Buchbesprechungen

Ina Schabert. **Englische Literaturgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine neue Darstellung aus der Sicht der Geschlechterforschung**. Stuttgart: Kröner, 2006. xiii, 497pp. Hb. € 25.00. ISBN 3-520-39701-3.

Ina Schabert's history of twentieth-century English literature from the point of view of gender studies can be most warmly recommended both to experts in the field and to scholars and students not specialized in gender studies but interested in this approach. This history complements the volume Schabert published in 1997, which focuses on the development of English literature from the Early Modern period to the end of the nineteenth century. Just like the first volume, the second part of Schabert's English literary history can be regarded as a milestone both in gender studies and in literary history. Schabert's presentation is innovative, highly informative, theoretically up-to-date as well as extremely accesible. Thus, this book, whose author is one of Germany's foremost scholars in the field of gender studies, is a pleasure to read – and to recommend. Schabert's text exemplifies the advantages of a literary history that is both theoretically informed and thoroughly contextualized.

It is well known that the process of writing a literary history inevitably involves a considerable amount of selection, both with regard to the writers that are deemed 'worthy' of being discussed in the first place and with regard to the room the writers are granted. As feminist scholars have emphasized since the 1970s, traditionally, literary histories tended to neglect female authors and their works, thus defining and perpetuating a male-dominated canon. Schabert seeks to correct this traditional male bias by drawing the readers' attention to works by female authors, such as Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, a modernist text largely ignored by literary scholars despite being one of the narratives that inaugurated the detailed exploration of the protagonist's mind by means of what is often referred to as 'stream of consciousness.' Another example of the revisionist stance adopted in Schabert's literary history is chapter 3.5, in which the 'foot-off-the-ground novel' is discussed as a specifically female genre. Just as important as this feminist revision, however, is the fact that the emphasis on the significance of the factors gender, sex and sexuality offers new insights into works written by male authors. In chapter 4.4 ("The Condition of Man"), for instance, literary works by writers such as Malcolm Lowry, Graham Greene and Samuel Beckett are critically revisited and chapter 3.4 is dedicated to 'male' Modernism.

The volume consists of four chapters plus an introduction and an epilogue. In chapter 2, Schabert offers a concise presentation of changes with respect to the central categories of sex, gender and sexuality in twentieth-century Britain. The subsequent chapters are dedicated to three periods of literary history in the twentieth century: 1900-1930 ("Modernism"), 1930-1970 ("The Rise and Fall of 'Committed Literature'") and 1970-2000 ("Postmodernism"). In the discussion of these three periods, the focus is clearly on gender, sex and sexuality, yet other social factors are also taken into consideration. Thus, Schabert, drawing the readers' attention to the nexus of ethnicity and gender re-

peatedly addresses the issue of nationality/Englishness and dedicates a chapter to literary texts written by authors of Caribbean, African or Asian origin living in Britain. As these examples show, Schabert's literary history is anything but a one-sided account of the development of English literature in the course of the twentieth century; it provides an excellent historical and cultural contextualization of the literary works addressed and is essential reading for anyone interested in English literature and culture in the twentieth century.

Marion Gymnich (Bonn)

Tobias Döring. **Performances of Mourning in Shakespearean Theatre and Early Modern Culture**. Early Modern Literature in History. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 223 pp. Hb. £ 45.00. ISBN 0-230-00153-X.

In her "Worrying about Emotions in History" (*American Historical Review*, 2001), Barbara Rosenwein complicates recent approaches to the history of emotions and their ritualization, redirecting research toward "local contexts of meaning" (827). From an assumed universality of emotions, studies have turned to the constructedness of emotions in what has become an important field of inquiry, manifested in monographs such as William M. Reddy's *Navigation of Feeling* (2001), Gail Paster's *Humoring the Body* (2004), and Daniel M. Gross's *Secret History of Emotions* (2006). Tobias Döring's *Performances of Mourning* is a timely and welcome contribution to this field, since it is both attentive to local contexts and turns from the social construction to the social performance of emotions.

Döring investigates early modern rites of mourning surrounding the nexus of staged and social performance at the intersection of private and public spheres. He studies the suitability of performances of mourning in early modern England and how on-stage mourning is shaped by *and* shapes public memory, which raises questions about the transformation of ceremonial burials from pre-Reformation to Protestant England, where proper mourning rites were a contentious issue. While Protestant England did its best to suppress Catholic rites of mourning and its attendant purgatorial beliefs, performance studies – understood as investigating "the performative potential in and through theatrical texts" (17) rather than the particular staging of plays – reveals how on-stage mourning recalls traditional mourning practices and potentially recuperates "emotions associated with the outlawed faith" (10). Theatres, that is, stand in for the church and constitute "a performative space in which to encounter and engage with embodied memories of what was lost" (192). Döring's book thus connects to the (impassioned) debates about Shakespeare's Catholic leanings. Döring steers clear of a recusant reading, however, emphasizing that the theatre "only ever *stages*, never *states*, points of doctrine or belief" (20, emphases in the original).

The study is organized into four chapters that bring the author's interest in performances of mourning to bear on a wide array of non-dramatic and dramatic (chiefly Shakespearean) texts. The first chapter delineates the changes in mourning rituals before and after the Reformation, observing how the transformation tacitly warranted the survival of the old rites. Similarly, the wave of iconoclasm inevitably left behind monuments commemorating pre-Reformation practices. Döring's readings of Shakespeare's history plays show that the latter are a striking locus of communal commemoration, becoming an "oral history project as cultural substitute for the acts of violent

oblivion committed against monuments in the recent past" (38); the theatre provides a space for staging seemingly prohibitive spectacles of mourning. The second chapter demonstrates how the lack of cultural channels for grief "drive the bereaved to seek alternative performances of mourning," resulting in (self-)destructive acts, which becomes tangible in revenge tragedies, such as *Titus Andronicus*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Hamlet*. Döring's readings of these plays are perceptively correlated with ethnographic evidence, with the relocation of un-'reformed' mourning in 'uncivilized' nations. In the third chapter, Döring takes on the physical manifestations of mourning and their "questionable signifying power" (111). In rhetorical and theatrical performance, "the persuasiveness of weeping is predicated on its power of deception" (132), which leads to an investigation of weeping women in *Richard III* and Chapman's *Widdowes Teares*. With its depiction of lamenting women, the theatre offers "a purging space where the reformed society in mimetic weeping could find some substitute for outlawed rituals of mourning" (148). Lastly, Döring analyzes the results of displaced mourning, the 'parodies of mourning.' Both *Much Ado About Nothing* and Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* share "the mechanisms of purposefully playful mourning and their political effects" (156). Mock funerals, while appearing to be Catholic rituals, rather bespeak an "anxiety of borrowed rites" (176), that is, Protestant anxieties about their own borrowing of older religious practices and its aesthetic channels, which exposes the continuities within allegedly discontinued practices.

Performances of Mourning is a densely argued, rewarding study, offering readers a wealth of material regarding rituals of mourning and commemoration in the studied texts and early modern England more generally, while drawing attention to the efficacy of performed mourning to explore "modes of imposed cultural regulation" (192). As such, the book is a substantial contribution to performance studies. Occasionally, though, one wishes that the author would have extended his perceptive readings of the various texts; moreover, given the subject matter and approach, the implicit engagement with the wider issues of emotional control and its attendant concerns with identification, not to speak of its historical embeddedness – that is, the discussion about emotional performances in the Middle Ages – would have made for highly useful addenda. It is to be noted, however, that this is *not* a shortcoming of the book, whose focus, after all, is meant to be on "local contexts of meaning." Rather, it is one of the great merits of *Performances of Mourning* that it will prompt future scholarship to revisit and recontextualize one of the central and most engaging periods in the emotional history of England.

Wolfram R. Keller (Marburg)

Peter Ackroyd. **Shakespeare: The Biography**. London: Chatto & Windus, 2005. xiii, 525 pp. Hb. £ 25.00. ISBN 1-85619-726-3.

Stephen Greenblatt. **Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare**. New York: Norton, 2005. 430 pp. Pb. $ 14.95. ISBN 0-393-32737-X.

James Shapiro. **1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare**. London: Faber & Faber, 2005. xxiv, 429 pp. Hb. £ 16.99. ISBN 0-571-21480-0.

Despite their very similar intentions, these three books are extremely different from each other. All three want to impart information about William Shakespeare, the world

he lived in and its influence on his work, and they intend to do so in the form of a biography, a cultural genealogy, or with focus on one important year in Shakespeare's life. The differences derive from three authors' self-perceptions and from the ways in which they pass on their information.

Peter Ackroyd gives no indication of what his intention with the book actually is. It consists of nine parts, beginning with "Stratford-upon-Avon," then moving on to "The Queen's Men," "Lord Strange's Men," "The Earl of Pembroke's Men," "The Lord Chamberlain's Men," back to Stratford and "New Place," on again to London and "The Globe," "The King's Men," and ending with "Blackfriars." The overall structure thus is provided by geographical and theatrical cornerstones in Shakespeare's life. So in some respects this is an ordinary biography, and the first chapter gives the usual information on Shakespeare's birth and baptism. Mostly, however, the book is not ordinary. This is not really surprising for all who are familiar with Ackroyd's idea that "[i]n a biography one is allowed to make things up; in a novel one is obliged to tell the truth." He is also convinced that the "importance and success of any biography lies with the biographer and not with the subject – if you can recreate the character of the artist upon the page, in your own words, it carries more weight than the simple transcribing of letters, essays or quotations" (Ackroyd, "Fact and Literary Fiction," *The Waterstone's Magazine* 3, 1995, 78f). Theoretically this sounds intriguing, but in practice two difficult questions arise: 'What is the character of the artist?' and 'How can it be recreated upon the page?' One device Ackroyd uses to achieve this objective fails utterly, namely to take quotations from Shakespeare's plays as titles for his chapters. Not only do readers receive no information about these titles' sources, but the texts are either fairly arbitrary, as in the case of Beatrice's words "*There was a starre daunst, and vnder that was I borne*" from *Much Ado About Nothing*, which have at least a superficial link to the contents of this first chapter about Shakespeare's birth, or they have no connection with the chapter at all, such as the title of chapter 3 from *The Taming of the Shrew*, "*Dost thou love pictures?*"

The second device employed, the style used to recreate Shakespeare's character upon the page, does not really succeed either. A typical example is a passage about the chapel "erected beside the school where he was taught, and each weekday morning he attended prayers here. And then there were the bells. The little bell called the boy to school in the morning; the great bell tolled at dawn and dusk, and was 'the surly sullen bell' of the sonnet that tolled at the time of dying and the time of burial. It eventually tolled for Shakespeare when he was laid in the Stratford ground." (10) A 'normal' biography would at least have told its readers that this bell is mentioned in sonnet 71. The information provided in this biography is unfortunately usually of the kind given here, namely extremely superficial and in its style revealing a character nobody would want to identify with Shakespeare.

