculate conception) that he misses how the text ceaselessly gainsays such things with the very “nothing” that Mahon wants to discuss. Timothy Clark has observed that “Much of Derrida’s ‘originality’ in relation to the literary lies in readings of Heidegger and Blanchot which can have the result of having his ‘own’ work seem derivative.”⁴ Although hardly an elegant formulation, this assertion is important not just to contextualize how Derrida reads Joyce but to appreciate how imagination might be profitably understood not as an individuated point of origin but as a continually expanding network of readings and re-readings.

There is nothing between them; they are just good friends. If *Finnegans Wake* imitates nothing, how can *Glas* imitate *Finnegans Wake*? (See the reviewer shrug and shift in his chair.) That *Glas* and the *Wake* have a “shared imagery” (200) is an interesting claim, and Mahon makes some persuasive points on this score. His Derridian search for “philosophemes” is attractive and perhaps, in its way, noble. His mode of inquiry, however, is strictly (if selectively) expositional; neither the master theorist nor the master writer come in for anything like criticism.

Thus, *Imagining Joyce and Derrida* is at times useful as a gloss on *Glas*, an analogizing of *Finnegans Wake* and Derrida’s thought, but without any challenges to the systems it perceives and obediently traces. And as if to

4 Timothy Clark, *Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot: Sources of Derrida’s Notion and Practice of Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 134.

ensure that this book does not give its reader undue pleasure, it is thick with redundancies: sizeable quotations and definitions are needlessly repeated. Appended to the phrase “these [studies] are more commendable than Lernout’s unsympathetic, nit-picking summaries in *The French Joyce*” is an endnote that reads in full: “The reference is to Geert Lernout’s *The French Joyce*.” Luckily this title is also included in the list of Works Cited, also attributed to Geert Lernout, so as to prevent any possible confusion. In that same list, though, James S. Atherton is credited with writing Derek Attridge’s *Joyce Effects* and Joseph Campbell is listed as the sole author of the book he wrote with Henry Morton Robinson, *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*. Derrida’s works are cited by abbreviations, but one has to dig through the twenty-five pages of endnotes to find their first mention, for there is no list of abbreviations to consult.

Mahon calls *Glas* Derrida’s “most sustained meditation on the imagination” (354), and that seems fair comment, and the phrase probably applies to Joyce and his *Wake*, too, but the rub is found in wondering exactly what “sustained” connotes. And if Mahon’s book might be likewise called a sustained meditation, it is not terribly sustaining.

Tim Conley
Brock University

Leon Surette. *The Modern Dilemma: Wallace Stevens, T.S. Eliot, and Humanism*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2008. 416 pp. Notes, index. \$59.95 cloth.

A new book from Leon Surette, one of Canada’s most distinguished interpreters of modernism, will always provoke interest, and his most recent, on Wallace Stevens and T.S. Eliot, repays the anticipation. It is a sophisticated and richly detailed reading of the works of the two poets with a view to exploring their relationship to humanism. Much has already been written about Eliot and humanism, mainly because Eliot spent a good deal of time attacking it in his prose. Less has been said about Stevens and humanism because he did not bother to say very much about it. As Professor Surette admits, Stevens’s prose “is not preoccupied with Humanism as Eliot’s is” (5). The book argues that the anti-humanist Eliot had a short humanist period and that the humanist Stevens was perhaps no such thing. I’m not sure these revelations are going to startle very many of his readers. In a time when Eliot studies seem obsessed with his

sexuality, his anti-Semitism, and his flirtations with fascism, his fifteen minutes as a humanist probably won't raise many eyebrows. Neither will the contention that Stevens's humanism may not be as deeply embraced as many scholars seem to believe.

The book's several strengths begin with the author's nuanced readings of works by the two poets. Although there has already been a great deal of critical attention lavished on Eliot and Stevens, Professor Surette casts new light on familiar texts. Drawing on his wide knowledge of intellectual history, he explicates well the philosophical and religious undercurrents of Stevens's thought, allowing him to construe his theme in ways that many will find convincing or at least plausible. Strong also is his use of life materials, letters for example, in bringing out fresh dimensions of meaning in difficult poems. His examination of the relation of Eliot's "Gerontion" to *The Waste Land* (131–51) is especially intriguing, bringing to light new connections and source materials. Stevens's great lyric "The Idea of Order at Key West" is also vividly contextualized in debates about humanism in the 1930s (chapter 5).

For all the book's many virtues, there are, however, aspects that one might call weaknesses but which are probably unavoidable given Professor Surette's approach. I refer, for example, to the problem of definition. What exactly does Professor Surette mean by a capitalized Humanism? The author does admit that it can mean a number of different things in different times and places and he does tell us what he does not mean by it, but at the end of the day his use of the term remains a little foggy. He admits that, unlike Jeffery Perl's sense of humanism as a constituent element of modernism, his use is "more restricted" and "more modest" (46). A few lines later, he writes that he makes "no effort to place Eliot and Stevens in the context of metahistorical movements and tendencies," and instead he seeks "to reconstruct their struggles to find their way in a world of conflicting opinion and belief played out against a background of accelerating scientific discovery and technological change." This is a little difficult to understand on two counts. The book has very little to say about "accelerating scientific discovery and technological change," so one can only assume that the phrase is being used in that clichéd sense typical of think pieces in newspapers, undergraduate essays, and the conversation of non-scientists.

Secondly, what exactly is a metahistorical movement or tendency? The bundle of ideas and social practices that descends from the civic humanism of the Italian city states in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to Christian Humanists like Erasmus and Thomas More in the sixteenth,

to the humanism of the Enlightenment and to its many nineteenth- and twentieth-century variants (46) is not, in truth, fundamentally “metahistorical” as these ideas and practices were very much the stuff of actual social, political, and cultural debate for centuries. So what does the word mean? From a number of asides and passing remarks in the book, it is clear that Professor Surette uses the term to castigate what he refers to as the “common assumption of much current scholarship that class, ideology, the means of production, and language determine the nature of artworks” (323). Against this supposed tilt in the contemporary critical scene, he asserts that unruly contingencies in the life experiences of Eliot and Stevens, even though the two poets share similar upbringings (4), “cannot easily be brought under the deterministic rules of Marxism or new historicism” (323). One of the most useful consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Communism in Eastern Europe was the return of Karl Marx to his rightful place as a nineteenth-century critic of the political economy of nineteenth-century capitalism, a contemporary of Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and George Eliot. It’s a shame that Professor Surette is still shadowboxing with his epigones. And I suspect this lies at the core of what is an actual weakness in the book’s method.

Professor Surette believes that he has understood the work of Eliot and Stevens by taking account of, as he writes, “the march of events’ in which their private lives were embedded” (323). Does march of events mean history? If it does, this is an astounding claim at the end of a book in which there is precious little critical engagement with “the march of events” or the private lives of the two men. There is a great deal of excellent close reading of canonic works and much in the way of the history of ideas, but a passing mention to General Pershing’s invasion of northern Mexico in 1916 in pursuit of Pancho Villa (160), the Osama bin Laden of an earlier phase of American military adventurism, hardly seems like a serious attempt to embed Stevens in the march of events. Only when he writes about Ramon Fernandez does he engage with a particular historical moment but then only to reject its influence on Stevens’s composition of “The Idea of Order at Key West” (204). The meditation on the poets’ private lives does not go much further than saying that Eliot was cuckolded by Bertrand Russell (which, according to Surette, seems to have led to Eliot’s rejection of humanism) and that Stevens was a Republican insurance company executive of a fairly typical sort. Neither of these revelations contributes a great deal to our understanding of either the ethno-erotic perversities of Eliot’s *Ara Vos Prec* poems or Stevens’s witty perversities in “The Comedian as the Letter C.”

As far as Eliot's humanist period is concerned, Professor Surette locates it early in Eliot's intellectual life when he seems to have come under the philosophical influence of Bertrand Russell. This influence was not long-lasting nor was it particularly deeply felt (if it even had any affect at all on Eliot). Indeed, Eliot's "flirtation" (5) with humanism is a little bit like those hamlets one passes on the highway about which travelers quip that if you blink, you'll miss them. The problem with debunking Stevens's allegiance to humanism means running against the current of scholarly opinion. Not itself a bad thing. But as most other scholars seem to think that Stevens "remained within the admittedly broad church of Humanism" (5), Professor Surette is put in the position of having to say that this "assumption is based on a rather careless reading of Stevens' poetry and a neglect of his prose" (5). It is one thing to suggest that one's colleagues may have erred because of ideological blinkers, or methodological legerdemain, or even unfortunate warps in their critical philosophies, but to give them the back of your hand by accusing them of being "careless" and neglectful tells us rather more about the author than it does about his colleagues. The republic of scholarship is no democracy, but it is quite startling to be told that so many could have been so wrong so often simply because they are not very careful readers.

