

REVIEWS

Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker, eds. *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care. Essays in Honour of Bella Millett.* York: York University Press, 2009. Pp. 217. £50.00 / \$95.00.

The eclectic nature of the collected essays form a suitable *festschrift* for Bella Millett, a prominent and renowned scholar whose research on *Ancrene Wisse*, to name but one example, has proven highly influential. To enable the contributors to give credit to the extent of Millett's research the volume has a broad title which invites a scope of literature whilst simultaneously retaining a clear focus. The collection reviews the chronological development of pastoral care from the Anglo-Saxon to late medieval period, providing detailed examinations of selected texts and surveying the development of pastoral literature as a genre.

In the preface Derek Pearsall praises the scholarly contribution made by Millett and provides a chronological appraisal of her research, deeming her an 'analytical thinker' and 'lucid writer'. He explains that the following essays celebrate various aspects of her research, including her impact on the regeneration of interest in early Middle English religious writing, her pioneering work on female reading practices and devotion, and her expertise as a manuscript and textual scholar.

The introduction by Catherine Innes-Parker and Cate Gunn expresses the recurring theme of the collection aptly, 'the questioning of received authority'. *Pastoralia*, or pastoral literature, is one of the many terms that are questioned. The difficulty of providing an appropriate definition for a heading which encompasses such a diverse range of texts is successfully explored before a brief résumé is provided, detailing how each paper comments or builds upon Millett's work. An introduction is then supplied to the context of the period in question. This traces the roots of pastoral care in both Latin and the vernacular from the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 to the expansion and diversification of pastoral literature during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

In the first essay A.E. Jones addresses the problem that solitary vocation posed for a system of pastoral care. 'Life in common' was perceived to be beneficial, for when individuals unite together they pool their spiritual gifts and experience a more complete realisation of Christ. The solitary life, in comparison, was seen as self-focused and lacking in spiritual direction. Frequently, the life of solitude was the culmination of a monastic life, enabling the individual to contemplate and produce texts

of moral education and catechetical material, thus providing a solution to the problem of pastoral care.

Elaine Treharne in the second essay considers networks of ecclesiastical influence and exchange operating between scriptoria in western England during the late Anglo–Saxon period. She proposes that one of the greatest problems for researchers is absence, the insufficient evidence to localise accurately many manuscripts. This generates a tendency to attribute manuscripts to known centres rather than to consider smaller or unknown scriptoria and therefore she proposes that scholars should seek to locate manuscripts by region.

Although Brian Golding states that Gerald of Wales' *Gemma Ecclesiastica* was little read, he successfully argues that it provides scholars with an important indicator of reforming preoccupations. The text was created to instruct parish priests in administering pastoral care; however, its rambling nature makes it difficult to follow in comparison to contemporary texts by Robert Grosseteste and Stephen Langton. Therefore, the *Gemma* had a limited readership and thus represents an unsuccessful experimental prototype which was created as part of the evolution of pastoral literature.

Jocelyn Wogan–Browne presents a fascinating consideration of the perceived dangers of reading pastoral literature, the notion that such texts generated independence from religious instruction rather than supplementing spiritual guidance. She uses Angier of St Frideswide as her case–study to illustrate the apparent relationship between author and reader.

The transmission and circulation of texts during the thirteenth century is discussed in light of the research undertaken by Ralph Hanna on Lambeth Palace Library MS 487. After a brief physical description of the manuscript, Hanna proceeds to analyse possible source material. He ascertains that the variations in scribal language and page formation descend from two individual exemplars and proposes that a narrative of the book's production can be inferred from its layout. From his discussion of MS 487 it is clear that book production was less centralised and organised than scholars had previously thought.

Joseph Goering, when considering the anonymous *Speculum Iuniorum*, views the extensive text as a unique amalgamation of the latest teachings of the schools and the practical literature of pastoral care. He proposes that this text provides scholars with an annotated guide to the sources, authorities and arguments that were important during the period of its construction.

The widespread appeal of Edmund of Abingdon's *Speculum religiosorum* frames Cate Gunn's discussion on the circulation of various

versions of the same text. She argues that variations are not necessarily a degeneration of the original but provide evidence for the processes of dissemination. She compares this text to the later *Speculum ecclesie* and notes that the treatment of catechetical material, the explanations of terminology, the division of the hours to meditate on the life of Christ and the tone of the two texts are particularly different. The changes that are evident provide a microcosm for the development of pastoral literature and highlight the notion that texts created for spiritual guidance underwent a process of continual adaptation to suit new and expanding vernacular audiences.