The third characteristic of this biography is connected with the kind of information that is given to readers, and it is also linked with the book's style. There is much information one would rather do without, especially when it leads to conclusions that give readers nothing of value at all, such as this observation about London: "The palace of the Savoy, linked with the French wars of Edward III, survived. The Earl of Warwick's house, in Dowgate between Walbrook and the Thames, still stood. The Tower of London, to which Shakespeare adverted more than to any other edifice in his plays, still watched over the city. Stone House in Lombard Street was known as King John's House. Crosby Hall, where Richard III was supposed to have accepted the crown of

England endured. It was only to be expected that Shakespeare's history plays would be imagined within the very heart of the city where he lived and worked" (106-7). The banality of this can hardly be topped, but it is precisely the approach of this book. It has nothing new to say about Shakespeare, and the way in which fairly well-known statements about his age and work are presented is either unconvincing or simply trite.

Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World* offers what his readers have come to expect of him: He sets himself a challenging problem, namely to find out how Shakespeare, the "young man from a small provincial town – a man without independent wealth, without powerful family connections, and without a university education" (11) could become so uniquely successful in his time, and then tries to offer solutions based on his vast knowledge of significant cultural contexts. One answer is almost immediately given and expresses an idea generally accepted in our own time: "Shakespeare had to engage with the deepest desires and fears of his audience" (12). The book has a chronological structure in its twelve chapters and employs another fairly common starting point, that "to understand how Shakespeare used his imagination to transform his life into his art, it is important to use our own imagination" (14).

Greenblatt covers the topics that are to be anticipated in such a book, but there is a surprisingly strong tendency to one-sidedness that mars its results. Everybody will, for instance, agree with him in his assumption that "Shakespeare found himself from boyhood fascinated by language, obsessed with the magic of words" (23). Readers then get useful descriptions of the kind of schooling the poet received, though they might be surprised by the extremely negative view on education at that time (26). Greenblatt evidently fails to imagine a different response here simply because he looks upon education from today's point of view. He cannot help noticing however, how Shakespeare in this context learned to fine-tune his linguistic and rhetorical skills.

The book's lack of alternative views sometimes results in unnecessary contradictions and the loss of important elements in its discussion of Shakespeare. Greenblatt understandably cannot be sure about the religious affiliation of the Shakespeare family, and he, therefore, has William reach "a strange but plausible conclusion: his father was both Catholic and Protestant" (102). In this context, Greenblatt claims, William "had come to acquire a comparable double consciousness," confirmed by the "ample evidence for doubleness and more" in Shakespeare's plays (103). There are indeed several reasons for this doubleness, ultimately connected with the world's development from the Middle Ages into the early modern world, which is, however, never discussed. The problem of the book's one-sidedness becomes evident when the importance of doubleness is entirely forgotten a bit later and a completely different conclusion is presented: "If his father was both Catholic and Protestant, William Shakespeare was on his way to being neither" (113).

In a similarly reductive way Greenblatt intends to make readers accept his notion that Shakespeare himself must have been in love with the young man described in the first 17 sonnets, i.e. the Earl of Southampton, and one wonders why Greenblatt here so blatantly identifies the lyric speaker with the author that he does not see that the "impassioned terms" used in the sonnets (239), which he sees as proof of the author's involvement, are fairly standard expressions. This surprising reduction of literary works to personal aspects finds its climax in chapter 10, "Speaking with the Dead," where *Hamlet* appears as the rather individualistic and subjective result of Shakespeare's concerns about his dead son and dying father. Greenblatt mentions the Catholic rituals rejected by the Protestant authorities, especially the prayers for the dead, but there is not

a single word about the notable extent to which the play addresses the living people of Shakespeare's and indeed our own time. These vital concerns of the living, which constitute the main clues to the play's continuing success, are completely forgotten.

The last chapter makes things even worse by trying to convince us that *King Lear* really is a play about what to do with elderly people. Greenblatt mentions this "parental anxiety" repeatedly and calls it an extremely "pervasive fear in this period" (359). For him, "at the core of the tragedy is the great fear that haunted the playwright's own class: the fear of humiliation, abandonment, and a loss of identity in the wake of retirement" (360). This is once again a fairly one-sided view of the play, leaving out the contexts that make it both traditional and modern. His book unfortunately and unnecessarily is too evidently, one might even say wilfully, selective and as a result of this too patently one-sided in too many respects.

James Shapiro focuses on just one year in Shakespeare's life, but he, too, tries "to understand how Shakespeare became Shakespeare." Well aware of the difficulties of every approach to the past, he intends to focus "on what can be known with greater confidence: the 'form and pressure' of the time that shaped Shakespeare's writing when he was thirty-five years old." In this way, he hopes "to capture some of the unpredictable and contingent nature of daily life too often flattened out in historical and biographical works of greater sweep" (xx) and in particular to find an answer to the question "how, at age thirty-five, Shakespeare went from being an exceptionally talented writer to being one of the greatest who ever lived" (xxii). This modesty goes well with Shapiro's profound knowledge and especially the lucid way in which his thoughts, analyses, and findings are expressed.

The book begins with the "Winter" of 1598-9, followed by "Spring," "Summer," and "Autumn" as its four main parts, consisting of three to five chapters each. The "Prologue" immediately takes its readers into the cold December of 1598 and makes them join the Chamberlain's Men in their daring undertaking of moving the timber building of the Theatre from Shoreditch to Southwark, in order to establish a new playhouse for themselves there. This gripping action is connected with all the necessary and useful information concerning the building of the Theatre in 1576, the "fall-out between the Chamberlain's Men and their prickly landlord, Giles Allen" (2), and the plan by Richard Burbage and "his fellow actor-shareholders in the company – William Shakespeare, John Heminges, […]" (3) put into practice "on 28 December" (1). This is how Shapiro passes on information: connected with important events and always engaging his readers. They learn what a theatre cost, how much a playwright and a day-labourer earned, who the other people involved in the enterprise were, what Shakespeare's position was, etc. Then the importance of this particular action is pointed out, Shakespeare really comes into focus, and Shapiro once again covers more time and provides important information. But he especially offers his readers significant categories for understanding what is really going on: "On the eve of the dismantling of the Theatre, Shakespeare stood at a professional crossroads. It had been five years since he had last found himself in such a situation. At that time he was torn between pursuing a career in the theatre and one in which he sought advancement by securing aristocratic patronage through his published poetry. For a while he had done both, but […]" (8). Arguments are put forward, reasons given, and people and their actions as well as Shakespeare's plays are in this way put into relevant and revealing contexts.

Information is always connected with illuminating insights into plays. The discussion of England's relationship with the rest of Europe, especially with Ireland and

Spain, for example, includes Edmund Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland*, his burial in January 1599, and leads to the conclusion that "*Henry the Fifth*, like Spenser's death, was turning into a drama that marked the end of an era for Shakespeare. Like the relics of Henry's military campaigns hanging in Westminster, the chivalric world celebrated in Spenser's epic and in his own early histories had become increasingly tarnished" (83). The development from this knightly, medieval culture to the early modern world is again, as in Greenblatt, not described in these terms and not generally reflected either, but the idea is taken up and developed further when Essex's situation in Ireland, his "post of Earl Marshal" and the "culture of honour" (286) connected with it, makes Shapiro speak of Shakespeare's fascination with "the decline of chivalry in England" (289) and the creation of the East India Company (303). He brings all these topics to the important conclusion that what one gets here "is a role reversal of staggering proportions: true adventure now consisted in pursuing national glory through trade and empire, not through a culture of honour. […] The death of chivalry coincided with the birth of empire" (307). This is then seen as the relevant backdrop to "*Hamlet*, born at the crossroads of the death of chivalry and the birth of globalization […]: there is a sense in *Hamlet* no less than in the culture at large of a sea-change, of a world that is dead but not yet buried" (309f). Shapiro is in this way much better able than Greenblatt to make readers understand that "Shakespeare didn't invent a new sensibility in *Hamlet*; rather, he gave voice to what he and others saw and felt around them" (331).

The last chapter reveals why the book never openly speaks of Shakespeare's situation in the context of the Middle Ages moving into the early modern world: Shapiro does not find any significant modern elements in Shakespeare, he detects only the contingency already mentioned in his preface. He thus interprets Shakespeare's revisions of *Hamlet* as resulting in the representation of a completely "relative world" (350). But then he says that "[s]alvation, not honour, now justifies the killing of the king" (351). This, however, is evidently not relative at all, or even arbitrary as Shapiro thinks it is, and he fails to see that honour is implied in bringing about this salvation. He surprisingly also reduces the enormous scope of the play to just one problem, "the deeper one, which remains in the play, of what justifies – not just morally but pragmatically – the killing of a bad ruler" (353). He thinks that all of Shakespeare's plays "from *Henry the Sixth* to *Julius Caesar* had already shown, removing the canker, however necessary, doesn't cure the state, because men who are even more ruthless than their predecessors fill the political vacuum, just as Fortinbras will" (353). Such a conclusion can only occur when one starts from Shapiro's assumption that *Hamlet* reveals the contingency of all human actions. Significantly Shapiro has completely forgotten *Richard III*. What this earlier play reveals is still an answer to Shapiro's question about *Hamlet*, and a very pragmatic one at that, namely that such a killing can only be justified by the community which condones it and by a better ruler and society as a result of it. Such modern pragmatism, however, is not seen by him in Shakespeare. His book is nevertheless a pleasure to read and highly recommendable.

Klaus Peter Müller (Mainz)

Lauren F. Pfister. **Striving for 'The Whole Duty of Man': James Legge and the Scottish Protestant Encounter with China**. 2 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2004. 760 pp. Pb. € 115.00. ISBN 3-6315-0946-3.