There is one other possible misperception in the book and that has to do with what Professor Surette feels is the "precipitous decline" of Eliot's reputation. I'm not sure how the author measures this supposed decline, but that is not the impression one might gather from the critical attention still being paid to Eliot in terms of new books, articles, book chapters, and references in the popular media (see, for example, Guy Dammann's article "How come Eliot is still so popular?" at blogs/guardian.co.uk, posted Tuesday, 11 March 2008 and viewed 20 November 2008). Stevens may now be getting his due and that must be a good thing. Had he participated as broadly and as intensively as Eliot in the public life of his society, his reputation would today probably bulk as large as Eliot's. Both Eliot and Stevens were very private individuals, but in coming face to face with the "modern dilemma," what they both experienced as the catastrophic loss of religious faith in a secular-leaning modernity, Eliot was roused to action in print, in broadcasting, and in public lectures. Stevens treasured his privacy and found there a kind of solace, a respite in "Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred" ("Idea of Order at Key West"). Perhaps humanism is not, after all, the key intellectual connection between the two poets. Perhaps where they both meet and part company is in their ambiguous and fraught relationship to aestheticism, to "enchanted night,"

or to those “fragrant portals” through which the disappointed, perhaps even despairing, modern poet draws near to beauty and then, just before he arrives, feels embarrassed and stops.

John Xiros Cooper
University of British Columbia

Eva Gruber. *Humor in Contemporary Native North American Literature: Reimagining Nativeness*. Rochester: Camden House, 2008. 266 pp. \$76.29 / US \$65.00.

Eva Gruber’s *Humor in Contemporary Native North American Literature: Reimagining Nativeness* has something of the feel of an end to an era about it, even as its concluding segments reach beyond, gesturing toward scholarship that most likely defines the coming decade in North American Aboriginal/Indigenous humour studies. A book like this has been too long in coming. Gruber’s encyclopaedic survey of critical literature on the subject, combined with her strong and clearly stated governing thesis, may remind readers of Linda Hutcheon’s *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. I strongly recommend Gruber’s book, especially the early chapters that survey the critical field, as one of two starting points for any scholar at or above the undergraduate level interested in Native North American literary humour—Drew Hayden Taylor’s *Me Funny* is the other. It is also a pleasant surprise to see that, despite Uncle Sam Coyote on the cover, “North America” means North America to Gruber. As a reader from the snowier side of the great Anglo-colonial divide, I cannot help but wriggle a little in delight to see how integral Canadian literary and critical production is to Gruber’s explanatory model.

The book’s structuring argument builds on Allan J. Ryan’s *The Trickster Shift*, another of the rare full-length monographs on the subject: humour, in its juxtaposition of incongruous elements, opens a space for readers to reimagine and renegotiate disempowering, predominantly colonial representations of Native identity. Native literary humour is vital because the discourses so deployed subvert—often from within—Euroamerican stereotypes that justify the oppression of North America’s original nations; further, humour allows an opportunity for Aboriginal people to reconfigure their own sense of themselves in the face of potentially overpowering institutional and media constructions.

Before articulating this premise, Gruber offers a brief, dense chapter entitled “Humor in Native North American Literature and Culture: Survey,” which does exactly that: she begins by extrapolating tribal humour from traces in Le Jeune and his compatriots in the early colonial period, follows this with ethnographers from the early twentieth century, and concludes with roughly current Aboriginal critics. She suggests that literary humour more readily shows the bitter impact of colonialism when compared to the laughter of “traditional ceremonies and everyday life” shared among friends and neighbours (9). Next, a chronological look at “pan-tribal Native humor in written form,” dating back to Alex Posey (Creek) at the turn of the twentieth century (12); Gruber discounts the much earlier, biting satire of writers like William Apess (Pequot) or Elias Boudinot (Cherokee). Although pockets of sarcasm and humour mark the Native American Renaissance—especially, one might think, Vine Deloria Jr.’s non-fictional *Custer Died for Your Sins*, although it isn’t mentioned in this section—it is not until the late 1980s that writers like Erdrich, Vizenor, then Owens, King, Wagamese, and Alexie come to the forefront. Noting the genre confusion that can be caused by authors’ admixture of oral tradition and standard European forms, Gruber summarizes an impressive range of contemporary comic novels, short stories, poetry, and theatre.

Chapter 2 addresses identity as the central issue in Native writing, discussing the topos of The White Man’s Indian in popular culture, historical accounts, and legislation. A quick rundown of the material causes and effects of legislative identity could have proven useful here, but Gruber’s focus is on the lack of positive modeling for Aboriginal individuals, as well as the potential for intracommunity discord sewn by internalization of essentialist, inaccurate stereotypes. Gruber makes a good case that literature can provide a starting point around which people can articulate new, beneficial possibilities of self-representation that not only contest but harness and subvert hegemonic imagery. Carefully picking her way through critical models of cross-cultural negotiation, she advances an agential model of the subject who—especially if this subject is an author—picks, chooses, and manipulates hybridized colonial discourse to advance an Aboriginal agenda. The use of language to create change is not foreign to traditional practice; as Owens says, Native Peoples have long understood the enactive, performative power of the word. Humour, by introducing elements of unfamiliarity and liminality to narratives of empire, allows authors space to reposition themselves with respect to these discourses. In addition, by walking the fine line between cross-cultural invitation and alienation, humour allows meaningful dialogue between actors differen-

tially positioned across the racial binary, actors who might otherwise find themselves unwilling to listen.

At this point the focus shifts to formal classification of techniques used by comic authors. Chapter 3 canvasses the critical positions taken on a number of modes within genres, doing similar work to John Clement Ball's invaluable *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel: V.S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie*. Irony and sarcasm are distinguished by their sharpness of attack, then the exaggerative arts of satire, parody, burlesque, and caricature are investigated through Revard, Alexie, and King. The overall argument is consistent with that advanced in earlier chapters but takes a linguistic turn in the second half, showcasing the use of dialect writing to contest the Queen's English as the standard-bearer of meaning. The chapter concludes by demonstrating that overt intertextuality seen in books like *Green Grass, Running Water* is compatible with oral tradition and can be interpreted particularly in terms of the Trickster's habitual breaking down of fixed categories. Gerald Vizenor's theories of semiotic Tricksterism are discussed, as is the tribal Tricksters, deploying narratives that confound expectation and destabilize repressive hierarchies of authors writing as pan-ethnic hierarchies.

By far the largest chapter, "Humor at Work in Contemporary Native Writing," addresses a wide range of issues through a myriad of hosts. Authors subvert colonial constructs of dominance like patriarchal Christianity and shake up the rigid racial binarism that propagates more discrete topoi like the Hollywood or New Age Indian. This thesis is worked through major novelists in the field, most of whom have been mentioned above, along with a number of less commonly cited writers. There are several highlights. One is Gruber's detailed close reading of Mojica's "Post-Colonial Traumatic Stress Disorder" and its engagement with medical language. Gruber also offers a strong reading of *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, although this reading might lead someone unfamiliar with the play to assume that the protagonist, Princess Buttered-on-Both-Sides, is only buttered on the Euroamerican side. In fact, Mojica forwards a material feminist reading of the way gendered systems of oppression operating within the Indigenous societies of "Pocahontas" and "Malintzin" led these women to make choices that many of their own people consider traitorous to this very day. Other highlights include an excellent section explaining the place of the word in historiographic metafiction, with challenging readings of Revard and Dumont. The penultimate portion of the chapter reviews authors' responses to academic appropriation of Indigenous culture, though again the effects that Euro-academic approximations of

Indigeneity have on, for instance, governmental policy are barely glanced over in favour of an identity model.

By now, a reader could be raising many of the objections found in Womack's *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*: Gruber tends, at least until the closing segments, to shy away from exploring tribally-specific political goals or issues internal to Aboriginal communities. This is understandable, given the book's focus on pan-tribal themes and the fact that Gruber's work systematizes a field of literary and academic production that for the last twenty-five years has prioritized identity and resistance to colonial discourse. Still, there is an element of relief to be had in the final pages where her emphasis shifts to humour's role inside Native communities. Humour is discussed in terms of its usefulness as a means of healing, reinforcing group identity, dealing with subjects that might otherwise be overwhelmingly tragic, and regulating behaviour. As might be expected from the theoretical body laid out thus far, internal discrimination involving mixedbloods is an important locus in this segment, as are tribal authorities who have absorbed too much of the Euroamerican way of governing. However, Gruber also resituates her thesis to demonstrate how humour can work to reinvigorate potentially inflexible Aboriginal traditions, and she talks briefly about the often sacred institution of clowning. She offers an interpretation of Paul Seesequasis' "The Republic of Tricksterism" that demonstrates the usefulness of a historical, institutional reading that opens up "instructive commentary" allegorized within the text (211).

This book does what it sets out to do on a grand scale, and does so with a self-reflexivity that is itself a useful resource. Every footnote opens an opportunity the main text might seem to exclude, and the appendix offers forward-looking research from scholars like Mackin and Fagan. Gruber's text is eminently readable, and although she might insist a little strongly on the inauthenticity of the often-shared discourses of Indigenous identity labeled colonial, her argument is thorough and convincing, and she prominently features the voices of Indigenous spokespeople, critics, and (of course) authors in its construction.

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Aloys Fleischmann
University of Alberta

Konrad Eisenbichler, ed. *Renaissance Medievalisms*. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009. 360 pp.

The Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto has become internationally recognized for their conferences and the resulting publications. This volume is the eighteenth in the series of essay collections and is based on papers given at a conference at the University of Toronto in 2006. Like most of the other entries in the series, this book contains a great deal of interesting research from a number of disciplines: in this case, history, literature (both English and continental), art history, history of science, and philosophy. The fifteen contributors come from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe and range from graduate students to senior academics, thus usefully increasing the diversity of viewpoints represented. A great deal of work on the Renaissance use of the medieval period is now appearing; this collection's range serves to set it apart from many of its competitors.

