

## Book Reviews

Lukas Erne and Margaret Jane Kidnie, eds. *Textual Performances: The Modern Reproduction of Shakespeare's Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.  
xv + 229 pp. £48.00, \$70.

This collection of thirteen essays represents a milestone for textual criticism. Commissioned from a group of distinguished young and more established editors, who have themselves helped shape the history of editing and textual scholarship, the volume re-examines this history and maps out the paths scholars might want to follow in the future. The result is a sense of remarkable range and historical situatedness. These are combined with moments of visionary thinking about ways of conceptualizing the transmission of early modern texts that emerge from experience and an excitement about the possibilities afforded by both old and new technologies.

Lukas Erne and Margaret Jane Kidnie's Introduction is lucid, thoughtful, and witty (the uncritical use of modern editions of Shakespeare by literary scholars is, at one point, compared to the dangers associated with driving an untested second-hand car). As the editors put it, the aim of the volume is "to gather together the points of key debate and controversy of the present moment to begin to understand the range of pragmatic edito-

rial methodologies that are emerging from the fray, how they respond to the surviving documentary evidence, and how they might speak (or fail to speak) one to another” (4). This dialogue and occasional open disagreement between the contributors energizes the volume and saves it from the dogmaticism of its acknowledged ancestor, Gary Taylor and Michael Warren’s *The Division of the Kingdoms* (1983). At the same time, while Erne and Kidnie are correct in their assertion that the collection “does not advocate a party line” (5), their selection of viewpoints inevitably favours some approaches at the expense of others. In their inclusion of three articles, by H. R. Woudhuysen, Paul Werstine, and Ernst Honigmann, that are (somewhat repetitively) concerned with the evolution of textual and editorial thinking in the twentieth century, combined with the absence, for instance, of any contribution primarily focusing on the impact of feminist or queer thought on editorial practice, the editors reveal their bias in favour of historical approaches and textual scholarship that steers relatively clear of the debates that have animated literary criticism and theory in the past twenty-five years.

That said, the volume contains several essays that are informed by, for example, contemporary postcolonial criticism and performance studies, giving the reader insights into ways in which other contemporary critical approaches might shape editorial work. Leah Marcus’s opening essay examines the racial vocabulary used in Quarto and Folio *Othello* with astonishingly clear-cut results: she finds that if indeed the Folio text shows evidence of authorial revision then Shakespeare “revised in the direction of racial virulence,” giving, in the Folio version, “an almost pornographic specificity and negativity to the image of interracial love” (30, 25). This makes Marcus’s observation that current editorial practice obscures the Quarto-Folio differences, conflating the texts in such a way as to create a version of *Othello* that is more racist than either the Quarto or Folio texts are in isolation, particularly disturbing. A similarly unsettling conclusion about “the conservative cultural bias” shown by traditional editorial practice is reached by Michael Warren, who examines how editors almost consistently emend a perceived error in the speech headings of the opening crowd scene in *Coriolanus* to show the citizens as an “angry, imminently lethal crowd ... menacing a figure of authority” (140). Starting from an entirely different standpoint in her concluding essay, Barbara Hodgdon’s thought-provoking remarks on the editorial challenges posed by the desire to make both past and future performance choices an integral part of the critical commentary in standard editions also highlight examples of editorial scurrilousness and prejudice.

Like several other contributors, Hodgdon writes from the standpoint of someone currently (or recently) working on an edition of a Shakespeare play. One theme that re-emerges in several of these essays—including the fascinating piece on doubling charts in the Arden 3 *Hamlet* co-authored with Neil Taylor by Ann Thompson, the general editor of Arden 3—is the frustrating nature of editing Shakespeare for established series, whose guidelines almost necessarily stand in the way of individual thinking and innovation in the type and layout of commentary. What makes John Jowett’s and Kidnie’s contributions in particular so refreshing is that they combine pragmatic awareness of such constraints with an optimistic attitude that allows them to think beyond these restrictions and imagine different ways of presenting texts in print. Unlike John D. Cox, who records the almost systematic frustration of his attempts, in his and Eric Rasmussen’s Arden 3 edition of *Henry VI*, to relegate “stage directions” and performance options to the footnotes, leaving the text itself as open and flexible as the Globe stage itself, Kidnie frees herself from the shackles of established print layouts. She proposes a new way of presenting text and stage directions which “begins to transfer the interpretative activity from the editor to the reader” (165). John Jowett, on his part, designs innovative layouts for the print presentation of the adapted texts of *Sir Thomas More* and *Measure for Measure* that allow him to highlight effectively the processes and implications of adaptation in his editions of these texts for the Arden 3 series and Thomas Middleton’s *Collected Works* (Oxford) respectively. Although, as Kidnie herself acknowledges, her layout “is in some respects as rigid as the more conventional format” (173), it is her and Jowett’s way of radically re-imagining the printed page which will, I hope, contribute to re-invigorating the medium of print, making it suitable for the twenty-first century user.

As John Lavagnino remarks in “Two Varieties of Digital Commentary,” “the casual futurological wisdom” of the 1990s, which saw the print medium as doomed to make way for electronic texts, has been proved wrong by events: “[I]t is not the case that we read everything online while our books collect dust” (194). Initial optimism about the possibilities afforded by the new media has now been replaced by more careful consideration of the ways in which e-texts and online editions may complement print or, if they are to replace print, how they may do so in a genuinely user-friendly manner that affords the user clear advantages over the print medium. Lavagnino’s thoughtful comments on the limited use of online commentary and his reflections about the distinction that should be made between “commentary intended as a companion to reading and commentary

intended as a scholarly reference” (195) are best read side by side with Sonia Massai’s contribution detailing her work on an internet edition of *Edward III*. Massai is clearly excited by the electronic medium and the way it allows an editor to draw “attention to textual instability,” foregrounding various aspects of the unstable text. Where David Bevington, who expounds a whole series of examples in which modernization and standardization of spelling lead to dramatic losses in meaning, nevertheless concludes that “the benefits [of modernization] outweigh the costs by making early modern texts more available to readers” (157), Massai’s edition, which belongs to Lavagnino’s category of commentary intended for scholarly reference, goes in the opposite direction. Her diplomatic transcript of the text includes animated type that alerts the reader to press variants. Furthermore, she includes the full texts of all available editions of *Edward III* up to 1905, as well as extracts from all more recent editions. Her essay and edition, thus, become the most extreme and materialized example of the direction in which the more daring contributors to this stimulating and important collection are heading: that of an editorial practice which, while providing critical guidance, ultimately shifts the responsibility for interpretation onto the reader, who is now conceptualized as a “user, or what can be described as a ‘Barthesian’ reader” (103).

This volume constitutes essential reading for anyone engaged in textual criticism or the editing of early modern drama. It should also appeal more widely to all “users” of modern Shakespeare editions who would like to avoid the here so vividly outlined pitfalls associated with the uncritical use of such texts.

## Works Cited

Taylor, Gary, and Michael Warren, eds. *The Division of the Kingdoms*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

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Jennifer Blair, Daniel Coleman, Kate Higginson, and Lorraine York, eds. *Recalling Early Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005. 412 pp. \$43.00.

A collection of twelve diverse essays, *Recalling Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production* marries and foregrounds Canadian cultural production prior to World War I. It interrogates the view of history as a chronological progression toward a superior present and its emphasis on present-day predilections. Instead, it valorizes a view of history in which a sense of the present is constructed at least partly on probing what has been erased or unacknowledged in the past. The essays concern themselves with examining novels and poems in conjunction with non-canonical works such as personal letters and journalism. More importantly, they dissect received writings in relation to other media such as photography, carvings, family letters, and captive narratives. Because of the growing availability of hard-to-access texts and scholarship of Canada's past, the political agenda of the methods utilized to make materials accessible and the extant orthodox interpretations are contested. Viewing the Canadian nation as a deliberate, limiting construction of the status quo, the essays convincingly expose its hidden agenda and secret underpinnings. Important questions apropos the control of Canadian content, queries pertaining to centring and marginalization and the questionable practice of highlighting and consolidating what is conventionally labeled national culture are plumbed, with both the political implications of the means by which material of the past is made accessible and the interpretations of such material being is constantly debated.

