

BOOK REVIEWS

THEORY OF THE LYRIC. By Jonathan Culler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. 391 p.

In the fairly generic 'Introduction' to his book, Culler confesses that his purpose is not to satisfy linguistic or psychological queries; rather, his interest is vested in discerning "the issues" and difference of parameters that "hypercanonical lyrics" offer in the Western tradition (6). The book is divided into seven Chapters. Each chapter is further subdivided into several subsections, of which I intend to highlight certain remarkable but strictly particular aspects of Culler's observation. In the first chapter entitled 'An Inductive Approach,' he condenses the four most significant aspects of lyric poetry: first, the reading of a lyric invites a phenomenal form of the voice to take shape, a voice objectified, rendered hypostatic; second, the need for the lyric to be itself rather than the representation of an event, thus assuring authenticity; third, the ritualistic or incantatory aspect in a lyric grants it life and lastly, the brief but intermittent blasts of the hyperbolic in lyrics elevates the esteem of the lyric (34,35,37). In 'Lyric as Genre,' Culler reads the Pindaric Ode and concludes that the antiquated 'I' in Classical poetry gives rise to "possibilities of individual singularity," and this must have driven the less antiquated poets of the modern world to furnish an individual existence from communitarian values, which must have been accompanied with enunciations of beings that "deviate from a social norm, rather than an allusion to the inner states" (54). In other words, the inner is expressed not by an expression of the inner, but by a deferment of the outer, provoking the so-called audience to ponder on the implications of such deferment. This, I believe, must have been capable of drawing the audience from appreciating a lyric beyond its recitation with a musical instrument like the lyre, creating an etymological distance with critical objectives. When Sappho and Longinus are brought into the equation, Culler rightly asserts that the "energy" of the sublime lyric or the lyrical sublime proffers "a poetry of passion," "embodying a turn where the suffering becomes a source of poetic power" (64). This is a remarkable observation. The 'turn' in the Sublime, or the 'turn' as the sublime was profoundly studied by Neil Hertz in his *The End of the Line*, and Prof. Culler also recorded his remarks on the making of what he called the 'Hertzian Sublime'.¹ In 'Theories of the Lyric,' he studies extensively the philosophy and the aesthetics of Hegel, making minute observations regarding the fact that Hegel was suggesting "not liberation *from* feeling so much as liberation *in* feeling" (94, original emphasis). He demonstrates three indispensable qualities of Hegelian criticism – Subjectivity, where both purification of the individual self and his scrupulous universalization of available cognition play a part; language, which is best understood when Culler quotes Hegel: a poet "deficient in original genius tries to find in the sphere of linguistic skill and rhetorical effects a substitute for what he lacks in real forcefulness and effectiveness of invention and achievement" (98). This is true for the majority of lyrical and epical poetry published –

Shakespeare's "Never, never, never, never, never" in *King Lear* has more sublime impetus than say, any ornamental verse of Thomson's. The third quality, the prototype, induces the philosophical poet to essentialize the logic over the example, while the theoretical, or the more literary poet might prefer the inverse (98). Each is suited to its own purpose, the purpose being decided by the poet for his audience, but once again, not necessarily the inverse. In his study of Emily Dickinson's "The Heart asks Pleasure – first," Culler contradicts Herrnstein Smith's understanding of the lyric as "a fictional representation of a possible real-world speech act" (112, quoted and paraphrased by the author), and I quote his criticism of the poem at some length:

What is the real world speech act being represented here? It is scarcely obvious – we would have to invent one and trying to imagine a speaker would be a diversion from appreciating the poem. What we have is a poetic reflection on the propensities of the human heart, with a real kicker in the tail, when "Inquisitor" and "privilege" give us a judgement not easy to attribute either to a speaker or to the heart. (112)

This is furthered in his Criticism of Robert Frost's 'Spring Pools' where he says that Smith's criticism "implicitly denies three dimensions of lyric: the effects of presentness of lyric utterance, the materiality of lyric language that makes itself felt as something other than signs of a character and plot, and the rich texture of intertextual relations that relates it to other poems" (119). The Fourth chapter, 'Rhyme and Repetition' does not continue the fine discourse in the third; it charts Jakobson's poetic theory (132, 133) and Nietzschean observations of rhythm (134). One peculiarly excellent point I find mentioned in this chapter is that the human response to rhythmical order often is never sourced in the regularity of human physiology but in the overall lack of it (138), thus creating rhythm as an exteriority internalized for appreciation. The superimposed had rather be regulative and repetitive – an idea I find thought provoking.

Moving on, in his 'Lyric Address,' I shall record a remarkable study of Keats's much neglected monologue, "This Living Hand" by Culler, something that, to the best of my scholarship has only been matched by John Barnard and Walter J. Bate, and something that I have come to define in the neologism I call the *Sensevil*:

While we don't actually wish to sacrifice ourselves, readers do temporarily sacrifice their sense of reality in allowing the poem to create for them a temporality in which the hand lives and is held toward them. (197)

The chain of enlightening comments continue with a critical study of Blake's 'Spring' in his "Poetical Sketches," maintaining that the apostrophe, self-aware of its fragile effect on the real content of the poem, creates its own mass with the archival and antiquated emphasis built within its very invocation. An apostrophe therefore is the archival inscription embedded in the poem without being forthcoming itself, creating ritualistic authenticity (216). This does not mean that the antiquated is real and the true purpose of a poem is to invoke, by some means, the atavistic; Culler argues that the poem is vested in the "iterative and iterable performance" in the "special "now" of lyric articulation" (226). With 'Lyric Structures,' we near the end of the book; here, Culler asserts that there is a praxis between the claims of experience and the claims of writing (283). Ideally, I think it means a natural transition from the felt to the 'inscribable' feeling, carrying with itself the weight of worth and value. It is the vicarious imagination recorded on paper. Furthermore, "Lyrics have a variety of strategies for framing fictional elements – fictional speakers and represented events – and bringing them into the lyric present, which is a present of enunciation" (294). Finally, in 'Lyric and Society,' Culler sums up the social function of poetry with a moderate degree of Elioticising: "Lyric is not mimesis and can work, in very different historical circumstances, to generate a community that it addresses, to assert social values, to

participate in a restructuring of the sensuous and affective domain of life” (330). Generalizing further as he should, and with remarkable acuity, he writes that “Poems offer memorable formulations, which can inform your thought or your life, but they are not thought to offer an argument, which may sometimes enable them to get under the guard of a wary intelligence, but may also lead to selective recall and repetition and evasion of what might be important (344).

Theory of the Lyric is abundant in incremental brilliance of poetic criticism. I would call them reflections, limned with sparkling insights. It is not difficult to believe that faculties and scholars would benefit from this book alike, anywhere and everywhere across our globe.

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Notes

¹ See ‘The Hertzian Sublime’ by Jonathan Culler, published in *MLN*, Vol. 120 No. 5, 2005, pp. 969-85. 10.1353/mln.2006.0007.

FICTIONAL CHARACTERS, REAL PROBLEMS: THE SEARCH FOR ETHICAL CONTENT IN LITERATURE. By Garry L. Hagberg (Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. 336 p.

Fictional Characters, Real Problems: The Search for Ethical Content in Literature addresses an emergent—or better yet, reemergent—interest in the complicated relationship between ethics and literature. Its purpose is not to make ethical judgements about the value of a particular literary work or author; rather, according to editor Garry L. Hagberg, its intent is “to investigate a number of literary and philosophical cases—conceptually telling ones—that bring to light both the intricacy and the interwoven character of ethical-aesthetic relations and how they manifest themselves in literary art” (Hagberg, 1). The collection of essays is divided into six parts, whose themes are both distinct and overlying. Each part comprises three individually-authored chapters and tackles a prominent debate about ethical-aesthetic relations in literature. Humanities scholars in the fields of philosophy, literature, language and culture weigh in on these debates.

Following Hagberg’s introduction, Part I: Ways of Reading for Ethical Content examines how philosophers talk about literature. In “Sophie, Antigone, Elizabeth—Rethinking Ethics by Reading Literature,” Nora Hämäläinen distinguishes three ways moral philosophers use narrative literature in their works. One of these approaches, *thin use*, refers to “literature as example” (15). We see this in Greenspan, who brings up the calamitous decision in Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice* to propose a moral dilemma, without dwelling on the ancillary complexities of the entire novel. The second term, *thick use*, refers to an approach “that attempts to enter into dialogue with the literary work—with all its complexities” (20). Nussbaum’s comprehensive study of Sophocles’ *Antigone* qualifies as *thick use*. Finally, in *open-ended use*, “the act of translation from literature to philosophy, from representation to argument, from experience to explanation” (23) remains in some sense abstract and irresolute. Diamond’s method of decentralizing the primacy of animal rights in J. M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* exemplifies *open-ended use*. Hämäläinen constructs a helpful methodology

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for thinking about how literature and moral philosophy intersect and studies three approaches taken by Anglo-American ethicists in recent decades.

In the next chapter, Eileen John focuses her attention on the fictional character. John contends that we often come to care for characters, not quite as real people, but as representational activities of language. Fictional characters “serve as occasions for more, and more intense, representational activities than do most real people. But they are also manifestations of an ordinary activity, of putting into words how people and their lives are found to be” (46). As readers, we care about representations of character, no matter how realistic, because we are invested in the ‘live possibilities’ they evoke.

Robert B. Pierce analyzes one of the world’s most well-known literary personages, the titular character of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Hamlet, according to Pierce, is not the hero of Shakespeare’s celebrated tragedy because of his conduct. He is the hero because he “articulates with remarkable intelligence and acuity of feeling what we all encounter” (48): those experiences that make us ask why we act and interrogate the circumstances that drive our behavior.

Part II: Matters of Character delves further into the issues of character, both in how we think about literary characters, and in turn, the philosophy of ethical character. Inquiry into a literary character’s morality inherently shares in some of the questions moral philosophers pose, as Gary L. Hagberg shows in his chapter by reconsidering Aristotle’s notions of ethical character. Hagberg sees Shakespeare’s *Othello* as an opportunity to discuss ethical character because the play’s “diabolical genius” (61), Iago, presents the problem of distinguishing moral appearance from moral reality.

In “Character, Social Information, the Challenge of Psychology,” Noël Carroll questions the long-held assumption that fictional characters provide readers with “social information” (83) about the real world. Carroll brings the social psychology of situationalism to the discussion of fictional character—a perspective that casts doubt on reading fictional characters as individuals with distinctive traits and instead sees them as parts of a larger literary situation. Carroll examines the Western *The Big Country* and concludes, however, that some social information can still be derived from characters, despite the situationalist perspective. In the subsequent chapter, Valerie Wainwright follows a situationalist framework, taking the character-versus-situation debate to Jane Austen’s *Emma*. Positioning herself against critics who read Emma’s character as defective, Wainwright examines “situational variables” rather than “putative character variables” (103) to unpack the behavior of Austen’s tetchy protagonist.

When pushed far enough, matters of character overlap with matters of subjectivity and subject position; those ideas are investigated in Part III: Literature, Subjectivity and Poetic Vision.

Richard Eldridge, for example, questions whether literary works can present *truth* in any sense of the word. He surveys a number of Fregean and neo-Fregean perspectives in contrast to Hegel’s *Lectures in Fine Art*, which highlight a literary author’s *poetische Auffassung der Welt*, or poetic grasp of the world. Eldridge concludes, “debates about whether literary art embodies significant truth-content in a form of presentation that is in any way reliable are likely to persist” (137).

Informed by Aristotle and Heidegger, J. Jeremy Wisniewski claims that the aim of moral philosophy is not to argue for a particular position, nor is it about developing a universal heuristic for right and wrong. Moral philosophy demands a kind of seeing or perception that cannot be condensed to strictly “propositional content” (139). Working through examples from J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello*, Wisniewski explores how “literature allows us to think our way into contexts that are wholly unique—that emphasize particularity—and that can educate the moral imagination” (146). In the following chapter, “Heidegger, Breton, and *Nadja* at the

Limits of Language,” Jonathon Strauss shows how a work of philosophy can give meaning to a work of literature, putting *Being and Time* in dialogue with André Breton’s surrealist novel *Nadja*. Eschewing historicists that read Breton in light of Hegel, Bergson or Freud, Strauss demonstrates how Heidegger is better suited for bringing out Breton’s theory of subjectivity.

Part IV: Language, Dialogical Identity and Self-Understanding discusses the dialogic processes through which the ethical content of literature is communicated. Anthony Gash considers an established view of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, in which the audience gleans the hero’s isolated, inner consciousness, a “subjectivity of their hearts and minds and the privacy of their own character,” as Hegel once argued (177). Gash proposes instead that the language of the play is essentially dialogic, and thus, relational. Hamlet’s speech (including the infamous sixth soliloquy) is always projected outwardly, “to those who surround him, the dead person whom he mourns, and the audience in the theater” (178). Those dialogic interactions form the basis of Gash’s study of ethical-aesthetic relations in the work.

Next, Richard Dawson turns to the pages of Jane Austen’s *Persuasion* for a productive discussion about Gadamer’s hermeneutic philosophy of self-understanding and its relationship to conversation. Reading *Persuasion* as a study of “the transformative power of conversation” (194), Dawson defends Austen from critics who argue the author hardly treated matters of philosophy in her literature.

In “Quartet: Wallace’s Wittgenstein, Moran’s Amis,” Stephen Mulhall harmonizes distinct strands—the trace of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* in David Foster Wallace, and Richard Moran’s reading of Kingsley Amis—to examine how they articulate “language’s capacity to be carried by the irreducible variety of individual voices and their unpredictable, improvised interactions and contradictions...from starting-points which always have a prior history to end-points that are always open to continuation” (216). In the end, Mulhall questions whether Wallace’s works are the trappings of a shallow postmodernism or testaments to the writer’s ultimate intimacy with the reader.

Narrative literature often details a progression of events, and thus, the following section, Part V: Patterns and Possibilities of Moral Growth, seeks to study representations of ethical content that elapse over the course of narrative time. Alan Goldman returns to Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* to discuss its depiction of moral maturity and judgment. “Austen is aware,” he argues, “of all the distinct capacities required for fully mature judgment: empathy, decentrated discerning perception, self-knowledge and recognition of fallibility, and the will to act on one’s reflectively endorsed judgments made in exercising these other capacities” (240). The growth of a literary character, whether major or minor, allows readers an opportunity for self-reflection.