Konrad Eisenbichler begins his introduction by giving a very efficient summary of ideas about the Renaissance, from Petrarch to Burckhardt to contemporary writers. While he adequately covers recent debates about whether or not there even was a Renaissance, Eisenbichler sensibly refuses to be drawn into this academic quagmire. Instead, he sidesteps the issue and decides to proceed on the assumption that there both was and wasn't a Renaissance and that this period both followed and was the same as the medieval period (ontological debates about whether there even was a medieval period are wisely and indefinitely deferred).

The book is divided into three sections called "The Constantly Changing Continuum," "Appropriating for Current Purposes," and "Building

Upon The Past.” Each of these corresponds to a particular view about the relationship between the two periods that is this book’s subject. The division may seem too rigid and schematic, but, as Eisenbichler admits, many or even most of the essays could have gone into two or all of the sections. Indeed, the essays valuably demonstrate the extent to which Renaissance ideas about the past were complex and multifarious and that even individual Renaissance writers were inconsistent in this regard.

Different readers will bring different interests and areas of expertise to a collection so wide-ranging, but there is definitely something here for everyone. I found the two essays on Shakespeare, by Gary Waller and Philippa Sheppard, the least useful. I was not persuaded by Waller’s discussion of *All’s Well That Ends Well* and I found Sheppard’s sense of the medieval period the least subtle in the book, although her discussion of French writing on Joan of Arc was interesting. Lidia Radi also wrote on Joan of Arc, in the context of Guillaume Michel de Tours’s *Le Penser de royal memoire* from 1518, a work that deserves to be better known. Perhaps the most intriguing of the literary essays was Donald Beecher’s discussion of the Bidpai fables, a group of texts originally from the Sanskrit that entered Europe (in Latin) toward the end of the thirteenth century. Once perhaps as well known as Aesop, the Bidpai fables are now relatively obscure in the English-speaking world. Perhaps this essay will do something to draw attention to them.

For me, the most fascinating essay in the collection was the lone entry from art history: Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood’s analysis (with handsome illustrations) of Renaissance architecture and its appropriation of medieval architecture. Nagel and Wood argue convincingly that for the Renaissance medieval works that imitated classical forms were to some extent seen as actually classical, even when the architects knew that these medieval buildings were only a few centuries old. This essay is related to their 2005 article in *Art Bulletin* and to their eagerly awaited book *Anachronic Renaissance*. The two writers are developing a theory of artistic time that will be useful in many disciplines and may help to find a way out of the problems of a too strict application of periodization, problems that have been the subject of much recent scholarly writing about both the medieval period and the Renaissance.

The last section of the book begins with another essay on time: in this case, Michael Edwards’s discussion of Renaissance philosophy’s use (or abuse) of Duns Scotus’s writings on time. Edwards deals brilliantly with a great deal of complex material and makes a compelling case for the presence of medieval philosophy throughout the Renaissance. The other essays

in this section (I would single out for praise Hans Peter Broedel's intriguing and entertaining look at natural history writing) are more concerned with periodization than with time per se; their focus on how writings about the parts of the world only recently discovered by Renaissance Europeans, about the natural world, and about space (in other words, about what we now call science) resist being enrolled in the conventional narrative of the triumph of empirical research and the birth of modern science.

With its focus on science and (to some extent) on modern Renaissance-isms as much as on Renaissance medievalism, this last section may well be the most popular with readers, as these are topics of great current interest. But I would recommend all the essays in the collection to people with an interest in the uses of the past, and I assume that this category includes all people. Taken as a whole, *Renaissance Medievalisms* offers an interesting and thoughtful look at that ever-interesting question of how the past becomes the present.

Stephen Guy-Bray
University of British Columbia

Mark Currie. *About Time: Narrative, Fiction, and the Philosophy of Time*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007. 160 pp.

Mark Currie's thoughtful and lucidly argued new study, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction, and the Philosophy of Time*, offers an excellent model for placing philosophy and literature into productive dialogue. The book's goal is to bring narratology up to speed with contemporary philosophical insights about time. In particular, Currie positions himself against the usual view that postmodern narrative is defined by its challenges to and revision of historical accounts of the past. He wants instead to focus on the future, arguing that central to contemporary fiction is an engagement with prolepsis, or the anticipation of future significance in the narration of present events. Thorough discussion of key philosophical perspectives on time is coupled in this book with attentive readings of recent English novels to mount a compelling demonstration that fictional narrative's real insights about time are found in its structural and temporal innovations rather than in its themes. Currie's bold claims about narrative's performative capacities in relation to philosophical knowledge comprise an important intervention in the scholarship of postmodernism.

In Currie's view, fiction's advantage over philosophy when it comes to exploring the aporias and contradictions in our understanding of time is its capacity to do something with time rather than simply say something about it. Fiction can explore individual instances wherein time is lived differently, experimentally, even disobediently, by fictional characters, and this exploration can play out at the level of the story's temporal organization. But to grasp narrative's performative operations in this way calls for a new calibration of narratological tools to parallel the sustained analyses of which philosophy is capable. Accordingly, the first chapters of Currie's book examine concepts of time as laid out by Augustine, Husserl, Heidegger, and Derrida, with an eye to bringing these concepts to bear on the relationship between lived time and narrative time. Currie describes a "hermeneutic circle" between the acts of presentification and de-presentification that "makes us live life as if it weren't present and read fictional narrative as if it were" (86). On the one hand, our narration of lived events tends to posit them as the object of future (for example, archival) memory, imposing a temporal self-distance in our storytelling. When we read a novel, on the other hand, we imagine already-written events, whose future is fixed in the pages to come, as nonetheless transpiring in the present moment. Pursuing this hermeneutic complementarity between life and fiction leads Currie to focus on phenomenological notions of time as subjectively experienced and perceived rather than as an object of external measure. Currie's examination of the temporal conundrums over which philosophers puzzle highlights the fact that literature has long been credited with the potential to explore understandings of time that diverge from strictly cosmological (clock) time or monumental (historical) time. If the critique of presence that drives so much of poststructuralist philosophy has no current equivalence in narratology, Currie begins to amend this shortfall by insisting that a degree of formalism is necessary to apprehend the temporal logic of contemporary storytelling and to sensitize literary criticism to its lessons.

Like other scholars of postmodern/contemporary fiction, Currie sees the anachronistic tendencies of contemporary fiction as more than formal experimentation or play. But where others have focused on the politics of postmodernism's engagement with history and the past, Currie turns in the middle chapters of his study to the ways in which the present is marked in fiction and in society by the future. He links the rhetorical definition of prolepsis—anticipating, with the purpose of dispatching in advance, readers' criticism—with the narratological one (the plot flash-forward), and he adds to the list a more general "structural prolepsis": the anticipation

of retrospection that characterizes our everyday acts of narration. This expanded idea of prolepsis informs Currie's readings of Graham Swift's *Waterland* and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* as examples of how the formal installation of future retrospect in present experience leads to new norms of temporal organization in the novel. In both these cases, however, Currie observes that while the texts feature protagonists whose experience of time contradicts the norm, the narratives themselves uphold linearity, and readers' expectations around chronology are unchallenged. Where fiction can substantiate a meditation on time in its structural anachronies is shown through an in-depth comparison of Ali Smith's *The Accidental* and Ian MacEwan's *Saturday*. In the former, Currie finds an explicitly self-conscious interplay between characters' musings on time and the temporal structure of the novel, so that the text's claims about time are enacted both constatively and performatively. In the latter, norms of realism dictate that the novel asserts its knowledge only implicitly, through the ironic disparity between the protagonist's awareness and the reader's. With characteristic fluidity, Currie then pursues the implications of his comparison between Smith and MacEwan to challenge the distinction between implicit and explicit self-knowledge in fiction. What or who is doing the knowing here: the characters, the author, the reader, or some productive combination of these elements in the reading experience? Throughout *About Time*, this deft movement between specific and general questions keeps a potentially abstract discussion relevant and grounded.

This book asks big questions about the nature of narrative: What can a novel know about time? How does this knowledge differ from philosophical knowledge about time, and how might these two kinds of knowledge be related to one another? I am drawn to the special status literature achieves in Currie's argument—the sense that narrative can teach us something about the metaphysics of time that lies beyond the reach of philosophical inquiry. However, I am nagged by a suspicion that the narrative challenge to our understanding of time is more narrowly circumscribed by the demands of linearity than Currie wants to concede. The claim that prolepsis is as characteristic of postmodern narrative as historiographic investigation is hard to substantiate through a discussion of only four novels. And even those novels that Currie presents as pressing the boundaries of temporal organization do so, by and large, at the level of content rather than structure. In fact, what is tacitly uncovered by the fictional exploration of time's phenomenological paradoxes, and by Currie's discussion of this exploration, is the depth and tenacity of our reliance on norms of linearity in narrative structure: the more authors play with time, the

more readers work to infer the proper temporal sequence to make sense of what we are reading.