The essays do not espouse any particular agenda but powerfully delineate how historical recall is essentially multi-dimensional and absolutely political, thus interrogating Michael Bliss and Jack Granstein's centralist views which claim that attention to differences within Canada has resulted in the loss of a common view of the nation's public history, that the selectivity of social historians who view events from the vantage points of feminism, multiculturalism, regionalism, and such like have produced unhelpful history which privileges the parts over the whole. This notion taken by Bliss and Granstein, it is noted, is rooted in their insistence that historical works foster nation building. However, Paul Hjartarson's "Wedding 'Native' Culture to the 'Modern' State" and Anne Milne's "Writing (Canada) on the Body" investigate the ramifications of

Bliss and Granstein's premises. Hjartarson's essay questions the exclusion of the Tsimshian carver and painter Alexcee from narratives of early Canada, revealing that such exclusions disempowered or erased the voice of the indigenous. This idea is further developed in J.V. Emberley's probing essay which views the archive as an extensive photo album, another arm of colonization which de-privileged the kinship systems of the indigenous. Her essay effectively demonstrates how the meanings of past photographs of First Nations families undergo metamorphosis when they are re-contextualized, specifically apropos the history of residential schools in Canada. Adam Carter, in his trenchant essay "Anthropomorphism and Trope in the National Ode," shows how the past as losses continually affect the present, while the essays by Cabasjsky, Stacey, and Venema indicate that altering of the past, the idea that the present must be read with more than just a nod to the past, offers new and intellectually stimulating ways to view past material. These writers highlight and emphasize the danger and folly of ignoring or viewing early Canadian forms such as the pastoral and the romance as simple and unsophisticated. Their arguments are augmented by Fiamengo's probing essay on Sara Jeanette Duncan where the contributor notes that it is highly erroneous—and dangerous—to view Duncan's oeuvre as feminist writings subverting the patriarchy when in reality her work is bedeviled by ambiguity and indeterminacy.

Another contributor, Anne Milne, explores the adoption of *le cheval* as Canada's national horse and deems it a propagandist symbol. She passionately asserts, using the horse as a metaphor, that it embodies the privileging of Canadians of European descent and the exclusion of non-Europeans (symbolized by other breeds), their histories, and their voices. Kate Higginson turns her lens to the widowed invader-settler women during the Northwest Rebellion in 1885. She cogently argues that they are emblematic figures (similar to the American Jessica Lynch) and that this construction of them militated against their being able to represent themselves, limited them as individuals, and also facilitated the white's less than humane treatment of the Cree and Métis. Adam Carter's revisionist's essay tackles G.D. Robert's nationalistic poems, drawing attention to their portrayal of Canada through solely Eurocentric eyes. Like Carter, Cecily Devereux's revisiting of Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie* shows that even in this poem the distance between the colonizer and colonized is maintained to foster the privileging and valorization of the dominant class and its goals.

Foucault's "What is an Author" succinctly encapsulates the primary issues raised by essays in this collection with regard to cultural productions:

*“What are the modes of existence of this discourse?”*

*“Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?”*

*“What placements are determined for possible subjects?”*

*“Who can fulfill these diverse functions of the subject?”*

This collection of valuable and intellectually stimulating essays is itself an archive, documenting new ways of viewing early Canada, using fresh and diverse methodologies and questioning the limitations and political agenda of those methods employed in the past. There is a risk, though, that the highly abstract theoretical content of the collection might appeal only to an academic readership, a limitation of audience that probably militates against the very notion of inclusion underpinning the collection. One must suggest, however, that this book should be required reading for all graduate students, especially those in Canadian and postcolonial literature. Diehard ossified academics buried in moribund, myopic ways of viewing Canadian nationhood are well advised to give this book a wide berth.

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Jill Didur. *Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender, Memory*.  
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.  
ISBN 13:978-08020-7997-8. 220 pp. \$53.00.

Jill Didur's *Unsettling Partition* is a welcome addition to the growing corpus of academic work on the 1947 partition of India that critically reflects on the relevance of literary texts for understanding the complexities of partition. As its title implies, Didur in her book attempts to “unsettle” questions regarding gender, partition, and nationalist politics. But instead of assuming that literary texts fill in the gaps in existing historical knowledge about the partition, she views literature as a “particularly appropriate place to consider how experience is mediated and the specific limits of what can be known about that experience” (140). Additionally, she attends to the “‘performative power’ of language mobilized in the act of reading with an emphasis on how literature intersects with the spheres

of knowledge, politics, and history in its representation of India's partition" (6). The topic, treated through detailed discussion of a wide range of literary and cultural texts, makes the book extremely useful for scholars working in the field.

To amplify her arguments and examine the role of literature in "bolstering or questioning the production of hegemonic nationalist imaginaries in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh" (6) both during and after partition, Didur examines, in five chapters and a conclusion, the following works: Rajender Singh Bedi's short story "Lajwanti" (1951), Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Jyotirmoyee Devi's *The River Churning* (1966), and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1988). Written and published at different postpartition historical moments, these texts have remained pivotal in addressing issues that are of critical importance to her own argument: nationalist politics, refugee and abducted women, gender and the nation, trauma and silence, and the relationship between literary criticism and historiography. She examines the differences in the fictional and textual representations of the event, of religious and gendered communities, and of class and caste politics and practices, and through these differences illuminates the ways in which these stories as well as their language disrupt existing narratives that project a monolithic picture of partition. Such diversity of representation also enables her to emphasize the plurality of views on the partition and its violence.

In the introductory essay, Didur problematizes the notion of "partition" and unsettles any seamless attempt within historiography to construct partition and its relationship to gender in singular and easy terms. In the first chapter, Didur considers the intersections between gender and nationalism in South Asia and the partition as a moment reflective of the "patriarchal community-state alliance" (16). Through a reading of Bedi's "Lajwanti" in chapter two, she explores the power of fiction in exposing the nexus of state and elite interests in the treatment of "abducted" women. Building on existing critical analysis, she argues, in chapter three, how Lenny in *Cracking India* manages to crack the patriarchal-nationalist code that re(asserts) itself in the aftermath of the partition. Her focus on Parsees, a community that was numerically in a minority but otherwise occupied a class position, and the significance that Sidhwa might have attached to its role in the nationalist construction is both refreshing and complex in complicating the story of partition that often gets viewed around the Hindu/Muslim axis. Chapter four, on Hosain's novel, reveals the continuing effects of nationalism and partition in postcolonial India. Providing the long view of the gendered structure of the community to which the pro-

tagonist belongs, she analyzes the novel in terms of its “thematic concerns of love, education, and domesticity as unsettling the monolithic nationalism that comes to dominate India and Pakistan in the time of partition” (124). Chapter five is important for its reading of “silence” in Devi’s novel through its commemoration of partition violence that meditates on the impossibility of recovering what has been “lost, neglected, or misplaced” (155) and the paradoxical representation of being haunted by memories that cannot be remembered. Didur’s point is that literature itself is marked by silence about violence and that “this silence serves a pedagogical purpose in reframing an attitude toward partition history” (126). Addressing this issue is also an attempt to answer the larger question: “Should the goal of the writer, reader, or literary historiography be to attempt to identify or empathize with (and by implication ‘understand’) the experience of the Other or on the contrary, recognize the gap within and between the Others’ experience and her own?” (138). Answering this question, Didur counters scholarly arguments that see literature as providing/restoring the historical record. Rather, she argues, the “silences in ‘abducted’ women’s testimonies are a sign of the original incompleteness of history or an example of ‘loss as loss’ in the first instance” (139).