In the succeeding chapter, “The Breadth of Moral Character,” Daniel Brudney responds to Barbara Herman’s reading of Kant. Substantiating his position with readings from Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and E.M. Forster’s *Howards End*, Brudney argues that “there is more to moral description than can be fitted into a Kantian’s philosophy” (256). Such novels, according to Brudney, present moral dilemmas, whose philosophical implications point to the limits of Kantian and neo-Kantian conceptions of reason and virtue.

Mitchell S. Green’s “Learning To Be Good (or Bad) in (or Through) Literature,” argues that literary texts “can change us morally” (283). But one of his skeptical insights is that if literature has the capacity to improve, it has an equal capacity to corrupt. An empathic response to literature can be both “good and bad,” depending on who the reader is empathizing with. Green’s position is trot out in (or *through*) literary classics as well as popular works of genre fiction from Dashiell Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon* to Joyce Carol Oates’ *Zombie*.

The final section, Part VI: Historical Genealogies of Moral-Aesthetic Concepts traces the development of the ethical-aesthetic dialectic across three broadly-conceived historical periods: ancient, modern, and recent. Humberto Brito returns to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, a text that has been foundational to debates about the delicate relationship between ethics and art since the beginning of Western philosophy. Martin Donougho provides the early modern example by examining the intellectual lineage of Shaftesbury, which he demonstrates descends from fifteenth-century Italian courtly traditions and continues through Kant, romanticism, and modernism. According to Donougho, “Aesthetic distinction” (325) is contingent on historical formations in which value and status were entangled. In “Fate, Philology, and Freud,” Jules Brody discusses the etymology of words such as Fate, or counterparts like Necessity and Destiny. Stemming from Freud’s understanding, Brody shows that Fate was an ethical paradigm for the ancients: “in inventing his deities, whatever their specific properties, man is saying that there are certain things he cannot have and certain things he may not do” (246). Brody’s study thus concludes that “the ordering principle of human behavior is the acceptance and internalization of Necessity” (366). Together, these last three chapters point to some historical contingencies at play in the ethical-aesthetic distinction.

Fictional Characters, Real Problems is a valuable survey of perspectives for scholars in the humanities and social sciences, for philosophies of mind and language, or ethics, for literary scholars in English or comparative studies. This collection is of special interest to certain author-area studies, with its healthy samplings of Shakespeare, Jane Austen, and J. M. Coetzee. As a comparatist, I remain curious about ethical-aesthetic relations in the innumerable literatures of the world, and to observe whether, and the degree to which, those relations emerge cross-culturally. *Fictional Characters, Real Problems* provides a worthwhile methodology for thinking about the relationship between moral philosophy and a literary work, inviting us to take account of what make-believe literature can do for the comportment of real people.

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Commencing his detailed introduction which covers the overall rationale and thematic components of this collection of 18 essays, Garry L. Hagberg conducts a frightening thought experiment: consider, if you will, what would be lost if all of literature were to suddenly disappear. To borrow from Jane Austen, who figures prominently in some of the essays, a truth we might anticipate would be universally acknowledged is that, as Hagberg puts it, “a great deal more—indeed profoundly more—than mere opportunities for entertainment or diversion” (1) would be lost. Certainly, as Hagberg asserts, the magnitude and nature of what would be lost could not be briefly stated, and “the fact that any such attempt to encapsulate the content of the loss would of necessity fail is itself a measure of the depth and complexity of literature” (1). Hagberg capitalizes on the vacuum thus created by calling attention to the existence of a single “set of aspects” which, he says, constitutes “literature’s ethical dimension” (1)—the realm explored by the 18 chapter contributors (including Hagberg himself).

Of course, as the thought experiment confirms, literature has a great many dimensions, but there is one other dimension which stands out as being of particular relevance here. In the

exceedingly complex annals of literary history, as is well documented, proponents of literature's ethical or moral dimension have often been deeply troubled by adherents of its apparently polar opposite: the aesthetic dimension (and vice-versa). Moreover, these dimensions have been known to turn out, on closer inspection, to be not merely in opposition but inextricably intertwined, operating along the lines of the age-old classical-romantic dialectic which is itself indicative of the close interrelation of philosophy and literature historically. It is not surprising, then, to discover that the aesthetic dimension is the next to materialize from the vacuum (albeit less directly), creating an ethical-aesthetic basis for Hagberg's differentiation of the collection from preceding debates in the critical field.

"Increasingly in recent years," Hagberg writes, "there have been helpful and illuminating discussions of the relation between literature and moral value, and a number of these have put forward general positions, often labeled [sic] with 'isms'—moralism (of strong, moderate, or weak varieties), autonomism, aestheticism (from a somewhat earlier era), etc.—concluding that ethical elements can, or cannot, be factored into aesthetic evaluation, that ethical values always, sometimes, or never trump aesthetic ones, that a work can be at one and the same time an aesthetic triumph and yet warrant moral condemnation, and so forth" (1). Hagberg's response is to proceed instead "with a different kind of philosophical aspiration: the project is to investigate a number of literary and philosophical cases—conceptually telling ones—that bring to light both the intricacy and the interwoven character of ethical-aesthetic relations and how they manifest themselves in literary art" (1). Ultimately, the "ocular" (1) approach and aim of the collection is to help provide, Hagberg says, "a vision or way of seeing ethical considerations as they are already inextricably intertwined, or indissolubly united with, multiple and diverse forms of literary expression... this collection investigates five fundamental aspects of the ethical content of literature and literary experience, put together so as to afford a complex and finely particularized vision of ethical content" (2).

As promising as all of this sounds, however, quite how Hagberg arrives at and justifies his key set of "five fundamental aspects" is unclear, beyond his early reference to a single "set of aspects" in the context of the vacuum created by the thought experiment. The collection consists of six parts (containing three essays each), which are entitled respectively: Ways of Reading for Ethical Content; Matters of Character; Literature, Subjectivity, and Poetic Vision; Language, Dialogical Identity, and Self-Understanding; Patterns and Possibilities of Moral Growth; and Historical Genealogies of Moral-Aesthetic Concepts. Parts I to V are evidently the aspects he refers to, yet only within the summary of Part IV is there actual, explicit reference to this being an "aspect of the ethical content of literature" (6/7). Moreover, as such titles indicate, each of the five aspects is in fact multiple or multifaceted, thematically encompassing three essays which also contain particular aspects on their own individual terms. Potentially, this is a recipe for conceptual surfeit and confusion—for instance, there are also references to five elements in Valerie Wainwright's essay entitled "Emma's Extravagance: Jane Austen and the Character-Situation Debate" in Part II (the Five-Factor Model of personality); in Jeremy Wisniewski's essay entitled "The Moral Relevance of Literature and the Limits of Argument: Lessons from Heidegger, Aristotle, and Coetzee" in Part III (Aristotle's five modes of virtue in Book Z of *Nicomachean Ethics*: *phronesis*, *techné*, *sophia*, *epistémé* and *nous*); and in Stephen Mulhall's essay entitled "Quartet: Wallace's Wittgenstein, Moran's Amis" in Part IV (the five sections of David Foster Wallace's "Octet"). While all of the essays, methodically and meticulously summarized by Hagberg upfront, duly explore and contribute to elucidation of ethical content, the lack of any intensely focused, thorough and cohesive discussion of the specific origins and nature of the core five aspects in

play, individually and collectively, severely hampers the prospect of the emergence of a holistic vision, despite Hagberg's valid and repeated attempts at fostering a sense of interrelatedness and unity by flagging factors linking back to issues in previous parts.

That said, the wide-ranging but closely investigative essays are generally excellent, covering many interesting topics (including truth and truthfulness, character development and moral growth, and selfhood and identity) as well as raising compelling questions (such as why do we care about fictional characters *as people* and does literature make us morally deeper, better persons?) that will undoubtedly appeal to philosophy and literature scholars alike. Indeed, this is a book which should perhaps not be judged by its cover and title, given that the interdisciplinary spirit of the collection might not be as readily evident to potential readers, at first sight, as it is to the editor and publisher. With such works as George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, for instance, having appeared for decades on English Literature curricula at secondary school level internationally, it can hardly be suggested or claimed at advanced higher education level that there is anything particularly novel or special per se about considering fictional characters in terms of real-world problems (as important and rewarding as such considerations can be), or about searching for ethical content in literature which, in any case, need not extend very far or take very long, let alone require a sizeable search party. It is only after the predominantly philosophical rather than merely literary credentials of the contributors have been gleaned from the opening notes (including leading lights such as Richard Eldridge and Stephen Mulhall), and the distinctly philosophical inclination of the essays delineated by Hagberg in the introduction is appreciated, that the title and collection really take on the intended interdisciplinary charge and slant.

While the hallmark and appeal of the collection is therefore its strong emphasis on philosophical concerns in relation to literature, potential readers should be forewarned, however, that the presiding critical focus on the ethical dimension, primarily, means there are inherent limitations in regard to selection and treatment (including of the aesthetic dimension) of literary case studies. It is not that the range of literary examples is too small—in fact, there are plenty of excellent choices (including Jane Austen, André Breton, Charlotte Brontë, Joyce Carol Oates, J. M. Coetzee, E. M. Forster and Shakespeare), as with the philosophical sources (including Aristotle, Hegel, Heidegger, Kant, Plato, Socrates and Wittgenstein). Nor is it the case that the intertwining of the ethical and aesthetic is fundamentally underappreciated—quite the reverse. Hagberg is at pains in the introduction to convey that "the binding of aesthetics to ethics does not join at a single seam" (2) and that for "a subject as complex and intricate as ethics, then put together with a concept as multifarious and wide-ranging as literature (and where we on investigation discover the two to be not put together, but indeed already intertwined down to the level of the finest detail), the danger of desensitizing oversimplification is everywhere" (11). Nevertheless, if there is a major criticism to be levelled at this collection, it is that an understandable lop-sidedness symptomatic of the critical leaning towards the ethical dimension can, at times, greatly undermine itself.

A glaring deficiency, for instance, is that the generous range of literary examples scrutinized does not include, or feature reference to, some of the key figures of nineteenth-century Aestheticism and/or Decadence whose theories and works do intersect with the key ethical concerns of the collection. Austen, Coetzee and Shakespeare are recurring presences—all well and good—but when Hagberg reports, for instance, that in Alan Goldman's essay entitled "Moral Development in *Pride and Prejudice*" in Part V, we see that literary depiction "is not only that: it is also an occasion for moral self-reflection" (8), or when Hagberg reflects that "certain literary works show us how to be good (or bad)" and "literature, as [Mitchell S.] Green argues [in "Learning

To Be Good (or Bad) in (or Through) Literature” in Part V], can contribute to moral development or degeneracy in its readers” (9), it is surely a critical imbalance to neglect to mention or engage with the likes of Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater, among others, from those key periods. Astonishingly, such figures are also absent from Part VI: Historical Genealogies of Moral-Aesthetic Concepts, where the Victorian/Aestheticism and Decadence periods are not even explicitly mentioned concerning the lineage traced in Martin Donougho’s essay entitled “Shaftesbury as Virtuoso: Or, the Birth of Aesthetics Out of a Spirit of Civility” which runs from “fifteenth-century Italian court society through various figures and cultural fields up to Kant, Romanticism, and into modernism” (10). To his credit, Hagberg does state in the introduction that the collection differs markedly from while also being meant in part as a contribution to preceding debates [including regarding “aestheticism (from a somewhat earlier era)”), and is far from exhaustive. Still, to adapt a famous quotation from *The Importance of Being Earnest* to the absence of Pater and Wilde: “To lose one... may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.”

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WITTGENSTEIN ON AESTHETIC UNDERSTANDING. By Garry L. Hagberg (Ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 394 p.

This book collects twelve essays concerning Wittgenstein’s treatment of aesthetic understanding, broadly construed. Essays discussing very specific issues coexist alongside contributions targeting general aspects of Wittgenstein’s view of aesthetic understanding and experience.

The book is divided into four parts. The first concerns the aesthetic dimension of Wittgenstein’s work, while the remaining three parts deal with literature, music, and the connection between the experience of art and that of persons.

While most contributions are authored by philosophers, the book also includes essays written by English literature scholars. This interdisciplinary approach is welcome, and it shows that Wittgenstein’s writings are able to foster a cooperation between philosophers and other scholars in the humanities – a cooperation that is often missing.

An example of this is provided by the essay by Robert Chodat, who attempts to apply a Wittgensteinian anti-essentialist argument to the concept of narrative. In doing this, Chodat rekindles a proposal that was already advanced with regard to art in general, namely that no rigorous definition of it is possible, and that in fact any attempt to formulate one may be seriously misleading.

When it comes to the scope of Wittgenstein’s writings that are discussed, the focus is mainly on the philosopher’s late production. An exception is represented by the opening essay, in which William Day reconstructs the Wittgensteinian notion of grammar from the *Tractatus* until his late writings, arguing that aesthetic understanding is paradigmatic of the way philosophical grammar works.

Various essays deal with music: in addition to the three essays contained in Part III, devoted to musical understanding, Garry L. Hagberg’s chapter also discusses music extensively. This is

unsurprising, giving Wittgenstein’s own artistic sensibility, as well as the wealth of remarks he devoted to this art form. More surprising is perhaps the fact that literature is also extensively discussed, with three essays clearly devoted to it – one of them being Chodat’s, discussed above. The remaining two essays are examples of how Wittgenstein’s philosophy may inform the interpretation of particular works.

Shlomy Mualem shows how one can make sense of the narrative structure of Borges’s “Emma Zunz” through the notion of aspect change, as well as by appealing to some of Wittgenstein’s considerations in his *Lecture on Ethics*. Walter Jost proposes a reading of Elizabeth Bishop’s poem “Crusoe in England” through Wittgenstein’s philosophy.

Hagberg’s essay is an attempt to clarify the relation between musical meaning and cultural context. Hagberg argues that, according to Wittgenstein, musical understanding is always dependent on connections we draw between the musical structures we hear and various elements that are only apparently extraneous to such structures, especially spoken language. The implications of this are wide-ranging. First, music is a culturally embedded phenomenon, and our capacity to understand music from an extraneous cultural context depends crucially on whether we manage to develop a “period ear” that renders us sensitive to the connections that endow music with its meaning. Second, any attempted generalization from musical structures to musical meaning is bound to fail, as musical meaning only exists in a network of highly specific cultural practices. Third, music and language share an essential feature: they only make sense because they are embedded in such a network.