The vernacular version of Edmund of Abingdon's *Speculum religiosorum* has received little scholarly attention; however, Nicholas Watson seeks to remedy this deficit. He proposes that the text reveals an insight into the development of insular vernacular religious thought and highlights the importance of early thirteenth-century pastoral material to later medieval writers and readers. The translated version of this text catered to a broader and more inclusive readership than its Latin counterpart and thus the intended audience help to explain the text's translation history.

The use of fear to coerce medieval audiences into adhering to Christian living and refraining from sin forms the basis for Robert Hasenfratz's analysis of Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*. This text sought to remind both priests and the laity of their responsibilities; however, this approach only encouraged behaviour generated by fear, rather than true faith. Unlike its source material, the *Manuel des Péchés*, this text does not present a balance between fear and the value of loving God, but uses fear of hell as an effective remedial therapy. Therefore, instead of creating an independent reader capable of resisting sin through love, this text created a fearful introspection by means of penitential instruction.

The prophecy of denunciation provided an important resource for reform, especially within Thomas Gascoigne's *Liber Veritatum*. Mishtooni Bose illustrates the extent to which both orthodox and heterodox texts rely on the art of prophecy. She proposes that Gascoigne's text is part of the established ecclesiastical tradition as it presents prophecy based on scripture and not mysticism. Gascoigne successfully criticises the decay of pastoral care using a prophetic voice to channel his thoughts whilst employing the rhetoric and language of scripture to elicit reform. Bose aptly describes him as the 'self-appointed prophet of doom for the church of his day'; however, his ideology was not isolated from the ecclesiastical establishments that he criticised.

Catherine Innes–Parker considers the influence of the Middle English adaptation of Bonaventure’s *Lignum Vitae* on the devotional climate of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. She compares the contents of the Latin and vernacular versions of the text and highlights the perceived differences in intended audience. Whereas the Latin text built upon previous knowledge, the vernacular versions expanded the gospels, omitted technical vocabulary and explained familiar terms to provide simple instruction for beginners.

The production of vernacular devotional material played a pivotal role in the programme of pastoral care for women readers. C. Annette Grisé explores the limited range of material created for women, whether to guide religious living, to explain spiritual topics or to provide devotional exercises and the way in which these texts circulated in a system of sharing and teaching. She focuses upon the compilations and miscellanies owned and shared by nuns and their influence upon the few extant examples of nuns recording devotional experiences. The texts that were written by women for female readers did not seek to replace the pastoral care provided by priests or male authors but to create inspirational female role models and to encourage women to perform an active role in their devotion. Therefore, writing enabled women to undertake a form of teaching based upon their own example, although the texts they were able to produce were extremely limited.

Alexandra Barratt considers the continuum between reading, prayer and meditation which influenced the types of texts prescribed for women and those that were explicitly forbidden. She argues that compositions for women sought to supplement legislative texts and notes that the majority had a narrow focus or were written on a particular topic. These texts sought to supplement legislative texts rather than to replace them. There seems to be no consensus regarding the texts religious women should read; however, the material should be affective and edifying rather than intellectual, and translation from the Bible was excluded.

As a collection this volume provides a useful consideration of pastoral care during the Anglo–Saxon and medieval periods. For scholars interested in the dissemination or reception of religious literature, in Latin or the vernacular, this volume is particularly beneficial. It encourages scholars to return to working with manuscript sources and to be unafraid of challenging the received authority of earlier scholars. All of the contributions within the collection highlight the importance of returning to original sources in order to ask new questions and to facilitate further research.

Anna Gottschall

Christopher W. Brooks. *Law, Politics and Society in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. 456. £65.00

Drawing on sources as wide and as various as Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), and the *Tragedy of Gorboduc* (1565), 'the first blank-verse tragedy in English' (57), to the sententiae covering the ceiling of Sir Nicholas Bacon's library, Brooks delivers an ambitious and impressive study. *Law, Politics and Society in Early Modern England* operates along two axes: the linear chronology from the late middle ages to the civil war, and the hierarchical structure from the monarch at the pinnacle down to the 'politics of the parish'. Within this framework he brings together three disciplines often treated in isolation: legal, political and social history. At the heart of his discussion is the debate over the nature and origin of the law, whether human or divine and its relation to the monarch. While this is clearly the nexus between the contexts of law, politics and society, Brooks's research also encompasses the individual, the family, the household, servants and gentry as well as the high politics at Westminster.