Quite recently Scotland's development quango Scottish Enterprise decided to set up a department to deal with China. It was to be headed up by a staffer who had worked for nobody other than SE and who knew no Chinese. So she was set to learn Chinese (a complex and lengthy process), although there are probably a couple of hundred Scots-trained Chinese economics graduates perfectly capable of getting up to speed with the Scottish business scene in a fortnight or so. This reflects both Scotland's present foreign language deficit and a past in which the influence of the small north European country on the Middle Kingdom (for good or ill) was truly disproportionate.

James Legge (1815-1897), the translator and populariser of Confucius (551 BC – 479 BC), philosopher and codifier of Chinese civic and public life, in his *Chinese Classics* series of 1861-86, was born in the small town of Huntly, about thirty miles north-west of Aberdeen. The agricultural and fishing region of Buchan, however, was not a backwater, being open to foreign influences through the sophisticated agriculture of its 'muckle ferms' (large, 200-300 hectare mixed farms), its herring trade with the Baltic and the educational bursaries, endowed by James Dick (1743-1828), a West Indian merchant, which gave it a disproportionate influence on education throughout Scotland. The author George MacDonald (1824-1905) was also a 'Huntly loon' as was Thomas Davidson (1840-1900), disciple of the Italian liberal catholic Rosmini who would found, *inter alia*, the Fabian Society and the American summer school movement with William James.

Legge was educated at the local school, Aberdeen Grammar School and King's College, one of the city's two universities (before their amalgamation in 1859). He seems to have been motivated even in his childhood to want to missionise the Chinese, but the grounds for this were more complex than the prevailing evangelicalism. They were closely bound up with two things: his reverence for the Scottish historian and nationalist ideologue George Buchanan (1506-1582), foremost Latinist of the Renaissance, and the combination of psychology, social science and practical reform to be found in the Scots Enlightenment. In Legge's case these were derived from the writings of the North-East's principal contributor to the Enlightenment, Thomas Reid (1710-1796), minister of the Kirk, professor at Aberdeen and Glasgow, and the central figure of the Scots school, which pre-supposed a quasi-mystic 'common sense' arbitrating between and directing the customary sense-derived stimuli.

Legge went to London to train for the ministry with the Congregationalists and in 1839 set sail with his new wife Isabella Morison to the missionary college at Malacca in the Malay peninsula. Three years later he followed the victorious British forces to Hong Kong, taken over after the first of the Opium Wars. He remained in Hong Kong for over thirty years, a mixture of respected citizen and a thorn in the flesh of the authorities, because of his sympathy for the Chinese and opposition to the dealings of the colonial government in gambling and opium. In between he found the energy, with the cooperation of a convert, Ho Tsun Sheen, to complete the first major translations of *The Chinese Classics* in 1861.

Pfister deals with this phase of Legge's career, and ends when he returned to fill Oxford University's first Chair in Chinese in 1876, where he joined Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) in establishing Oxford's dominance both in oriental studies and in

comparative religion. She is particularly informative in describing the cultural and intellectual milieu of early nineteenth-century Huntly and the enabling power of 'commonsense' philosophy. As such, this is a corrective to accounts of Scottish intellectual life which, following H.T. Buckle (1821-1862) in his *History of Civilisation in England* (1857-61) saw the country ground down in the aftermath of the enlightenment under evangelical dogmatism.

This is a very useful study, especially as it parallels the republication and reassessment of work by Legge's similarly fecund autodidact contemporaries, in Edinburgh's fine edition of James Hogg (1770-1835), recent symposia on Hugh Miller (1802-1856), the Cromarty geologist and journalist, and studies of Sir James A.H. Murray (1837-1915), creator of the *Oxford English Dictionary.* William Donaldson's rightly-acclaimed *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland: Language, Fiction and the Press* (1986) stressed the effect at the mid-century of the railway, the penny post and the weekly paper; but Pfister's research and editing is pushing the beginnings back to the contemporaries of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) and the intellectual world – more diffused than that of Edinburgh in the 'high' enlightenment of David Hume, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, 1755-1780 – of the 'Hero as Man of Letters'. The time for an overall assessment of this phase of the 'democratic intellect' cannot be far off.

Christopher Harvie (Tübingen and Edinburgh)

Victoria Rosner. **Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life**. Gender and Culture. New York: Columbia UP, 2005. xi, 219 pp. 20 ill. Hb. $ 18.00. ISBN 0-231-13304-9.

Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life is a very welcome exploration of the manner in which certain innovations in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century art, architecture and interior design (as well as concurrent changes in interpersonal, social and class relations) appear to have significantly influenced a number of writers in the modernist period. The main thread of Rosner's argument engages with the work of the Bloomsbury Group, especially the artists and designers associated with the Omega Workshops (founded by Roger Fry and others), and Virginia Woolf, whom Rosner describes as her book's "guiding spirit": "No other major novelist of the period was so preoccupied with the critique of Victorian domesticity or so explicit about the relationship of literary modernism to the changing nature of private life" (15). To give but one example, when Woolf claimed in her 1923–5 essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (also known as "Character in Fiction") that "[o]n or about 1910 human character changed," she quite deliberately chose "a homely illustration" to support her argument: "The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing room, now to borrow the *Daily Herald*, now to ask advice about a hat. Do you ask for more solemn instances of the power of the human race to change?" (qtd. 3). The point Rosner makes in quoting this passage is that when one pays proper attention to the importance of such "intimate spaces" and "homely environs" a radically different notion of "modernity" emerges than that which is produced by a concentration on the "locations more traditionally sanctified by the avant-garde: the street, the café, and the gallery" (4-5). Rosner suggests that such a course of action "yields a new understanding

of what interiority means for modernist writers," explaining that in her view "interiority" can be taken to "refer to a cluster of interdependent concepts that extend from the representation of consciousness to the reorganization of home life; revised definitions of personal privacy, intimacy, and space; and new assessments of the sexualized and gendered body" (11). "This definition is far broader," she adds, "and more permeable than the generally accepted critical view […] which emphasizes the mind's ability to craft an individual reality, to live in a world exclusively populated by personal associations and memories" (*ibid*.). This newly expanded, interestingly interdisciplinary concept of 'interiority' is then explored in chapters on Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*, Whistler, and the aesthetics of *fin de siècle* picture framing; Woolf's and Lytton Strachey's memoirs of their respective childhood homes; the 'feminisation' of the hitherto 'masculine' study in Conan Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia," Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness* and Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*; and the representations of domestic space in Woolf's *Night and Day* and *To the Lighthouse*, Forster's *Howards End*, and a selection of Omega murals and interiors. The result is a thoroughly researched and satisfyingly convincing vision of 'domestic' modernism that deserves to be read and discussed as widely as possible.

Ian Blyth (Hull)

Matthias Bauer. **Schwerkraft und Leichtsinn: Kreative Zeichenhandlungen im intermediären Feld von Wissenschaft und Literatur**. Rombach Litterae. Freiburg i. Br.: Rombach, 2005. 481 pp. Pb. € 62.00. ISBN 3-7930-9413-8.

Matthias Bauer's interdisciplinary study explores the intertwining of science and literature throughout 500 years of European intellectual history. It traces the trajectory of theories of gravity and their impact on the intermediary field between scientific research and its poetic adaptation, investigating poems, stories and novels by writers who have focused on mankind's subjection to the forces of gravity and its continuous desire to transcend it, both physically and spiritually. Consequently, Bauer has chosen Icarus's flight towards the sun as a major reference point in his study.

The first chapter, "Schwerkraft und Leichtsinn," provides a journey into the history of physics, and it also explains various semiotic patterns, exemplified in the works of Ferdinand de Saussure, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Heinrich von Kleist. It further proposes the concept of the 'field' ("Feldbegriff") for the intermediary terrain between science and literature. Introducing key terms like "configuration," "defiguration" and "transfiguration," the functions of "design" and "display" or the differentiation between "anagrammatic conjecture," "diagrammatic method" and "paragrammatic discourse," the study stakes out a complex theoretical framework.

The second chapter, "Das Gewicht der Dinge," is concerned with the poetic configuration of the modern scientific worldview. Bauer accentuates the impact of earlier models on the theories of Copernicus and Kepler and elaborates on the role of creativity and imagination as a complement to empirical observation. In his survey on the methods of Galileo, Descartes and Newton, Bauer includes a discussion of recent scholarly studies. Particularly rewarding for the reader, he also focuses on how early modern philosophers and scientists evaluated previous or contemporary theories, for example, in

pointing out Newton's critique of Descartes or Leibniz's dissatisfaction with a monolithic Newtonian framework.

In his third chapter, "Die Schwerkraft der Worte," Bauer shows how Voltaire's interpretation of Newtonian thinking and eighteenth-century poetic renderings of the Newtonian universe had an enormous impact on the European intellectual world. Outlining reverberations of theories of gravity in eighteenth-century literature, Bauer explores Jonathan Swift's satire on scientific investigation in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and the ironic application of laws of gravity on spoken language in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704). Bauer also investigates themes of gravity and its metaphorical implications in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1760-69), apparent, for example, in uncle Toby's interest in the trajectory of cannon balls. With its numerous references to gravity, Sterne succeeds in creating an intermediary field between literature and science. According to Bauer, the novel can also be regarded as a critique of the Lockean distrust of metaphors and jokes, as voiced in his famous *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690). The chapter then delineates Georg Christoph Lichtenberg's interpretation of Newton's theory and its relation to Kantian philosophy as well as Immanuel Kant's and Johann Gottfried Herder's reflections on Newton's achievements.

The fourth chapter, "Die Fallhöhe der Zeichen," takes an extensive analysis of Jean Paul's works and their incorporation of scientific knowledge as a point of departure and then explains how the change from a Newtonian worldview to the modern conception of relativity influenced the intermediary territory between science and literature. Dealing with Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Sanders Peirce, Albert Einstein, Robert Musil and Gottfried Benn, the chapter traces the dissolution of the traditional Newtonian universe by field theory and its reverberations in twentieth-century literature. It includes a discussion of Nietzsche's idea of the world as "Kraftfeld," Peirce's concept of "abduction" (the act of finding an ad-hoc hypothesis that has to be proven by subsequent observation) as opposed to "induction" and "deduction" and applies Peirce's "abduction" to the interpretation of literary texts. Bauer introduces Einstein's seminal theory of relativity and Max Wertheimer's "Gestalt theory" and links them, for example, to Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930-1942) where the author, as Bauer argues, constructs his protagonist as "Feldgestalt" with transitory identity and thereby mirrors concepts of the early twentieth-century scientific revolution.