More groundbreaking is Currie's suggestion that the "archive fever" poststructuralist philosophy describes as increasingly central to contemporary society's experience of the present resembles very closely the self-memorializing process in which fictional narrative has been engaged all along. Fictional events are always presented according to the rules of teleological retrospect—after all, we don't expect or appreciate the inclusion of material that won't prove relevant later on in the story. If today we perform our lives for the camcorder, shaping our daily reality in anticipation of what our actions and words will mean in the future, then we are adopting narratological principles to a degree that makes the study of literature newly illuminating and important. What fiction knows about time—and how that knowledge can intervene in philosophical debates, nuance linguistic tense theory, and shed light on our proleptic cultural activities—are the questions that make *About Time* a good candidate for the series under which it is published, "The Frontiers of Theory." Its place on that list also signals an intended audience well beyond the undergraduate level, but Currie's study certainly makes a rich resource for the teaching of literature, philosophy, public memory, and cultural studies and would be of major interest to most university libraries.

Sarah Henstra
Ryerson University

Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn, eds. *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography*.
Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 338 pp. \$38.95 cloth.

Larissa Lai notes in her contribution to the volume that, for Asian Canadian artists, "not enough authority has suddenly become too much" (108). In their introduction, the editors map out the historical reasons for this shift in power. Earlier in the establishment of the field, Asian Canadian literature was marked by autobiographical or autoethnographic writing. Asian Canadian artists often relied on such first-person narratives to persuasively argue for issues of belonging, legitimacy, subjectivity, citizenship, and cultural assimilation into the nation. During this time, authorship was conflated with authenticity, creating a burden of representation for minority writers. Asian Canadian literature was often read as anthropology or

sociology, and its writers were assumed to be the “native informants” of their respective cultures. For literary studies, as critic W.H. New expresses, Asian Canadian literature was perceived to be “stuck in the convention of literary realism” (Ty and Verduyn citing New 11).

The late twentieth-century workings of globalization and transnationalism, however, have prompted skepticism toward the project of national inclusion that was once so crucial to the establishment of the field. Asian Canadian literature has responded to these historical changes, and the editors observe that it has “shifted noticeably and even dramatically in style, genre, and subject matter from [that] produced some twenty or thirty years ago” (1). More specifically, the editors note that “no longer are minority authors identifying simply with their ethnic or racial cultural background in opposition to dominant culture” (3). It is this shift in the literary landscape, from writing characterized as autobiographical or autoethnographic to formally more diverse, that the editors of *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography* wish to explore.

Critics within the field of Asian Canadian literature may initially be wary of the book’s title. The word “beyond” evokes a teleological understanding of literature, one that potentially assumes autoethnographic writing as a phase that has ended. Yet, as the editors clarify, they do not discredit the importance of autoethnography as a genre. Rather, for them, “going ‘beyond’ autoethnography or critical ethnography means moving away from questions of ‘authenticity,’ essentialist identity politics, and a view of a cultural group that is static” (4–5). The book’s organization reflects this approach to autoethnography: Each contributor engages with some of the most prominent theorists in the field (including Françoise Lionnet, James Buzzard, James Clifford, and Mary Louise Pratt) within his or her own unique critique of a range of different media: literature and critical writing, photography, and video art. As a whole, the collection promotes an understanding of Asian Canadian writing that encompasses the fine arts and emphasizes the political and historical dimensions of cultural production.

Part one of the four-part book is entitled “Theoretical Challenges and Praxis.” It is devoted to critical engagements with the concepts of “beyond” and “autoethnography” that frame the entire collection. Smaro Kamboureli’s contribution traces the cross-disciplinary emergence of autoethnography within the fields of anthropology and literature. Importantly, she reminds us that there was a time when autoethnography was heralded as a “radical shift” in the politics of writing (33), as it attempted to reclaim the anthropological gaze and reassert a sense of self-identity. Paul Lai’s

article, “Autoethnography Otherwise,” draws from Kandice Chuh’s recent work (*Imagine Otherwise*) that calls for a more rigorous engagement with literary theory and criticism. A critique of autoethnographic writing often falls prey to discerning what is “real” from what is “fiction,” and Lai argues that literary theory can circumvent this trap by foregrounding the politics of representation. Kristina Kyser’s contribution is an example of such an exercise in literary criticism. Her psychoanalytic reading of Shani Mootoo’s *He Drown She in the Sea* prevents an easy ethnographic reading of the novel, for a “psychoanalytic reading severs the novel from its Indo-Caribbean context, thereby troubling any essentialist connection between self [the narrator] and culture” (75).

Part two, “Generic Transformations,” opens with an intervention by Larissa Lai on the potential dangers of autoethnography. As she shows in the case of Evelyn Lau’s *Runaway*, autoethnography can deepen the state of oppression, not only by reiterating trauma (feeding into racist and sexist stereotypes) but also by reaffirming the benevolence of Canada’s multiculturalism (narrating a past, unjust history that has since been corrected). Lai compares Lau’s text to Wayson Choy’s *Paper Shadows*, a book that deliberately refuses an ending of resolution or healing. Lai’s comparison highlights the importance of a historical understanding of “what the texts did at the moment of their emergence, and what they do [...] in the present” (108). Pilar Cuder-Domínguez’s contribution turns to the speculative fiction of Larissa Lai and Hiromi Goto. She argues that by choosing to write in a genre that eschews realist expectations, these authors are able to avoid essentialist interpretations of their works. Instead, the estranged worldview of speculative fiction allows for more creative interpretations of race, gender, and sexuality. Joanne Saul’s essay reflects upon the poetry, photography, and critical writings of Fred Wah as an example of what she refers to as “‘autoethnography’ [...] as a practice” (134). She shows how Wah situates both his critical and creative works deliberately within autoethnography in an attempt to complicate and expand its meaning.

The essays that form Part three, “Artistic/Textual/Bodily Politics,” further interrogate the politics of the autoethnographic impulse within a variety of media, including prose fiction, billboard art, and video art. Christine Kim’s article compares the critical discourses surrounding Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* with Larissa Lai’s *When Fox Is a Thousand*, both originally published by the same small feminist press (Press Gang). Kim argues that the relative critical and economic success of Mootoo’s book compared to Lai’s is due in large part to the marketability of postcolonial texts. Kim’s contribution emphasizes the roles of both academia and the

publishing industry in the cultural production and circulation of “ethnic literature.” Ming Tiampo’s essay discusses the visual art of Ken Lum and Paul Wong. She observes how “both artists self-consciously abandon autoethnographic narratives” in order to dismantle racial essentialisms (181). In other words, both artists promote a deliberate misrecognition of their work so that “reality is misinterpreted as fiction, and fiction as reality” (193). Tara Lee extends the boundaries of autoethnography by questioning the body itself as a site of authentic culture. She looks at the video art of Laiwan to see how technological interventions into the body (including ultrasounds, images from exploratory organ surgery, X-rays, and microscopic images of blood cells) disrupt the assumption that the body is a stable and static subject.

In Part four, “Global Affiliations,” the focus of Asian Canadian writing is recentred from one limited to the nation to one informed by the global circulations of language, culture, and power. Eva C. Karpinski reclaims the first-person voice of autoethnography in her reading of Suniti Namjoshi’s *Goja: An Autobiographical Myth*. She argues that, by situating the “I” in a variety of contested contexts, “as a survivor of sexual abuse, an ethnic ‘other,’ [...] a lesbian, [...] a member of Indian aristocracy, and a Western postcolonial intellectual” (229), Namjoshi is able to resist the East/West power hierarchy that structures and determines much of autoethnographic writing. Mariam Pirbhai looks at the way Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* deliberately incorporates different genres and forms in the imagination of space. By doing so, the book is able to articulate a diasporic identity, what Pirbhai refers to as an “ethnics of global citizenship,” that neither is limited by nor negates the national sphere (248). Christine Lorre completes the book with an intriguing article that traces the literary career of Ying Chen. Lorre observes that in comparison to Chen’s earlier immigrant fiction that is invested in the particular relationship between China and the U.S./Canada, her later works are deliberately absent of any ethnic markers that identify the narrator, including any indications of time and place. Lorre argues that Chen’s focus on exile, a consistent theme throughout her oeuvre, is in her latter three books “put in abstract terms of empty and full, not in terms of national identity” (278). Lorre reads the aimlessness, disconnectedness, and repetitiveness of Chen’s latter works as reflective of both Western existentialism and classical Chinese poetics, further questioning the possibilities of “non-ethnic writing.”

Overall, the book’s cross-disciplinary approach to autoethnography should appeal to scholars throughout the humanities and social sciences, particularly those engaged with the politics of representation. The collec-

tion's strength and originality exists in its exploration of the possibilities, as well as the limitations, of approaching Asian Canadian cultural production in a way that is not overdetermined by race. The book presents numerous viable approaches to Asian Canadian writing that do not fall into the traps of identity politics and racial essentialisms. Yet, in an era many are eager to proclaim as "postracism," it will pose challenging questions for the role of race in the future of Asian Canadian literary criticism.

Hee-Jung Serenity Joo
University of Manitoba

Allison Muri. *The Enlightenment Cyborg: A History of Communications and Control in the Human Machine, 1660–1830*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. 240 pp. (40 halftone pages). \$60.00.