The insistence on the relation between music and language is certainly a central topic in Wittgenstein’s reflections on music, and it is not surprising to find it again in Gary Kemp’s essay contained in Part III. The chapter makes an interesting point about the privacy of aesthetic experience. Kemp points out that Wittgenstein at times describes aesthetic experience as being too rich to be expressed in language. On the basis of this, Kemp argues against the interpretation of Wittgenstein according to which the private simply does not exist. While we cannot refer directly to it, the inexpressible character of our aesthetic experience constitutes the background on the basis of which our language games evolve over time, or are substituted by new ones: it is exactly the attempt to capture what is left out of the intersubjectively expressible that prompts us to gradually change the way we use words.

Alessandra Brusadin offers an account of Wittgenstein’s anti-psychologism about aesthetic understanding. According to Wittgenstein, understanding is mastering a skill. Our ability to produce aesthetic judgments is also described on that basis – aesthetic judgment cannot simply be the evidence of an internal state. These claims are then put to the service of an elucidation of Wittgenstein’s claim that psychology cannot explain aesthetic understanding.

While they belong to the book’s part devoted to musical understanding, the main interest in Kemp’s and Brusadin’s essays lies in the claims they make about Wittgenstein’s views about broader aspects of his philosophy.

Beth Savickey’s essay also makes a general and fascinating point regarding Wittgenstein’s late works. The pervasive invitations to imagine hypothetical scenarios found in these writings are best construed as improvisations, requiring the active participation and interaction of the reader. This interaction, she argues, is similar to our interaction with works of art.

In one of the most original essays in the collection, Bernhard Rhie argues that Wittgenstein holds a unique position in the philosophy of the face. Against a pervasive Cartesian prejudice, according to which an expressive face is simply an outer sign of an inner state, Wittgenstein can be interpreted as arguing that the face is in fact the place where expression is constituted, rather

than simply manifested. Among other things, this means that, in looking at an expressive face, we do not make inferences as to the emotional state of its bearer, but rather directly see that she is in such a state.

While it is understandably found in the musical section of the collection, Eran Guter's essay also concerns Wittgenstein's remarks concerning the understanding of other persons. According to Guter's reconstruction, Wittgenstein construes musical understanding as a form of *Menscherkenntnis*, in that it is rooted in the mastery of language games related to human expression. This essay is one of the richest in the collection, and it is also remarkable because of its discussion of how Wittgenstein's musical thought was influenced by figures such as Schopenhauer, Spengler, and Schenker.

David Goldblatt's essay is the only one in the collection devoted to the aesthetics of film. Goldblatt uses Wittgensteinian tools in order to shed light on what he calls "inside/outside" movies: when a star is acting, we often do not simply see the character she is portraying, but also the star herself.

Constantine Sandis closes the collection with an essay that is devoted to the general problem of aesthetic understanding. Particularly, Sandis observes that the Wittgensteinian model of understanding is inimical to the view that the understanding of art could be reduced to an understanding of its content, that is, of what the artwork says, or the ideas it conveys. Much like in the case of Wittgenstein's infamous talking lion, understanding requires more than mere decoding of a message, as it presupposes a capacity to understand why such a message was produced in the first place. The essay then connects this issue to the current debate on empathy. In this case too, Sandis argues, the understanding of others has been incorrectly described as an access to the other person's mental content. The Wittgensteinian alternative to this view is an account of empathy that is grounded in shared, public practices.

With regard to the possible didactic uses of the book, most of the essays deal with questions that are likely to be too specific to be suitable for introductory purposes, although some chapters could certainly find a place in a course on Wittgenstein's thought on aesthetics and the arts.

Overall, this book represents a valuable contribution to the study of Wittgenstein's thought on aesthetic understanding, and more broadly, on the relation between art and human life.

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ADORNO AND EXISTENCE. By Peter E. Gordon. Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2016. 256 p.

Peter Gordon confesses in the Preface to his study of Theodor Adorno's writings on the philosophies of existence that he hesitated for some years before embarking on the task for fear that he adored the Frankfurt theorist a little too much. Can one write a truly critical appraisal of a thinker for whom one candidly feels something like unalloyed affection? What emerges from the text that follows is a triumphant refutation of these courteous anxieties. He has produced a sensitively argued, minutely nuanced outline of Adorno's career-long confrontations with a current

of thought that had reached a near-hegemony in intellectual affairs in the era before structuralism.

The term 'existentialism' has become all but synonymous in the history of philosophy with its late Parisian variant in the hands of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, but its lineage extends back to the work of Martin Heidegger, of whom they were assiduous readers, itself born of a productive *démarche* from the phenomenology of his quondam teacher Edmund Husserl. At the source of the river, however, lie the mid-nineteenth century writings of Søren Kierkegaard, Christian theologian and existentialist, on whom Adorno wrote his second *Habilitation* thesis at Frankfurt University, published in 1933 as his first book, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*. Adorno's encounter with Kierkegaard would undergo a fascinating transformation in the thirty years that elapsed between this work and a 1963 essay that he dedicated to the supervisor of his thesis, the theologian Paul Tillich, entitled 'Kierkegaard Once Again.' Gordon faithfully reflects this circumferential route in the structure of his book, which begins with the Kierkegaard thesis and ends with a chapter dedicated to Adorno's reassessment of the metaphysical implications of the Danish thinker's work, in the artificially bright light of a world darkened by the legacy of Auschwitz.

Adorno inherited from his friend and mentor Walter Benjamin the image of Kierkegaard's philosophy as a reflection of the microcosmic world of the nineteenth-century bourgeois interior. If western philosophy had begun its career in the streets and the marketplace with Socrates calling out provocations to the passers-by, it had gradually become a matter of the individual apprehension of external reality or, as Kant termed it, transcendental apperception. In Kierkegaard, the reflective self inhabits a tightly bordered space, compact enough to become the paradigm of authentic inwardness, as contrasted with the outside world of appearances, the traffic of the crowd and the babble of commerce. No item of furniture in the apartment is more pertinent than the fashionable mirror that was designed to be attached to a window frame, so that it reflected the external scene into the living-room. Its incorporation of the street as one of the furnishing elements of the interior thereby simultaneously reflected the assimilation of the external world into the constitutive subjectivity of the sovereign bourgeois individual who underlies all philosophical idealism.

In his maturity, Adorno would mitigate this early critique of Kierkegaardian interiority by suggesting that its delimitation of exterior reality at least implied a negative verdict on the falsity of that world, against which it retained its own hope of something better. There would be no such mitigation of the fundamental ontology of Heidegger, whose body of work would become for Adorno undoubtedly the most troublesome spectre of twentieth-century thought. In Heidegger's existential construction of contingent being, given the name of *Dasein*, Adorno saw nothing other than a relapse into sheer abstract idealism, but this time against the minatory background of Europe's subjection to fascism, with which Heidegger had effected an all too telling professional and ideological accommodation. Existential ontology is replete for Adorno with instrumental contradictions of its own claims. While it officially sought a reconciliation of *Dasein* with its world, it effectively abandoned it to the hegemony of the pre-existent, foreclosing on any possibility for change. Such historicity as there is in ontology is the petrified accretion of what has already supervened, and in hypostatizing the overarching notion of Being against the mass of mere beings, it betrays a corresponding disinclination to interest itself in the contingencies of concrete existence. Although Heidegger was hardly the first to bemoan the lack of attunement between the mental concepts of philosophy and the material world, the latter is never permitted to intrude, in its phenomenality or its temporality, into the individual's consciousness of itself. Instead it appears as though 'thrown' into its present world (but by what?), and can achieve a

sense of its own authenticity by subjectively assuming the death that will result in its own nullity, the same relative numerical nullity in which Schopenhauer's chapter on the vanity of existence had conceived it. The Heideggerian injunction to be what one already is, simultaneously a fatuous tautology and the sinister mandate of a racial totalitarianism in which everybody had his or her assigned role to play, is the *ne plus ultra* of existential ontology. Gordon incidentally juxtaposes this injunction with Nietzsche's 'Become who you are!' from *The Gay Science* (1882), which Adorno does not cite in this context, oddly conflating Nietzsche's vision of the human potential for self-fashioning with Heidegger's elevation of static self-identity.

By the 1950s, existentialism had achieved, chiefly as a result of its co-option in the novels and plays of Sartre, the status of an intellectual vogue. The notion that individuals were each of them alone in a fundamentally meaningless world, free to arrive at their own decisions in response to it, had effectively given the philosophy its turn to intellectual respectability by subtracting both the Kierkegaardian theology and, subsequently, the Heideggerian sterile conformism from it. In 1950, on the threshold of a parallel career in fiction, the Anglo-Irish Oxford philosopher Iris Murdoch already noted that existentialism was nothing other than the latest species of romantic liberalism, an antithesis to canonical Marxism despite Sartre's own successive attempts to bring faint seasonings of first Stalinism and then Maoism to it. Much as certain maxims of Nietzsche's had been absorbed into popular consciousness – Live dangerously! Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger! – so existential concepts such as the freedom to realise oneself, through moments of crucial decision and testing oneself to the limits, ossified into popular cliché everywhere, from the pulpits of the established Church to the canons of advertising. This latter trend inspired the hardest polemical edge of Adorno's 1964 assault on existentialism, *The Jargon of Authenticity*.

Gordon strikes an uncertain note when he characterises the *Jargon* as 'satirical' in its discursive tone. It is ruthlessly sardonic, particularly with regard to the blather of those poets who participated in the general strategic amnesia of official culture in postwar West Germany, by celebrating the enduring essence of humanity, only a few years after European civilisation had descended to the level of shovelling heaps of emaciated corpses into open mass graves, but that does not amount to satire. Indeed, the familiar point that 'laughter is often the best weapon against authoritarian sobriety,' as Gordon asserts, 'a Nietzschean truism that gains renewed truth when one recalls Charlie Chaplin's mockery of Hitler,' is very much not Adorno's view. In the chapter on the culture industry in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Adorno and Horkheimer write that capitalist entertainment 'makes laughter the instrument of the fraud practised on happiness ... In the false society, laughter is a disease that has attacked happiness and is drawing it into its worthless totality'. Adorno had already argued this in a letter to Benjamin of March 1936, in which he stated that '[t]he laughter of a cinema audience is anything but salutary and revolutionary; it is full of the worst bourgeois sadism instead.' And he specifically addresses both Brecht's play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* and Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* in the 1962 essay, 'Commitment': 'The true horror of fascism is conjured away; fascism is no longer the product of the concentration of social power but rather an accident ... the opponent must be scaled down, and that promotes false politics ... Contrary to all dialectics, the ridiculousness to which Ui is consigned takes the teeth out of fascism'. When a lone Jewish girl in Chaplin's film is shown belabouring Nazi stormtroopers with a saucepan, as though historic savagery could be stymied by clowning, 'the film loses its satirical force and becomes offensive.'

In the same section of *Adorno and Existence*, 'Satire and Secularisation,' the misapprehension of Adorno's stance on satire leads Gordon to an oddly flat-footed response to the critique in the

Jargon of the appropriation of sacred language by existentialism. Having completed the expulsion of theistic concepts from philosophy that had its prelude in the scepticism of the European enlightenments, late existentialism then makes an attempt to reappropriate such categories on behalf of a thoroughly disillusioned but newly enthroned imperious subject. Because existentialism pronounces only a negative anathema on the spiritual realm, it fails to rescue the moment of dignity in the category of the other-worldly, precisely that which held out hope, in however illusory a fashion in the established religions, for the transformation of the present life. It somewhat misses the mark, then, to throw an ironic light, as Gordon does, on 'Adorno's own barely stated and persistent investment in the theistic categories he considered obsolete'. Not everything about the categories was to be considered obsolete, a facet of Adorno's thinking that would be sustained into the 'Meditations on Metaphysics' that conclude *Negative Dialectics* (1966). 'In condemning the [existentialist] jargon as a species of idolatry,' Gordon writes, 'Adorno appealed counterfactually to the holiness it betrayed.' For 'counterfactually,' however, we could read 'dialectically.' 'Unanswered in Adorno's polemic,' Gordon continues, 'was the question as to why even such a distant appeal to the sacred would retain any validity in a profane age,' a charge then efficiently refuted by the remainder of the same paragraph, which concludes with Adorno's answer. 'Previously, the unbearable transience of a false and unsatisfied life was counteracted by theology, which gave hope of an eternal life. This hope disappears in the praise of the transient as absolute.' Venerating the mundanity of everyday life in the same terms is what tinges existentialism's jargon with its note of blasphemy.

It is in the attempt, however, to find common ground between Adorno's negative dialectics and Heidegger's existential ontology, an enterprise not lacking for exponents in the past decade particularly, that Gordon tests the tensile cohesion of his own argument to its limit. In the section 'Heidegger's Critique of Reification,' he contends that Adorno acknowledges, despite himself, the truth moment in Heidegger's derogation of phenomenological positivism for seeing the subject-object relation as a simple non-negotiable dualism. Adorno's argument against Heidegger, however, is that he projects any reconciliation between the two back to its vanished origin in Being itself, thereby pulling the rug from any attempt in the present, or in any future world, to reconcile them. On Gordon's reading, Adorno's argument 'underscores the point that Heideggerian thinking cannot be summarily dismissed as outright falsehood.' If fundamental ontology invokes the hope for a reconciled state that would end the reification with which Dasein must live, a hope that it then sabotages and denies by fatefully shifting it back into the mists of primal existence, the pass is already long since sold, but Gordon tries to suggest that Adorno somehow cryptically awards Heidegger the credit for at least conceding that reification is undesirable. What Heidegger calls the 'forgetting of Being' (*Seinsvergessenheit*) is not the same thing at all as the epigram from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with which Gordon juxtaposes it – 'All reification is a forgetting.' What distinguishes them is precisely the temporality that is Heidegger's putative fundamental theme. Ontological forgetting is as old as evolution. The reification to which members of the administered society are subject derives from the historically developed methods of administration themselves, from the industrial revolution to the garbage of the culture industry. These, precisely, are what a reconciliation worthy of the name would need to confront, while Heidegger's 'dirge over the forgetfulness of being,' as Adorno puts it, 'is the sabotage of reconciliation.' Heidegger's philosophy is not a genuine attempt to envision a reconciliation, but rather the sanctimonious sigh of one closing the file on it.

Notwithstanding these burrs in its argument, *Adorno and Existence* is elegantly composed, in lucid and unalienating prose, which is by no means the gold standard in current writing on the

Frankfurt School. It will be an authoritative text in the continuing encounter between dialectical critical theory and those belated philosophies of existence that, following the decapitation of French existentialism in the postmodern age, continue to multiply like the Hydra's heads in a world tottering on the brink of yet another abyss.