A short conclusion emphasizes the study's arguments as an affirmation of the vital interplay between science and literature. The primary merit of the book lies in its extensive diachronic attempt to map out overlapping areas of scientific research and poetic imagination. Since Bauer approaches a wide range of authors, works and theories, a conclusive summary for each chapter would have greatly enhanced the direction of the author's train of thought. Throughout the book, complex theoretical reflections are interspersed with biographical anecdotes about authors and scientists which provide a change to the sometimes rather hermetic style of Bauer's writing. However, for readers without in-depth knowledge of semiotics, physics and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophy, Bauer's book will pose a considerable challenge. A well-structured and extensive bibliography of more than forty pages is added. Unfortunately, the book has no index. Nevertheless, with its combination of scientific and literary analysis, Bauer's study can be regarded as a remarkable contribution to the fast-growing body of work on the mutual impact of science and literature.

Oliver Lindner (Leipzig)

Kirsten Shepherd-Barr. **Science on Stage: From *Doctor Faustus* to *Copenhagen***. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2006. viii, 271pp. Hb. £ 18.95. ISBN 0-691-12150-8.

How do you successfully stage quantum mechanics (Michael Frayn, *Copenhagen*, 1998) or the biochemistry of memory (Théâtre de Complicité, *Mnemonic*, 2000)? The surge of new science plays over the last two decades has dispelled any doubts about the theatrical viability of the genre. *Copenhagen* was a smash hit both in the West End and on Broadway, defying C.P. Snow's 1959 pessimistic forecast of a widening rift between the two cultures of the sciences and the humanities (218). Science plays "utilize scientific ideas or feature scientists at their centre" (1), the term science broadly encompassing the natural sciences, physics, mathematics, medicine and technology. They share certain characteristics, such as the casting of the scientist as hero or villain, a complex ethical discussion, and the combination of textual richness and scenic restraint in their presentation of science. While such plays might serve to educate the audience and familiarize them with the issues posed by contemporary science, the most successful of them, Shepherd-Barr argues, generally employ a particular scientific idea or concept as an extended theatrical metaphor, thus investigating human problems as well as the concepts of truth and reality by reference to scientific ideas (4-6).

Shepherd-Barr claims to present "the first full-length analysis of this interdisciplinary phenomenon" (1), investigating the tradition of science on stage from the Renaissance to the present, with a strong focus on the current wave of science playwriting. In particular, she claims to present "the first full-length investigation of science plays within the context of performance" (8), i.e. with a focus on their dramaturgical strategies and their production and reception, thus setting her study off from a large number of previous ones that merely explore the theme and contents of science plays. This claim is certainly fulfilled in her book, albeit somewhat insistently driven home. Methodologically, Shepherd-Barr draws on J.L. Austin's speech-act theory and the related concept of performativity, consistently showing how the science in the plays actually informs their aesthetic make-up instead of merely being explained to the audience. The plays explored are mostly British, some are from other European countries or from America.

The first two chapters survey the terrain of science and the stage over the last four centuries, dealing with the usual suspects such as Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Jonson's *The Alchemist*, Shadwell's *The Virtuoso*, as well as plays by Shaw, Ibsen, Dürrenmatt, and Brecht. These earlier plays, Shepherd-Barr argues, tend to borrow images or ideas from science to create metaphors, and it is only in later plays that science is formally and structurally integrated. The third chapter is devoted to twentieth-century docudramas about physics, which draw on actual historical figures and sources and lay claim to authenticity and verisimilitude. Chapter 4 is devoted to Frayn's *Copenhagen*, which serves as a case study of science plays generally and is described as "one long speech act that performs the uncertainty principle" (35). The next three chapters deal with contemporary science plays and are organized by scientific themes (evolutionary theory, mathematics, medicine), while chapter 8 addresses the controversy over playwrights' use of history in science plays, which is a mainly academic controversy because "the audience knows it is watching a play" and has no trouble separating fact from fiction (187). The final chapter surveys recent trends in science and theatre within the framework of "postdramatic" or "non-representational" theatre and explores recent science plays that reject the literary and historical focus of works like Michael Frayn's *Copen-*

hagen and Timberlake Wertenbaker's *After Darwin* in favour of a more theatrical way of scenic presentation that relies primarily on physical and visual means. The book concludes with a comprehensive annotated list of four centuries of science plays, organized by science themes.

The book is not free from errors: the introduction is slightly jumbled, repetitive and fails to give the reader a clear idea of the book's structure. In the chapter subtitled "Pseud's Corner: From Jonson to Ibsen and Shaw" (20-4), Shaw is mentioned only briefly and Ibsen is not mentioned at all. A play entitled *Possible Worlds* is referred to (152) without the name of the author or any additional information and without being cited in the bibliography or the list of science plays. If Shepherd-Barr has in mind the 1988 play by Canadian playwright John Mighton, this play, which is indeed a science play, at the same time clearly contradicts her statement that in science plays "love is generally unimportant" (55). Altogether, however, her study provides a theoretically well-informed and sustained taxonomy of science plays and does indeed fill the gap identified by its author.

Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp (Bonn)

Peter Childs, ed. **The Fiction of Ian McEwan: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism**. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 166 pp. Pb. £ 12.99 ISBN 1-4039-1908-9.

Merja Makinen. **The Novels of Jeanette Winterson: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism**. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 179 pp. Pb. £ 12.99. ISBN 1-4039-4099-1.

Susie Thomas, ed. **Hanif Kureishi: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism**. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 191pp. Pb. £ 12.99. ISBN 1-4039-2057-5.

The appraisal of contemporary literature is a challenge to readers, reviewers and scholarly critics. It feeds an entire industry and keeps more than one profession busy. Claudio Guillén is certainly right when he maintains that it is the "traditional right" of the literary critic "to define, compare, arrange the available stories" (*Literature as a System*, 1971, 7) into a system of literature. At the same time, however, it is not until the inevitably canonising glance of the literary scholar captures a text as a *text* that it is elevated to become part of literary history. With regard to the pitfalls of the writing of literary history it is understandable that some critics have become cautious. The relative openness of contemporary critical practice and a broader cultural perspective have enabled an ever wider range of texts to receive critical attention.

The three slim blue paperbacks discussed here are published as part of Palgrave's Reader's Guides, a series meant to offer orientation in an increasingly complex literary sphere. The books may be marketed for 'the general reader' but it is clear that this is a euphemism for 'students of literature.' These are the books undergraduates and their teachers might feel tempted to buy in order to find their way into – and in the ideal case through – the jungle of the critical appraisal of contemporary writing.

Although the general style of the series defines the essential outlook of each volume the individual strategy of the selection, presentation and balancing of critical voices varies

from editor to editor. The condensed look at the critical reception of a writer, in a format that ranges from newspaper reviews to scholarly dissections, serves to accentuate dominant themes in the literary work under scrutiny and brings out the features inherent in each text which argue against easy categorisation.

With regard to the three authors under discussion, the particular approach of the Reader's Guides reveals the extent to which labelling may occasionally over-focus the debate on issues which are assumed rather than proven to be essential and which thus result in blind spots. A clear advantage in this context is that all of the guides approach the work of their particular author comprehensively. As they move chronologically from text to text the books also relate to works that may not so easily fit into an acquired matrix of reading.

Hanif Kureishi is probably the most pronounced example of the tendency towards an acquired categorisation. Susie Thomas repeatedly identifies the preconceptions that underlie the critical approach to his literary work: Engaging issues of race and changing patterns of Britishness, Hanif Kureishi is a writer and film-maker whose work has centred on issues of identity but has been too readily pigeonholed as belonging to the ethnic domain. In this regard Thomas carefully directs the attention of her readers to critical appraisals which have been concerned with "the burden of representation," a phrase coined by Kobena Mercer (3) to express the assumption that minority artists speak for the entire ethnic community. How very much this "burden" has been uploaded onto Kureishi and his literary work becomes clear when one takes into consideration that he himself has refused to present in his texts "useful lies and cheering fictions" which would limit his artistic freedom as a writer to that of a "public relations officer, a hired liar" (26).

To pick but one example from Thomas's book, her compilation of critical voices on *My Beautiful Laundrette* takes the reader right into the middle of the debate on the racial issues in Kureishi's stories. The controversy which ensued immediately after the film was first launched in 1985 exposes the paradigmatic problem of how the labelling of a so-called minority writer has distracted much attention from a film in which documentary realism is transformed into a surrealistic fantasy creating a highly allusive and ironically charged meta-text on the story it tells. Denounced by conservative critics as coming straight from the agitprop department (35) the film was also attacked by those who might have been expected to receive it more open-mindedly. The poet and film-maker Mahmood Jamal disapproved of its "soggy liberalism" and similar comments were expressed by others who criticised Kureishi for sensationalising issues of race, class and sexuality only to please a voyeuristic white audience. In this context Thomas uses her editorial role to put some of this criticism into perspective. Only once the storm caused by the initial impact of the film had abated were voices raised by critics who read it in the wider contexts of the climate of the Thatcher years and the brutality of the ideological reprogramming of British society during this period. Directing one's attention to the broader socio-cultural issues that concern Kureishi in his dramatic, novelistic and cinematic work one sees that he has worked his way from the margin into the centre of British culture. When seen from the distanced vantage point of the reader's guide, the critical controversies over Kureishi's literary work begin to formulate an implicit imperative not to read him as a writer exclusively concerned with ethnic issues but as a social critic concerned with the state of British society which happens to be postcolonial and multicultural.

If Kureishi is an example of the difficulty of removing the blinkers of an ethnic reading Jeanette Winterson is described by Merja Makinen as a writer whose novels

have sometimes been subject to rather segregational treatment by feminist critics. Working her way through Winterson's literary output Makinen's summary of its critical reception allows the reader to participate in the discussion on the significance of Winterson's rendering of gender politics in her novels and the particular postmodern stance she displays in her writing.