The last two decades or so have seen a revival of interest in legal history, as the excellent research of Martin Ingram and Laura Gowing can demonstrate. Both investigate the highly litigious character of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in terms of the proliferation of law literature and the huge numbers of litigants filling church and common law courts. This in turn necessitates, as Brooks himself proclaims in his introduction, 'a fuller examination of the place of law in early modern society' (1). Historical work in this field has addressed the separate jurisdictions and juridical powers of the ecclesiastical or church courts and the common law courts; the variety of cases brought before the courts and the wide cross-section of society participating in law. Slander and the notion of credit have in the recent past been popular objects of attention. Other historians, such as Wilfred Prest and Paul Raffield, have chosen to focus on lawyers and their institutions, namely the Inns of Court and the Universities that trained them. While Brooks includes much of this in his own work, he makes some major departures from the work that has gone before. Whereas social historians, for example, have tended to look at legal records, individual cases, or specific crimes and criminals in order to uncover cultural truths, they are in effect working from the outside in. Brooks, as it were, works from the inside out. He begins with a succinct summary of the history of the law and then takes as his real starting point England's break with Rome and the monarchical debates that accompanied it. Brooks draws on the work

of Ernst Kantorowicz and the notion of the two separate bodies of the king, also discussed by contemporaries such as Edmund Plowden and Sir John Fortescue. Quoting Fortescue's *De laudibus legume Angliae* composed in the early 1470s, Brooks highlights the belief that the king did not have the power to change the law:

Just as the head of the body physical is unable to change its nerves...so a king who is the head of the body politic is unable to change the laws of that body. (26)

The concept of a king as subject to the law is known to have angered James VI and I; but subjects become slaves when a king is above the law. The absolute power of the king is modified, even nullified, if by 'king' we understand the 'king in parliament'. Brooks delineates the contradicting views over the best form of government: monarchy, aristocracy or democracy. James Whitelocke, Sir Edward Coke and John Calvin all 'maintained the essentially Aristotelian notion of mixed monarchy that had underlain the "monarchical republic" of Queen Elizabeth' (142). Nathaniel Rogers, on the other hand, regarded democracy as the worst form of government, believing the best government was based on divine law.

Despite the ongoing polemic regarding *absoluta potestas*, Brooks points out that

although seventeenth-century law students were assiduous note-takers, the surviving evidence suggests that scores of lectures were given without the speaker ever raising the history of the common law or its relationship with the church or the crown. (155)

He avoids the trap of falling into erroneous tidying and sweeping generalisation, boldly engaging with the contradictions in his findings, entitling the final sub-section of Chapter 6 'Mixed messages?'

Throughout the period, it was 'a commonplace that religion and law were the two columns that supported the commonwealth' (211). Brooks illustrates just how intimately related these two domains were; however, he warns us not to read too much into the proliferation of law books in the vernacular coinciding with translations of the Bible into English. Rather he directs attention to the similarities between institutions and practitioners: 'Lawyers wrote religious "meditations" and many had close connections with individual members of the clergy, mentioning them in their wills, or even undertaking the task of editing some of their

sermons' (209). He also emphasises, as has not been done before, that the first morning of the meetings of the courts began with a sermon. While it is easier, Brooks argues, 'to capture the nuances of religious as opposed to legal, political thought', owing to the number of sermons in print compared to charges, it is nonetheless 'no easier to interpret the impact of sermons' (211–12). It is perhaps a surprise to note that 'there is little direct evidence of attempts to control sermons', and literary critics of this genre will be quick to agree with Brooks's assertion that 'the sophistication of the political ideas expressed in sermons is sometimes striking' (212). Brooks persuasively establishes the complementary aspects of law and religion, citing William Leigh, who in 1613 'even managed to draw a fairly plausible parallel between preaching and pleading' (213–34). We are later reminded, however, in his refutation of Christopher Hill's and Lawrence Stone's views of the family, 'that it is difficult to measure how far religious ideas, most often expressed in sermons, corresponded to life as lived in real families. Much the same may be said of legal practices and ideas' (383).