Didur’s achievement lies in her careful attention to what she identifies as a “rhetorically sensitive” reading of the texts—a phrase she borrows from Spivak. Her emphasis on the “literariness” (10) of literature and language, and meaning making through realism, fragmentation, and imagery is one of the distinguishing features of the book, crucial as it is in demonstrating how language mediates representations and perceptions of history, memory, experience, consciousness, and understanding of this event. As well, it is useful in pointing out how literary narratives destabilize “truth claims about the past, disrupt totalizing accounts of independence and the division of India, and work toward deterritorializing nationalist discourse” (11). Other interesting moments in the book include analyses of letters, diaries, autobiography, and advertisements such as the one for Parle Gluco tea biscuits in English language newspapers as the events of partition unfold in 1947. Didur points out how cultural representations such as the Parle Gluco biscuit ads at that time produce a rhetoric that nurtures masculine political power and reinscribes the home as the domain of women, especially mothers, and privilege patriarchal interests in the national imaginary—something that constituted the imagination in the treatment accorded to women during the partition. Overall, Didur’s intensive discussion of existing scholarship on nationalism and partition

and their relationship to literary and cultural narratives ensures the valuable contribution made by *Unsettling Partition*.

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Marta Straznicky. *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550–1700*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 182 pp. \$85.00.

Plays written by women in the early modern period have attracted significant scholarly interest over the last quarter century, and the works of such writers as Mary Sidney, Elizabeth Cary, and Margaret Cavendish are now known to many. Their writing has been considered within biographical, socio-political, and theatrical contexts and, thanks to new editions and anthologies, is now frequently taught in university classes at all levels. The wider circulation of their work has been accompanied by increasing recognition that closet drama is not a poor cousin of publicly staged dramatic entertainment but a genre with its own merits, produced for specific occasions and purposes and with its own set of dramatic conventions. This, Straznicky insists, is the “fundamental argument” of her book. “Closet drama,” she states, “is an *alternative* to the commercial stage, and ... its very difference from the public theatre was mobilized by women writers to engage in a discourse that was, until the Restoration, systemically inaccessible to them” (112). This may not be a particularly new argument, but it certainly benefits from the consideration it receives in *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550–1700*.

Marta Straznicky readily acknowledges the many contributors who have advanced our understanding of early modern women's closet drama to date, and her thorough research is obvious as she draws on past readings of the plays she discusses. In contrast to many of her predecessors, she examines closet plays both before and after the closure of the public theatres in 1642. While consideration of plays spanning 150 years could have resulted in an excessively weighty tome or vague generalizations, Straznicky succeeds in maintaining a focused argument as she examines the work of Jane Lumley, Elizabeth Cary, Margaret Cavendish, and Anne Finch. While the exclusion of certain authors such as Lady Mary Wroth, and the limited references to Mary Sidney Herbert and Katherine Philips have been questioned (Bennett 378), the choice of works allows for a useful

comparison of plays both prior to the interregnum when women did not have access to the public stage and post Restoration when they did.

This text also takes an unusual approach to women's closet drama in other ways. First, the plays are examined within the context of performance traditions, but without privileging the commercial theatre as the standard of comparison. Instead, Straznicky analyzes how the women writers she studies selectively include elements of the theatrical tradition in their closet plays. Second, she considers the plays against a history of reading to argue that these women did not wish to avoid the public eye entirely but that they wanted to control public access to their works. She concludes that the privacy of the closet, "a site of writing, reading, and—potentially—performance" (113), and the more controlled "private" circulation of closet drama permitted an "ideological resistance" (117) that, because it was hidden, may have been even more menacing than that of the public stage.

Straznicky opens her argument by acknowledging the difficulty of defining the concepts of public and private in the early modern period. Questions are raised about the early modern household as a private space and the belief that commercial theatre productions were more or less public than a play in manuscript or print. Straznicky provides detailed analysis of printing and manuscript conventions associated with drama, methods of play circulation that are often granted only fleeting attention, and argues that "manipulations of print and manuscript format enable the woman writer to address a readership that is selectively public or private" (1). She also connects closet drama to plays performed at court and in academic settings and suggests that play reading was considered a pastime of an intellectual elite and that it became increasingly politicized when the theatres closed.

The plays are discussed in chronological order, beginning with Lumley's *Iphigeneia*. Noting prior studies that viewed Lumley's work as a faulty schoolgirl exercise and, more recently, as a political commentary on virgin sacrifice and the execution of Lady Jane Grey, Straznicky returns Lumley's work to the context of humanist education principles while insisting that the choice of text and method of translation suggest "a personal rather than programmatic endeavour" (21). Looking closely at the differences between Euripides' text and Lumley's translation, Straznicky contends that Lumley purposely chose to emphasize the father-daughter relationship between Agamemnon and Iphigeneia and that her changes also reveal careful attention to both sound and dramatic coherence, suggesting that

the play was intended for performance, possibly to be read in front of Elizabeth I during her visit to Nonsuch Palace.

Having focused on the humanist context and performability of *Iphigeneia*, Straznicky moves on to explore the idea of private and public readerships for Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*. In contrast to criticism that has traditionally connected Cary's work with Senecan tragedy and the mode of political discourse embraced by the Sidneys and their coterie of writers, Straznicky relates Cary's work to the private pastime of reading. She carefully analyzes the play's typographic arrangement, observing that it was particularly designed for readers and claiming that publication of a closet play could be a way of "specifying rather than renouncing its position within the public sphere" (52–53). Straznicky closes this chapter with a perceptive reading of the two printings of the play, one of which includes the dedicatory sonnet "To Dianaes Earthlie Deputesse, and my worthy Sister, Mistris Elizabeth Carye," and suggests that these are directed to different readerships, one an elite public readership and the other a more private circle of friends and family.

While Cary's work is explored in terms of readership, Cavendish's closet plays are examined in relation to the closure of the theatres in 1642 and the accompanying shift from play going to play reading. Straznicky discusses Cavendish's desire for fame and her equal fear of public censure and points to Cavendish's own criticism of the commercial stage to claim that Cavendish intentionally designed her plays to be read aloud rather than performed on stage. Nonetheless, these plays engage with the conventions of both play reading and play going, and Straznicky notes that the repeated representation of performances in Cavendish's closet drama situates her readers, like her plays, simultaneously in the private world of play reading and the imagined social world of play going. Straznicky thereby concludes that in their design and anticipated performance, Cavendish's closet plays envision a space "in which both author and reader, and perhaps especially the author-reader, can be secluded and socially engaged at the same time" (90).

Moving on to the Restoration period and the reopening of the theatres, Straznicky sees the continuation of the genre of closet drama as a sign that it served a function distinct from commercially staged plays. She maintains that it enabled women to engage in a form of public discourse without "violating the fiction that they were appropriately closeted as individuals" (91). Finch's closet plays, *The Triumphs of Love and Innocence* and *Aristomenes*, are then examined in relation to both her refusal to write for the commercial stage and Katherine Philips's carefully orchestrated

production of her translation of Corneille's *Pompey* on the Dublin stage. Straznicky argues that while the two women use different strategies, they both reject the role of professional playwright because of the "sexualized and commercialized" (97) relationship between playwright and audience in Restoration theatre. She suggests that their emphasis on their status as amateur writers and their resulting anti-professional stance allowed them greater control over the public perception of their work. Straznicky therefore offers a fresh perspective on Finch's work as she concludes that what is often seen as Finch's "retreat from public ... is more accurately a retreat from an indiscriminate public" (109).