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It seems to be a commonplace: Adorno's thinking is – more than anyone else's – essentially critical. Or in his own words: "Thought as such, before all particular contents, is an act of negation, of resistance to that which is forced upon it." Although this refers to Hegel's determination, the principle of thought is negativity, it can indeed be understood as a characterization of Adorno's own thought which – borrowing a metaphor from Hegel – appears to "infiltrate the opponent's stronghold and meet him on his own ground."

In his book *Adorno and Existence*, Peter E. Gordon focuses on one tradition of thought Adorno repeatedly criticized in his writings: "[e]xistentialism, the philosophy of existence, existential ontology," even though "these terms are not interchangeable". (2) But understanding this project as a depiction of ostensibly opposed thinking, along with the expatiating assessment of their correctness, would be misleading. Rather, the central ambition of this book is to unfold how Adorno develops his philosophical thought in immanent critique of Edmund Husserl, Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger. Gordon's aim is to show the "philosophical continuities" (31) of Adorno's work in critique of existentialist positions, how he moves through this critique "toward the thought of negative dialectics via a critical reading of phenomenology" (82) and how his "path toward materialism is developed via the internal and dialectical reading of prior idealist philosophy" (155). What could be more appropriate to Adorno's thought than this "via negativa" (XI) Gordon chooses?

Although existential philosophy plays a crucial role in this exposition, it is explicitly not Gordon's aim to give detailed accounts of its central arguments. Instead, bearing in mind that "Adorno was not the most careful of readers" (161), his "enduring, if dialectically mediated, allegiance to the philosophy of existence" (160) is intended to be elaborated. For this purpose, Gordon leads the reader in a very comprehensive but not trivializing way through Adorno's substantiation of his "own mental impulses," as he puts it in *Negative Dialectics*. It's one of Gordon's essential purposes to highlight the "task" Adorno felt "ever since he came to trust" those impulses, namely "[t]o use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity", taking into account both Husserl's phenomenology and Adorno's critique of it. Gordon defines Adorno's mode of immanent critique as "a form of redemptive criticism" which "strives for "salvation [Rettung]" of phenomenology's central ideas" and "seeks to discover the signposts in bourgeois philosophy that point toward its own overcoming". (80) Gordon is able to demonstrate in different such cases how – and in which respects – Adorno shared the underlying "need" of existentialist positions and how he aimed to rescue it in a mediated form of thought. For example, he shows the connection of Adorno's judgement, "Heidegger reaches the very borders of the dialectical insight into the non-identity in identity," with his conception of negative dialectics and how he developed the latter in conflict with Heidegger's

ontology. In addition to this discussion of the relation to Husserl and Heidegger in the *Negative Dialectics*, substantial landmarks of Gordon's way through the development of Adorno's thought are his *Metacritique of Epistemology*, the *Jargon of Authenticity* and the book on Kierkegaard, his 'Habilitationsschrift.' Discussing thus almost the complete work of Adorno, Gordon's stance, based on the perspective of his critique of existential philosophy, seems to allow an immanent reconstruction of substantial constitutive moments of Adorno's thought including the "primacy of the object" and his repeated reference to a thought from the standpoint of redemption. In the case of this conception of a "primacy of the object" an allegedly one-dimensional access of Adorno's thought through his immanent critique of existential philosophies reaches its limitations. To discuss this preponderance and the "disenchantment of the concept" Gordon has to reconstruct Adorno's understanding and critique of Hegel's philosophy, as well as referring to Adorno's letters to Walter Benjamin to illuminate the last aphorism of *Minima Moralia*. In line with this, Gordon's reconstruction is not as immanent as is the reconstructed critique is and how he portrays it. To be clear, this does *not* mean that Gordon's reconstruction is wrong; it's just not as coherent and consequential as it presumes. Besides, the reconstruction of Adorno's critique of Hegel is, despite its brevity, as precise and intellectually stimulating as the chapters on Heidegger and Kierkegaard. Gordon's "via negativa" does not lead not invariably through ontology; instead some detours are apparently necessary.

Despite this incoherence in the actualization of its negative principle, *Adorno and Existence* illuminates how Adorno's thought enmeshes itself in existential philosophy in an attempt to cut its Gordian knot – a metaphor he uses for dialectics – by searching for its *raison d'être* and thinking it through. As already noted, existential philosophy is not the only object of critique, but it is indeed the one – next to Hegel's thought – that occupies Adorno's repeated attention. Gordon's book shows connections in Adorno's work that one would have difficulty finding without the perspective from which he apprehends it. Those constitute the basis for the speculative need that Gordon's book evokes. This formidable study should constitute only the beginning for the intensified involvement with Adorno's redeeming critique of existentialist philosophy to which it provides access.

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THE OPACITY OF NARRATIVE. By Peter Lamarque. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2014. 230 p.

Peter Lamarque is well known for his 1994 collaboration with Stein Haugom Olsen, in *Truth, Fiction and Literature*. Twenty years later, in 2014, his interest in literature is manifested through his profound knowledge of narratives and storytelling in *The Opacity of Narrative*—a collection of essays on some of the biggest and most recurring concerns in literary thought. Eight of these essays had been previously published in journals or other volumes, but they were reworked for the purpose of this book. Therefore, a small problem of redundancy ensues: some of its themes or subjects are recurring throughout the essays, ending up in some repetitions of the theoretical

framework, even though the essays have distinct objectives. However, the repetition of a few sets of arguments and chains of thought seems to have two concurring purposes: on the one hand, it grants autonomy to each essay, allowing them to be read individually, offering as much theoretical framework as required; on the other hand, this redundancy grants the book's overarching argument consistency. Moreover, this brings us to an interesting point that agrees with one of the book's main arguments as well: *The Opacity of Narrative* suggests two modalities of being read, a particular one, focused on the subject of one or more essays, and a general one, that aims at the book's main argument, as its subject is, in turn, the modalities of receiving and dealing with narratives.

The main purpose of *The Opacity of Narrative* is to point at narratives (and literature) as a social practice with some kinds of interactions that are agreed upon by its partakers—the same as with Wittgenstein's concept of game. Lamarque's concept of opacity is grounded upon the fact that narratives are always told from a certain point of view and, thus, the facts they report are somewhat filtered by the way they are told (the selection of details is reflected on the selection of language employed). In Lamarque's words, "Rather than supposing that narrative descriptions are a window through which an independently existing (fictional) world is observed (...) we must accept that there is no such transparent glass—only an opaque glass, painted, as it were, with figures seen not *through* it but *in it*" (2014: 3). In other words, narratives are opaque because their content is indistinguishable from its mode of presentation (be this textual description or scenic setting). This argument is very well explained when Lamarque analyses Charles Dickens' description of the Venerings in *Our Mutual Friend*, saying that "character descriptions, indissolubly tied to character identity, are seen to have a dual function: a characterising function and a connective or thematic function" (71). Therefore, besides describing a state of affairs in which something happens or someone shows up, narrative descriptions also work in a persuasive manner, as a means of connecting to its audience. This is deftly dealt with in chapter 8, "Thought, Opacity and the Values of Literature," where "Narrative voices" are considered to be "prominent, intrusive. The descriptions are not given, as it were, neutrally. They are deeply imbued with attitudes and values, with opacity, and are to be pondered and enjoyed in themselves not merely as vehicles for information" (159).

The argument for narrative opacity is, thus, consistent and easily agreed upon, as storytelling doesn't exist without this opacity Lamarque describes: it relies on a narrator's point of view and on his ability to reduce a certain situation to a communicable language. These descriptions are, as Nelson Goodman would call them, ways of worldmaking—built upon description dependent facts. Lamarque distinguishes the opacity of texts—that require intellectual understanding—from the transparency with which a photography presents its object. In this sense, this concept of opacity seems to stem from Charles Sanders Peirce's category of thirdhood, where a perceived sign depends of an intellectual interpretation on the behalf of the interpreter, while, in the case of photography, the perceived sign points directly at that which it refers to (being in a relation of secondhood). So, a transparent reading of a narrative would be one free of a narrator-dependent perspective and without formal artifices that obscure the world being presented—a hypothesis which is utterly impossible.

This collection of essays is substantiated by some Wittgensteinian principles, such as the notion of Literature as an institution to which readers relate in different ways, depending on their degree of investment. One of *The Opacity of Narrative's* purposes is to look at narratives, not as objects (books, texts, plots), but as the ways people relate to them, allowing for various ways to engage with narratives. It seems that a contradiction arises when Lamarque locates the concept of opacity, not on the means of communication used (even after arguing that narrative opacity relies on the

incapacity to distinguish between content from means of presentation), but on this engagement on the behalf of the interpreter.

An interpreter's engagement (whether they are a reader or an audience) in a narrative depends on various factors, the main one being the defence that "participants in the rule-governed practice of literature are defined not by social or political criteria—class, gender, age, reader preferences and so forth—but by conformity to the roles in the practice" (106), where these roles are related to each person's function in interacting with the narrative ("author-roles, work-roles and reader-roles," *ibidem*). There are as many ways of engagement with a narrative as there are interpretations, as they depend on the interpreter's expectations and on their way to deal with narratives. One example of engagement comes from understanding a statement through paraphrase or synonymy: it is natural to essay synonyms over a statement to try and understand it, but there are no perfect synonyms and the means of the narrative have to be altered to be fully understood. The author admits that "opacity can occur in (at least) two contexts: the non-substitutivity of identities and the non-transparency or intentionality of representation" (8). Lamarque brings up the case of Cleanth Brooks, a critic hailing from the *new criticism* wave who considered paraphrase to be a heresy when it is taken as the sole aim of criticism. However, it is clear that, to point at and to explain a poem, it is necessary to paraphrase it, but criticism shouldn't be reduced to paraphrase.

Another of Lamarque's concerns comes from the excess of engagement with which one can relate to a narrative, and it consists in the recurring practice of assimilating life to narratives. People start building a kind of narrative identity, as if they could see chapters in the ways of progress of their own lives, when that kind of categorization is neither empirical, nor logical. According to the author, "People often dramatise their lives (or parts of them) in the sense of adopting a persona or playing a role (...) Standardly, the distinction between actor and role is secure even if in principle they might merge. Viewing our lives as a drama in which we are the central character might be the nearest we get to a "life narrative"; yet it need not involve narrative at all" (63). Unlike what happens in narratives, life doesn't have a deliberately intentional framework: for instance, while in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* the constant references to car traffic and to the wrecked vehicle that comes up after a party might be a way to hint at the cause of Myrtle's death, in real life, details don't open up a way to more details with the teleological intent of predicting the future. This kind of identification of life with narratives might have come up from deconstructing some mechanisms related to the biographical style, where it is not uncommon to value progress and failure as narrative developments in the life of the subject of the biography, when, as a matter of fact, these events might have been simple incidents in that person's life. This has to do with the principle of functionality posited in chapter 4, "Literary Narratives and Real-Life Narratives," that "*It is always reasonable to ask of any detail in a literary work what literary or aesthetic function that detail is performing*" (72). Lamarque even goes to explain why such an identification with narratives is so common, through a thought theory, "there are likely to be some kinds of isomorphism between the structure of a literary work—or at least parts of a work—and the structure of thoughts that the work elicits and which generate the emotional responses" (143)—because of the fact that during narratives we have to process what is being told through the way it's being told, there are certainly cases of isomorphism between narrative form and thought content reaction.

There seems to be two kinds of narrative opacity being described in Lamarque's book, even though they are treated as one and the same. The first one depends on the identification between form and content in narrative. The other one depends on an interpreter's engagement with a narrative, adding information that's logically sequential to the understanding through substitution

for synonyms or paraphrase, which allow for modes of identification with characters or events. However, the author doesn't seem able to decide the root of his opacity theory: "Transparency and opacity in narrative are not intrinsic qualities of a text but ultimately rest on the interests brought to the text" (11-12).

This argument for a twofold view of opacity isn't disjointed from Lamarque's views on aesthetics too, as stated in chapter 9, "Aesthetics and Literature (A problematic relationship?)." It is in this chapter where the author's wit is most greatly displayed. Delving into Frank Kermode, Geoffrey Hartman and John Guillery's argument over the role of pleasure in constituting the canon (which can be read in *Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of Canon*), Lamarque remarks that this concept of aesthetics isn't grounded on taste-based value assessments, but through insightful characterisations of "how the work *appears*, what *impact* it has, what is *salient* in it, what merits aesthetic *attention*" (172). His inquiry reveals that what is aesthetic in the literary experience doesn't depend solely on merely textual properties, but also on the reader's engagement with the work, proposing a shift "from the picture of an author producing a *text*, communicating a *meaning* and inviting *understanding* to that of an author creating a *work*, engaging a *practice* and inviting *appreciation*" (177), concluding: "It is the latter that must underpin any coherent, non-reductive aesthetics of literature" (idem). It is through this engagement that aesthetic properties are revealed, such as the opacity Lamarque has been arguing about: it is neither a merely textual characteristic nor is it fully made-up by the intervener.

Although *The Opacity of Narrative* might be deemed a book on either Literary Theory or Philosophy of Literature, there are no prerequisites for its comprehension, but a basic understanding of what happens in a narrative situation to feel rewarded for reading this book. The point of the book is an aesthetic one: to posit that the way we feel or perceive the world we live in, or the narratives we know about, hold a strong influence on the way we communicate about such subjects and, for that, the inability to distinguish means of presentation from what is presented is not only a characteristic of narratives, but also of the way we experience the world. In times such as the ones we live in, where narratives give a factual framework to all sorts of incidents (be it historical events or news reports), Lamarque's distinctions and suspicions make for a very good reading. *The Opacity of Narrative* might be fundamental for people who are interested in the relationship between narratives and facts (or truths), biographies, history or journalism.

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It is very interesting to read this academic book on narratology in the context of the recent heightened currency given to 'story telling' in the corporate and marketing sectors of society. Anyone with a brand to market, a book to sell, an event to organize or a career as an influencer to launch is advised to tell a story about themselves and their life trajectory. This is how legends are made, and myths created.

The recent worldwide popular culture literary phenomenon, 'Game of Thrones,' caused a furore amongst its fans when the final season of the show disappointed them because of its rushed and superficial storylines. The characters whose individual arcs were developed with subtlety and sen-

sitivity in the books were forced by the scriptwriters to behave in ludicrously contradictory ways to rapidly resolve complicated plot issues. Millions of people signed a petition for the final season to be rewritten, showing their commitment to the narrative of the story and their sense of outrage at the callous violation of its integrity.