Law, Politics and Society in Early Modern England is a book of two halves, the first half dealing with the 'high politics at Westminster', the second 'the provincial "politics of the parish", a gap 'more readily bridged through legal materials than almost any other kind of source' (241). Unsurprisingly, the contributions of influential and familiar figures such as Sir Edward Coke feature prominently but Brooks's source material ranges from seminal cases and commonplace books to practices such as the circulation of legal manuscripts and the regular reading aloud of *Magna Carta* in parishes. Most refreshing is the approach that utilises political and social history not as a backdrop, but as an integrated and integral element in any discussion of the law. Furthermore, Brooks illustrates that 'the law' seems 'to offer a tantalising opportunity to transcend the divide between political and social history' (10); consequently this book is a critical marker in the dominating interdisciplinary trends of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Sonia Suman

Magnus Ankarsjö. *William Blake and Religion: A New Critical View.* Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2009. Pp. 140. £33.50.

Traditional Christianity, William Blake believed, had been utterly corrupted by the tyrannies of state religion. Held in thrall to forces of

economic injustice and political oppression, it imposed false and damaging constraints on sexual and artistic expression, promoting forms of humility and subservience which were in actuality directly opposed to the true spiritual life. Blake's art is in sustained revolt against these distortions, attempting to recover the purer redemption obscured by orthodox Christian belief through a visionary recasting of its scriptural message. The prophetic books he produced from 1789 forge a distinctive and complex mythology, biblical in inspiration, and deeply hostile to religious and political authority. To describe this as a 'recasting' is perhaps to limit unduly its subversiveness: whether Blake's attacks on dogmatic Christianity were so comprehensive as to be heretical is a source of continued debate.

It is a debate increasingly informed by awareness of the religious contexts of Blake's own life—no longer do we hold to a picture of Blake as an isolated genius—and especially of the radical protestant fringe groups active in London during this period. These engaged in varieties of antinomianism (the denial of all authority other than that of the spirit) and enthusiasm (a belief in divine inspiration, of a predominantly visionary kind); they were also deeply involved in the prophetic millenarianism current in the culture of the 1790s. Biographical detail on this period in Blake's life remains sketchy, and, until recently, the only proven connection with any such group has been his attendance at the founding conference, in 1789, of a church inspired by the mystical writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1699–1772). The discovery made in 2004 by two Blake scholars, Keri Davies and Marsha Keith Schuchard, of the association of Blake's mother with the Moravian Church has opened up new avenues for enquiry. Catherine Blake, it seems, had been a member of the 'Congregation of the Lamb', a London Moravian group, along with her first husband. Although she left the congregation after his death in 1751, and it is hard to establish how far Moravian influences persisted into her second marriage with Blake's father, this piece of evidence raises some intriguing possibilities for better understanding Blake's own spiritual vision. In particular, the Moravian emphasis on sexual experience as an essential element of divine revelation may have some bearing on Blake's growing disenchantment with Swedenborgianism in the 1790s; part of Blake's frustration centred on Swedenborg's more dualistic turn of thought about the body and spirituality. It is feasible Blake's conviction of the mystical potential of sexual union bears the mark of his mother's Moravian experiences, especially given that her membership of the 'Congregation of the Lamb' coincided with a turbulent period in the history of the London Moravians, during which exploration of this dimension to Moravian

belief was given particular importance. Parts of the community engaged in worship of the genitals and performed acts of ‘conjugal love’ in front of elders.