Scholars of early modern women's drama will find many familiar references and arguments in *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550–1700*, but Straznicky goes beyond the familiar to offer provocative readings of the works she discusses. Reassessment of private and public spheres and consideration of reading practices have been the centre of recent scholarly attention; nonetheless, this text is singularly successful in situating specific texts in relation to a history of page and stage, of private reading practices and public theatre performances. Occasionally the discussion seems unnecessarily convoluted—particularly in the conclusion, where Straznicky connects ideas about the space of the closet and the works produced in it. However, the argument regarding closet drama as a viable genre distinct from commercially staged plays remains clear. While the title, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550–1700*, implies an overly ambitious project, this slim volume offers a thoroughly researched and engaging analysis of a selection of women's closet plays and their relationship to commercial theatre, print culture, and the space within which these women worked.

## Works Cited

Bennett, Alexandra G. Review of *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550–1700*, by Marta Straznicky. *Notes and Queries* 53.3 (September 2006): 377–78.

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Alison Calder and Robert Wardhaugh, eds.  
*History, Literature, and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies*.  
Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2005.  
310 pp. \$24.95.

In *History, Literature, and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies*, Alison Calder and Robert Wardhaugh bring together ten essays by Canadian and American scholars whose common concern, broadly speaking, is to find new ways of conceptualizing the prairies. The point of the collection, according to its editors, is to interrogate and reconfigure conventional understandings of the prairies which posit or reinforce the notion that this region is timeless and frozen, at once “unchanging and unchangeable” (4). In their Introduction, aptly titled “When Is the Prairie?,” Calder and Wardhaugh provide an overview of literary and historical scholarship related to prairies, clearly illustrating the extent to which the “where” of the prairies has dominated both disciplines. In and through their readings of prairie writing, literary scholars (most notably Henry Kreisel, Laurie Ricou, and Dick Harrison) have constructed a “generalized prairie reality” (6) in which “landscape dominates culture and geography effaces history” (8). The same can be said of those historians (including Donald Gunn, Alexander Begg, and George Bruce) who, in the late nineteenth century, drew the prairies into nationalist projects, linking the conquest of the region to nation building. While some historians writing during the 1970s and 1980s (Gerald Friesen, Douglas Francis, and Howard Palmer) began to question “centralist metanarratives” (12), focusing instead on the regional specificities and/or ethnic multiplicities of the prairies, Calder and Wardhaugh bemoan the fact that, even as “old definitions of region were challenged ... new ones were not offered” (13).

This book, then, seeks to challenge deeply-entrenched assumptions about “how the land speaks the people” and “how it shapes human history and culture” with questions that ask how “people speak to the land,” how we “write ourselves onto the prairie space,” and how in doing so we transform the prairies into a place radically unfixed and unstable (4). To be sure, some of the essays in this book fulfill its editors promises: Claire Omhovère’s “The Melting of Time in Thomas Wharton’s *Icefields*” re-imagines the prairies as a “living landscape” (43); Dennis Cooley, in “Documents in the Postmodern Long Prairie Poem,” reflects at length on the notion that poets engage with the prairies by “erasing old inscriptions, retaining versions of old subscriptions, and authoring new inscriptions” (184); and in “Time’s Grip Along the Athabasca, 1920s and 1930s,” Cam McEachern

argues for the ways in which the Peace River district of Alberta was once, but is no longer, implicated in the promotion of early twentieth-century liberal ideology. Cooley's essay stands out for its comprehensive history of the prairie long poem and its thoughtful reconsideration of how historical documents figure in the work of such poets as Robert Kroetsch, Monty Reid, and Birk Sproxtton. Equally compelling is Russell Morton Brown's "Robert Kroetsch, Marshall McLuhan, and Canadian's Prairie Postmodernism: The Aberhart Effect," which draws convincing links between William Aberhart's politics, Kroetsch's poetry, and McLuhan's theory.

Readers, however, should be attentive to the discrepancies between some of the editors' claims about the nature of this collection and what the essayists actually deliver—claims, for example, that this book focuses on the *Canadian* prairies and that interdisciplinarity characterizes its contributors' overall approach to rethinking the region. Although most of the essays in this collection grapple with the meaning of the Canadian prairies, two (Frances W. Kaye's "The Tantalizing Possibility of Living on the Plains" and Sarah Payne's "Reconstructions of Literary Settings in North America's Prairie Regions: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Red Cloud, Nebraska, and Neepawa, Manitoba") present cross-cultural work that compares Canadian prairie culture to that of the American Great Plains. And while these same two essays utilize interdisciplinary methodologies, the other essays in this collection (including Claire Omhovère's reading of *Icefields*, Nina van Gessel's discussion of Carol Shields's *The Stone Diaries*, Heidi Slettedahl MacPherson's examination of Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning*, S. Leigh Matthews's work on women's prairie memoirs, Debra Dudek's revisiting of Margaret Laurence's Manawaka fiction) are primarily grounded in literary discourses and scholarly practices.

More troubling is Calder and Wardhaugh's misleading suggestion that, unlike previous studies of Canadian prairie history and literature, *History, Literature, and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies* does not privilege European settler/invader culture (3). The book's glaring lack of essays on First Nations prairie literature, coupled with its overt emphasis on canonical prairie writers (Robert Kroetsch, Margaret Laurence, and Carol Shields), undermines the editors' attempts to reconceptualize the dynamic between prairie history, culture, and literature. Culture, in this collection, is for the most part conceived as European settler/invader culture. In addition to overlooking Aboriginal writing, moreover, the ten essays largely fail to reflect the ethnic/"racialized" heterogeneity of the

prairies (prairie writers of East Asian, South Asian, and Central/Eastern European descent are ignored entirely).

I am not suggesting that the book should be summarily dismissed for its shortcomings—on the contrary, it offers several provocative and eloquent (re)readings of prairie literature. And because essay collections are selective by nature, they are bound to displease some readers while delighting others. Indeed, in anticipation of criticism from some of the displeased, Calder and Wardhaugh explain that “[o]f all the proposals [they] received in [their] call for papers on prairie topics, not one was on a text by an Aboriginal author” (10). But such a disclaimer, given the number of scholars in Canada with expertise on Aboriginal literature and culture, neither excuses the omission nor addresses the other problematic oversights of this collection. Ultimately, despite its ambitious objectives, *History, Literature, and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies* reinforces more than it challenges conventional ideas about prairie literature and as such should be approached with caution.

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Rachel Connor. *H.D. and the Image*.

Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004. 152 pp. \$79.95.

Rachel Connor’s new study, *H.D. and the Image*, provides a new and exciting examination of H.D.’s interest in the visual. Moving beyond the conception of H.D. as Imagiste, Connor explores H.D.’s involvement with avant-garde filmmaking, psychoanalysis, and spiritualism to analyze the interconnections of gender, sexuality, and subjectivity in her *oeuvre*. Drawing on work by film scholars, feminist philosophers, and gender and cultural studies theorists, *H.D. and the Image* offers readings of H.D.’s lesser known poetry and prose as well as contextualizes her interdisciplinary interests in film and spiritualism.

Most fascinating about Connor’s study is the attention it gives to H.D.’s preoccupation with European avant-garde cinema. H.D. worked as a film critic, actor, editor, and writer while she was involved with POOL Productions, an independent film company that Bryher founded in 1927 in collaboration with H.D. and Kenneth Macpherson (Bryher’s husband and H.D.’s lover at the time). H.D. also wrote reviews, theoretical essays,

and poems for its journal, *Close Up*. Connor provides a succinct summary of film history and situates the POOL production of *Borderline* within a tradition of avant-garde film being produced in Europe during the 1930s. Offering an insightful analysis of German expressionism and French impressionism, Connor examines H.D.'s influence by G. W. Pabst, one of Germany's most well-known expressionist directors, and Sergei Eisenstein, the Soviet director who spearheaded the montage school of filmmaking. Indeed, Connor links the impressionist concept *photogenie*—"the momentary flash of recognition or a moment when the look at something suddenly flares up with a particularly affective, emotional intensity" (25)—with H.D.'s own visionary experiences. She goes on to explore the contradictions inherent in H.D.'s film writings: at times, these writings embody an intellectual prejudice about commercial (read popular) filmmaking and at others an appreciation for the collectivity of spectatorship as well as an interest in such Hollywood stars as Greta Garbo and Louise Brooks. In this way, Connor offers a new way of looking at H.D., film connoisseur: H.D. as both avant-garde intellectualist and consumer of popular movies. This chapter in Connor's book is especially well researched and provides important new insights into H.D.'s enthusiasm for the moving image.