One of the characters in the books, and the show, Tyrion Lannister, overtly refers to narrative and story in a speech at the end in which he and his colleagues are deciding who will be the next ruler of the realm of Westeros. Brandon Stark is chosen - explicitly because of the 'importance of his story.' Having survived two assassination attempts, and the destruction of his home and family, and because in response to his physical immobilisation caused by injury he becomes a visionary, he is known as 'Bran The Broken.' As Harry Potter, another famous boy on a hero's journey, was 'The Boy Who Lived.'

Tyrion says: 'Nothing is greater than story. It is more powerful than gold... the person who holds the stories holds the memories of our people.' This is the brilliance of the title of this book: the 'opacity of narrative' refers to the way one cannot see 'through' a story, as one can see through a window, and you cannot see clearly, because the story is not transparent. Its elements are not interchangeable with the elements in other stories. A story is not just a vehicle conveying meaning: it has intrinsic meaning, in itself. It is coloured, it is emotive, it is smoky, it carries symbolic residue which partly obscures or adds glamour to what we are being shown.

The essence of story is the universalising of a character's specific life history and circumstances, humanizing it and opening it up so that many others can access its lessons of survival and the paths to fulfillment its protagonist creates. The narrator shows us, in what Lamarque evocatively terms a 'fine-grained' way, the relationships which connect characters to each other within the world and landscape of the story; the specificity of the story is not collapsed, blurred or lost in the process of its universalisation and projection into the imagination of the reader.

The cover of the book is an example of this: we see a young woman nursing a baby, under a tree, being watched by a shepherd boy with a cane. Yet the boy's clothes are made of rich materials, and the woman is partially undressed, with her entire lower body visible, although she is in a public place. There is a streak of lightning in the dark clouds in the sky in the background, and an oddly modern-looking construction in the middle of the setting. Without knowledge of the context, our minds start creating a story to explain this scene and its elements. What we 'see' shows our bias, our beliefs about human nature, and our idiosyncratic tendencies when it comes to world-building.

Lamarque argues in the introductory section that it is the narrator's way of telling the story that makes it unique and memorable, and which differentiates a special and worthy narrative from mere reportage, summaries or factual recounts of events.

Lamarque's own mode of discourse is logical and calming in its structured progression: he states his intention to be 'anti-romantic' and skeptical in his approach, and to avoid the excesses of extremism when analyzing the narratological theories of others, and he follows through on this promise. The book unfolds sequentially, like a fan, each chapter building and expanding on the previous one, extending into a thing of both usefulness and beauty. Each chapter concludes with a graceful précis, succinctly demonstrating how the ideas within it have enriched the argument.

Lamarque's breadth of knowledge of his subject matter is impressive, and the discursive style he chooses is appealing and accessible even to a non-academic reader, although the philosophical discussion is detailed, comprehensive and intellectually demanding. The Bibliography for this book is multi-layered and almost 10 pages in length, and his dynamic use of the primary and secondary texts in counterpoint to each other in his argument is strong and balanced.

His argument has authority because of the balanced and inclusive way he constructs it: 'The fact

that readers of the great works of literature give special attention to the precise manner in which the content is presented is integral to the practice of reading literature as literature... The form in which a work of literature is constructed... is absolutely essential to both its identity and its value as literature. So a reader who is indifferent to the fine-grained linguistic presentation and attends to the content only as broadly specified plot and character ... is not showing an interest in the work as literature.'

At times, Lamarque has a tendency to use ponderous double negatives and overly complicated syntax, which detracts from the clarity of his overall thesis. But this is balanced by the vibrancy and suppleness of his literary analysis, and the obvious respect he has for the poetry and prose he examines. 'Writers of literary fiction,' he notes, 'invest form, design and artifice with the utmost significance.'

Lamarque uses the concept of opacity as an integrating motif throughout this book, and it functions elegantly to enable him to examine different aspects of narrative and story in illuminating ways without blurring or collapsing them. He is so restrained in the book as a whole, refraining from making the sweeping statements that he critiques in the style of others, that when he does use the imperative voice, we listen with a respect he has earned, and grant him authority to do so:

'We must accept', he says, 'that there is no... transparent glass, but only an opaque glass, painted... with figures seen not through it but in it.'

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THE AESTHETICS OF MEANING AND THOUGHT: THE BODILY ROOTS OF PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, MORALITY AND ART. By Mark Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. 304 p.

The term 'aesthetics' was derived from the ancient Greek word 'aesthesis', meaning perception by senses. Mark Johnson, emeritus professor of the University of Oregon, is returning to that very origin of the philosophical field of aesthetics, by developing theory that all experience, meaning, thought, communication, value and action can be understood as the on-going interaction between man and his environment. Basically aesthetics is about experience, says Johnson, in the sense of perceiving by our senses. These perceptions are faced both outward (the environment) and inward (conditions and emotions) at once. Key in Johnson's approach is his rejection of the dualistic view of the human being. Mind and body are not two distinct ontological realities, argues Johnson, but really the mind is body. Following these insights, Johnson wants to do right to the bodily base of the mind and thus of meaning. Instead of assuming that sentence-like propositions are at the core of meaning and thought, Johnson explores the path of how meaning is grounded in our sensory, motor and affective faculties and qualities.

In this writing he understands humans as (complex, highly evolved, embodied) dynamical systems that are organized in various sub-systems that work together in order to function as a whole in its environment. So, writes Johnson: 'thought takes place via structures and processes on many levels: in neurons, in a cortex, in a brain, in chemicals in the blood, in social interactions,

within cultural institutions, and thus in a multidimensional environment'. Interesting in this enumeration is that thought, or: the mind, is not reduced to the brain—as so often is done by neuroscientists. Any thought and all understanding takes place as 'a body' in 'a world', where meaning and understanding—knowledge—is not achieved by inner (mental) representations of outer realities, but where meaning and thought is achieved by the constant interaction between inner processes and structures and outer processes and structures. Johnson speaks of organism-environment couplings. Our concepts, states Johnson, are a 'complex simulative activity in (both) brain and body of (...) sensory, motor, affective and cultural dimensions'; our 'concepts are realized via functionally bound clusters of neurons that are connected and coactivated as part of our embodied interactions with aspects of our environment'.

Most valuable in Johnson's theory is, in my view, the realisation that nothing we can think of has a meaning that exists in itself, but that all meaning is always constituted in an ongoing interaction with the world. Fundamental in Johnson's thinking is that all meaning is, what I would call: anthropomorphic. For instance, spatial relation concepts like: up and down, front and back, near and far, are defined by our experience of being in the world. Wonderful other examples that Johnson gives, of how our body shapes our understanding of the world are expressions like: the foot of the mountain, the hands of a clock, and the arms of a river. And also, in a metaphorical sense: the head of the department, and: showing the face of things to come. Fundamental in Johnson's theorising are what he names: image schemas—recurring patterns of organism-environment interactions that are intrinsically meaningful. Such as the aforementioned up/down or 'Verticality' image schema, but also: 'Container' (in/out), Source-Path-Goal', 'Balance', Center/Periphery' and others. Johnson states that all these body-based meanings are not per se linguistic, but rather are pre-linguistic concepts. He also links these pre-linguistic concepts to emotions, which he assumes to have an immediacy of meaning. Meaning that is not mediated by language, but is simply 'there' in experience: perceived, aesthetic.

Noteworthy is that Johnson's seems to view language mostly as a semiotic and formal system. Signs are signifiers which are constituted by formal rules and internal relations within syntax or a text. He argues that 'there is no such thing as 'language' in itself—no language without our experience of language, and no language experience without an enactment of meaning that involves more than just linguistic structures.' In my view he is absolutely right here, since all language-use is always 'about something', that ultimately is not found within the linguistic structure itself. The step Johnson makes next is saying that there thus is more to meaning 'than what is presentable through language', by which he intends: formulated beliefs, in the form of a proposition. The problem Johnson sees with such a view of meaning or understanding is that any proposition will always rule out a lot from experience, which—so to say—is also 'there' and 'true', and matters as well for how any proposition is understood.

I would say Johnson is perhaps really looking for a way to say that meaning is more like a space that is opened than like a statement. Meaning and understanding is more like a space or a web than like a statement or a formula, because there is always more to say about reality, about experience—about being in the world, than we can say at once. Johnson himself talks of metaphor when he points to this aspect of understanding and meaning. I think it would be fair to say that meaning and understanding is an on-going process of describing, testing and re-describing that multi-dimensional environment Johnson mentions. But other than Johnson seems to think, I believe that environment does not always have to be our immediate environment. Since, because we have language, we can transcend our immediate situation and learn of, and experience, other situations and environments. Situations we are not actually in. To me, this is typically what art

and language can do: show that there is 'a world' outside our immediate situation. A world that can be told. That can be imagined and pretended. A world that can be understood, and thus has meaning. How often it has not been true for people that this other 'world' that they learned of or imagine, is more important and meaningful to them, than their immediate environment and situation?

'Can you think about the world without language,' asks Johnson on page 92. 'Can you, without language, have experience that is meaningful, that makes sense to you, that generates inferences and that leads to further experience?' Obviously this question is intended rhetorical, since Johnson immediately states that we can: 'Much of the time in our lives (...) we grasp the meaning of what's happening in ways that do not rely on words.' For me however, this Johnson has not made evident or plausible in his book. I agree with Johnson that any single-minded, semiotic view on language will make any 'speech-act' too small to do justice to meaning making or understanding, and to experience. Also I am convinced, as Johnson argues, that mind and body are inextricable quantities, so that a non-dualistic view upon meaning and understanding is more than necessary. A view that takes into account the visceral qualities of our experience that direct and shape our understanding of the world. I am however not convinced of any pre-linguistic concept. Not because I dismiss the possibility of a primary grasp of, for instance space through a body-based knowing and capacity, but because Johnson has not succeeded to successfully disentangle language and thought in his examples. It remains a question and a mystery how any conceptual understanding can be achieved outside language after reading Johnson's book.

On page 87 Johnson describes a lovely memory of the younger him and his girlfriend dancing to Nat King Cole. 'The way we held each other, where my hand rested upon her back, how she let her head rest upon my shoulder, the fragrance of her hair, (...). It was all meaningful (...) and most of that was not dependent on language.' However, as Johnson states himself further on the page: all suggested 'meaning' is suggested in language-use. Even when we say that meaning is a space, not just this or that which is literally said and semiotically explainable, still the case is here also suggested in language. So here, the meaning of 'she let her head rest upon my shoulder' will, in the context of 'girlfriend' and 'close dancing,' have a meaning-range of concepts like: trust, dependence, care, and perhaps: want. From the perspective of the described young people: were these concepts all simply or directly felt, as I understand Johnson intends? Or are these understood and said (in thought)? And what came first: the feeling, the understanding or the words? Really, as I believe, these are all there at once. We might even question if 'dependence' or 'trust' is something that is firstly and foremost 'felt' or firstly and foremost 'understood'.

Johnson argues in this book that much 'meaning' and knowledge is constructed outside language-use but rather emerges from qualities and patterns of bodily interaction with our environment. He wants to accentuate the role of experience/perception and the sensory-motor-affective processes that lie at the heart of experience and understanding. In doing so he wants to emancipate the place of emotion and feeling in our gaining knowledge of the world, but mostly, I believe, he wants to open the one-sided and detached approach of semiotic linguistics toward perception: to make us see that there is a world still outside our reasoning. Completely other and richer than we can say or see at once.

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BASANTI: WRITING THE NEW WOMAN. By Himansu S. Mohapatra and Paul St-Pierre (Trans.). Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019. 246 p.

For long out of bounds, Odia novel *Basanti* has recently returned in a new avatar through a much welcome English translation of the same. The work has long been recognized as unique and experimental. It is the first fictional manifesto of feminism in Odia literature. It is also the first – and going by the record the last – collaborative novel in Odia. The work was serialized in the literary periodical *Utkal Sahitya* between 1924 and 1926, like most novels of that time, and published as a book in 1931 by Sabuja Sahitya Samiti. Nine young writers of the Sabuja Age – a delayed version of Romanticism in Odia literature – took turns to compose the novel. The novel can be said to exemplify the model of unity-in-diversity.

A simple plot unusually plotted

Basanti is on one level a simple story of love, marriage, separation and reunion. A young girl named Basanti, living in Cuttack and brought up to be self-respecting and freedom loving by her liberal parents, is plunged into an uncertain future due to the untimely death, first of her father, and, then of her mother. Debabrata, a young man from a wealthy zamindar family from Balasore, who is pursuing his education at Ravenshaw College in Cuttack, steps in to rescue her. He loves Basanti and finds his liberal and progressive ideals perfectly matched by hers. He marries her despite opposition from his domineering and conservative mother.

Post marriage their relationship is put to the severest of stresses. Debabrata finds himself unable to credit Basanti's love of books and ideas and her easy going ways in the way he did in the past. On the contrary, he blames her for the very same qualities that once won his admiration. He turns her out of home in a fit of rage. After suffering his share of trials and tribulations he is of course reunited with her at the end. Around this simple and somewhat formulaic tale of love, separation and reunion the authors of *Basanti* have woven their complex narrative of a woman aspiring for freedom and demanding equality with men. The nine authors – six men and three women – have developed this woman's story concertedly, leaving their distinctive signatures in the style and the character creation.

A feminist ahead of her time

Though conceived of almost a century ago, the eponymous heroine does not come across as a figure locked in the distant past. The aspiration she voices for the independence and emancipation of women through education makes her leap across the years and speak to our time. Savour this remark made by her in a conversation about unequal gender roles in society with a male friend of her husband Debabrata: "But there should be a place for women outside the world of men. Unless there is, women's lives will not be full" (113). This could serve as a timely feminist slogan now.

The same quest for self-esteem and identity informs Basanti's desire for a place outside domesticity, her desire to start a school for girls in the hide-bound village she makes her home after marriage. It is in fact in her desire to balance home and work that she declares her affinity with a modern woman faced with the conflicting demands of career and home. But Basanti is much less advantageously placed compared to her contemporary counterpart. She has to balance work with not just home, but with a world larger than her domestic sphere, a world governed by traditional pieties that demand that a woman conform to her 'second sex' status. Whereas her modern counterpart has usually to juggle her career and her nuclear family, she is up against

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patriarchy in a much more direct way. Her quiet rebuttal of this ethos makes her a dissenter, a true rebel.