Davies and Schuchard’s discovery of the Moravian connection is not only the starting point for Magnus Ankarsjö’s study of the religious vision of Blake’s poetry, but also its point of constant return: testifying to the repetitiveness of this book is the fact that an account of the discovery, along with the observation that it refutes E.P. Thompson’s claim of a connection between Blake and another radical group, the Muggletonians, is provided on no less than six occasions in the first forty–six pages. If this indicates a struggle to get the argument started, another of the book’s chronic returns provides a clue as to why this is so. Robert Rix’s 2007 study *William Blake and the Cultures of Radical Christianity* attracts almost as many references as Davies, and several more than Schuchard, which is understandable, for it—a good deal more competently, it must be said—covers much of the same ground. Ankarsjö’s attempt to distinguish his consideration of Blake’s religion from that of Rix involves him in a number of departures from the latter’s conclusions; one cannot help feeling, however, that these are more an effort to justify his own project than instances of real disagreement, especially given that the terms of dissent are often hazy. One representative example: Rix, Ankarsjö observes, ‘somewhat oddly singles out *Poetical Sketches* as the prominent example of Moravian influence in Blake’s work’ (43). We are not told why Ankarsjö thinks this odd, or whether the oddness pertains to the singling out of *Poetical Sketches*, or to the possibility of Moravian influence in this collection—does he believe Rix is wrong to discern such influence? It may only be a stylistic tic, but the qualification (‘somewhat’), also enlisted elsewhere in Ankarsjö’s dealings with Rix, is just as confusing: is this akin to saying that Rix is half–right? I would wager that, rather than expressing a necessary reservation, it betrays faltering purpose.

‘Blake never adhered to any particular creed or way of thinking but his own’ (31). This is an insight from which much of the rest of the book diverges, as its author, keen to press the ‘newness’ of his critical claim, forces Blake’s poetry into ever–firmer affiliation. By its close, Ankarsjö has decided ‘that there is substance enough to call him a Moravian’ (139). Surely his first judgement was the correct one: Blake’s eclecticism resists confinement; he had a remarkable capacity for drawing on disparate sources while never being subsumed by them. And if the possibility of Moravian influence is worth investigating, it remains just that—a possibility. Valuable new evidence is being garnered from archives about the religion of Blake’s family, but there is still scant

information about their practice during Blake's youth; what has been discovered so far relates to an earlier period. There is as yet no means of substantiating Ankarsjö's claim that 'Blake is of a Moravian family' (6), that 'Blake was not raised a Muggletonian—he was a Moravian' (8). Moravianism itself was prone to be fluid, having episcopal status but standing awkwardly between dissent and conformity to the Church of England; often, as in the case of Blake's mother, it was a temporary abode rather than a lifelong spiritual home for those on the radical protestant fringes. Antinomian groupings in general were rarely discrete, and the attachments of their members given to be highly mobile and unstable. It is for this reason that many of Blake's most important recent critics, such as John Beer and Jon Mee, have preferred to describe his affinity with a more general tendency to 'enthusiasm' rather than any one antinomian tradition. I can see no good reason for doubting the justness of their assessment.

Matters, as ever with Blake, remain obscure, and a critical approach which cherishes transparency—the preferred terms are 'obvious', 'evidently', 'clearly', 'definitely', 'little doubt'—serves him badly. Those seeking an introduction to Blake's thought on religion would better off consulting Robert Ryan's essay in *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (2003); those who require more detail can turn to Rix's survey. Jon Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (1992) remains indispensable.

Martin Dubois

John Williams. *Wordsworth Translated: A Case Study in the Reception of British Romantic Poetry in Germany 1804–1914*. London: Continuum, 2009. Pp. 165. £65.00.

'It is the complex, frequently contradictory relationship between nationalism encapsulated in language, and the translator's task, that lies at the heart of this study' (74). The chapter from which this statement is taken, lying appropriately at the heart of Williams's book, provides a welcome theoretical grounding to the scrupulously researched political and cultural circumstances into which Wordsworth was appropriated by nineteenth-century Germany. This fifth chapter engages with the fundamental process of 'translation' and its indissoluble links with 'interpretation' (74), and by drawing on Dryden's theories of translation, which 'became widely known through the eighteenth century' in Germany, Williams brings together the theoretical and political

implications of translation. In Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* for instance Williams asks whether 'an English Virgil [is] being created to serve the ends of England?' (79) This is, *mutatis mutandis*, the main question being asked in Williams's case study.