One of this study's early chapters traces the impact of the moving image on H.D.'s *Sea Garden* and *Notes on Thought and Vision*. Connor aligns H.D.'s attempt to capture the energy of the immediate present and the dynamism of the visual in her early Imagist poems with Joyce's epiphanies, Woolf's moments of being, and "the still point of the turning world" of Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Situating H.D.'s early poetry in relation to the development of filmmaking in general, Connor explores the "cinematics" (36) of *Sea Garden* by exploring the stasis and dynamism inherent in the poems of that early collection. Cinematic techniques like inter-cutting and analytical editing are linked to the narrative flow between poems. Connor draws parallels between the palimpsestic technique that H.D. uses throughout her career and the inter-cutting and superimposition of images in early avant-garde film, especially Eisenstein's use of montage in *October*. Through the exploration of the formal and stylistic qualities that these two contemporaries—Eisenstein and H.D.—share, Connor provides a view of modernism that is distinctly interdisciplinary. More specifically, in her analysis of *Her* and *Nights*, two of H.D.'s cinematic texts, Connor develops a "queer theoretic" of the gaze that allows H.D. to explore issues of power and control surrounding the visual representation of the female body. In fact, H.D.'s engagement with the image allows her to resist

dominant ideologies of gender and sexuality through her emphasis on the erotics of the lesbian gaze.

In this study, Connor expands the conception of H.D., *Imagiste*, by acknowledging the heterogeneity of her writing and exploring H.D.'s representation of the image which mediates between and moves beyond such ideological binaries as highbrow/popular, aesthetic/politicized, private/collective (8). Most importantly, this study recognizes the blind spots that inhabit H.D.'s writing: the Eurocentrism present in her appropriation of mythology, for example, and her lack of engagement with Egyptian cultural history and politics in *Helen in Egypt*. Connor argues that, in giving a voice to Helen of Troy, H.D. can be seen as reaffirming the masculinist power that underlies mythological discourse and also as silencing the Egyptian resistance to British colonialism. Although acknowledging the important work that H.D.'s revisionist analyses of myth and history undoubtedly perform, Connor astutely points out that H.D. reinforces the cultural hegemony inherent in discourses of race, colonialism, and imperialism.

Toward the end of *H.D. and the Image*, Connor moves on to an examination of H.D.'s "visionary politics" of the 1940s, a new "way of seeing" that is marked by her desire to move beyond the boundaries of national identity and construct a community without borders (91). This interconnection of cinematic spectatorship and visionary experience is perhaps encouraged by the onset of World War II. For Connor, *The Gift* foregrounds H.D.'s desire to foster a spiritual collectivity influenced by the principles of community and equality that stem from her Moravian faith. The alternate spiritual dimension that H.D. accesses in *The Gift* is described with the terminology of film—literary analepsis is likened to cinematic flashback—and thus reinforces H.D.'s concerns with film, memory, and spirituality. During an air raid described in *The Gift*, for example, H.D. "is able to 'let pictures flow past and through me'" (96). In this way, Connor characterizes H.D. as both a spectator of spiritual images as well as an instrument through which these images are projected. By way of this analogy, Connor highlights the link between H.D.'s spiritual identity and her visionary politics and juxtaposes notions of collective spectatorship and private reception.

The sixth chapter of *H.D. and the Image* is both provocative and provoking. For Connor, H.D.'s exploration of spiritualism allows her (H.D.) to challenge orthodox constructions of gender and sexuality, provide a method for moving beyond entrenched conceptions of self and subjectivity, and surpass the elitism of the modernist literary establishment. Indeed, arguing that H.D.'s engagement with spiritualism undercuts her intellec-

tualized persona (115), Connor examines H.D.'s interest in the concepts of ritual and community inherent in popular spiritualism, especially in relation to the unpublished typescripts "The Sword Went Out to Sea" and "Majic Ring." Spirit transmissions allowed H.D. to reach a wider social community and to contest the dominant ideologies and power hierarchies that are bound up in heterosexual desire and orthodox Christianity (121–22). Tantalizing the reader with the links between the visual and the spiritual, Connor's study does not as successfully probe the depths of H.D.'s interest in popular spiritualism, especially in relation to her spiritualist narratives "The Sword Went Out to Sea" and "White Rose and the Red."

Connor freely acknowledges that H.D.'s challenges to normative formulations of sexuality and gender are undercut by a conservatism that can limit their radical potential: "What is revealed if we look at H.D.'s oeuvre is a *spectrum* of viewing experiences, containing within it a number of co-existing but conflicting political positions in relation to spectatorship" (109). H.D.'s exploration of film and spiritualism undoubtedly highlights the contradictory nature of her relationship to high modernism: although her interest in Hollywood cinema distinguishes her from the "aestheticised purism" (7) of some of her colleagues, her preference for European avant-garde film (with the preference given to form over content) is entirely in keeping with the at times elitist interests of canonized modernists.

*H.D. and the Image* is a brilliant addition to interdisciplinary analyses of H.D.'s oeuvre, however. In its examination of the interconnections between the visual, the spiritual, and the political, Rachel Connor's study provides important observations of H.D.'s involvement with *Close Up* and with popular and avant-garde filmmaking in general. Lucidly argued, *H.D. and the image* would be of use to any reader interested in H.D. and the visual and to most university libraries.

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Allan Pritchard. *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century: A Critical Survey*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. ISBN 0-8020-3889-1. \$63.00.

This is such a rewarding subject that I'm surprised that no one has thought to tackle it in modern academic times; the last book entirely devoted to this topic was by Donald Stauffer back in 1930. One reason for neglect might be the lack of good editions of seventeenth-century biographies,

which are often hard to come by in their original form. Another might be a general lack of awareness of the richness of available material, for many biographies were printed as prefaces to collected works or concealed in funeral sermons. Allan Pritchard has trawled through hundreds of lives in a spirit of judicious appreciation, with results that convince one that early modern biography is a field full of hidden treasure.

Consider how little known these works are. Who wrote the life of Francis Bacon, for example, or Lancelot Andrewes? The life of John Williams, Thomas Fuller, Matthew Hale, or Dudley North? Pritchard's discussion of these biographies brings out their intrinsic merits, using them to illustrate the conventions of the genre, and shows how they enlarge those conventions. He reviews the evolution of life writing from the cautious, inhibited exercises at the beginning of the century, mainly eulogistic and wary of offending authority, to the shrewd, indiscreet, and vividly evocative sketches produced by John Aubrey and Anthony Wood at the end of this period. Notions about what a biography might reveal changed enormously over a hundred years, moving from stolid uncritical admiration of eminent figures to imaginative and insightful assessments of character and motive that are recognizably modern. The scope of biography altered greatly in this time, as dutiful regard to statesmen and grave divines slackened, and individuals of all kinds came to be seen as worthy of record. A vast amount of social history is concealed in these biographies, and as an index of changing attitudes toward public accomplishments and private worth they are invaluable.