Shortlisted for the Raymond Klibansky Prize for best English-language book in the Humanities, Allison Muri's *The Enlightenment Cyborg: A History of Communications and Control in the Human Machine, 1660–1830* promises a lot. Spanning not only the hundred and fifty years suggested by the subtitle, but also twentieth-century cyborg theory, science, and narrative, Muri draws a line from the "man-machine" anatomized by seventeenth-century physician Thomas Willis to recent work on the postmodern cyborg. *The Enlightenment Cyborg* casts a skeptical eye on theories that have tended to invoke the cyborg, either hopefully or despairingly, as "a vision of radical change" in a technologized present (6). Such politicized oversimplifications of the cyborg, Muri suggests, results from an inattention to history. Most work in cyborg studies defines the cyborg against the Cartesian subject, taking for granted that the mind/body duality theorized by Descartes was the Enlightenment's defining, or maybe only, theory of subjectivity. Muri's research into English seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific texts demonstrates that, on the contrary, Descartes's separation of mind from body was, even as early as 1667, contested by anatomies and theories of human body and consciousness as inseparably "mechanical" and that these definitions, not the Cartesian one, "produce[d] the nascent definitions for living bodies" still used by medicine and science today (23). Similarly, our present-day fears and fantasies of the cyborg rehearse anxieties and desires that Muri

traces to the age of sensibility's "reaction to mechanical interpretations of human knowledge and understanding" (31).

While the book opens with the caveat, "there is no such thing as the Enlightenment cyborg" (3), Muri finds precedent terminology in French philosophe Julien Offray de la Mettrie's "man-machine." Although she insists, rightly, on maintaining the historical specificity of each of these terms, Muri argues that both the Enlightenment man-machine and the cyborg share an ontology; they both "exist because of the important assumption, established in the Enlightenment, that humans can be defined in the same terms and by the same physics as machines" (22). Maintaining this doubled historical focus, each chapter anchors enlightenment man-machines and postmodern cyborgs in the political, medical, and technological discourses of their times. And it's in Muri's emphasis on discursive contexts—particularly her use and ample quotation of fascinating Restoration-era medical theory—that the book lives up to its promise. By introducing under-studied eighteenth-century texts such as Thomas Willis's descriptions and anatomies of the brain, Muri opens an archive valuable not only to cyborg theorists but also to eighteenth-century scholars and historians of ideas. Until now, many of these texts have hardly been studied outside of medical histories. This illustrated edition also provides forty pages of gorgeous images from these early works and cyborg films, providing a useful and compelling visual resource for scholars and their students.

In chapter 2, Muri begins to clarify the shared ontology of "man-machine" and "cyborg" by examining medical texts that, first, described a mechanized body and, second, articulated a view of the mind or consciousness as also material, based in the flow of fine particles of the body, or "aether." The second conclusion, which suggests the materiality of the soul, was the most controversial, for obvious reasons, suggesting as it did a model of human life without God. Although the idea that mind and feelings are based in electro-chemical processes is now widely accepted bioscience, Muri observes that the controversy of the material soul persists in cyborg literature which posits the mechanical against the moral and feeling human.

While Haraway called the cyborg "a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (quoted in Muri 19), Muri defines the cyborg more narrowly as "an organic machine that is steered or governed by a homeostatic mechanism" (19). But Muri doesn't lose sight of the second part of Haraway's definition, that the cyborg is also a creature of fiction, necessarily expressed in the political and tech-

nological metaphors of its time. In chapter 3, Muri argues that in both periods, analogies between nervous system and communication system have “represented not only physiological mechanisms but also moral and political ones” (87). Her analysis of twentieth-century media theory in this chapter focuses on the cybernetic theory, first expressed by Norbert Wiener in 1948, that the cyborg is both steered by a “pilot” and governed by a “feedback mechanism” (88). But this description of the mechanized human as part of a communications network is neither modern, nor postmodern, she argues; rather, it is the latest iteration of a longstanding trope that imagines the human mind in analogies of technologies of representation and communication. During the Enlightenment period, these tropes were fraught, as scientific thinkers from William Harvey to Willis began to articulate the dangerously political thesis that the man-machine was “driven by natural forces and energies communicating throughout the body, rather than spiritually governed by a single monarch” (107). Muri then diverges from this provocative cultural reading to foreground the importance of Harvey’s and Willis’s texts to cyborg theory, concluding that by placing the cyborg within the history of physiological mechanisms, “we can see the cyborg not as Cartesian automaton with a soul but more accurately as a human-machine-text moved by energy and controlled by a circuit of communications” (115).

In what was, for me, both the most promising and most frustrating chapter of the book, “Communications, Circulations, and Commerce,” Muri expands on her analysis of man-machine in relation to the body politic. Here, in chapter 4, she focuses first on Willis’s “metaphorical inscription of order” in his descriptions of human physiology where, she says, “the mechanical nerves were the communication systems of the body politic” (120). In this chapter, more explicitly than in the previous, Muri introduces the political context of Willis’s physiological theory. In reference to his pronouncement that the two souls, corporeal and rational, “wrangle” for power, for example, she poses a series of questions beginning with “Could [Willis] be commenting on the ongoing struggles for power between Charles II and parliament?” Though Muri provides some important historical detail here, the cultural-historical analysis is disappointingly fleeting though the chapter’s conclusion insists that the man-machine anatomized by Willis and theorized by La Mettrie “represented the governance of the social and commercial hierarchies of the nation” (165). The comparison of Willis’s corporeal soul to Hobbes’s vision of the commonwealth shifts disconcertingly into a study of mid-eighteenth-century literary responses to argue that the eighteenth-century literature

of sensibility was a reaction to the period's increasing acceptance of the man-machine.

In chapter 5, Muri looks for evidence of an Enlightenment “woman-machine.” After analyzing recent iterations of female cyborgs as either dangerously sexual cyber-babes or machine-like wombs and attempting to locate parallels in Enlightenment fictions, philosophies, and medical texts, she concludes that there were no woman-machines. But, as her analysis of the medicalization of midwifery reminds us, female body parts were mechanized in the eighteenth-century and the reproductive “woman-mechanism” described in texts such as *Tristram Shandy* does bear some relation, although not causal, to the postmodern, sexual, and threatening female cyborg.

Because the book is organized thematically rather than chronologically, chapters 2, 3, and 4 feel repetitive. This presents a particular challenge to an argument that depends, for its force, on accurate and specific historical analysis. The sense of circularity is further heightened by some unfortunate editorial oversights; in at least one instance, a key idea is repeated, word-for-word, in two separate chapters and contexts and significant quotations are regularly presented as new information even though we have encountered them before. While Muri opens more questions than she answers, the book is nevertheless a valuable historicist intervention into current cyborg theory. The Enlightenment Cyborg opens critical and relevant conversations about where political imagination meets embodiment, affect, and the machines we may be and once were.

Ailsa Kay
McMaster University

Giovanni Cianci and Jason Harding, eds. *T.S. Eliot and the Concept of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. xv + 229 pp. \$95.00

In an age of academic criticism, it is difficult to imagine the effect that T.S. Eliot's early essays had on the study of English literature in universities. These essays—many of them short, unscholarly in the conventional sense, and published in periodicals sold on newsstands—redefined the tradition and established in the still-young discipline of “English” the values (wit, irony, complexity, ambiguity) which the New Criticism would enshrine

and which would define English studies until the rise of critical theory in the early 1970s. Eliot's enthusiasms, notably for the Metaphysicals, helped to shape curricula; his aversions, including most of the Romantic and Victorian poets, survived his distaste, but their proponents often seemed vaguely on the defensive.

Late in his life, Eliot admitted what his own critics had long since figured out—that his pronouncements were influenced largely by his own needs as a poet and his sense of what was most useful for the revival of poetry in English when he began to publish during the Great War. This confession, and his sometimes dismissive attitude toward his own criticism, did nothing to diminish Eliot's stature, and in the last thirty years steadily growing awareness of the complexity and subtlety of his critical positions has enhanced his reputation and made him the most analyzed poet-critic in English. We can now see that Eliot's anti-Romantic prejudices were more apparent than real and understand some of the ways in which his poetry and criticism were influenced by the Romantics and Victorians; we can see how he anticipated much later critical theory, including deconstruction, and attempted to find a way beyond the impasse of radical indeterminacy; we can begin to untangle the ways in which Eliot's philosophical training, his contemporaries, and the history of his time affected his formulations.

The idea of tradition has long been recognized as central both to Eliot's aesthetics and his conservative politics, and commentary on Eliot has sometimes come to grief either by trying to separate art from politics completely or by trying to subordinate art to politics. These two errors, mechanical applications of extreme New Critical and Marxist positions without the subtlety of their better practitioners, are often the result of critical laziness, and one aspect of that laziness is the failure to acknowledge the broader anterior influences which shaped both Eliot's critical and political writings. The Cianci and Harding collection, which originated in a conference on "Re-Reading T.S. Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'" at the University of Milan in 2004, is an attempt to recontextualize Eliot's idea of tradition. Most of the contributors are not Eliot specialists, and few of the essays refer to any Eliot criticism that is more than twenty years old. Neither fact is necessarily a disadvantage: non-specialists can bring fresh perspectives to old issues, and what is valuable in older criticism is often subsumed (and often without acknowledgement) into more recent. But there is a huge Eliot literature, and many of the scholars here seem unaware even of the most recent work, a circumstance that results too often in reinventions of the wheel. Any serious student of Eliot has read

about the relation of “impersonality” to poetic personae; anyone who has examined Eliot’s idea of culture knows that he opposed an exclusive focus on one nation’s or one language’s literature and affirmed the importance of pan-European and extra-European influences and standards; anyone who has engaged with Eliot’s politics at a level deeper than name-calling knows about the influence of Julien Benda and Charles Maurras.