Devoting the first two chapters of the book to a complementary yet separate reading of critical approaches to gender issues and the narrative technique in Winterson's first novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, Makinen's selection of critical voices serves to show how the two themes relate intimately to each other. The assertion of lesbian specificity in the texts cannot be fully analysed without simultaneously acknowledging their postmodern narrative stance. In her discussion of *Written on the Body*, for example, Christy Burns notes that Winterson is re-claiming the "flattened word" and the "desensitised body" (113). This statement accounts for the paradigmatic transposition of genders observed by critics, a transposition which underlies and facilitates alternative narrative strategies in Winterson's writing: she rephrases gender identities within and through an experimental narrativity that can push language systems to their very limits. In all this the critical appraisal of Winterson's novels shows that she escapes the narrow definitions suggested by labels such as "lesbian" or "feminist." She constantly blurs clear-cut distinctions as, for example, in *Written on the Body* where the gender of the first-person narrator is kept undefined, focusing the reader's attention on the narrative representation of the love-relationship rather than the gender of the lovers. With regard to Winterson's remapping of sexualities the fluidity of the postmodern concept of identity is clearly spotted in her texts but critics agree that it is not necessarily pushing it to the point where the deconstruction of differences would embrace the self-less subject. As far as the experimental in Winterson's novels is concerned, there is a narrow margin between a strong leaning towards modernist strategies of narration – an inheritance claimed by Winterson herself – and a self-confident extension of these influences into the postmodern project in literature.

A summary glance at the critical discourse on the literary work of Hanif Kureishi and of Jeanette Winterson exposes the emergence of strategies of labelling and categorisation. Labels like 'ethnic' or 'lesbian' automatically provide the critical approach to their texts with a vantage point which may become an obligation. In comparison, as Peter Childs's book shows, Ian McEwan's fiction has been more difficult to pigeonhole. The only label that critics have been inclined to use for McEwan's fiction is that of a 'literature of shock.'

This term, of course, aims to describe the typical psychodrama that dominates McEwan's writing. McEwan turns the normality suggested by his everyday settings, whether for example that of family life in *The Cement Garden* or that of holiday-making in *The Comfort of Strangers*, into "a nightmare fable of labyrinthine and dangerous relationships" (48). What may often sound like the ingredients of a simple horror story becomes for McEwan the point of departure for an exploration of the depth of human desire and the fragility of human relationships.

Ranging from emotional regression to violent atavism, the human factor in McEwan's writing has constantly attracted the attention of critics because it has always been potentially disturbing as it develops the horror of the unexpected arising out of the familiar. Symptomatic of this is McEwan's taking up of the theme of childhood. This is the most frequently recurring theme in his fictional universe and must be seen as something like a narrative proposition which provides the stories with a set of conventional

expectations and a variety of social taboos from which they derive their essential energy. In *The Cement Garden,* for example, the children's lives challenge the central taboos of Western society: death and incest. Exploring society's forbidden zones McEwan, exposes the thin veneer of culture which conceals a nature that is in itself driven by dark mechanisms of desire.

Despite his occasional nomadic excursions into different genres critics have never regarded McEwan as diverging from his interest in the psychological dissection of his protagonists and their relationship with their environment. Pointing to the achievement of McEwan's most recent novels, *Atonement* and *Saturday*, Childs implies in his conclusion that he stands "at a fascinating point in his own evolutionary development as a writer. He has come to be seen as Britain's foremost contemporary novelist" (151). Given the breadth of criticism of McEwan's fiction, Childs not only had to be selective but also representative whereas Thomas and Makinen had the opportunity to be comprehensive. The result is a different reading experience and a different perspective on a contemporary writer. Childs never has to argue for the eminence of his subject and therefore his analysis can concentrate on the major themes in the criticism of McEwan's novels. This, however, leads to some neglect of more subtle layers. For example, McEwan's particularly moderate stance in the wider field of postmodernism does not even merit an entry in the index to the guide.

There can be no doubt that the three guides reviewed here achieve their aim of involving their readers in discussions on three contemporary British writers. Their mixture of popular and academic appraisal is meant to take readers *in medias res*. Looking at the three guides as a group this rather democratic approach to secondary criticism is not unproblematic insofar as it may blur the line between academic analysis and the necessarily more popular style of criticism found in newspapers and review publications. Though the editors' remarks should help to navigate these precarious waters it may be questionable whether everyone will be enabled by the editorial commentary to make the necessary distinctions.

However, this downside may be more than compensated for by the mode of presentation in the guides which requires the reader to give up the comfort of a passive and dependent receptive posture. These are guides that encourage questions rather than provide answers. The result is – at times – a reading experience that is tentative and provisional. Of course, with regard to the likely readership of such guidebook literature this may not seem a disadvantage after all. The books neither claim to offer comprehensive interpretations of literary texts nor do they limit the perspective of the writer under scrutiny. On the contrary, all the editors show the variety of interpretative approaches.

Clearly, the strength of Palgrave's series of reader's guides is that it takes the critical assessment of literary texts seriously and – in the cases at hand – suggests rather than prescribes manifold ways of reading the work of Hanif Kureishi, Jeanette Winterson and Ian McEwan. The reader is not only invited to observe the critical debate but is essentially urged to participate in the controversies that characterise the writing of contemporary literary history.

Christoph Ehland (Würzburg)

Marie-Luise Egbert. **Garten und *Englishness* in der englischen Literatur**. Heidelberg: Winter, 2006. 237pp. Hb. € 35.00. ISBN 3-8253-5160-1.

There are arguably few semantic spaces which are as intimately associated with English culture as the garden. Consequently, much has been written about gardens and gardening, especially since the eighteenth century when the English landscape garden became all the craze in Europe and a proud showpiece on the island. In the face of such voluminous writing on the subject, it is by no means easy to find an original approach to an extremely well-charted territory. In her study Marie-Luise Egbert broaches the subject from the somewhat unspectacular proposition that the garden is a seminal feature of Englishness and her analysis aims to discover the ways in which a rural, pastoral, and paradisal concept of national identity has been inscribed into English literature.

The book is divided into eight chapters. In the introductory section Egbert adumbrates the English obsession with gardening and proposes to concentrate on English rather than on British culture. Moreover, she introduces a distinction between three seminal functions of the garden which may serve as motif, metaphor or metonymy. The operation of these devices inside narration are illustrated with the help of Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant" (1888) although Egbert's reading stretches far beyond the limits of the text itself. The second chapter initially retraces the universal semantics of the garden as a heterotopian space, as proposed by Michel Foucault, and then narrows the focus onto Western concepts of the garden as the topographical analogy to Arcadia, the Garden of Eden and Paradise. This mythological system of semantic analogies is transferred to England in the following chapter. By taking recourse to Hobsbawn's concept of invented traditions Egbert shows how the geographically remote location of the island encouraged the belief in its rural virtues. As a consequence, England emerged as the happy isle, the *insula fortunata*, specifically chosen by God himself – a proposition which is substantiated, not surprisingly, by reference to Andrew Marvell's "Upon Appleton House" (1681) and even more clearly by John of Gaunt's speech in Shakespeare's *Richard II*. The discussion of England as "demi-paradise" and its mythological as well as political implications is stimulating, and the reader might have wished to have learned more about the ways in which this notion was handed down over the centuries as an invented tradition in its own right. However, there is a gap in the tradition of more than two hundred years since the argument jumps from the Renaissance to Kipling's "The Glory of the Garden" (1911) and culminates in a reading of Julian Barnes's *England, England* (1998) which, although obviously interesting in itself, is awkwardly placed as the finishing point of this section.

This becomes even more obvious as chapter 4 takes the reader back into the eighteenth-century debate about the *English* garden. The refusal of the symmetric arrangement in the French style and the concomitant return to an apparent, albeit carefully designed, naturalness is extensively discussed with reference to the theoretical writings of Horace Walpole and the practical work of landscape architects such as Lancelot Capability Brown. Egbert demonstrates how the development of the English landscape garden was largely due to the political competition with France but that its genuine aesthetics also reflected the economic position and social aspirations of the landowning classes. These contentions are tested against two literary texts: By readings of Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771) and Richard Graves's *Columella* (1779), Egbert illustrates how the ideological components surrounding the English

garden were so firmly ingrained into Enlightenment discourse that they could easily be used as narrative conventions in late eighteenth-century fiction.

The ensuing four chapters explore, in chronological order, literary texts in which the garden is employed for various purposes. The dominant paradigm which emerges is that of a metonymic relationship between characters and their country houses as well as their surrounding gardens which reflect the psychological dispositions of their owners. While the analyses of Jane Austen's novels as well as H.G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay* (1909), E.M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) yield few fresh insights, the discussion of more recent, postmodern texts is distinctly more rewarding. By drawing on selected examples, Egbert demonstrates in chapter 7 how the glory of the eighteenth-century garden has given way to its idealised simulations in the shape of simulacra and tourist commodities. Additionally, the final chapter concentrates on desperate but invariably fruitless attempts to reconstruct and, literally, to excavate the historical truth of the garden – a topic brilliantly examined in Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* (1993).

Since *Arcadia* is one of the few dramatic texts which have been consulted and since poetry, with the exception of "Upon Appleton House" is almost completely left aside, the epithet English literature should be qualified in the more narrow sense of English fiction. Although the study covers much familiar ground, Egbert is a knowledgeable expert in her field and the two final chapters on the garden and postmodernism are a welcome addition to the ongoing debate about Englishness.

Jürgen Kamm (Passau)

David E. Cooper. **A Philosophy of Gardens**. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006. x, 173 pp. 9 ill. Hb. £ 18.99. ISBN 0-1992-9034-2.

Shelley Saguaro. **Garden Plots: The Politics and Poetics of the Garden**. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. xiii, 249 pp. Hb. £ 50.00. ISBN 0-7546-3753-0.

David E. Cooper's *A Philosophy of Gardens* is written with the express aim of filling a lacuna: Despite their prominent role both in history and in contemporary popular culture, gardens have rarely been the object of philosophical enquiry. The absence of any established branch of the discipline dedicated to the study of gardens and gardening accounts for the indefinite article in Cooper's title (1). Cooper's own philosophical interest lies not in redefining 'the garden' (12-3). Instead, he is concerned with the meaning of gardens *for* people and with reasons for "the immense significance that human beings locate in the making and experiencing of gardens" (3).