The most familiar seventeenth-century lives are those by Izaak Walton (which still, incidentally, lack a modern scholarly edition). Reverential, affectionate, almost saccharine at times, they preserve the memories of Donne, Herbert, Hooker, Wotton, and Sanderson in ways that the Victorians admired. They say nothing very critical of their subjects, who are represented as model Anglicans, mild, peaceable, and exemplary. Donne stands apart from the other figures with his reckless and licentious youth, but he is easily smoothed into the mould provided by St Augustine, where youthful worldliness was converted into a saintly middle age. Pritchard points up the shortcomings and deficiencies of Walton's practice in ways that show him to be more of a writer of fiction than a biographer. Walton gives virtually no dates in his accounts, he invents the speeches of his characters, he offers little detail in descriptions of their personal appearance, and he idealizes them into virtuous, patient Christians who might all have qualified for sainthood in the Restoration Church, had that Church decided to create its own Anglican saints. Their similarities are empha-

sized, their distinctiveness played down. Even though all of his subjects wrote extensively, their writings are virtually ignored. Inconvenient facts are utterly unwelcome: we never hear that Herbert's stepfather was one of the regicides, that his mother's remarriage was resented by his family, or that his brother Edward was notable for duelling and dissipation. We learn nothing of Donne's sensualism and skepticism, of Hooker's wealth (which would compromise Walton's picture of pastoral simplicity), of Wotton's militant Protestantism or of Sanderson's trimming to the Cromwellian regime. Men of great complexity and sophistication are simplified down to unworldly pietists.

In many ways, as Pritchard makes clear, Walton's lives are the continuation and the culmination of the earlier tradition of life-writing in England, in which the statesmen always had judgment and gravity, and the divines were always earnest, learned, devout, and unworldly. Among the stereotypes of the genre we meet: the preacher whose ambition is to die in the pulpit, the divine who is so preoccupied with matters of the spirit that he doesn't notice that his house is on fire, the student who cannot leave his books for a moment, such as John Preston who would read Aquinas in the barber's chair, or the statesman ever musing upon policy. Personal failings or vices are rarely mentioned; Pritchard notes that only anger amongst the vices was admissible, for this often arose from hatred of sin or from an aristocratic temper. Marriage, wives, and children have little or no part in early biographies. Parentage is mentioned only cursorily, especially if it is humble: it is not uplifting to know that Wolsey's father was a butcher or Laud's a clothier. Childhood is usually ignored ("all children are alike in their Long-coats"), youth is rapidly passed over, but the last days, even hours, of a subject's life are attentively dwelt upon. The protracted death-bed scenes that are characteristic of seventeenth-century biographies, which reached their zenith in Burnet's account of Rochester's end, were important because they revealed the condition of the soul, the depth of faith that gave proof of salvation. Had salvation, the great purpose of life, been achieved? "The last dayes are the best witnesses of a Man," remarked Jeremy Taylor.

Religious and secular biographies had distinct limitations, as well as conventions, because of the need for reverence toward the subject. There was also the problem, when dealing with eminent men, that the life of the individual became obliterated by the account of public affairs: history all too easily overwhelmed biography. In Heylyn's life of Laud, for instance, there is scarcely more than a paragraph or two about Laud's personal life in a folio of five hundred pages. Criticism of great men was

not easy, either. Heylyn was unwilling to suggest that Laud might have been the architect of his own disasters and those of his church and king. A powerful and damaging figure such as the Duke of Buckingham could not be assessed in his lifetime, and he largely escaped criticism for two generations afterward.

The breakthrough to a more liberal, expressive kind of biography came after the Restoration. Thomas Fuller's *Worthies* (1662), his record of the notables of England, had an unprecedented social inclusiveness, admitting porters, mechanicks, musicians, and alchemists into the company of the traditionally great. In Lincolnshire, James Yorke a blacksmith appears along with Robert Cecil the statesman. David Lloyd's bulky *Memoires* (1668) of the casualties of the Civil War on the royalist side also spread its net very wide. But there is no doubt in Allan Pritchard's mind about where the palm of honour should be bestowed among Restoration biographers: John Aubrey, with Anthony Wood as a close second.

Aubrey's unflagging curiosity about his contemporaries and near-contemporaries was aided by his vast and miscellaneous acquaintance of family and friends, by his natural inquisitiveness, and by his delight in all things odd and surprising. He started collecting biographical information to help his friend Wood with his encyclopaedic account of Oxford authors, so it may have been the freedom from the direct responsibilities of publication that allowed him to write so frankly about individuals, and his habit of jotting down details of lives as they came to him may have produced his terse anecdotal style in which a sharp phrase registers some unforgettable impression. He had few prejudices, was willing to record impartially all kinds of idiosyncrasy, and expressed a wonderful liveliness, informality, and candour in his brief lives. His fascination with the physical appearance of his subjects—Bacon with his viper eye, Falkland's "blackish haire, something flaggy," Thomas Randolph's "pale ill complexion, pock-pitten," Venetia Digby's damask cheeks—makes these people immediately imaginable. Aubrey's unprecedented interest in their sexual behaviour, their private foibles, their afflictions and hopes, gives his observations a fullness and depth and psychological complexity without parallel in English biography and causes Pritchard to suggest links between Aubrey's way of recording character and the emergence of the novel at this time.

The beneficiary of Aubrey's gleanings was Anthony Wood, the industrious and cantankerous Oxford antiquary, who wanted the material for his great compendium of literary biography, *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691 and 1692). He compiled lives of many hundreds of Oxford writers, which are entirely secular in character, frank, opinionated, and quite lacking in

moral commentary. In general, he was well disposed toward High Church and Catholic authors and scornful of the Puritans. His lives owe much to Aubrey's information but are rendered in a businesslike plain style, and although they lack many of Aubrey's engaging touches, they nonetheless offer shrewd character sketches. They are factually detailed and reliable, wonders of compression, and remain invaluable to literary scholars: indeed, they are the foundation of many of the seventeenth-century entries in the *New Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

Allan Pritchard rounds off his survey with accounts of the group biographies of the Holles and the North families. In the course of his book, he has put a vast miscellany of lives into a serviceable framework and has established the categories and conventions of these works. He has made accessible large numbers of biographical exercises that have undeservedly fallen into obscurity. There are some omissions, inevitably. I would have liked to hear more about biographies of unusual women, for example—John Evelyn's *Life of Margaret Godolphin* merits more than a few lines, and the funeral sermons for Lady Magdalen Herbert and Lady Anne Clifford yield much that is memorable. Nevertheless, anyone interested in the cultural history of the seventeenth century would benefit from reading this book, which is full of jewels twinkling in the grass on ancient graves.

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Ton Hoenselaars, ed. *Shakespeare's History Plays: Performance, Translation, and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.  
ISBN 0-521-82902-X. 287 pp. + illus. \$80.00 cloth.

Ton Hoenselaars has assembled a valuable collection of essays examining Shakespeare's most politically enquiring plays. Despite the (implicit or explicit) keynote of celebration which frequently sets the tone of English major institutional theatrical revivals of Shakespeare's Histories—as when the Royal Shakespeare Company uses them as a rhetorical vehicle of self-definition—the plays themselves are, and often remain, intrinsically episodic and politically skeptical in their dramatization of hopes and disappointments which do not outlast a single lifetime, and so thwart a conventionally heroic sense of conclusion. Dennis Kennedy pertinently asks in his Foreword to the volume: “What is a nation? What is a national

history? In Shakespeare's chronicles these questions are intensely localized to England and England's provinces" (2), in the forms of plays so "directly conscious of public ideologies and private prerogatives, of dynastic and internecine angst or of the relationship of personality to power" as to provide a saga of a nation in terms of "precarious preservation shot through with torture and distress" (3). The resonances, poignancies, and ironies of these plays have a unique recurrent topicality, currently in relation to what Kennedy identifies as the "great paradox of our time," "the intense exercise of a residual form of nationalism amid a globalized economy and transnational politics" (7).