Williams brings in Goethe, who as Williams points out denied Wordsworth the status of 'world-literature', for more contemporaneous translation theory: in 1813, Goethe wrote that there are essentially two options for the translator: to bring the author in question to the reader in 'such a way that we can look on him as ours' (79), or allow the reader to 'go across to what is foreign and adapt ourselves to its conditions' (79). The second half of this useful and engaging chapter deals with three specific instances of translation/interpretation by Friedrich Jacobsen, Ferdinand Freiligrath and Marie Gothein. Here Williams gets down to the inherent difficulties of translating meaning across two different sets of grammatical rules. Quoting Christopher J. Hall, Williams is keen to bring home the point that 'languages rarely express the *same* meanings in the same ways' (77). The theoretical bases that Williams succinctly summarises in the first half of the chapter are brought to bear in detail and with precision when dealing with these three specific examples of translation in action. Jacobsen, in his *Briefe an eine deutsche Edelfrau*, is shown to take a third way contrary to Goethe's aforementioned dichotomy: 'far from being the only German writer and anthologist of English poetry to present the reader with the poem in its original language', Jacobsen also provides a German prose translation at the foot of the page, rendering the 'alien' English into 'a very accurate, but wholly Germanized, account of the original' (87). Williams suggests that Jacobsen is appropriating Wordsworth for his vision of a burgeoning German Nation, distilling the Protestant Christian message from Wordsworth's verse and recreating his sentiments as German prose serving the 'universal German Nation' (87).

Ferdinand Freiligrath appears to recreate the poetry in all its 'otherness' by retaining the iambic pentameter line. Despite this, the demands of German syntax create a necessary appropriation of Wordsworth's lines: German word order makes the first eight lines of 'Yew Trees' turn into nine in Freiligrath's translation. As Williams says of this poem: 'I am tempted to think that a reading of these lines will have stirred a sufficiently powerful sense of metempsychosis in Freiligrath to spur him on' (88).

This is linked to Alexander Tytler's *Essay on the Principle of Translation* of 1797 which states that 'The genius of the Translator should be akin to that of the original author', and this poem, as far as Freiligrath is concerned, certainly contains the right sort of patriotic

message for Germany. But in trying to recreate both content and form, Freiligrath necessarily corrupts the text. Williams suggests that both Jacobsen and Freiligrath are ultimately working against that idea that translation is a ‘broadening or liberalizing activity’ (89). Instead, they seek to make as much of the subject text their own as possible. On the subject of Freiligrath, the only issue I can take with Williams in this otherwise meticulously researched study is his comment that, having arrived in England in 1851, Freiligrath ‘finally managed to meet Wordsworth’, who died in 1850 (111). Williams cites Bömig’s 1906 *William Wordsworth im Urteile seiner Zeit*, and not having this work to hand I cannot check whether it is his error or Williams’s. If Bömig’s, however, Williams should have something to say about it.

Marie Gothein’s verse translation of the famous passage from *The Prelude* on the French Revolution provides the most illuminating example of translation that attempts to remain as faithful as possible to the form of the work, and in the process distorting the sentiment of the original. Williams shows how Gothein, in her desire to maintain the iambic line, misses crucial qualifications present in Wordsworth: where Wordsworth registers a subtle apprehensiveness in the line ‘When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights’, Gothein has simply ‘Wo die Vernunft auf ihre Rechte pochend...’, ‘reason insisted on her rights’ (91). Likewise, there is no implied mismatch in the lines ‘work/Which then was going forward in her name’: as Williams puts it, ‘Wordsworth’s Revolution has been hijacked by a spurious Enchantress called Reason’ (91). Gothein, in 1893, takes his enthusiasm at face value and excises the doubt to produce a text appropriate for the Germany into which she put her anthology.

This central chapter therefore goes a long way to clarifying Williams’s project here, in showing how and why texts are reproduced in translation for specific cultural and political situations. This is indeed the concern of most of the case study, the political and cultural environment in which these German Anglophiles were working. The bulk of the work these translators do is at bottom a work of metempsychosis, and this is drawn out consistently in this case study by the gradual realisation that the same poems return time and again in the anthologies: ‘The Solitary Reaper’, ‘We Are Seven’ and ‘She dwelt among th’untrodden ways’ for instance. ‘The Solitary Reaper’ is perhaps the most important short poem here, as it is a poem of inclusiveness taking as its subject a member of the common people, registering the importance of national identity built on folk culture. Of course, there is a shared folk heritage that automatically binds Germany and England together, a fact that didn’t escape the notice of Friedrich Wilhelm Zachariä in his 1756 poem

Tageszeiten when he wrote ‘Deutshes sächsiches Blut schlägt in Britanniens Barden’ (‘German Saxon blood flows in the veins of free British bards’). Williams is good at bringing out the change in German nationalist feeling from 1770 onwards that prompts these anthologists to find in Wordsworth the poems, like ‘The Solitary Reaper’, that lament the passing of a shared identity, and poems such as ‘We Are Seven’ that ‘place a particular importance on childhood’ (23) and that explores the development of man ‘as both an individual and a social animal subject to the forces of history’ (22–23). It is this tension between inclusiveness and exclusiveness, the cosmopolitan world-view and nationalistic impulse that runs throughout this case study.