The gender trap

Woman-centred as the novel is, it does not fail to give a finely nuanced portrayal of the male protagonist, Debabrata. He is shown as a well meaning idealist. He is against caste and gender hierarchy and wants education to be used as a means of social change. But there is an incompleteness of conversion in him. That is to say, he is someone who, despite wanting or trying to, cannot practise the ideals he professes. He marries Basanti for love and he does really mean to make this orphaned and helpless woman happy. He believes his important duty was to take care of her: "...he never let himself forget that his most important duty was to ensure that Basanti was happy, and, of course, to take care of her. How could she forget this, when she was a soothing ray of moonlight in his life (70)?"

Things do, however, turn out differently. Their relationship changes from respect and love to indifference and doubt within a short time of their marriage. The conflict between subjective desires and objective realities has been rarely rendered more dramatically in an early Indian novel. It is just not that Debabrata is assailed by self-doubt: "Was he still the same Debabrata? Why did he no longer feel the same life force coursing through him as when he was a student?...he surely must have changed. He realised that under the barrage of onslaughts from the world his soul had been crushed" (71).

The irony of the situation is that 'Debabhai' finally becomes a stranger for Basanti. Their relationship reaches a crisis point with Debabrata suspecting Basanti of infidelity and turning her out of home. The novel shows through the interesting medium of confessional – diary entries and letters - and also through the juxtaposition of dialogues and incidents how the strained relationship is more of a socially determined impasse than a purely personal misunderstanding. In other words, at the root of their relationship lies gender, or, to be more precise, the disparity of gender.

When the same male friend (Braja) of her husband's asks Basanti: "All right, sister-in-law, tell me what's your goal in life?", she replies, "You may not believe it, but I'm telling you the truth. I haven't yet been able to decide what my goal should be. But I do have certain beliefs about the sort of life a woman should have" (149). Encoded in this reply is a critique of the male-oriented society's instrumental conception of goal that effectively bars women, especially women like Basanti who have beliefs about the dignity of women's lives, from having goals.

Female bonding

What makes *Basanti* a leading work in Odia feminist literature is that it is a novel that explores female bonding through its portrayal of the solidarity between women. This is made clear not only from the friendship between the women characters in the novel but also from the way this friendship differs from and contrasts with the friendship between the men characters. In the novel Basanti and her mother Nirmala bond with several women and the bonding is existential and personal, in other words on the micro level. Debabrata, however, has only one male friend and his bonding with him is on an ideological level, that is to say, on the macro or big picture level. While experiences and intimacies of shared life are foregrounded in the way Nirmala, Basanti's mother, relates to Kalyani, Suniti's mother, and Basanti relates to her two best friends pre and post marriage, Suniti and Nisa, abstract notions of social work – Dickens has exposed the hollowness of this sort of 'telescopic philanthropy' - are the glue that bind Debabrata with Ramesh, his only friend in the novel. Basanti is also shown as more flexible in her relationships, being able to relate to a wide variety of women and men and as an equal. Debabrata, however, comes across as inflexible in the matter of forming relationships with people. He can only relate to people

hierarchically. He is most comfortable when he is around his social inferiors, like the servant Dhanika, for example. Basanti is, by contrast, more personable and caring in the way she treats Dhanika and the maid Saniama. And despite being mistreated by her mother-in-law Subhadra, she makes a genuine effort to connect with her at a human level. No wonder it is Subhadra who wakes up to Basanti's human qualities in her absence and does not rest until she is found and brought back home.

Conclusion

Basanti then is a rare work of fiction, collectively imagined and written in order to nail down a fleeting glimpse of woman's freedom in a society in which it was not a reality yet. The English translation is lucid and flows like an uninterrupted stream. This is remarkable considering the fact that the translators are additionally faced with the delicate task of rendering the book's plurality of styles, a task they have seemingly performed with aplomb.

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JAMES HOGG AND BRITISH ROMANTICISM: A KALEIDOSCOPIC ART. By Meiko O'Halloran. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 308 p.

Meiko O'Halloran exploits the kaleidoscope as an extended metaphor throughout her book to describe the complexity of James Hogg's writing, characterised by the merging of various literary genres, quite experimental for the Romantic period, with the aim of placing this Scottish author amongst and at the same level of the most canonical ones of the era such as Wordsworth, Byron, Southey, and Scott. Hogg's experimentalism with literary forms and his awareness of the rules of the early nineteenth-century literary marketplace, O'Halloran explains, place him as a central figure in British Romanticism. O'Halloran contends that Hogg's engagement with the literary marketplace of the period made him experiment with the possibilities offered by the miscellany and the anthology genres, typical of the nineteenth-century periodical press. These genres, O'Halloran points out, influenced Hogg's literary style which can thus be best described as "kaleidoscopic," similarly to the instrument invented by David Brewster in 1816. A viewer could assemble the parts of this fascinating tool in an infinite number of ways, enabling them to see a wide range of images and objects. O'Halloran uses the kaleidoscope to describe the plethora of literary genres with which Hogg experimented: from the novel to the long narrative poem; from the celebratory poem to the parodic genre; from the short story to the essay. O'Halloran is successful in building her argument throughout the book, as the kaleidoscope metaphor elegantly describes the complexity of one of the most prolific authors of the Romantic period.

O'Halloran's book offers a panoramic view of this neglected author, mostly known for his novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, by showcasing Hogg's incredible achievements in less known works. At Hogg's time of writing, the combination of Hogg's humble background and the role of contemporary reviewers, who controlled the success or the failure of an author according to nineteenth-century rules of politeness and Englishness, contributed to a biased reception of this writer. Hogg's themes, ranging from the violence of war to the negative

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consequences of the imperial rule on the labouring classes, destabilised the dominant discourse supported by the periodical press in which Hogg mostly published and which reviewed Hogg's other works. O'Halloran's monograph hence contributes to highlighting and revaluing the multifaceted creativity of Hogg.

In chapter one, "Hogg's Self-Positioning in *The Poetic Mirror* and the Literary Marketplace" (16-58), O'Halloran contends that in this collection of poems which, as the title *Poetic Mirror* suggests, imitate and, sometimes, exaggerate the style of the most popular poets of the period, Hogg poses himself as "a participant in, and a critical viewer of, the literary marketplace" (16). When first published in 1816 Hogg's parodies, O'Halloran points out, incited an active participation on the part of contemporary readers who had to recognise whether the poems were an imitation or had actually been written by the real authors, as *The Poetic Mirror* was published anonymously. In this collection, O'Halloran explains, Hogg went beyond the Romantic ideal of poet as "primitive prophet, projected onto sublime or barren landscapes" (23) as, instead, he presented "the modern bards" as "commercial competitors in a dynamic new world of print" (23). O'Halloran remarks that in *The Poetic Mirror* by drawing on various literary forms such as parody, satire and imitation, Hogg both established himself among the canon of contemporary poets and critiqued "their chosen path to posterity" (35). O'Halloran's choice of this collection as kaleidoscopic image of Hogg's poetics is particularly successful as it portrays the perception of Hogg both by himself and his contemporary reviewers and writers: Hogg wished to be accepted as part of the circle of select authors of the time but he was also critical, as O'Halloran argues, of "the self-importance of many celebrated poets of his day" (36). *The Poetic Mirror* thus "exemplifies Hogg's complicated sense of himself as both an insider and an outsider" (46).

In chapter two, "Hogg's Eighteenth-Century Inheritance: *The Queen's Wake*, National Epic, and Imagined Ancestries" (59-113), O'Halloran presents Hogg's collection of poems arising from a "sixteenth-century bardic contest" (61) at the court of Mary Queen of Scots during Christmas time as a tool for both "gain[ing] admission to his present-day literary marketplace, and a national epic" (61), merging old and modern Scottish literary forms in order to fashion Scotland's "identity as a modern commercial nation" (60). When describing *The Queen's Wake*, O'Halloran uses the term "epic" to portray Hogg's ambition to present the collection of poems as both "a narrative of national origins and a national model of poetry which expresses an idea of Scotland's powerful identity and aspirations" (62).

Chapter three, "By Accident and Design: Burn, Shakespeare and Hogg's Kaleidoscopic Techniques, from the Theatre and *The Poetic Mirror* to *Queen Hynde*" (114-177), explores the influence of these two famous authors on Hogg's writing. Here, O'Halloran argues that not only the "Romantic cult of Shakespeare as a natural genius" but also "Shakespeare's ... personal resilience in the face of adversity" profoundly inspired Hogg (123-124). *The Hunting of Badlewe*, a play that Hogg composed in 1814, showcases his ambition for the theatre and "his experiments with dramatic form and convention" which, O'Halloran contends, "shaped his kaleidoscopic techniques" (127). Nonetheless, the work was not well received because "no one expected autodidact labourers to write historical tragedies for educated urban audiences" (127).

In chapter three, O'Halloran explores one of Hogg's most ambitious works: the long narrative poem *Queen Hynde* (1824), where Hogg "move[s] the shepherd-poet out of the pastoral tradition and into the epic" (153). In this work Hogg claims his own rules, "refusing to conform to the expectations of a particular genre" (157), and demanding his contemporary readers "to accept Hogg's faults and to recognise their own" (158). Most importantly, in this "eclectic mock epic" Hogg explores issues of "kingship, sovereignty, legitimacy, and the plight of individuals who

must negotiate their place in a disordered society ... strik[ing] a blow at rigid social and literary hierarchies" (169).

Chapter four, "Exploding Authority and Inheritance: Reading the *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* as a Kaleidoscopic Novel" (178-216), offers a fresh interpretation of Hogg's most famous novel published in 1824. O'Halloran remarks that here, Hogg explodes the family metaphor that Edmund Burke utilises in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) to promote the nuclear foundation of the British nation "as the touchstone for the preservation of harmonious social order and hierarchy" (192). Burke argued for the "patriarchal politics of the family" as model for a strong nation, where the king would pose as the father and the queen "as a mother, to whom citizens owed unquestioned filial obedience" (192). O'Halloran points out that the protagonist of Hogg's *Confessions* explodes Burke's discourse of nation as family by committing fratricide, matricide, and leaving his estate into a complete ruin.

In the final chapter, "Imploding the Nation: Aesthetic Conflict in *Tales of the Wars of Montrose*" (217-255), O'Halloran further explores Hogg's deconstruction of the family metaphor, "[t]he destructive internal dynamics" of which are now "turned against itself" (217). In these stories, O'Halloran remarks, Hogg captures the fragility of a nation going through the literary market crash of 1825-26 and the political unrest caused by the Reform Bill of 1832. Hogg's experiments with fractured voices are particularly strong in these tales, exposing "the multiple perspectives of characters who are swept up in the cyclical conflict of a nation which is at war with itself" (220).

O'Halloran's book is in conversation with other recent Hogg studies such as Ian Duncan's *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton University Press, 2007), which explores Hogg's accounts of regional, national, and imperial history; Penny Fielding's *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction* (Clarendon Press, 1996), which investigates Hogg's ideas of nationality through the relationship between writing and orality in nineteenth-century definitions of "culture"; Fielding's subsequent book, *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography: North Britain 1760-1830* (Cambridge Studies in Romanticism, 2011), where she considers how Scottish Romantic authors, and Hogg among the others, expose the roles of England and Scotland in the construction of the British nation. O'Halloran's book is also in line with the ideas that Douglas S. Mack develops in *Scottish Fiction and the British Empire* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006) as Mack's book evaluates Hogg voicing the margins; and two further essay collections: *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, edited by Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) which, similarly to Mack, investigates Hogg as a working-class author who challenged the aesthetic conventions of other contemporary writers; and *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg* (Edinburgh Companions to Scottish Literature, 2012), edited by Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack, which displays 16 essays on the contexts and debates that shaped Hogg's writings. O'Halloran's monograph adds to this conversation by focusing on "Hogg's centrality to British Romanticism through his radical experiments with literary form and his creative reconfiguration and parodic interrogation of the values of the early nineteenth-century literary marketplace" (1-2). O'Halloran focus on Hogg's reinvention of particular literary genres and his effort to "prompt readers to exercise their own critical reflexes" (2) makes her book an important contribution to Hogg studies.

Yet, as the kaleidoscopic metaphor well purports, O'Halloran's book will also interest critics researching the experimentalism of postmodern fiction, as well as those scholars fascinated by the political activism of postcolonial texts. O'Halloran's volume, in fact, highlights how Hogg's use of multiple perspectives anticipated literary strategies typical of the postmodern period,

while Hogg's denouncement of the poor treatment of the margins is in line with the social and anti-racist activism of postcolonial studies.

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WHY WE DANCE: A PHILOSOPHY OF BODILY BECOMING. By Kimerer L. LaMothe. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. 304 p.

Why We Dance introduces dance as a vital art and a philosophy of bodily becoming. It portrays that dance matters at the most fundamental understanding of existence and that movement is the building block of life. The philosophy of bodily becoming has been strengthened in this book by author's personal experiences as a dancer, trainer, farmer and mother. She understands what becoming of the body means as she has danced every aspect of her life. According to her, movement exists in us always and is permanent but is incarcerated by isolation, technology and distraction. This book showcases a significant work on the question why we dance by bringing in the biological, ethical, spiritual and ecological necessity of dance.

In our daily life, we perform so many activities like walking, running, dancing, harvesting, moving in ways that align our bodily becoming with the movements of the natural world. In a world, where movement matters, the course for understanding dance as a vital art must be done indirectly, by reconsidering our basic assumptions of who we humans are, re-educating ourselves by critically examining the dominance of materialistic paradigm in Western culture and by recreating the dancer hidden within us. It can only be made possible if we begin from the crust, try to bring to light the resistance to acknowledging dance as a vital art in places where we do not even notice that it exists.

Being a dancer myself, a question always ponders me: *Why dance?* It seems dance will give me no end results, no future. I can rather utilize my time in something which is more productive, has a promising future and will give me happiness. We most often dance just for fun and entertainment but lack a speculative approach to appreciate when others dance as we don't have any understanding of conceptual resources. But this book has enlightened me with a realization and vision that dance exists everywhere, sometimes we know it and sometimes we don't, but it is there. It is an activity that animates every dimension of our bodily self. It is a vital art for our artistic, intellectual, religious endeavor. It is vital for uplifting our emotional, ethical and spiritual selves. It is vital for our humanity. This book comprises of a dance-enabled, dance-friendly philosophy of bodily becoming which is vital for every human being.