Taking aesthetics as his point of departure, Cooper demonstrates that the human appreciation of gardens is neither fully accounted for by assimilating it to that of art (painting in particular) nor to that of nature (chapter 2). Assimilating them to art neglects the fact that gardens are places and that they contain natural elements. By contrast, aligning them with nature means ignoring those similarities which actually exist between gardens and works of art (such as being man-made, being part of a tradition). Nor can these contradictions be solved by considering the case of gardens a unique fusion of the appreciation of natural elements on the one hand and artefactual ones on the other (chapter 3). This would mean denying gardens their character as holistic creations in which each part signifies in relation to all the others (56). In Cooper's

analysis, then, the appreciation of gardens emerges as a distinct case, an aesthetic experience *sui generis*.

The distinctiveness of the garden is further explored with regard to garden-practices – by which Cooper understands gardening as such, but also other activities performed in the garden like eating or playing games (chapter 4). He suggests that the special significance of gardens may have to do with their being "conducive to the good life," the *eudaimonia* as intended by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (chapter 5). The garden, in Cooper's line of thought, contributes to the good life because it induces in human beings certain virtues (95). This issue is revisited by Cooper in his conclusion, but its actual relevance to the meaning of gardens remains marginal (157).

In chapters 6 and 7, Cooper distinguishes between seven modes of meaning (e.g. instrumental, depictive, allusive) for gardens and the elements they contain. To these, Cooper adds the meaning of 'The Garden' – a garden exemplary of all gardens – as a special symbolic relation. The Garden, he argues, embodies a co-dependence between man and the natural world. Just as man's creativity in the garden depends on the cooperation of its natural elements (their prospering in the precinct of the garden), so the natural world in its turn depends on man's creativity as the very means of its expression. This reciprocal dependency is what Cooper terms his "modest proposal" (134-5). He goes on to modify this proposal into the stronger claim that 'The Garden' is the embodiment of a "co-dependence of human existence and the 'deep ground' of the world and ourselves" (145). Emphasising the spiritual quality of the link, he states that "The Garden […] is an epiphany of man's relationship to mystery. This relationship is its meaning" (*ibid.*).

As such, the claim of a mystical relationship experienced in gardens might appear almost trivial, but it is Cooper's merit to have formulated that relationship as the symbolic meaning of 'The Garden.' While one may accept his caveat that the "deep ground of the world" need not be understood theistically, it is less easy to see why conceptualisations of an ideal world beyond this world in terms of gardens (in Judaism, Christianity, Islam) play hardly any role in this context. Having a notion of paradise is certainly not a presupposition for experiencing an epiphany in the garden. Even so, it would have been worth reconsidering the role of such religious garden images in the light of the proposal.

On the whole, however, Cooper's *A Philosophy of the Garden* is a fine and stimulating study that is highly accessible even for those foreign to the field of philosophy. The study nicely grasps the aesthetic distinctiveness of gardens in a way that demonstrates the ultimate inadequacy of such labels as 'nature,' 'art,' or even 'nature and art' – the garden stands on its own ground.

Approaching the matter from the angle of literary criticism, Shelley Saguaro in her study *Garden Plots: The Politics and Poetics of Gardens* takes it for granted that gardens also have meaning in texts. She aims "to examine the multifarious aspects of the meaning of gardens in twentieth- and early twenty-first-century literary texts" in which "gardens, of one kind or another, are deployed […] for very specific and significant reasons; they are not simply incidental or facilely clichéd" (xi). How exactly one would put literary texts to the test of their relevance in this regard remains unanswered, though. As Saguaro adumbrates in her use of the polysemous term 'plots,' gardens are studied both under material and figurative guises (xiii). From the start, Saguaro draws attention to the decidedly political dimension which gardens can have, citing Jamaica Kincaid on the issue of botanical naming in a (post)colonial situation (xii-iii).

The three main chapters deal with textual uses of gardens along both chronological and thematic lines. Each of these chapters offers detailed readings of four pieces of fiction by writers from across the English-speaking world. Under the heading of "Botanical Modernism" (chapter 1), Saguaro discusses Virginia Woolf's "Kew Gardens" (1919), Katherine Mansfield's *Prelude* (1917), Elizabeth Bowen's "Summer Night" (1941), and Eudora Welty's "A Curtain of Green" (1941). Placing these short stories in the context of modernism, she summarises the essence of gardens in them as reflecting "a range of political and personal complexities, many of them disruptive of what had been previously established as norms and certainties" (58). Thus, she considers Woolf's "Kew Gardens" as symbolic of both "British botanical imperialism" and of the approaching end of the Empire (11). Moreover, she finds that Woolf's preoccupation with theories of time and duration is very aptly expressed in a garden since the latter is itself subject to constant flux. The Irish gardens evoked in Bowen's "Summer Night" and the ruins found therein are read as evidence of historical contingencies such as the conflict between Republicans and the Anglo-Irish Ascendency but also the Second World War, which forms the temporal setting of that story. With John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984), A.S. Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia" (1992), Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), and Carol Shields's *Larry's Parrot* (1997), the second chapter ("Natural History and Postmodern Grafting") assembles four postmodernist texts classified by Saguaro as metafictional. These widen the scope from gardens to nature, thematising colonial plant hunting and bringing in aspects of metahistoriography with the figures of the two Tradescants (Winterson). The chapter also looks at the pivotal role of sexuality in botanical classification (Byatt, Winterson). In the "Postcolonial Landscapes" of the third chapter, politics take centre-stage. Saguaro interprets gardens as sites of conflicts over the possession and cultivation of land and underscores the need to reconsider such tropes as paradise and pastoral in postcolonial settings. The texts studied here are J.M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1998), V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999).

The much shorter chapter 4 is a synopsis of science-fiction and cyberfiction, including John Wyndham's *The Day of the Tryffids* (1951), Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1984), and William Gibson's *Virtual Light* (1994). The cyborgs and artificial animals featuring in these texts are considered with regard to technical engineering and the relationship between reality and simulacrum. Actual gardens, however, play a negligible role here. The book ends with a coda opening the perspective onto a changed, non-anthropocentric relationship between human beings and the natural world, a partnership of sorts (note the parallel with Cooper's "co-dependence"). In evidence of such a shift, Saguaro adduces texts such as Mike Dash's *Tulipomania: The Story of the World's Most Coveted Flower* (1999) and Michael Pollan's *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World* (2001) which, following Pollan, she calls histories of "coevolution" (226) – a group of texts clearly distinct from the literary texts discussed in the body of the book.

Largely free of jargon, the study is very readable though slightly compromised by persistent spacing errors. As it turns out, there is actually no attempt at categorising the many uses of gardens in literature into one overarching poetics of gardens, as the subtitle seems to suggest. Affording the reader a good glimpse of what gardens *can* mean, Saguaro's highly perceptive, well-contextualised readings themselves aptly illustrate that in literature, meaning is open-ended.

Marie-Luise Egbert (Leipzig)

Anthony Fothergill. **Secret Sharers: Joseph Conrad's Cultural Reception in Germany**. Cultural History and Literary Imagination, 4. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006. 276 pp. Pb. € 48.20. ISBN 3-03910-271-0.

Anthony Fothergill's book on Conrad in Germany covers the roughly sixty years from Conrad's first introduction to German readers by Samuel Fischer Verlag in the 1920s to the late 1980s. The study adopts a wide definition of reception which encompasses "a whole range of correlations from direct influence to perceived affinity" (71). In fact, the author all but discards the term early on in the study, preferring to talk about "cross-cultural conversations" or "elective affinities" between Conrad and his German readers instead. Such affinities, Fothergill claims, "can provide a powerful conceptual tool for bringing writers into dialogue and open up more channels of insight than just a one-to-one conception of 'influence'" (71).

This may well be the case, and, particularly in the chapter on Conrad and Thomas Mann, Fothergill's juxtaposition of the two writers and their respective approaches to similar sets of aesthetic and conceptual problems does indeed throw new light on both Mann *and* Conrad – proving Fothergill's (rather well-worn) point that every act of reception is also an act of interpretation, and that we may learn something about Conrad from his German readers. But the book's concern is not just with such major figures as Mann, and not just with the public sphere (Mann wrote the foreword to the 1926 translation of *The Secret Agent*), but also with what he calls the "informal reception" (121) of Conrad in Germany, and with lesser-known people like Oskar Loerke or Ernst Freissler, who worked for Samuel Fischer in the 1920s and 1930s. Loerke's and Freissler's engagement with Conrad is well documented, and, as Fothergill shows, in many ways representative of the early stages of Conrad in Germany. His source material, however, becomes more and more sparse as the Weimar Republic turns into the Third Reich. The chapter on Conrad under the National Socialists relies on passing references to Conrad in letters and diary entries by Gottfried Benn and Max Beckmann, while the section on "Literary Criticism as a Political Act" deals exclusively with Hermann Stresau, an ex-librarian who wrote the first major German monograph on Conrad. In and of themselves, these are fascinating stories. At times, however, they more than skirt the anecdotal, and it remains unclear what point either about Conrad or about Germany it is they are supposed to be making.

The study's emphasis on the personal and the informal does indeed have its downsides, and the same holds true for the conveniently vague notion of "cross-cultural conversations" between Conrad and his German readers. Particularly in the chapters on Christa Wolf and Werner Herzog, Fothergill stretches the concept of reception to its limits. Wolf's appearance in the book is legitimated by her briefly quoting Conrad in her Chernobyl novel, *Störfall* (1987), an incident which gives rise to lengthy reflections on Wolf's œuvre and its (dis)similarities with Conrad's. If the chapter cannot quite avoid the impression that the bringing together of these two writers might indeed be "arbitrary" (201), the section on Herzog enters even more shaky ground. Although Herzog has demonstrably read Conrad at some point and expressed a general admiration for him, he has always refused to admit anything like literary influences on his work. The chapter does not feature a single statement by Herzog on any of Conrad's texts or on any aspect of his literary technique. There is thus very little evidence for anything like an active engagement – a somewhat meagre basis for a whole chapter on

Herzog's reception of Conrad, or indeed on a "cross-cultural dialogue" between the two, even if it is a "perceived" one only.

Fothergill offers in-depth and often original readings of Conrad's texts as well as informed analyses of the cultural context and the political situation that they met with in Germany. Nevertheless, it is only rarely that the book lives up to its promise. Occasionally, the study provides genuinely fresh insights, but its tendency to digression and a somewhat cavalier attitude towards referencing make it difficult to follow the author's argument. Topics like Conrad's racism and at least partial sympathy with colonialism do not receive the attention they would have deserved, particularly in a German context. Ultimately, Fothergill's point is perhaps not so much about Conrad or about Germany as it is about literature and its "ability to offer a counter-voice to authorities who would dictate what is true" (134). It is a point powerfully illustrated by some, if by no means all, of his case studies on Conrad in Germany.

