

Book Reviews

Lisa Wood. *Modes of Discipline: Women, Conservatism, and the Novel after the French Revolution*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003. Pp. 189. \$54.58 cloth.

Modes of Discipline explores the way in which anti-Jacobin novels penned by women reflect the complexity and heterogeneity of post-revolution conservatism. Lisa Wood notes that much critical attention has legitimately focused on radical women writers of the period because their proto-feminist principles are directly relevant to feminist literary history. As maintaining social hierarchy was part of the loyalist project, conservative women writers are often seen as complicit in maintaining the structures of patriarchal authority. Building on the recent work of Eleanor Ty, Christine Krueger and others, Wood seeks to complicate and develop the relationship between gender and revolutionary thought by demonstrating that various narrative strategies and experiments with genre were employed by conservative women novelists to promote the dignity and education of women. Her exploration includes the work of Hannah More, Laetitia Matilda Hawkins, Elizabeth Hamilton, Jane West, Jane Porter and Mary Brunton. Efforts to maintain equilibrium between female agency and conservative principles did not necessarily gain support throughout anti-Jacobin literary circles. *The Anti-Jacobin*, in particular, Wood points out, used the reviewing process to guard gender boundaries. Other elements of the conservative movement, however, were not as condemnatory. Particular attention is paid to the role of Evangelicalism in creating a space

for women to balance a socially conservative position with the textual representation of female agency.

In the first two chapters, Wood introduces the socio-political context in which the novels were produced and discusses the employment of “an excess of strategies designed to limit meaning” in a potentially destabilizing genre (16). The next three chapters explore in detail the specific narrative strategies of didacticism as they were used by women novelists to negotiate a position of authorial power. Techniques include the inclusion of embedded statements to signify moments where a character acts in a morally appropriate manner, digressive pauses in which the narrator assesses the significance of certain actions, the inclusion of prominent authoritative male characters and the use of repetition.

The gender of the narrator and the position he or she takes in the text is seen as instrumental in controlling meaning and increasing authorial power. In addition to examining the use of a masculine or ungendered narrator to enable female authors to transcend their own gendered position, Wood draws our attention to the tension between different narrational strategies in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Although heterodiegetic narratives gradually became the dominant narrative mode, providing a sense of authority and distance, Wood points out that some conservative writers retain homodiegetic narrators, which allows them to assert overt control over textual meaning. Others, like Laetitia Matilda Hawkins, construct a mixed narrational form using such devices as footnotes to foreground “the implied author’s experience, wisdom and understanding” (115).

Chapters six and seven argue that in the early nineteenth century some conservative women writers move female characters out of conventional domestic plots and avoid the virtuous and unchanging undeveloped female characters common to the anti-Jacobin novel. Substantial revisions in characters and plots were made possible by hybridizing the form, blending the anti-Jacobin novel with other genres, specifically evangelical fiction and the historical novel. Mixed forms provided a space for increased female agency, but authors varied in their willingness to experiment. Wood charts out different possibilities in each chapter by comparing the novels of authors who continued to produce passive and underdeveloped female characters (Hannah More and Jane Porter) and authors who reconstruct female virtue to include spiritual development and active interaction with the world outside the home (Mary Brunton and Jane West).

In chapter six, Wood contrasts More’s *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* with Brunton’s *Self Control*. Blending a domestic plot with emergent evangeli-

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cal fiction, she suggests, allows Brunton to move beyond the submissive, voiceless heroine in More's text. Rather than placing movement towards marriage as the key impetus of the narrative, Brunton focuses on the female protagonist's ability to move from flawed woman to good Christian by learning to interact with the world outside the home. The comparison in chapter seven maps the influence of historical genres on antirevolutionary novels by women. The gentle, domestic female characters in Jane Porter's *Scottish Chiefs* are contrasted with various forms of female heroism constructed in Jane West's *The Loyalists* and *Alicia de Lacy*. By setting both her novels in times of war, Wood argues, West is able to increase the acceptability of women's agency; after all, exceptional times allow for exceptional measures. At the same time, West's representation of highly capable women tests the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for women.

Wood's work demonstrates the subtle ways in which antirevolutionary women writers obtain agency without noticeably disturbing dominant conservative ideas. Several of her conclusions would gain strength from a more detailed exploration. For example, Wood spends some time convincingly discussing the prominence of the domestic male in the work of More and Brunton. More "foregrounds the domestic role of men, marginalizing to the point of invisibility men's roles in other areas, such as government, justice and commerce" (127). Brunton's *Self Control*, Wood notes, similarly celebrates domestic men. Wood makes only brief reference to Brunton's *Discipline*, however, a text published several years after *Self Control*, and a work which complicates her argument. Mr Maitland, the male protagonist of the later novel, is a merchant and a plantation owner, who briefly intervenes in political matters, speaking out before the senate in an attempt to better the situation of slaves. He is described as having domestic tastes and does return to his Highland home at the end of the novel. Yet, after having been involved in various business matters throughout the novel, he makes arrangements to visit London as the novel draws to a close, suggesting that his connection to the commercial arena will not be excluded from the domestic picture. The representation of a pious, nurturing hero who is able to interact with the material world suggests that the concept of the domestic male fluctuated as it developed in antirevolutionary writing, and a more detailed analysis of its various manifestations would have further enriched Wood's study of gender roles and conservatism.

It is unfortunate that closeness in publication dates may have made it difficult to respond to one of the most recent books on antirevolutionary novels, M. O. Grenby's *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and*

the French Revolution. Grenby's broader study of conservative literary strategies might have intersected in interesting ways with Wood's gendered analysis, and Grenby's interest in the role of reviewers in consolidating, disseminating and controlling conservative ideas in the literary marketplace might have complicated Wood's exploration of the relationship between reviewers and women. *Modes of Discipline*, however, usefully contributes to current criticism on the Romantic novel on its own, and the background it provides on evangelical novels may also be of interest to Victorian scholars. It might be profitable to place the chapter on historical fiction in conversation with the work of genre theorists, that of Ina Ferris or Ian Duncan, for example.

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Work Cited

Grenby, M. O. *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Paul Whitfield White and Suzanne R. Westfall, eds.
Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Pp. 326.

This book should more properly be called *Theatrical Patronage in Early Modern England and Shakespeare*. The big guy makes a central appearance in three out of the twelve essays and is pretty well absent thereafter. For the most part, the book charts the history and development of patronage practices in the theatrical culture of the early Tudor period to the Stuarts. A vast quantity of learning is crammed between its covers and the results are never less than fascinating. The subject of theatrical patronage is a growing area of study that incorporates a plethora of issues relating to the social life of early modern England including the ways in which the shift from a feudal exchange economy to a market-driven economy affected the drama and is perceptible in the practice of patronage in the period. Most students of the period have a rather simplistic view of patronage that this collection of essays goes a long way to correct, flesh out and clarify. The focus is on