Dance is a movement and every dance has a pattern. As we dance, we not only create movement patterns but we become the patterns we create. Dance teaches us discipline, regularity, it sharpen our minds as it involves sensing and responding. This creation of patterns of sensation and response is what LaMothe refers to as "a rhythm of bodily becoming." Dance is an active participation of our senses and cultivation of sensory awareness. The movements we make in a given moment make us who we are. For instance, while portraying a role in a dance, we tend to lose our identity and give full justice to that role. In our daily life also, we play a number of roles, a student, a mother, a wife, etc. doing complete justice to each of these roles. We tend to dance every moment

in our life. These movements make us who we are. LaMothe in her book tries to convey the shift of experience which happens to her when she dances. Dancing moulds us into a different person with varied forms of experiences, knowledge, reality, practicality and ultimate truth. But the biggest hurdle we often face is the priority given to matter as real. In this sense, we measure movement as a way to arrest the matter we assume in making it. This ultimately creates a problem in appreciating dance as a vital art. But every movement we make is different from the previous one and every movement matters (22).

Since this book lays an important emphasis on "movement", the author gives various definitions of the term, although the term dance never needs a definition, it is self-explanatory. It is important to note that what we do and who we are is nothing but a movement, Movement is a transformation, making us outreach our previous self, transforming us into a new and better person. Dance is not just a movement of hands, legs or body but it also stirs our thoughts, ideas, imagination, perception and creativity which are dance-enabled and makes us feel what we are feeling. It is the best way to reach our creativity as it refreshes our mind, induces new feelings, skills and habits.

Scientifically, theories of evolution presume that matter is real and that matter is what evolves. Although, these ideas that matter is real or matter evolves creates hurdles for believing in dance as a vital art. Dancing provides a node of natural selection as it serves as an evolutionary advantage. Dance is not just an activity that human beings evolved to do but it is a bodily capacity whose potential for creating life the human species exists to maximize (45).

Dance makes us feel related to something greater than ourselves. It makes us strong, free, connected, creative, and beautiful. This subjective knowledge has been compared with the factual meaning of the term knowledge wherein knowledge is something which is written down and a person who is able to read and write are the only ones capable of acquiring knowledge. Thus, dancing is considered as opposite of what counts as knowledge. It is only seen in terms of entertainment, fun, stress-relief. Thus, a person who is a practitioner of dance and wants to write about his or her experience of dance, find themselves in an utmost dilemma. If they write about it, they undermine its practice and if they defend dance as non verbal then dancing is not considered as true knowledge. But the value of dance cannot be only measured by how much scholars have written about it in order to make it knowledgeable, rather it should be valued for its combination of technical, embodied, experiential, symbolic, spiritual knowledge. Dancers not only acquire knowledge about the various steps and techniques but they discover knowledge themselves while practicing it. Indeed, reading and writing themselves are best evaluated as dance.

Dancing is also a means by which a thinking mind proceeds to attain a rational end. Dancing appears as a biological necessity of human living. Dance is a process of becoming itself. It is not only performing on stage or mastering the techniques but it is reliving and rediscovering ourselves in order to move in this progressive world. The author teaches by sharing a personal experience of her becoming mother the fifth time, that dance connects us. Our movement expresses an impulse to connect whatever other movements have enabled. We dance every moment from within or physically, not realizing that it is dance which pushes us like a gigantic force to enable movement and connect with other humans ethically. We must expand our horizons by the act of dancing as an ethical necessity. Dance is a way of life, to build strong relationships, social commitments and becoming bound to one another by sharing their own personal experiences of pleasure. There's no way of becoming human without dance.

We humans are always surrounded by the dichotomy of pain and pleasure. This pain can be emotional, physical, spiritual or mental. In any case, it breaks us down. But the author perceives dance as a form of heal to this pain, which is also a movement. In words of LaMothe, "A dance-

enabled sensory awareness is a place where we can embrace our pain as a catalyst to our fundamental sensory creativity. It is a place where we can begin to learn from pain how to invest our conscious selves in the ongoing healing work of the universe as it is happening in us” (149).

Dancing also acquires its role as a spiritual necessity. While dancing, we move ourselves or with the group, we sense and respond. This interaction is love which is an appearance of god. If we love dancing, we love ourselves, we love the people that surround us, and we love each and every moment of our life. And to acknowledge dance as a vital art, we must first evaluate the distinction between nature and culture. It is essential to take into consideration the idea that culture is the movement of nature seeking its own becoming in human form.

The book covers its topics well and breaks new grounds by helping people to think about dancing beyond its performing aspect, by the way it is present everywhere, in everything we do, in our day-to-day movements, in our relationship with others. It has intended the readers to rethink the concept of dance as a vital art, opposing to the rigid misconceptions as laid down by the materialist paradigm. Dance is a way of life. It is important for the dancers to realize how important it is to create and generate values and ideas which will enrich our intellectual as well artistic sectors of society. Dance not only appears as a way in which a material body can move or as a form of social cohesion or as nonverbal knowledge. Dancing not only appears necessary for building biological selves, but also necessary for building ethical selves. It gives us the knowledge we need to connect ourselves with other humans in mutually life-enabling ways. Every human is born of a dance and born into a dance. Dance is one which heals us from all our pains. Bodily movements make and reinforce the distinction between culture and nature and showcases dance as a vital art and ecological necessity. Thus, *dance is a vital art*.

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CONSIDERING ETHICS IN DANCE, THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE. By Fiona Bannon. Switzerland: Springer Nature (Palgrave Macmillan), 2018. 250 p.

We all try to find ways to facilitate positivity, satisfaction, fulfillment, happiness in our lives. “Considering Ethics in Dance, Theatre and Performance” by Fiona Bannon is an attempt to articulate these with the intermingling of our ethical, aesthetic and relational lives or engagement with one another as joint authorship towards an inclusive world view. It is written with an ambition to consider practical ethics as the core of collaborative art making. It is important to consider what it means for each of us to live well and to persevere. With reference to the work of John Dewey, Baruch Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze, Gregory Bateson, etc., the author explores features of social integration in studio practice, our aesthetic sensibilities, ethics as a facet of our lived experience and the complex issues of our present time.

The aim of the book is an exploration to the nature of the interdependencies through which practice is composed and the active possibilities that can increase by enhancing our competence to shared engagement through ethics. An engagement with aesthetics, ethics, and art making and knowledge generation brings in us a sense of mutuality to live our life better and better and to

create and recreate ourselves anew. It is aspired to discover the nature of ethics and aesthetics in association with collaborative practices. She asks a general question to clarify the core of this book. Since we are staying in a society and not in isolation, we come across various types of personalities in our modes of working but how can we recognize a sense of mutuality and maintain the interrelationships among each other? It is our conscious engagement through what can be recognized as an ethic- aesthetic of practice, which is the only way for us to more fully appreciate and sustain the future benefit of our mutuality.

Any kind of performing art requires sensitivity, care, challenge, transmission and thus, it is important for us not to forget our ethical origination in the community and recognize ways of *being-with* one another. While working towards a new choreography in dance or a new production in theatre, we have to come across a number of challenges but it is important to keep calm to make our mind work peacefully and recognize and affirm values and behaviors that could be adopted for the process of creating the performance.

The processes involved in devising performance are sometimes differently framed as collaborative, collective or co-creative practice (1). This book also explores and contributes to a number of overlapping debates. The basic area it covers is the question of how to live well, what ought to do and not to do with the help of communication in and through art. This process along with artistic sensibilities also involves an engagement of ethics. In words of Bannon, “The purpose is to examine aspects of adopted approaches to creating performance in terms of the ethical, the aesthetic, and the lived experience of things that matter. The focus falls on the ways that we work, play, learns and interact with one another, and through which, shape artistic responses to our experience of the world” (5).

The author argues that the process of creating or making a performance is an opportunity to learn about ourselves, how we relate with others through various modes of social communication. She also intends to consider the ways by which we can utilize ethics as an interacting aspect of artistic performance practice.

A prominent question may arise regarding the role of ethics in performance. How is ethics really related to dance, theatre or any art form? It is important to note that when we consider ethics, we consider the attitudes towards ethics that inform our own behavior and practice. An ethical attitude developed while creating and making performance helps one to integrate with others and also to judge oneself. The ways by which we orient ourselves forms the ground for the nature of the ethics of practice. Our creative contribution is heightened by our ethico-aesthetic engagements and the way we cooperate with others while working. This has been explained by giving various examples of the writings and teachings of Spinoza.

A brilliant and pioneering work has been done by the author since she has explained the core concepts like ethics and aesthetic experience from the very fundamental point of view so that the readers get clarity of the overall concept and utilize the same practice in their day-to-day life. This book not only encourages the practitioners of performing arts how to work as a team with one vision and with collaboration, but also helps a laymen how to live better. It is these features that ultimately motivate us to initiate certain acts, within our gradually unfolding, fluid interrelatedness. Ethics comes from a Greek word *ethos* which means habitat or dwelling. Dwelling refers to our attitudes and behavior which constitutes our character. But we recognize ethics as an exacting and an integral part of performance making as ethics is about considering our stance towards ourselves and it is the presence of reflective self-consciousness that enables one to share a collective imagination for ourselves and others. The ideas of ethical relations as generated as practice are informed by an ethics that embraces *being-with-others*.

According to Spinoza, humans are not innately social but must persevere to become one for a number of reasons. It is for the purpose of developing the power of reason and justice which we learn from the experiences of practice of working together. While reviewing performance practice, we understand how we might relate with one another and appreciate about changing attitudes, to questioning communication and opinion. Towards ethical frameworks, the author quotes the work done by cultural theorist Sara Ahmed, Richard Sennett, David Bohm, Masumi, etc., which not only reflects what the author tries to convince but gives us a knowledge of the varied notions of ethics.

An alignment of aesthetics with social and educational experiences in the realms of lived experience has been also elucidated in this book. We can see a turn from the usual associations between aesthetics and art to the relation between aesthetics and ethics which shape our social integration. According to Bannon, considering both aesthetics and art together focuses on the ways that our sensations inform the dialogic relations that form our experiences. This integrates a sense of well-being, respect, sustainability, and individual capability. The term aesthetics has been coined by Baumgarten in 1750 although the origins of the concept can be traced back to antiquity. Although the meaning of this term is a much debated one but there are some who believe that clear definition of the term is both possible and necessary and for some it is a problematic experience. Yet the term pertains to all forms of artistic practice but an idea which is removed from lived experiences. It is critical reflection on art, culture and nature. But one point to keep in mind regarding the concept of aesthetics that it has no division between self and other, it is a fusion of features functioning as a cooperative environment.

The book provides the much needed solution of present times by which we can acknowledge the ways that aesthetics and ethics reside together as they are not something we acquire but they are the way we are. The intertwining of aesthetics and ethics offers a means towards cohesive understanding of experience that leads to collaborative, creative and improvisational practice and makes us realize the path in which we should lead our life.

The biggest challenge that comes across is the task of group performances, shared practice which is dominated by interpersonal energies, different point of views and operation. Working through the processes of art making puts us in the realms of learning how to handle material ideas. A pertinent question in terms of dissemination of methods is how to trace the transmission of collaborative co-creation and how do we share practice? It is observed that in the rhythm of a process, we find a sense of coherence in which individuals learn to think, to share experience and to challenge new opportunities with one another. In collaborative practice, there is a sense of shared responsibility within the practitioners in engaging with the challenges that we need to address concerning our social associations.

Ethics also plays an important role while realizing our ideas in the form of artworks. We must fulfill the responsibilities that are inherent while working as a participant contributor. Through improvising within our knowledge of what is known, we may realize progressive change. It is a venture filled with inequalities which we must emerge with. Bannon says that collaboration is an indispensable element of group activity which is a source of investigation, questions and exploration.

Thus, in this genuine, beautiful and lucid book, Fiona Bannon deals with the practice of joint authorship in dance, theatre and performance as an activity that interweaves aesthetical perceptual processes with an ethical practice of living an examined life in relation to others. Ethics and aesthetics can be understood as the norms that govern our social and personal conduct and we can shape our deepening knowledge of our humanity. It is important to reflect on our responsibilities

and to learn and to act on what we know. Conclusively, in the making of Dance, Theatre and Performance, there are social roles in the ways that we learn to interact through our attachments to other people and to the groups with whom we work along with the challenges that we encounter together. She lays emphasis on the fact that we can fulfill our potential in performing arts if we work guided by our ethics as practical ethics is a constitutive attribute of the attitudes inherent in the making and creation of collaborative performances.

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SHAKESPEARE AND INDIAN CINEMAS: LOCAL HABITATIONS (*Routledge Studies in Shakespeare*). By Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarti (Eds.). London: Routledge, 2018. 344 p.

Shakespeare first came to India as an entertainer and later as a mediator of Western ideologies. This crossing of borders via Shakespeare was a part of Britain's colonial mission to "civilize" the East by suppressing their cultural consciousness. His proliferation as a medium of Britain's cultural imperialism makes it difficult to deny the impact he has had on cultures around the globe. The strokes of green bleeding into blue on the cover of the book are emblematic of this cultural alchemy. However, just like the process of alchemy where the goal is to transmute the baser metals into gold, the idea behind Shakespeare's universality was, historically, to whitewash other cultures.

As a result, the afterlife of Shakespeare's text is continuously reiterated and negotiated within the cultures it was put in conversation with by the empire. The title of the book, *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas*, not only targets Shakespearean, film, post-colonial or theatre scholars but also urges them to study the impact of Shakespeare on the "Local Habitations" and vice-versa — in order to realize the historical and contemporary influence of the literary works surrounding him.

This book is a collection of fifteen chapters, divided into four parts, three interviews and an annotated filmography of 115 films, which serves as an extensive archive of Shakespearean films in the Indian Cinema. These re-iterations of Shakespeare via cross-cultural adaptations put stress on his text's embryonic nature by questioning the transformativity of his universalism. The book, edited by Poonam Trivedi, associate professor of English at Indraprastha College and Paromita Chakravarti, professor of English at Jadavpur University, directs our attention towards the work done in "regional cinemas and bring their particular histories of literary and theatrical engagement with Shakespeare into the larger and a more interactive picture" (4). Cinema is a crucial cultural index of our society, and the authors ranging from film theoreticians, gender scholars, Shakespearean scholars, and documentary and filmmakers compel us to reconsider our experience of watching it.