However, the collection has a further reach of ambition. Hoenselaars: "One of the aims is to study the various national responses to the plays with an eye to the process whereby different political and cultural contexts have tended to accommodate the plays' implicit 'Englishness'" (9). Notwithstanding the specifically English terms of the plays' inquiries, the contributors gather cumulative evidence of notable theatrical productions and resonances which are crucially restricted by, or to, their place of origin. Alexander Shurbanov and Boika Sokolova argue, as part of their account of the chronicle plays' productions in Bulgaria, that in "rewriting the histories the twentieth century diagnosed its own painful plight and reinscribed Shakespeare in the body of its post-World War II culture not as the author of unique dramatic creations based on old stories, but as a rich source of old texts to be reshaped for modern use—a legacy whose vigour resides in its endless susceptibility to meaningful revision and adaptation" (186). Other essays consider the plays in production in Japan, Italy, Austria, Spain, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

Hoenselaars subdivides the collection into three sections: "Alienating Histories," "The Appropriated Past," and "Stage Adaptations of the Histories." In the first section, Andrew Murphy contributes a provocative essay on how Ireland "functions as a kind of liminal space—at one and the same time foreign and familiar" (42), as part of how Shakespeare's Histories offer "a profound engagement with the issue of the uncertainties and fragmentation of national identities" (47), in which the Irish and the Welsh particularly emerge as figures and forces of "liminal disruption, serving to interrogate the easy tropes of national self-imagining" (49). This prompts us to "ask ourselves what exactly constitutes the 'foreign' and to consider the question of where exactly the boundaries between the 'domestic' and the 'foreign' can be drawn" (56). Murphy's essay leads effectively into Lisa Hopkins's analysis of how Wales figures in the plays as the "home and locus of a Britishness which is not quite Englishness" (60); "Wales's status

as physically marginal makes it prone to being treated as psychologically marginal too,” a territory of the fantastic where “rationality is prone to sudden violent, almost Gothic encounters with its Others” (66). Hopkins concludes by asking trenchantly: “Can England ... ever escape from its Welshness—or would to do so make it less than England?” (73). While the subsequent assertion by Jean-Michel Déprats that *Henry V* is “less dialectic and ambiguous than the eight history plays that preceded it” (75) may be arguable, Déprats offers a thoughtful account of his experiences in translating that play for a French audience.

The collection boasts other vigorously challenging reappraisals. James N. Loehlin proposes how “Brecht’s epic dramaturgy provided a justification for the construction of” the *Henry VI* plays “which retain the episodic narration of the chronicles in place of an Aristotelian unity” whilst providing an “emphasis on the harsh economics of war and government” which is “thoroughly Brechtian” and has served as a “keynote for modern productions” of the plays (134). There is unusually detailed consideration of *King John*—aptly described by Hoenselaars as “a play whose political stance interrogates and demystifies rather than supports a unitary notion” of England (113)—in Edward Burns’s essay on performances of Shakespeare’s plays as historical “cycles.” In what I thought the best argument of the collection, Burns points out how such epic production cycles have the advantage of providing a healthy alternative to conventional commercial theatre by requiring an ensemble; though he adds that the main disadvantage—from which arguably Michael Bogdanov and Michael Pennington’s aggressively left-wing English Shakespeare Company arguably “never recovered”—is that “it builds a male-centred, male-defined company” (155). The RSC and larger subsidized companies face a paradox in the theatrical formulation of any non-Brechtian epic sense of “this England” in a situation where:

any certainty of the value of such an enterprise is called into question by the nature and tendency of the dramatic material from which the epic style is built. It seems to me that the “history” plays question what “history” is, and show us “history in the making” in that they derive so much of their dynamic from the clash between rival characters or groups who seek to “make history” ... in their own competing terms. The battle is over what is digested, remembered, understood. The internal dramas of the plays are in themselves a challenge to the idea of an overarching “historical” structure on which the “cycles” are predicated. (157)

Thus, claims Burns, whilst a theatrical image of nation and spirit may have been formulated and affirmed, Shakespeare's plays present "history as made out of the uncontrolled, often embarrassing, emotions of a dysfunctional multinational family," in ways contrary to the drives of national integration myths: "as this happens, [Shakespeare's Histories] can be seen to mock the audience's need to pull together, to find a larger frame for the interfamilial squabbles in front of us" (164).

Hoenselaars's collection offers many examples of such lively skeptical thought to identify and counter many forms of national and theatrical parochialism, and their intrinsic restrictions. The assembled essays argue enthusiastically and convincingly for the valuable strengths of Shakespeare's Histories in opposing the restrictions of ostensibly self-legitimizing power.

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Rita Keresztesi. *Strangers at Home: American Ethnic Modernism Between the Wars*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. xxii + 226 pp. \$60.

When I teach Modernism, Zora Neale Hurston is central to my course, as are Nella Larsen and Ralph Ellison. Jewish and Native American writers are also a decided part of my canon of authors. I know of few teachers whose conception of Modernism is so antediluvian as to encompass only Anglo-American authors. Innovative anthologies of American Literature such as the excellent Heath anthology transparently critique such narrow canon formations. Moreover, critics such as Werner Sollors and Houston Baker moved beyond such narrow conceptions of Modernism in the 1980s and 1990s so that Ruth Keresztesi's contention that her approach of getting beyond the canon is controversial and innovative is unsustainable. She does "rethink the project of American literary modernism from the perspective and peripheral locales of ethnic writers" (xiii) and in doing so brings some interesting critiques to bear on a wide range of authors, but her approach is hardly earth shattering. As she says, "I critique the taken for granted high modernist standards of American modernism, reread the canon from its ethnic perspectives and suggest that modernism and ethnicity were intimately connected within American version of modernism" (191). I would like to know "taken for granted" by whom? Surely

not the informed mass of university educators who laugh out loud at the elitist pretensions of traditional critics who support such propositions and are now in a decided minority except at Oxbridge and certain Ivy League institutions?

Despite my frustration with the claims of this book, there are many interesting critiques of an interesting variety of authors and it is good to see the juxtapositions between different ethnic authors. Countee Cullen is shown to subvert “the genre of melodrama to expose the class bias and patriarchal ideology of the New Negro Movement as farce” (26). Here, as elsewhere, Keresztesi brings fresh perspective to an author who previously has been too readily dismissed as marginal to the modernist canon. Likewise, Mourning Dove is interestingly juxtaposed with Nella Larsen through their common interest in the mulatto figure. There is much talk throughout the book about the importance of performing ethnicity, and the use of Judith Butler’s theories here illuminates the ways in which racial performativity is different to that of gender and plays out in different ways. Her reading of this trope in Mourning Dove’s work is particularly astute. Also astute is her use of Paul Gilroy’s work to discuss Nella Larsen in a context beyond the narrow confines of North America. She rightly insists that “(B)y bringing in non-American examples ... into the American narrative, Larsen exposes the claustrophobic character of Nationalist discourses in general” (47).

Overall, though, the book is disappointing. It begins to talk about minstrelsy, but fails to use the vast wealth of material available in studies by Michael Rogin, Eric Lott, and W. T. Lhamon to investigate it as a key trope of performative ethnicity both for Jews and African Americans. Melville, we are told, “puts on a minstrel show of the whole nation” (14–15), but she does not develop this through her discussion of Modernist writers. She is not very good at discussing the world beyond the literary which I believe is key to understanding the full context of the writers she discusses. Thus, jazz is mentioned when discussing Hurston but there is no discussion of its importance formally for African American writers. Writing is a narrow business for Keresztesi. I am afraid she is also prone to restate her position repeatedly. Hence, Countee Cullen’s double plots and the problems of Zora Neale Hurston’s patrons are discussed repeatedly to the annoyance of this reader at least. In conclusion, *Strangers at Home: American Ethnic Modernism Between the Wars* contains several incisive readings of a range of writers but its overall scope is less ambitious than it claims.

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Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham. *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 298 pp. U.S. \$70.00 cloth.