This reiteration gives much of the volume an amateur air, a serious problem in a collection aimed at specialists. There are odd errors of omission as well, which perhaps derive from the miscellaneous nature of the papers at any conference, even one with an apparently precise topic. The fourteen articles in this collection are grouped in four sections which deal with tradition and impersonality, literary contexts, art and anthropological contexts, and Eliot’s relation to individual artists and critics; there is no section on philosophy and (with one exception) no serious discussion of Eliot’s early philosophical studies, which can be seen as the ground from which his poetry and literary and political criticism grew. This is not simply a matter of one reviewer’s preference. If Eliot was, as recent scholarship suggests, a philosophical skeptic who thought of subject and object as constructions and saw all binaries as necessarily relational within an ambivalent whole, then the supposed opposition of writer and tradition—or of tradition and innovation—is more complex and problematic than most of the writers here acknowledge. As Jeffrey Perl noted in *Skepticism and Modern Enmity* (1989), one advantage of tradition for Eliot is its emphasis on contextual significance, intertextuality, relationship, and multivocal interpretation, but such ideas are generally ignored in this volume, and some of the most perceptive and influential post-1980 commentators on Eliot’s thought—Walter Benn Michaels, Richard Shusterman, and Donald J. Childs, for example—are not mentioned at all. Perl is cited only by Jewel Spears Brooker, whose steadily deepening work shows a comprehensive knowledge of Eliot’s poetry and prose, including his work in philosophy, and of Eliot criticism. Her clear and nuanced essay discriminates among the various meanings of personality in Eliot’s criticism, various ways of achieving impersonality, and analyzes the relation of the latter to perennial issues of self-sacrifice and self-transcendence in myth, religion, and philosophy. Professor Brooker brings the whole of Eliot’s world of ideas to bear on single words and concepts, and the result is impressive.

Some of the other individual essays are interesting and stimulating in unexpected ways. Clive Wilmer traces the influence of, and reaction against, Eliot’s “impersonality” in postwar poetry, including “confessional” poetry; Michael Hollington draws attention to the gender politics of Eliot’s

concern with cultural reconstruction and to the relation of his ideas to those of Wilhelm Worringer and Alois Riegl; Marjorie Perloff finds affinities between Eliot and Marcel Duchamp; Max Saunders traces contrasts and parallels in Eliot's and Ford's versions of the literary tradition and its relation to individual writers. These four essays, and Jewel Spears Brooker's, are the best in the volume.

Edward Lobb
Queen's University

Michael Peterman. *Sisters in Two Worlds: A Visual Biography of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill*. Introduction by Charlotte Gray. Compiled and edited by Hugh Brewster. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2007. 176 pp. \$45 cloth.

Most striking about this book is not its well-woven biographies of Catharine Parr Traill (1802–1899) and Susanna Moodie (1803–1885)—Michael Peterman has digested his previously published research into a text suitable for a general audience—but rather its visual appearance. In shape and modest length, *Sisters in Two Worlds* resembles a colour-filled modern version of the Victorian family album. A remarkably pretty and affectionate book, in one fell swoop it compensates for the ugliness of many of the volumes that Traill and Moodie saw published in their lifetimes, the elder's *Canadian Wild Flowers* (1868) and *Studies of Plant Life in Canada* (1885) being the obvious exceptions.

Biography lends itself to the visual representation of places and personages in the old world and the new that these sisters and their families inhabited. In 1832, they immigrated to Upper Canada from Suffolk, England, on different ships, Traill aged thirty and a month married, Moodie aged twenty-eight, married a year, and the mother of one daughter. For scholars looking for further insights into these women's lives and literary careers, this book will be a disappointment, for the text chiefly rehearses what has been offered previously in different forms. But scholars are not this book's choice of reader; rather, its ideal reader seems to be the history buff eager for an introductory-level rendition of history and literary history—simple, straightforward, with discursive endnotes but no citations after quotations or references.¹ As sketch is to story, this “visual biography”

¹ For example, Peterman calls Traill's *Backwoods of Canada* (1836) “a steady seller” that “became required reading for those contemplating emigration to North

is to biography. Although it is understandable that Margaret Atwood's poetic portrait would haunt any would-be biographer of Moodie just as Rudy Wiebe's fictional portrait of Big Bear would haunt any historian, the brief portraits of her and her sister that Peterman has already provided in other genres and decades are not advanced here; Atwood's portrait not challenged. And one cannot but wonder why.

In the decades during which Peterman has been working on Moodie and Traill, the editorial work by Kathryn Carter (*The small Details of Life* [2002]) and other early-Canadianists to treat the writings of Frances Stewart, Lady Simcoe, Anne Langton, and many diarists now demands that these two sisters be read contextually. The era when independent treatments can contribute meaningfully to discussions of them has passed. Some of those women succeeded splendidly in the settings that defeated the Moodies and Traills, but in which their younger brother Samuel Strickland (1805–1867), who emigrated seven years before them, thrived with the help of three successive wives. Peterman helpfully profiles the brother's success, but he does not offer a sustained treatment of his two subjects as people or as writers of more published literature than anyone else in Upper Canada except Major John Richardson; rather, he contents himself with suggestion. Tantalizing topics, such as the piracy by U.S.–American publishers of the women's books, are mentioned several times—Peterman claims that the U.S.–American sales of *Roughing it in the Bush* rivaled those of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (125)—but not followed up. Moodie's relationship with London publisher Richard Bentley is described, but one is left wondering if it is exceptional or if Bentley treated other authors of settler narratives similarly. And so on.

Because Peterman stays at the level of chronicle and of suggestion, no deeper discussion dissects the idea that the failure of the women's father to become a squire and raise genteel children predictably doomed Traill and Moodie to colonial fates in a settler culture with husbands incapable of or unsuited to menial work, tangled up in a frustrating existence between two worlds. But was it not Moodie's husband rather than her father who set her on her course to Upper Canada? In a wider sense, after so many publications on Moodie and Traill, one yearns to learn what their lives

America" [85], but there are no sales figures, a list of editions/printings in the author's lifetime, or another form of evidence for this statement. He leads the reader to no source when calling *Canadian Crusoes* Traill's "best-selling book" (121), and the same holds for his description of the English edition of *Roughing it in the Bush* as a "bestseller" (124). (What did constitute a bestseller in Victorian England?)

and literature tell us about imperial nineteenth-century history generally. Peterman widens his focus only to take in the stories of the sisters' other siblings and of those who patronized Catharine and Susanna in Upper Canada. The literate class, not the working class into which they were thrust, remains the author's nearly exclusive concern as he bypasses the exploration of the reasons why both authors appear to have kept their British readers foremost in mind throughout their careers. Is one correct to infer what the text implies, that Peterman celebrates that loyalty, stubbornness, expression of unwillingness to live in terms of their circumstances, pride, unmitigated class bias, a deep and unwavering understanding that cultivating the arts trumps cultivating the soil—call it what you will?

A residual effect of Peterman's treatment is confusion over the meaning of the book's title. Were the two worlds that the women negotiated essentially those of the imperial centre and the colony, or were they essentially those of upstairs and downstairs—literate if threadbare gentility in Suffolk and illiterate manual labour in settler societies that, like the one of Cobourg, did not value the arts in ways the sisters could discern (67)? Does Peterman want his title to signify both? If so, the lack of clarity frustrates more than it engages. If by two worlds he means England and Canada, centre and periphery, then, although he does not mention as much, the two are much more discernible in his text than they are in the impressive and historically comprehensive visual matter assembled by Hugh Brewster and photographer Ian Brewster. The reason is that the English aesthetic of the picturesque, practised right round the British Empire, served a vital role in undergirding imperial claims to places as far flung as India, Africa, and Canada, pictorially rendering them, however inaccurately, as recognizably English. So in its depictions of landscape, the rich visual aspect of this book offers a single, continuous world,² while the textual pursuit of the women's lives as they moved from a deeply-rooted genteel rural elite to a loosely-knit and rambunctious homesteading backwoods culture, from the pastoral to the wild emphasizes disjunction and the women's hardy resistance to, accommodation of, and alteration by it. It is as if Peterman cannot decide. Fifty years ago, *Poetry in Canada: The First Three Steps*, R.E. Rashley's long-forgotten literary study, helped identify a first-generation immigrant's desire to replicate the home country's culture, while the second-generation contended with the difficulties, ambivalences, and contradictions arising from growing up amidst parental efforts to plant the home country's culture in a distant space and call that home.

² One notable exception is a pair of images: Anne Langton's unpicturesque ink drawing of the Otanabee River's unpeopled but stump laden river bank in 1837

Peterman's versions of Moodie and Traill seem to demand that their experience, and presumably their writings, be seen to represent both generations' experience.

The result for early Canadian literary studies of Peterman's extensive and committed contributions is that Moodie and Traill somehow remain exceptions to rather than part of the settler history of Upper Canada. Unless the author himself is poised to offer comprehensive critical treatments of both writers' works, this quirk is one that future scholarship will wish to address if not correct. Meanwhile, if not sufficiently probing, its informational and visual dimensions will woo many readers and perhaps open Canadian literary history to a readership beyond the academy.