The final chapter provides an interesting insight into how the German Wordsworth canon changed post-1848 and in the run up to the World War I. The idealism that Gothein took from Wordsworth is replaced by a focus on his turn to conservatism. Felix Güttler’s *Wordsworth’s Politische Entwicklung* of 1914 traces his poetic career, finally lighting on a mature poet who condemns the rashness of those newly in power, and who is shown to be ‘a royalist subject and fervent admirer of his fatherland and its institutions’ (139). Wordsworth is pressed into the service of the politically conservative: rather than idealising the common labourer he is now ‘anxious about an alienated working class, who...could be expected to seek the fall of the State’ (140).

Williams ends on the exhortation to us all to stay alert to the ubiquity of translation in all its forms, and how it is inherently bound up with issues of the history of reception, cultural exchange and literary criticism in general. Rather than thinking of any English poet as fixedly English, whose persona will not easily ‘translate’, we need to be aware that literary identity is more often than not subject to these extra-textual forces. It comes down, as is shown at the beginning of this study, to the questioning of the Enlightenment view that language ‘was no more than a vehicle for expressing ideas that were already in existence’: interpretation of a text is dependent on the medium through which that text is being interpreted (3).

Anthony Williams

Gabriel Josipovici. *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010. Pp. 224. £18.99 / \$28.00.

Gabriel Josipovici's *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* became the subject of a surprising controversy in British media last summer. A critic in the *Guardian* cited a few sentences from the book which criticised a number of contemporary British authors and portrayed Josipovici as a polemical crank. Josipovici replied by writing a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* in which he said newspapers and broadcasters had invited him to comment on the row and he in turn had informed them he would do so only if he could bypass all the critics he had apparently led astray and focus on the argument of the book. The invitations were promptly cancelled, presumably because the press was more interested in the personalities behind the controversy than in the words that started it.

Critics have continued their criticisms and counter-criticisms, but most of them can be disregarded here. One of the accusations, however, has to be noted—namely that Josipovici has written a book about high-brow modernism for a large middle-brow audience. This might be true, because a book on the fundamental aims of modernist art is not going to appeal to the common reader and those who think themselves experts in the field are used to a style of writing that exhibits an air of sophistication and rhetorical poise lacking in Josipovici's book. Modernist art is elitist and difficult, but it should not be snobbish, and here Josipovici is in a difficult position.

Another controversial figure and populariser of aesthetic literary criticism, Harold Bloom, once remarked that he does not think modernist and postmodernist literature actually exist as two distinct genres. In Bloom's view, modernism and postmodernism remain in the post-enlightenment tradition and both recycle the themes of western post-Miltonic literature. Although Bloom's view as it pertains to modernism is perhaps too provocative for most tastes, his reasoning is tempting to those who feel the lack of a distinctive break in form between modernism and postmodernism. Potential readers of Josipovici's book might hope to discover an explanation as to why this break never seemed to happen and ultimately it is of little importance that the explanation is in middle-brow language, because this is a topic that has to be spelled out as clearly as possible.

Josipovici examines Greek tragedy, *Don Quixote*, Wordsworth's poetry, philosophy from Kierkegaard to Wittgenstein, disenchantment, Picasso's and Duchamp's art, and refers to various other modernist

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artists, artworks and phenomena. Music receives less attention, but this is understandable due to the technical nature of the subject. In literature, he wants to make a distinction between serious writers and ready-made critical favourites. He thinks making writers into political figureheads too often undermines criticism based on artistic merits. For example, icons of the *Nouveau Roman* or gay and feminist writing are done a disservice if their aesthetic achievements are overshadowed by hollow praise. Josipovici's bitterness toward the guardians of these icons is very clear from the start.