Since there aren't many jokes in the book, I should probably point out the two I spotted. According to Christopher Marsh, "Greensleeves" has "recently been voted the most annoying telephone hold tune in England," and the editor of a website on stress management has said, "Every time it comes on the line, I want to smash the phone with a pick-axe" (176). Second, the so-called "Wicked Bible" of 1631 printed the seventh commandment as "Thou shalt commit adultery" (137). If Caroline drama is any measure of the mores of the time, the exhortation to adultery worked. Other information in the book is equally engaging, though less funny.

Crick and Walsham have meticulously assembled and substantially contributed to this collection of twelve essays on the continuity of the spoken, handwritten, and printed word over a four-hundred-year period. The authors, most of them affiliated with history departments in England, are following paths previously mapped by such distinguished historians of the book as Chartier, Ong, Clanchy, Parkes, Sharpe, McKenzie, Love, Grafton, Beal, Marotti, Woolf, and Eisenstein. I place Elizabeth Eisenstein's name last in my (incomplete) list because almost every essay in the collection explicitly or implicitly takes issue with the thesis of her influential two-volume study, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1979). Each writer, whether by editorial urging or personal conviction (or both), attacks or at the very least seriously tweaks Eisenstein's argument that the shift from scribal copying to moveable type printing in the late fifteenth century constituted nothing less than a "communications revolution" (Eisenstein 1:25). One essay refers to "Eisenstein's classic formulation of the triumphalist impact of print" (261). Academic triumphalism is poor form, as the New Historicists have made clear about E. M. W. Tillyard's "classic" *Elizabethan World Picture* and historians of all stripes have said of Christopher Hill's not-so-classic pronouncements about the causes of the English Civil War.

But was Eisenstein really so blind to the points the present writers are making about the limitations of print and the continuity of scribal and oral promulgation of texts in the period? She certainly makes the point that "even 'book' learning was governed by reliance on the spoken word—producing hybrid half-oral, half-literate culture that has no precise counterpart today" (Eisenstein 11), a point that Anthony Musson's essay

on the oral “publication” of laws at town crosses and markets helpfully develops, and she is well aware that “the first century of printing produced a bookish culture that was not very different from that produced by scribes” (26). These historians are still leveling many of the same criticisms at Eisenstein’s accounts of printing house culture and the spread of printed works by Latin-literate humanists throughout Europe that Anthony Grafton launched so vociferously in his 1980 review of Eisenstein.

Eisenstein-bashing aside, these essays make a forceful case for viewing the various forms of communication—speech, handwriting, and print—not as competing modes but as complementary and mutually reinforcing ones, a point that Walter J. Ong, *sj*, made on many occasions. I once heard Father Ong “confess” that he had not *written* a word of his most recent book but had, rather, dictated it into a recording machine from whence it was typed by a stenographer and set into print electronically. There were more books being published, he pointed out, in the television/computer age than ever before. Movies and the like were certainly not displacing books, however they were being produced. Something similar is true of the intertwined networks of preachers, proclamation readers, scribes, amanuenses, and printers who plied their co-existing trades from 1300 to 1700.

The essays are divided into four groups: I. “Script, Print, and Late Medieval Religion,” II. “Script, Print, and Textual Tradition,” III. “Script, Print, and Speech,” and IV. “Script, Print, and Persecution.” With Parts I and IV treating religious writing and one of the essays in Part II focusing on seventeenth-century bibles, the volume is heavily weighted toward religion, as, indeed, was the entire period under discussion. Felicity Riddy puts the case that in the early fifteenth century *publication* of a work entailed presenting it, often orally, so as to stimulate public discussion. She concludes her essay with a highly speculative account of the (non-)publication of Julian of Norwich’s *A Revelation of Love*. David d’Avray explicitly takes on Eisenstein (not to mention Foxe and Bacon), arguing that “Printing was important but not decisive” in the spread of the Protestant Reformation (51). Toleration, not the printing press, he says, determined the longevity of heretical ideas. What d’Avray calls the “technical” and “complex” arguments about the loss rates of scribal copies that he “inflict[s]” on his readers (52) may not be riveting for the general reader—whoever he or she is—but they are meticulously and pointedly made. Finally, in Part I, James G. Clark provides a balanced, detailed account of the extent of English Benedictine acquisitions of printed texts (which began more quickly than acquisitions by university libraries) and Benedictine involvement

with printing in general, particularly at the abbeys of St Albans and St Augustine's, Canterbury.

Part II opens with Anthony Munson's piece on textualized legal authority in the late Middle Ages. While there was always considerable doubt about whether legally reliable evidence could be obtained other than by *viva voce* testimony, precedents were increasingly recorded in ways that provided a degree of uniformity and consistency in pleading and judicial practice (103). They were gathered first in Year Books and, influentially, in Littleton's *Tenures* (1481) and in Coke's *Institutes*. Thus the spoken, written, and printed word reinforced one another in the promulgation and enforcement of the law. Another type of legal document, the earliest charters, has recently been edited by Julia Crick, who here traces patterns of perpetuated error in the manuscript and print versions of the Latin charters of pre-Conquest England in order to reveal attitudes toward authority and change. These are the kinds of "authoritative" documents that antiquarians such as John Dee, Edward Coke, and John Selden gloried in citing to substantiate their accounts of England's past. Scott Mandelbrote employs a similar technique of tracing perpetuated errors in the production of bibles from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. At times, he elides the disparate textual cultures spread over these three centuries in ways that feel like shortcutting rather than cautious synthesizing.

In Part III, Andrew Butcher's essay about the function of script in "a Late Medieval Town [Hythe in Kent], c. 1300–1550" argues that the ceremonial expression of civic custom and identity undercuts the distinction usually drawn between pragmatic and literary records. In an essay that stands apart from the others, Christopher Marsh makes the persuasive claim that musical satire and sexual innuendo flow powerfully and sometimes disruptively between the lines of broadside ballads when they are exhumed from the archives and re-imagined in performance along with their traditional tunes. A somewhat different kind of performance figures in Jonathan Barry's argument that in Bristol between 1640 and 1714 the bellman and the Recorder of the Assizes commanded more political authority with their oral proclamations than did all the "printed papers" that inundated the town (201).

Alexandra Walsham's essay "Preaching without Speaking: Script, Print, and Religious Dissent" begins Part IV. If you know her splendid essay "'Domme Preachers'? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print" (*P&P*, 168 [2000]: 72–123), you will already have a good idea of what she is arguing here about Protestantism and printing, namely that religious "persecution catalysed enthusiasm for the press as

a valuable missionary tool and stimulated renewed appreciation of the advantages of scribal publication in a climate of censorship” (226). Thomas S. Freeman’s essay looks at similar communication strategies among the Marian exiles, who relied heavily on scribal copying to spread the word to their co-religionists and, in England, to avoid detection. Ann Hughes argues that, while some orthodox Presbyterian preachers reluctantly acknowledged the need to distribute their sermons widely (as only print could) in order to counter mistaken sectarian views, this did not mean that print was replacing the immediacy of pulpit oratory or the targeted intimacy possible in handwritten forms of debate. Her chief witness is Thomas Edwards’s *Gangraena* (1646), about which she has recently published a hefty monograph. Margaret Aston contributes a brief but wide-ranging and learned “Epilogue.”

A signal achievement of the volume, taken as a whole, is to realign medieval and early modern periodization so as to emphasize continuities in the goals as well as the methods of communication. A small defect of the title is omitting the key words “in England.” In terms of historical methodology, the essays embrace an admirably broad range of strategies and evidence, from the very local to the geographically and chronologically sweeping. Monocausal explanations and radical paradigm shifts are clearly out of fashion. Each historian should be a hundred-eyed giant of learning, looking this way and that. But be careful not to flash your Argus eyes triumphally, like the peacock.

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