I.S. MacLaren
University of Alberta

Craig Monk, *Writing The Lost Generation: Expatriate Autobiography and American Modernism*. University of Iowa Press, 2008. 230 pp. \$36.95.

“One of the drawbacks to living in Paris is that people often refer to you as an expatriate, occasionally shortening the word to an even more irritating ‘ex-pat.’ It is implied that anything might take you to London or Saint Kitts, but if you live in Paris, it must be because you hate the United States” (211). The complaint of David Sedaris, dark ironist and twisted celebrant of American culture, testifies to the exceptional tenacity of the image of the American resident in Paris as a cultural refugee, one whose exile is a repudiation of provincialism, philistinism, or whatever else is held to be wrong with American life. It is an image that took shape in the decades between the two World Wars, and in *Writing the Lost Generation: Expatriate Autobiography and American Modernism* Craig Monk returns to the scene of its origin, looking at how the expatriate experience was constructed, and contested, through numerous autobiographical writings. Not surprisingly, attitudes toward

is, without aesthetic analysis, reproduced above her postsettlement picturesque watercolour, sketched from a similar perspective fifteen years later (71). To the extent that the picturesque is necessarily a humanized rendering of non-human nature, pre-settlement renderings of nature proved a challenge for most amateur sketchers and watercolourists.

both the adopted city and the nation left behind turn out to be more various and ambivalent than the stereotype allows.

Motivations for leaving the United States and, in most cases, for eventually returning, are just one aspect of interwar expatriation examined by Monk. The book as a whole aims to map the relationship between the vast numbers of Americans in Paris, the autobiographical writings they produced, and American literary modernism. Monk presents these phenomena as reciprocally fostering each other: a handful of American writers settle in Paris; a literary scene emerges, attracting more Americans; autobiography becomes a way of staking a personal place within (or against) that scene; the scene in turn becomes partly defined through the autobiographical writings.

The number and range of texts Monk brings together is impressive: by his own count, he examines seventeen autobiographical works in detail and draws on more than a dozen more. Along with well-known works such Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* appear those of minor hangers-on, such as Bravig Imbs, and of slight but curious figures such as Jimmie Charters, a Montparnasse bartender whose ghostwritten memoir *This Must Be the Place* appeared in 1934. Monk shows that the popular image of the expatriate in the twenties and thirties was not defined primarily by eminences such as Stein or Hemingway but by writers now obscure. For Malcolm Cowley, it was the wealthy Bostonian-turned-Bohemian poet Harry Crosby; Monk suggests that a more truly representative figure was the journalist and cultural critic Harold Stearns, author of titles such as *America and the Young Intellectual* (1921), who "challenged the best and brightest of his contemporaries to follow his example and go abroad" (69).

Monk defines the collective significance and value of this array of autobiographical works in two principle ways. First, that they can be read "as criticism": autobiography, he proposes, "came to represent for modern writers a formidable framing gesture, a critical act" (12). But given the era's many far more defining and influential critical acts, including the essays, reviews, anthologies, and editorial activities of Pound, Eliot, and Woolf, the claim does not carry much force, and indeed for stretches of the book it slips out of sight, as Monk follows other threads in the writings. Second, and more persuasive, is the argument that autobiographical writing helps us reconnect modernism to mass culture. As a relatively accessible form, it played a significant role in disseminating modernism, which it "tantalizingly promised to elucidate" (12). Furthermore, the number of autobiographical works written by journalists reminds us how the media business

supported so many of the Americans who took their literary interests and ambitions to Paris and how features such as Wembley Bald's "La Vie de Bohème" and Janet Flanner's "Paris Letter" offered running commentaries on expatriate life and literature.

Monk also argues that autobiographical writing "proved itself receptive to the kind of aesthetic innovation that came to define modern literature" (11). But he sometimes seems to claim more on this account than his analyses support. For example, one is persuaded that Kay Boyle's 1968 tendentious editing, rearranging, and partial rewriting of Robert McAlmon's 1938 *Being Geniuses Together* effectively "subvert[s] the voice of an apparently unwilling collaborator a decade after his death" (159); it is then difficult to credit Monk's estimation of that work as a "bold experimentation with autobiographical form" in the modernist spirit. As Monk also suggests, some of the works surveyed certainly complicate the definition of autobiography, as they strive to portray a collective subject, extending or effacing the personal voice to encompass generational experience. The effort, however, doesn't seem to have issued in significant formal experimentation.

The idea of "collective autobiography" (65) raises the question of group coherence and character implied in the label "Lost Generation," bestowed by Stein and introduced into circulation by Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Monk helpfully traces the various meanings that attached to "Lost." In popular use it almost immediately came to mean a condition of advanced dissipation, which provoked a number of writers to try to redefine its sense or deny its validity. Monk's survey demonstrates in detail that the term "Generation" was equally contested insofar as it designated any coherence beyond rough contemporaneity. We see the generation break into waves by year of arrival in Paris, waves into loose clusters, and clusters into portraits of recalcitrant individuals, who often used autobiography to diminish their peers and assert their own singularity. Monk suggests this reflects not merely egotism but also the genuine "intellectual heterogeneity" (94) that unsettles even the most dedicated attempts to define group identity. He nonetheless defends his own use of the "Lost Generation" label on the grounds that his study investigates the connection between "the role of its alleged participants in framing their own cultural achievement and the manner in which the term proliferated" (3). The rationale is valid, but there is a touch of irony in it, as the study shows that almost from its inception the currency of the term seemed to be continually renewed by successive efforts to investigate its currency. By this means, like many a dubious but resonant concept, it seems destined to survive.

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Ella Ophir
University of Saskatchewan

Nora Foster Stovel. *Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study of Her Complete Writings*. McGill-Queen's UP, 2008. 432 pp. \$29.95 paper; \$85 cloth.

Nora Stovel has been studying Margaret Laurence for nearly two decades. Fellow critic Barbara Pell designates her “the pre-eminent Laurence scholar in Canada.” And rightly so given the documentary evidence: since 1992, I count six editions of or monographs about Laurence’s writing, along with several articles. This new study of Laurence’s “complete writings” thus represents a kind of Stovelian masterwork, much as Laurence’s own final novel, *The Diviners* (1974), brought together not only her four previous Manawaka fictions but also addressed the breadth of her literary development and range of interests. *Divining Margaret Laurence* appears at a time of renewed focus upon Laurence and her considerable oeuvre. In recent years two biographies (James King and Lyall Powers) have appeared along with a closely rendered study of Laurence’s African fiction and scholarship (Donez Ziques) and a shorter analysis of her spiritual interests and themes (Noelle Broughton). Stovel’s book includes chapters on Laurence’s early journalism and writing, her five African books, her four children’s stories, her later non-fiction, her much-admired Manawaka novels, and her final, failed attempt at a work of fiction. By way of critical purpose, Stovel argues that, pace Ziques, she is the first to relate Laurence’s African work to her Manawaka cycle and that, overall, her book covers in depth and plentiful detail all important aspects of Laurence’s literary work.

She is right. The book covers the territory fully and is dense in its analysis of each aspect of Laurence’s writing. One might call the study old-fashioned in its prescriptive citation of the work of previous scholars (especially those who support Stovel’s enthusiastic lines of thought) and in its assiduous attention to the many essays that Laurence herself wrote in part to guide critical thinking of her readers. The fact is that even before her fictional well ran (nearly) dry with the completion of *The Diviners*, she was deep in thought about the roots and development of her writing and

the shape of her vision. One might argue that these matters became, latterly, her great subject. Although she made several stabs at writing a final novel, the dominant emphasis of her final decade (or so) was thoughtful and shaped reminiscence that spoke to the way she wanted to see herself and the way she wanted to be seen by others. Memory is the prevailing force in *Dance on the Earth* (1989) just as it governs Laurence's incomplete novel of the same title.

Divining Margaret Laurence will be a highly useful book for students and teachers and a must for Canadian libraries. The chapters on the Manawaka books are rich in their treatment of symbolic patterns and narrative methods, whether or not they are traditional and more experimental. Stovel presents a very deliberate author at work, one who scarcely missed an opportunity to invest a name, a place, an object, or a natural phenomenon with symbolic or thematic reverberation. "Dr. Raven in *The Fire-Dwellers* is," for instance, "well named for a harbinger of death" (218), for he brings together bird and death imagery. While too many portentous namings risk appearing overly predictable and even heavy-handed, Stovel sees Laurence's artistic hand both steady and shiningly stellar. Her "artistry" is outstanding, her "artistic alchemy" extraordinary. She provides a wealth of similar critical observations, even if the sheer density of such fare may leave some readers wondering if and when enough is enough, even for a writer of Laurence's immense stature in Canada.

An aesthetic case in point is *The Diviners*. Stovel's chapter on the novel is enlivened by a detailed discussion of the editing that Judith Jones of Knopf (New York) brought to bear on Laurence's "loose, baggy monster" (247). Jones had been charged by both Jack McClelland and by Caroline Hobbhouse of Macmillan in London to bring the manuscript into publishable form. Describing the many excisions and alterations that Laurence (for the most part) accepted with apparent good grace, Stovel positions herself as one who is unconvinced by the validity of many of Jones's recommended cuts. She laments the loss (or alteration) of detailed passages about Morag's early efforts as a writer, and shows, through close manuscript analysis, what was finally left out or altered as a result of editorial advice. Although Stovel admits that "*The Diviners* was drowning in detail," she questions whether, in chopping so much of the text, her "editors miss[ed] her metafictional aim?" (252). Given the published novel and the evidence she offers here, it is difficult to agree with her. For me at least the answer should be, "If Jones et al. did miss some of that authorial aim, it was not by much."