One of Josipovici's best examples is his reading of Mallarmé's 'Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui'. Mallarmé acts as an example of a difficult author in Josipovici's argument and although the analysis is not very detailed and relies heavily on Malcolm Bowie's *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult* (1978), it nevertheless allows the reader to approach the semantic breaking point for which Mallarmé's modernist language is famous. Josipovici reminds the reader that Mallarmé said meaning in his poetry is created through short-cuts, hypothetically and that it self-consciously avoids narrative. The moral of the story is that if the reader demands solid meaning, a description of an ideal or actual object, or distances himself from meaning by maintaining that Mallarmé is merely engaged in wordplay, he has not understood what poetry and especially modernist poetry is all about.

An obvious question presents itself: What happened to modernism when it was divided into two camps, one of which sought to overcome the limits of artistic expression while the other served the demands of the markets? Josipovici's argument is harsh on fashionable modernist authors who have withdrawn into free-floating textual wordplay. An unarticulated meaning which is necessary to motivate even non-narrative texts rests, in part, on the failure of communication, but it is not the business of modernist artworks to serve communication by means of realism or idealism either. Josipovici often refers to Francis Bacon to illustrate the delicate balance between representation and abstraction in modern art, art which must try to breathe life into the artefact that has lost touch with the transcendental source of what was once called Spirit. This is of course impossible after disenchantment, but an attempt to do so at least creates the opportunity to remember what aesthetic experience has lost after the moderns lost their gods and geniuses.

The early work of Alain Robbe-Grillet is, according to Josipovici, a good example of the break that eventually created two kinds of modernisms. *Les Gommages*, *Le Voyeur*, *La Jalousie* and *Dans le labyrinthe* are for Josipovici masterpieces where the mad narrator searches passionately for an unarticulated truth in the spirit of Greek

tragedy and anecdotal narration is discarded. Later works by Robbe-Grillet still shun traditional narrative and retain their amusing madness, but the driving force of truth as the ultimate goal of the narrator and the reader has vanished. According to Josipovici, Robbe-Grillet noticed that he was free to write whatever he pleased and proceeded to do exactly that in his later novels. As a result, his novels became irrelevant, lacking in tension, and readers were left bored in an infinite textual space.

Authentically modern works of art are always marginal because they are difficult and trying for the reader. Writers like Mallarmé write on the edge of comprehensibility and anyone familiar with Beckett's work knows how ridiculous the idea of a theatrical performance with traditional plot twists and characters must have seemed to him. Josipovici's explanation of the motives of writers such as Mallarmé and Beckett is that for them conventionality destroys the possibility of artistic meaning. Recycling artistic conventions in this sense is not much different from mere wordplay where meaning is largely irrelevant. Both create closed semantic domains where meaning is either rigidly fixed or lacking in depth. Modernist writing, in contrast, looks for that which refuses convention and closure and refuses to become art.

Josipovici makes Kafka's hunger artist the patron saint of modernists. The hunger artist does not fast because he wants his audience to admire him, but because he has not found anything suitable for his consumption. Following Barthes, one can say that a modernist is an artist who knows what kind of art is no longer possible. For Kafka and Beckett writing was a means of survival in a world where conventional ways of writing had become meaningless, and their burden was to suffer through arduous searches for new modes of expression.

It seems that Josipovici thinks (and how could he not) that literary criticism is misguided if it first defines literature based on political motives and then awards writers who write in order to fit their art to match those definitions. Josipovici's experience with the British press is proof enough for the aesthetic worthlessness of this politicised approach to literature. But the more serious repercussions are felt in literature itself where literary and linguistic innovation is transformed into a mechanical and conventional exercise. There is a distinctly Benjaminian dread of mechanical and meaningless art behind Josipovici's spleen. And it is this feeling of dread that should distinguish the elitists from the snobs.

What Ever Happened to Modernism? presents a version of a tradition in which artists who feel they have no tradition can feel at home. In the larger historical framework, the rootlessness they feel stems from industrialisation and the French Revolution, but in the end the source of Josipovici's preferred modernism is the individual's desire to collate an

artwork endowed with Spirit from the shards left behind by the iconoclasts of the twentieth century. There is re-enchantment and then there is re-enchantment in the art of the disenchanted modern world and Josipovici's book demonstrates this with surprising clarity.

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