Bettina Boecker (München)

Jutta Zimmermann. **Dialog, Dialogizität und Interdiskursivität: Die Geschlechterfrage im amerikanischen realistischen Roman.** Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006. 451 pp. Pb. € 85.50. ISBN 3-506-71754-2.

One of the most striking features of American fiction in the age of realism is the significant increase in the number and length of dialogues. How does one account for this phenomenon? Is it somehow related to the single most important social issue dramatized by the authors, the position of women?

In the first section of her massive study, Jutta Zimmermann lays the theoretical groundwork for her analysis of fictional dialogue. She does so, first, by reviewing an impressive array of models taken from speech-act theory, narratology, discourse analysis, philosophy and communication theory, and second, by locating her project within the current debates of realism and gender. If one may wonder initially whether such well-known figures as Bakhtin, Foucault, and Habermas need to be rehearsed at such length, the reader quickly realizes the potential payoff of such thoroughness, for each of the models discussed provides important clues that go into the making of Zimmermann's own perspective. The most important distinction emerging from her survey of the field contrasts models of conflict on the one hand (e.g., Foucault, Lyotard), and models of consensus on the other (e.g., Gadamer, Habermas). After weighing the pros and cons of both, she decides in favor of an intermediate approach inspired largely by Jürgen Link and Ursula Link-Heer's concept of interdiscursiveness.

Reading Zimmermann's discussion of realism and gender, one is struck by her skillful combining of historical and systematic criteria. Her in-depth review of the various stages in the development of critical discourses concludes with a typological distinction between models of complicity on the one hand, and constructivist or reader-response models on the other. While the former assume an inherent link between realism and an ideological agenda supporting the status quo, the latter postulate the basic openness of all texts to various responses and thus the liberating potential of any work of fiction, including the writings of realism.

The theoretical section of the book carries considerable weight in itself. Moreover, and more importantly, the systematic criteria developed in this section shed new light

on such key works of the period as Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, Henry James's *The Bostonians*, and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. In an adroit move, Zimmermann prefaces her discussion of these major works by a look at two novels usually considered proto- or pre-realistic: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Oliver Wendell Holmes's *Elsie Venner*. In addition to strengthening her diachronic perspective, including these works helps Zimmermann to illustrate in practical terms why she chose to link the issues of dialogue, realism, and gender. Focusing on the interplay between dialogue and narratorial commentary, she can show how Stowe and Holmes, rather than utilizing the liberating dynamic of dialogue, tend instead to engage in an essentialist discourse that confirms the existing hierarchy of the sexes.

From this perspective, the achievement of the kind of realism practiced by Howells, James, and Wharton appears all the more impressive. Zimmermann's close reading of *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, for instance, builds a strong case against new-historicist critics who have argued that despite his vocal opposition to the current state of affairs, Howells was profoundly in tune with American expansionism and capitalism. Unlike Stowe and Holmes, Howells's sophisticated use of dialogue involves a didactic program designed to convey a truly dialogic, anti-authoritarian ethos. Here, as in the work of James and Wharton, dialogue functions as a vehicle of "interdiscursiveness," engaging as it does in a productive and often subversive critique of such hegemonic, patriarchal discourses as the Victorian cult of domesticity and social darwinism.

Zimmermann's book stands to rank along with Winfried Fluck's magisterial studies (*Inszenierte Wirklichkeit*, 1992; *Das kulturelle Imaginäre*, 1997) as yet another major German contribution to the ongoing reassessment of American realism. In addition to the book's innovative perspective, I was particularly struck by the continuing vitality of the seemingly old-fashioned method of detailed textual analysis. Of course, one has always known that a James novel warrants close attention to minute details, but it turns out that even a much less sophisticated stylist like Howells benefits from a close reading. Moreover, the juxtaposition of essentially monologic authors such as Stowe and Holmes and the truly dialogic writers that form the major object of the study makes one wonder whether the distinction between high and popular literature may not make sense after all. Apart from aesthetic considerations, even in terms of the 'cultural work' of fiction (Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 1985) the interdiscursive use of dialogue in Howells, James, and Wharton may achieve more in the way of realigning the reader's sympathies and perceptions than the simplistic fictions of Stowe and others held in such high regard by revisionist critics of the canon.

Dieter Schulz (Heidelberg)

Konrad Gross, Wolfgang Klooss and Reingard M. Nischik, eds. **Kanadische Literaturgeschichte**. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005. ix, 446 pp. 133 ill. Hb. € 34.95. ISBN 3-476-02062-2.

In the Metzler histories of English, American and French literatures, Canadian literature occupies only a secondary position, that of the 'other' literatures, and is dealt with in a superficial manner. The astonishing boom in Canadian literature since the upsurge of nationalism in the late 1960s, its profound enrichment by native and immigrant writing during the past three decades as well as its impressive international success

more than justify the publication of a separate volume in the Metzler series dedicated to Canadian literature alone.

Written and edited by some of the most prominent contemporary scholars in Canadian literature in Germany and Austria, the volume raises high expectations that it readily fulfils and frequently exceeds. The authors and editors were faced with the difficult task of dealing with at least three literatures (English-Canadian, French-Canadian, and Native-Canadian) that have been produced in a complex cultural and political environment which the chapters investigate in a compelling and enlightening manner. Their presentations of Canadian authors and literary and cultural theorists are embedded skilfully in national and international frameworks in a way that makes it easy for the reader to follow the evolution of Canadian literature from its initial colonial status, *via* a wave of cultural and political emancipation, to the major challenges to the national discourse posed by native and immigrant writers. The authors comment on contemporary tendencies towards internationalization which render essentialist understandings of "Canadian" obsolete and which point towards the transcendence of national considerations in the definition of a Canadian writer in a multicultural and international context.

In writing the history of Canadian literature, the authors are careful not to create a master narrative. They investigate the diverse developments in the different cultures of Canada, point to contradictions and search for the factors that have determined them, without losing sight of the connections and mutual influences between the English-speaking and French-speaking cultures. The authors also contemplate the way in which the literary and critical productions of Canada mirror Canadian self-perception and propagate Canada's (self-)image in the world. Due consideration is also given to the so-called institutionalization of Canadian literature, a process that involves state support for publishers, literary prizes, schools, and universities. All have been equally instrumental in the establishment and continual re-formation of the literary scene in Canada.

The editors warn the reader that the choice of the individually discussed authors and texts is unavoidably based on the personal interests of the scholars who have authored the respective chapters. This is in general of no further consequence since an objective style is observed in most of the entries, but the reader misses, for example, the reference to Timothy Findley's writing in the chapter on novels about the First World War ("Der Kriegsroman," 139). One also wonders whether the occasional double entries on different authors are really necessary. The most striking examples are on pages 291-2 and pages 330-1, whose entries on Tomson Highway, Drew Hayden Taylor and Daniel David Moses echo one another. On the other hand, this overlap might be intentional as the focus of the relevant chapters is different each time. The repetition of some of the information provides a welcome connection between the chapters whereas the expression "*a mari usque ad mare*" might have been edited out after its first usage.

Nonetheless, the Metzler history of Canadian literature remains the product of exemplary team-work both on the level of writing and of editing. The names of the authors of individual entries are discreetly mentioned on the *impressum* page and the volume maintains a unitary structure and style throughout, a remarkable achievement when one considers that no less than 18 scholars were involved in its conception and many more in the process of its editing.

The volume is well-balanced in its composition: The developments in fiction, drama and poetry in high and popular culture receive equal attention, whereas the selection of English and French-Canadian authors reflects their popularity both in Canada and

among German readers and scholars. This work will prove a substantial enrichment for the bookshelves of German-speaking readers and students of Canadian literature.

Anca-Raluca Radu (Marburg)

Ruth Mayer. **Diaspora: Eine kritische Begriffsbestimmung**. Cultural Studies, 14. Bielefeld: transcript, 2005. 196 pp. Pb. € 19.80. ISBN 3-89942-311-9.

The invitingly blue ripples reproduced on the book's cover suggest at first glance a pleasant poolside rather than the serious business of hammering out a 'critical definition' of the term diaspora. However, Mayer does mean serious business indeed. The aquatic cover, it emerges, is rather to be taken as a symbol of the centrality the author ascribes to 'water cultures' (oceans, coastal areas, and ports) in the context of diaspora studies.

Reviewing recent critical debates, Mayer interprets the current ubiquity of the term diaspora as the symptom of a shift in perspective in cultural and social studies. In her introduction, she sketches this development concisely, especially with respect to the growing significance of diaspora studies which, to some extent, has superseded postcolonial studies as a theoretical framework in explaining those global phenomena in society, culture and literature which are informed by conceptions of the nation state but cannot sufficiently be explained by them. However, Mayer does not aim to develop a taxonomy or typology of global diasporas and their histories. Indeed, her book articulates a timely caution against tendencies of universalising conceptions of diaspora as they have proliferated of late. Rather, Mayer sets out to highlight essential facets of the phenomenon of diaspora with the explicit intention of countering the simplifying and historically undifferentiated usage of the term she perceives to be gaining currency. What makes this well structured and lucidly argued book an asset to diaspora studies is the author's methodological decision to discuss current theoretical and conceptual questions with reference to three case studies, ranging from antiquity to the present, which Mayer (without pretending to examine their history and development in all its complexity) investigates as specific to their particular times and contexts.

Acknowledging diasporas largely to be retrospective projections but arguing against the restrictive use of the term exclusively for contemporary forms of community building, Mayer holds that the concept of diaspora may well be historicised and that it constitutes, if used with caution, an important corrective for cultural studies. Thus, it is her objective to contribute towards a pre-history of globalisation that no longer refers to received notions of centre and periphery. Discussing in three chapters some potential signposts towards a diasporic historiography, she attempts to avoid projecting new categories onto the past but rather strives to emphasise differences between past and present.