I still vividly remember the experience of reading the novel in 1974. Keen and enthusiastic as I was, I found myself struggling with various aspects of the book; both the often-dullish metafictional representations of young Morag as a writer and some of the novel's cumbersome narrative strategies (Memorybank Movies, Snapshots) marred the reading experience for me, even as I responded positively to much of the book. Important as the novel clearly is, it clunked along rather leadenly and self-consciously at times. When I dared to express that view to Margaret herself, she listened courteously but begged to differ. Little did I know at that moment that Judith Jones—described by Margaret as “one of the really great editors in this world” (248)—had already struggled to hone down what appeared to her simultaneously as a brilliant manuscript and an “utter mess.” (246).

I find Stovel at her best in her chapters on the Manawaka novels and on Laurence's African books. Simply put, there is much to learn from this study and much to ponder. But there were many disjunctions along the way. What I found most irritating is a tendency to indulge in stylistic and analytical repetition, an unhappy habit that is likely the responsibility of both author and McGill-Queen's University Press. In a review of Paul Comeau's *Margaret Laurence's Epic Imagination*, Stovel herself complained that his study was “rather repetitive and restrictive.” It is advice she might well have applied here. Summaries of critical responses to particular texts seem too often to echo Laurence's own observations, although in dull or infelicitous ways. Critical views that resist such homage are, if noted at all, quickly dismissed or forgotten. Hence, Barry Callaghan and Janet Lunn are mentioned but sent out of the room while others are not invited in. W.J. Keith, who also was disturbed by many stylistic flaws in *The Diviners*, is listed in the works cited but never acknowledged.

I also miss critical views of an international orientation, although one of Stovel's rallying points is Laurence's wide-ranging appeal to audiences. There is virtually nothing here about her popular or critical reception in Britain, France, or the United States, an omission I found surprising in such a comprehensive study. Stylistically, I too often choked on pedestrian attempts at argument—“therefore, an exploration of *Heart of a Stranger* can help to illuminate her fiction” or flights of the relentlessly obvious—“Hagar is, of course the stone angel” (178). Imagine a SINGLE paragraph that contains two such similar clauses—“Characterization is crucial to Laurence's own fiction” and “Characterization is also crucial to her Canadian fiction” (102). Moreover, I became tired of Stovel's reliance on vague terms like “artistic alchemy,” a phrase used so often I lost count

even as I remained uninformed as to what it might mean. My guess is that with some careful editing the book could have been many pages shorter and much the better for the exclusions.

One final concern that I must register and this applies to most recent writers on Margaret Laurence. There seems to be a shared sense that her final fifteen years in the Peterborough area were generally unproductive and, overall, a disappointing end to her life. So little attention has been applied to these important years of Laurence's life. Stovel notes that she enjoyed a few strong friendships during her Lakefield years even as she drops a single reference to her "drinking heavily." There is, alas, so much more to be learned and said about Margaret's continued energy, gregariousness, and active citizenship, even as she reorganized her memories and wrestled with her demons (her "Morag Duhb" moods, her loneliness, her authorial frustrations). Too much attention is paid to the backwoods book-banners who on two occasions attacked *The Diviners* in the simple-minded ways of their ilk. Those attacks certainly bothered Margaret, but she was the recipient of overwhelming support and attention from close friends, university colleagues, her many writer friends, and indeed most members of the Peterborough-area community. For the most part she soldiered on, knowing that her fictional well had likely run dry but deeply committed to her many new responsibilities, passionate interests, and friends. That said, what Stovel does offer here is a record of Laurence's continuing attempts to forge ahead with her writing habit and to review and reorganize her "rampant" memories according to her retrospective sense of herself. The textual analysis of the changes that marked *The Diviners* sit interestingly beside her writing of *Dance on the Earth* and the manuscript of the uncompleted (and unwieldy) final novel. In these chapters Stovel offers a further and major contribution to our knowledge of Margaret Laurence at work.

Michael Peterman
Professor Emeritus
Trent University

Vera Camden, ed. *Trauma and Transformation: The Political Progress of John Bunyan*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008.
185 pp.

This volume provides valuable reading for scholars of the British seventeenth century and essential new material for those interested in dissenting culture and politics in seventeenth-century England or John Bunyan's work in particular.

The collection begins with a fascinating pair of essays. In the first, psychoanalytic critic Peter Rudnytski proposes a tantalizing thesis: that the postregicide generation in which John Bunyan lived out his adult years suffered a culture-wide case of trauma. Rudnytski builds his argument on T.S. Eliot's now shop-worn theory of a "dissociation of sensibility" and connects this dissociation with both the regicide and with the Fall through the application of psychoanalytic reading to key passages in *Marvel*, *Milton*, and *Harrington*. The essay yields fascinating insights. As the next essay in the collection demonstrates, however, the foundation of Rudnytski's argument is open to debate. In five brief pages, David Norbrook lands several quick blows and sends the "dissociation of sensibility" theory down for the count. Norbrook takes issue with Eliot's theory because it assumes a uniformity of mind in the English people and refuses to acknowledge the process of dialectic in political argument and counterargument which he believes underpins historical change. While Norbrook is appreciative of Rudnytski's thesis, he disputes the broad foundation of Rudnytski's analysis and some of its detail. The pairing of these essays makes for a bracing read and a delightful intellectual exchange where the creative, suggestive associations provided by Rudnytski are refined, recalibrated, and, in some cases, refused by Norbrook's sober historical analysis.

The issue of trauma is explored again by Camden herself in the context of John Bunyan's life. Camden sets out to interpret what other Bunyan biographers have not addressed: the motivations for Bunyan's change from a rebellious youth, through a period of mental distress and into a relatively stable adulthood of preaching and writing. She challenges established views promulgated by Christopher Hill and others of Bunyan as a young military man, steeped in confidence and burgeoning with a well-formed separatist ideology when he returned from military service in 1647.

The next three essays move beyond trauma to explore gender, marriage, and sex. Margaret Ezell investigates Bunyan's representation of gender. She questions existing critical evaluations of Bunyan's female characters that tend to drain the blood from them, so to speak, in order to understand

these characters as dry figures or types rather than characters taken from his daily life and pastoral ministry. Ezell concludes that many of the more colourful women who populate his fictions may indeed have been drawn from his actual experience and cautions that we should not “protect Bunyan through omission and by abstraction from any association with female lewd livers” lest we overlook “one of the complex social dynamics that Bunyan, man and minister, had to negotiate”(80).

As Ezell assesses how critics view Bunyan’s women, Thomas Luxon and Michael Davies probe Bunyan’s own relations with the female gender. Thomas Luxon looks at Bunyan’s representation of marriage, while Michael Davies assesses his subconscious fascination with sex. By way of a study of classical friendship doctrines, and of Milton’s adaptation of these to a Christian view of marriage, Luxon evaluates Bunyan’s thoughts on marriage as they are evident in his biography and in his literary representations. Not surprisingly, Luxon concludes that Bunyan’s views fall outside of the learned classical and humanist discussion and fall squarely in the realm of Biblical tropes and symbolism. Luxon finds the Bedford preacher to be a cold fish whose language betrays at every turn a dismissal of earthly marriage in favour of a spiritual marriage with Christ himself. If Michael Davies’s assessment is correct, however, Bunyan’s preference for the figural over the fleshly may have led to repression. Davies explores evidence of the bawdy in “Apology” for *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and other works. Although Davies provides many examples of what he argues to be bawdy in Bunyan’s writing, he is reticent to commit to any intentionality on Bunyan’s part. He argues that Bunyan’s use of bawdy language is ultimately subversive and intended to direct “the reader away from sexual transgression and ‘back to God’”(118).

The final two essays place Bunyan in a larger historical content. Roger Pooley offers a refinement to the generally accepted view of Bunyan’s radicalism with a balanced, historically grounded assessment of his theology and its potential to fuel political radicalism. Specifically, Pooley examines the strains of antinomian thought in Bunyan’s writing and places him within a spectrum of these ideas, “left of Baxter; right of Clarkson; and not far from Dell, Crispe, and Saltmarsh (133). Pooley affirms that antinomian doctrine that stressed freedom from the Mosaic law was perceived by some to create the justification for wanton freedom from civil laws. Not so for Bunyan. For all of his earlier resistance to authority, Bunyan, Pooley argues, was not “keen on ‘willful resistance’” to King James II.

Sharon Achinstein also takes up the question of Bunyan’s views of James II and unsettles firm assertions about Bunyan’s final political opin-

ions. She probes this issue in a study of the politics of late seventeenth-century remembrance and the particular significance of funerary remembrances—or the lack thereof—in Bunyan’s case. With her characteristic rigor and due attention to a wide range of sources, Achinstein issues a challenge for scholars to look more carefully at Bunyan’s final years and to tease out the complexities in both his theological and political views so as to avoid easy assumptions about who would have sided with whom in those tricky months that led to the Glorious Revolution. In conclusion, this is fine collection, rich in insight and full of invigorating controversy.

Arlette Zinck
The King’s University College