In her first chapter, focusing on the Jewish diaspora of antiquity and the Middle Ages, Mayer explores the usefulness of the term diaspora for writing a 'pre-history' of globalisation by focusing on historical constellations and contexts which refuse to be compatible with national historiographies and 'Völkergeschichte'. Taking issue with Edward Said's levelling concept of Orientalism, Mayer insists on historical and geographical plurality, arguing for a new perspective on diasporic historiographies. In the second chapter, she turns to the period of national awakenings and focuses on the foundation of the West African nation state of Liberia. With her reading of the history

of the African American diaspora as an integral part of the history of the Western metropolis, rather than as a counter history to the history of Euro-American imperialism, she critiques Paul Gilroy's influential theory of the 'black Atlantic'. The 'utopian' element she perceives in Gilroy's understanding of diaspora as a primarily future-oriented concept is interpreted by Mayer as romanticising and as potentially obscuring the ambivalences inherent in the history of diasporic communities. For her, this emerges most clearly with respect to the significance of the idea of the nation state for African return movements which, convincingly, she argues to have been obfuscated by predominant notions of diasporas as 'imagined communities'. In the third and final chapter, Mayer turns to the Chinese diaspora, particularly of the early twentieth century, which she suggests to be paradigmatic of current tendencies of transnationalisation and deterritorialisation, arguing that it may be considered in many respects as the vanguard of numerous styles of living which nowadays are subsumed under the heading of the 'postmodern condition'.

Managing to give a concise survey of recent critical opinion on, to outline current problems of, and to point out a possible new direction for diaspora studies, Mayer's book is well appointed to hold its own among the plurality of critical voices discussing the phenomenon of diaspora. Its brevity and its clarity make it particularly useful as a text book for academic teaching. Mayer's book is not, however, relevant only to students. Especially the chapter about the Chinese diaspora is the product of independent research which ties in with an ongoing research project directed by the author at the University of Hanover. Mayer's study will thus be of interest also to scholars in the fields of literary and cultural studies in general and, more particularly, of Anglophone literatures, as its focus, with the exception of the case study of the Jewish diaspora, is primarily on Anglophone diasporas. The focus on the Anglophone world, extending, unfortunately, to the book's language which is riddled with Anglicisms, is, more importantly, also reflected in the literature referred to by the author which is restricted exclusively to texts in English and German. This, it seems, is indeed one of the weak spots of the book in that it obscures the 'transnational' dimension not only of diasporas but also of diaspora studies.

Having said this, there is no question that the strength of any introduction of this kind manifests itself in its capacity of appositely condensing the plurality of phenomena and voices to a digestible bulk. These quibbles should, therefore, not deflect from the merit of Mayer's book which, in general, succeeds very well in doing just this. The study is wholeheartedly to be recommended to all readers with an interest in diaspora studies and the related disciplines of migration studies, multicultural studies or literary and cultural studies and (in spite of its alleged demise) postcolonial studies.

Axel Stähler (Canterbury)

Lars Eckstein. **Re-Membering the Black Atlantic: On the Politics and Poetics of Literary Memory**. Cross Cultures, 84. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006. xvi, 291 pp., Hb. € 62.00. ISBN 90-420-1958-1.

The book focuses on the strategies and politics of remembering in works of the Black Atlantic. The author's conception of the term 'Black Atlantic' issues directly from that of Paul Gilroy as articulated in his book *The Black Atlantic.* In the book, Gilroy utilizes

the metaphor of perpetual voyage as he struggles to conceptualise black cultural identity. The image of the ship, indeed, lies at the centre of Gilroy's argument, with black culture projected as a travelling and therefore transnational category, its ship eternally on sail, criss-crossing the Atlantic, and causing the spread – like rhizomes – of black cultural expressions within the territory of the original triangular trade. Following this definition, Eckstein undertakes a theoretical groundwork on the connections and interconnections between memory and black literature and thereafter proceeds to apply it to three major works of fiction.

In his first part, Eckstein articulates the conceptual framework of his study. Following Renate Lachmann's basic position in her *Memory and Literature*, he presents literature as a mnemonic art, as works which connect with, and reconstitute, texts of earlier generations transforming the forms and politics of the older texts in fresh contexts. Working out the details of his position, the author foregrounds two terms – "testimony" and "palimpsest" – and draws attention to the complex relationships existing between them. As he argues, the distinguishing element between the two lies in the nature of reference evoked by a particular work of literature. While testimony applies to works which rely on direct, primary, and therefore "mental" resources, those categorised as palimpsests connect with "manifest" and consequently palpable materials. Slave autobiographies represent appropriate examples of the former. Eckstein points out that testimonies often purport to represent records of direct experience and are thus presented as literal truths. However, as the author demonstrates through his brief discussion of Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, such works are not always innocent or even faithful. Rather, both their styles and the views they project are often influenced by political and personal factors, a fact which makes them subject to manipulation, distortion and even censorship. What legitimises them, finally, lies in the struggle they wage against hegemonic structures.

"Palimpsests," on the other hand, maintain open, inter-textual connections with old materials, "displacing" and preserving them at the same time. The term originated in the medieval period when fresh texts used to be inscribed on rolls of parchments which already contained written materials. Eckstein is aware that the term's usage has always been restricted to written texts but argues all the same for the need to extend its frame of reference, making it take in visual images and music as well. With regards to visual materials, Eckstein posits that a written work can be inspired by an image, can "store" it in a way that makes it recoverable, and can transform and simultaneously displace it. As for music, modes of mnemonic transformation in literature may include the evocation of textual patterns such as the call and response modes in blues and the integration of "formal aspects" and "associative moods." Having carefully laid out his theoretical position, the author selects three representative novels of the Black Atlantic for detailed discussion in part two of his study.

Born in the Caribbean, Caryl Phillips, the author of *Cambridge*, was brought to Britain at only three months. *Cambridge*, which centres on the tragic story of a Christian slave in a Caribbean plantation is a montage of several written texts, including journals detailing impressions of European travellers to Caribbean plantations and well-known slave narratives. David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress*, employs different mnemonic strategies. The novel refers back mainly to the eighteenth century engravings of William Hogarth, reflecting on the depiction of blacks in the works of the English painter. The memory of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the last novel discussed, is rooted

principally in black musical traditions, most notably blues, work songs, spirituals and jazz.

Re-Membering the Black Atlantic may not be a perfect work – for one, the distinction that the author tries to draw between individual, collective and cultural memory does not seem to have been quite clearly articulated and, also, since the work was originally written in German, the translated version contains a few awkward phrases and turgid expressions – but it is no doubt a product of meticulous research and painstaking investigation. The theoretical point of view is carefully laid out. Applying it in practical analysis, Eckstein exhumes the different materials that he believes each author has re-visited and establishes their connections with the respective novels. The work's special strength lies in the way it stretches the concept of literary mnemonics to encapsulate music and engravings. Altogether, it represents a solid, original contribution to the investigation of the connections between literature and memory on the one hand, and to the studies of Black Atlantic writings on the other.

Wumi Raji (Ile Ife)

David Dabydeen, John Gilmore and Cecily Jones, eds. **The Oxford Companion to Black British History**. Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 2007, xxvii, 562pp. Hb. £ 30.00. ISBN 0-1928-0439-1.

This is a very useful book indeed. It seeks "to give coverage to nearly 2,000 years of black British history, from the presence of African soldiers defending Hadrian's Wall in the second century AD to contemporary issues relating to refugees and asylum-seekers" (ix). While the editors regret to have to admit that in many cases the records are "too scanty" (*ibid.*) to allow detailed entries, they offer the volume as "an archive, incomplete as it is, of current knowledge of the black British presence," which (they hope) will "provoke discussion and debate," as well as "sustain ongoing research and encourage new scholarship" (x). The archive is rich: It contains some 450 entries (of different length) written by some 120 contributors (including the three editors and five advisory editors). The "thematic contents list," intended to help readers find their way, ranges from Armed Forces, Audio-visual Media, Education, History, Literature, Medicine and science, Music, Organizations, Performing arts, Publications, to Personalities, Politics, Religion, Slavery, Sport, and Visual Arts. The list of contributors is a successful mix of highly qualified academics established in their particular research areas, young academics (such as Ph.D. students) whose expertise is no less impressive, and people with a great amount of experience in the fields of culture, politics and education. However, the experts come almost exclusively from Anglo-American academia; otherwise there are two West Indians, one African, one German and one Canadian. Whether this represents the status quo in Black British Studies or a particular choice of the editors (many contributors are connected to Warwick University where the editors work) is not made clear.

The core of the *Companion* consists of (i) overviews describing the history of black people in "Roman Britain," "Renaissance Britain" and, with some overlap, "Tudor Britain" as well as "Georgian and Victorian Britain". These historical overviews are complemented by (ii) regional and local studies focusing on "Ireland," "Scotland" and "Wales," on the one hand, and the major slave ports (Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Liver-

pool, and London), on the other. (iii)In-depth studies of political events and historical developments – such as the "Slave trade," "Slavery," "Abolition" and "Emancipation" as well as the "Criminal justice system," "Housing," "Immigration" and the problematic of "Reparations" – round off the core. In addition, there is a wealth of material and information on the fields of literature, music, religion and sports. The entries for literature cover not only texts written and movements formed by black writers but also analyse key texts which represent black people from a white perspective – such as *Titus Andronicus, Othello, The Tempest, Oroonoko, Robinson Crusoe, Mansfield Park, Vanity Fair* and *Heart of Darkness*. Theoretical issues relating to, for example, "Black British English," "Mixed-race identity," "Multiculturalism," "Orientalism" and "Racism" are competently dealt with. Finally, more than 200 entries concerning "Personalities" are a mine of information for every reader.

No work of such scope is without shortcomings. I should like to briefly mention three points. Firstly, as far as I could see, the term "black" is used without further discussion. It refers to British people of, ultimately, African descent. This is fair enough but should be spelled out because in the 1970s and 1980s a distinctly political definition of "black" was used to position all non-white people (including, for example, people from Asia) in opposition to white British people. Secondly, although there are quite a number of entries on various aspects of black culture, an overview of black British popular culture is missing. Thirdly, the Birmingham "Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies" has an entry which is, however, strangely silent on the Centre's achievement in the fields of race and ethnicity. (This is remedied in the entry on "Caribbean Studies.") There are other minor errors, amongst which the characterisation of Richard Hoggart as "'New Left' Marxist" (97) verges on the ridiculous.

However, these are minor quibbles. The *Companion* is an enviable achievement. It should be on the desk of every scholar working in the field, and it is a must for every university library.

Jürgen Kramer (Dortmund)