The first part, "Indigenising the Tragic," delves into the interstices of the original text to analyse how its previously signified meaning evolves when Shakespearean tragedies are appropriated by the Indian cinema. Poonam Trivedi's article, "Woman as Avenger: 'Indianising' the Shakespearean Tragic in the Films of Vishal Bhardwaj," analyses how women supplant men as an "active instru-

ments of redemptive justice" (10). This is similar to Bhardwaj's movies in which there is a disjunction between the text's constructive intention and director's auteurism. Trivedi locates these gendered tragic resolutions at the center of her argument to analyze the alternative space created in the feminised afterlife of Shakespeare's text which is used to conceptualise the relationship between the agency of the local and the global women on the contemporary and early modern stage, respectively. Robert S. White, on the other hand, has replaced the gendered variables with dharma, the code of right way of living, to study how Mahabharata's moral insistence conflicts with the tragic frame of *Hamlet* in Vidhu Vinod Chopra's 2007 film *Eklavya: The Royal Guard*. He does so by juxtaposing the politics of Renaissance revenge tragedy with the movie's decision to grant women the agency to halt the "cycle of retributive violence" (11) in his article, "Eklavya: Shakespeare Meets the Mahabharata." The alterity and relationality between the two different cultures allows for the productive articulation of the differences in the movie. Considering the social and cultural values which are at the stake of such articulations, the section makes the reader question how an active presence of one's cultural memory and norms affects the reading of the play. Koel Chatterjee, cognizant of these socio-cultural complexities, weighs in on the epistemological and phenomenological implication of Mansoor Khan's decision to keep the original tragic ending of Romeo and Juliet in *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* against commercial logic of a typical Bollywood adaptation.

Chatterjee's essay segues us into Amrit Gangar's "Silent Shakespeare: Recouping an Archive," which vocalizes the history of silent Shakespearean movies in India. Positioned under "Critical Innovations: Historiography of Silence and Poetics of *Rasa*," it highlights the necessity for recouping and reclaiming the understudied voices of the past to realize the historical implications of our contemporary analysis. The reconstructed archive according to her will prompt "deeper studies into India's literary traditions in different languages that had reproduced a large repertoire of the Shakespeare oeuvre in translations of either performative plays or non-performative texts" (124). This section critiques 'how' and 'why' the oeuvre was silenced, and generates new modes of studying the aesthetics of Shakespearean film adaptations using notes from Zankar's essay on Sanskrit *rasa* theory.

The third section, "Between the Global and the Local," does not fail to account for the inconsistent prioritization and heterogeneity of the local identities that comprises the global. The problem, therefore, is not simply about the "intercultural dialogue and intertextuality between Anglophone cinematic genres...and the exploration of Indian regional identities" (13) as the book proposes, but also about self-projection of domestic spaces which have historically been a site of Britain's annihilatory strategy. Preti Taneja's "Such a Long Journey: Rohinton Mistry's Parsi King Lear from Fiction to Film" raises questions about the relation between the global and the local, diasporic and the native, and insider and the outsider. She has coined the term "diaspora-pudding" (157) to create a space for texts in which the distance and difference between the familiarity and unknowability of the local are scaled either by the presence or absence of Shakespeare. The critical work on diaspora-pudding, she argues, must "reach an audience of global exiles whose memories are sacred, but that will also include people who have general interest in the locale of the film... captures 'India' in its... contradiction of civilisation" (157). The idea might seem disorienting at first, but raises an important question about the identification of and with a nationalized selfhood. "Cinematic Lears and Bengality: Locus, Identity, Language" uses Shakespeare to carve out a Bengali identity for the readers from four movies which were marketed to an international audience. This undoubtedly raises concerns about the increased consumption of ethnicity in and ho-

mogenization of the global market, but Paromita Chakravarti argues for and illustrates the opposite via her analysis. She asserts that Shakespearean adaptations are a "mode of producing and maintaining difference" rather than a tool for the erasure of diversity. This swerve from the conventional way of thinking seeks to answer how the regional articulation of differences reinforces one's cultural autonomy. Varsha Panjwani's essay, "Shakespeare and Indian Independent Cinema: 8x10 Tasveer and 10 ml Love," expands the narrative thread of "the global and the local" with the materialist reading of indie Indian movies. She apprises her readers about how "the expression of a new middle-class, transnational, cosmopolitan identity in a globalised, urban India" (14) is enabled in 8 x10 Tasveer and 10 ml Love. The materiality within the play's text seems insignificant upon reading, but it becomes indispensable when the text is reworked in a visual medium. The cinema, as a result, becomes a tool for illuminating the interstices of the original text, configuring new-identities and cross-cultural discourse.

"Gendered Play and Regional Dialogue in Nanjundi Kalyana" marks the beginning of the fourth section, "Reimagining Gender, Region and Nation," and articulates the difference between the tropes of regional cinema and Bollywood. Shakespeare, Burnett explains, is the medium for preserving the local identity within regional cinemas. This is evident in his analysis which attributes Nanjundi Kalyana's national yet simultaneously regional character to its proximity to Bollywood and the critical changes which were made to accommodate certain aspects of regional cinema. Next, A. Mangai studies the moments where Shakespearean and Tamilian literary works have come together to raise important questions about the social origin and the cultural significance of the adapted texts, and probes deeper into the question of local identity in her essay "Not the Play but the Playing: Citation of Performing Shakespeare as a Trope in Tamil Cinema." The intertextuality in these texts compels us to question what is stated and critique the way it meant to examine the ambiguous and enigmatic nature of regional identities articulated both in the regional and national adaptations of Shakespeare.

Following the four sections of the book are the interviews with Pankaj Butalia, documentary film-maker, Roysten Abel, theatre director and playwright, and Aparna Sen, Associate professor of English and Humanities at Heritage Institute of Technology. Each of the three interviewees tries to explain the different points of Shakespeare's influence in their lives. If Butalia talks about documenting the experience of people with *Hamlet* in areas sensitive to militant violence, then Abel narrates how Shakespeare influenced the way he thinks about multidimensionality, gaze, and audience during the production process, and Sen brings in the perspective of a female actress navigating her way through Shakespeare's text in contemporary India.

The book accrues a significant amount of research value from its carefully retrieved and assembled filmography. The authors in the book demonstrate how the archive can provide valuable insights once the research ensues. In terms of the regional identities, the majority of the essays focus on the south-eastern division of India. If the book had included an exploration of other regional identities it would have expanded its scope further. Nevertheless, this omission does not work to its disadvantage because it provides an opportunity for its readers to explore the untouched avenues with the aim "to uphold the transcultural appropriative as a legitimate mode of interpretation" (18).

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AESTHETICS AND ART: TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY CHINA IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE. By Jianping Gao. Berlin: Springer-Verlag GmbH, 2018. 232 p.

Aesthetics and Art is a collection of essays on Chinese aesthetics by Jianping Gao, a leading aesthetician in today's China, a past president of the International Association for Aesthetics, and the author of the broadly acclaimed *The Expressive Act in Chinese Art* (Uppsala, 1996). The sixteen essays selected can be roughly divided into four groups, centering, respectively, on painting criticism in pre-modern China, traditional Chinese aesthetics, Chinese aesthetics since the late 1970s, and contemporary Chinese culture.

Among the issues discussed in the first group of essays, several were covered in Gao's *Expressive Act*, but here we have access to his further thoughts on Chinese painting, primarily of the "literati tradition". The book starts with the question of what *kinds* of lines are beautiful. Citing works like Plato's *Philebus* and William Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty*, Gao holds that beautiful lines of western tradition are to be found among "certain mathematically or geometrically describable lines" that show orders and rules (4). By contrast, beautiful lines in the eyes of traditional Chinese painters are freehand lines, embodying the artist's gestures and emotional and spiritual state. "Brushstrokes" is a more proper word here: lines in Chinese painting, as well as in calligraphy, are the traces of the brush, which is controlled by the artist's hand and mind. The discussion naturally leads to a popular Chinese saying: "writing and painting share the same origin." One connotation of this saying is that for both calligraphy and painting the brush is used in the same way. Literati painters since the eleventh century, it is generally believed, employed the expressive abstract calligraphic lines to convey what was in their mind. To this understanding of the "same origin," Gao adds that such a saying was more attractive to painters than to calligraphers, for the former intend to "attach painting to character-writing so as to claim the authority of the classics with its importance to the whole civilization" (30).

Next are two interesting essays adopting a comparative perspective. The analogy-drawing between the game *go* and painting is prevalent in traditional Chinese texts on painting. By exploring key terms in this analogy, *xing* (form) and *shi* (momentum, propensity, situation) particularly, Gao says that we obtain a better understanding of the concepts of sequence, process, and balance in Chinese painting. Gao's second comparison is made between Villard de Honnecourt's *Construction: The Wheel of Fortune* (c. 1235) and a Chinese book titled *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (1679), which is inspired by Ernest Gombrich's putting together of these two in his well-known *Art and Illusion*. However, where Gombrich uses these two books to prove that apprentice painters of different traditions relied on "basic vocabularies," Gao believes they are fundamentally different. When learning to paint, Europeans lay stress on the mastery of geometrical forms; they learn how to construct pictures from such sketchbooks as *Construction*. Chinese painters, by contrast, have an anti-geometric inclination, one which treats imitating copybooks as a process to cultivate a kinesthetic sense of the act of painting. This is of course in line with literati painting ideals: a painting should be unconcerned with "formal resemblance" and aims instead to be "calligraphic," as traces of the gestures of its maker.

Three essays, which comprise the second group, are concerned with issues arising from the study of pre-Qin texts. Gao starts with introducing Confucius's aesthetic ideas. When most

thinkers of his time condemned art for its confusing human senses or exerting adverse effects on society, Confucius defended art by arguing that "it was useful in educating pupils and keeping social order" (125). In this Confucian tradition lies the root of a, one can say, "non-autonomous" art theory that regards the practice of art as an important means of self-cultivation.

The next essay is a study of *Yue ji* (On Music). It is the earliest fully-developed treatise on aesthetics in China and has come down to us in the Confucian textual tradition. Gao's study focuses on the tripartite diagram of "*wu* (substance) – *xin* (heart) – *yin* (voice)," which can be readily found in the very first sentence of *Yue ji*: "All voices come from the human heart, whereas the moving of the human heart is caused by substance" (130). Gao is well aware of the confusion that might be caused by his translation of the key terms. No single English equivalent is "adequate to express the range of meanings covered by each of these terms," according to Scott Cook, who rendered the tripartite as "[external] things – heart – music."¹ Gao explains that the diagram could work in two directions. On the one hand, different social conditions (*wu*) can produce different feelings or emotions, which in turn find expression in different music, hence the diagram "*wu* → *xin* → *yin*". On the other hand, different music may evoke different responses and therefore produce different effects, hence "*wu* ← *xin* ← *yin*".

"The Original Meaning of the Chinese Character for 'Beauty'" is an early piece from Gao, written originally in Chinese in 1982. Gao challenged several opinions on the origin of 美 (*mei*) – the Chinese counterpart of "beauty," notably that of "large sheep being beauty." That the Chinese ideogram 美 is composed of 羊 (sheep) and 大 (large) is broadly accepted by traditional Chinese philologists, and an idea from which Zhu Guangqian (1897-1986) developed the notion that "beauty originated from the flavour of sheep soup" (138). Gao contends this is not tenable. By deciphering the meanings of *mei* in pre-Qin texts and using archaeological evidence, he convincingly argues that the character for beauty does not originally refer to delicious food; instead, it might imitate a man or woman wearing certain ornaments on the head. Gao's opinion is of course open to question, and more questionable is his using the new interpretation of *mei* to draw the implied conclusion that the Chinese consciousness of beauty originated from the sense of sight, rather than the sense of flavour. The origin of the aesthetic consciousness, Gao would agree, might well be traced to a time long before the invention of Chinese characters, say, the Yangshao Culture of the Neolithic Age.

The third group of essays is a survey of modern Chinese aesthetics. In the West, aesthetics is a rather specialised, if not marginalised, area pursued by a small number of scholars. In China, by contrast, it became incredibly popular during the late 1970s and 1980s. Gao's first essay in this group studies this phenomenon, which is generally known as the "aesthetics craze" in Chinese academia. For Gao, this craze for aesthetics is by no means accidental; it reflected a need of the time and played a vanguard role in the transitional period immediately after the Cultural Revolution, a period that saw China's reform and opening-up and ideological liberation. The role is threefold. Firstly, it paved the way for a renewed comprehension of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. Secondly, as one of the first fields where Western influence was accepted, aesthetics prompted the practice of translating Western books in other humanistic disciplines and social sciences. And lastly, it helped untie Chinese literary and artistic creation, which had long been expected to "visualize and pictorialize certain political and social concepts" (161).

Gao makes a clear conceptual distinction between "aesthetics in China" and "Chinese aesthetics." While the former is associated with the import and reception of Western aesthetics, the latter refers to an aesthetics that roots in Chinese philosophical and artistic tradition. The distinction has been widely accepted in Chinese academia since it was first raised by Gao in 2004. Implied in

this distinction is a contention between what Gao calls “the universality and national particularity” in aesthetics (189). A few ideas Chinese scholars used to support the universality of aesthetics, such as “common human nature”, are examined before Gao takes his own position that aesthetics, unlike such subjects as mathematics and chemistry, has “an internal link with the culture and society it emerges from... [and] the aesthetics of a nation or a culture is not a branch or application of a universal aesthetics” (194). Nevertheless, a Chinese aesthetics with modern sense, Gao holds, should be based on the study of both Chinese and other aesthetic traditions. And this is precisely what Gao has endeavoured to achieve in his own research, the first group of essays in this book being a fine example.

Essays included in the last group are concerned with contemporary culture. In “The Growth and Construction of Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace,” Gao challenges the view of regarding cyberspace as a closed space, as independent of physical or real space, contending that it is a part, or an extension, of people’s social life. The last essay of the book, “The Beauty of a City,” starts with Gao’s critical reflection on “one face for a thousand cities,” a recent phenomenon that accompanies Chinese rapid urbanisation and also bothers many aesthetic souls in the country. The sameness in a city landscape is nothing to be worried about if “city” is defined as a daily necessity; but if a city is intended as a piece of art, it cannot repeat others. Of the latter idea, however, Gao is very cautious, for treating a city as an artwork would mean “this city must be finished once and for all” and that it “lacks traditional neighbourhood culture” (223). For Gao, the beautiful city is a living thing wherein its residents can feel a sense of belonging.

As a collection of essays, the book would be more reader-friendly if an introduction were added. Also, it would benefit from sound editorial work; misspellings occasionally obstruct the flow of one’s reading. Small defects as such, however, cannot obscure the virtues of the book as a whole. Written in a plain, pithy style, Dr. Gao’s book would entertain those English readers who intend to acquaint themselves with Chinese aesthetics, in both its traditional and modern senses. To readers who already have some knowledge of Chinese artistic tradition, this book would certainly afford fresh insights.

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Notes

¹ Cook, Scott. “Yue Ji’, Record of Music, Introduction, Translation, Notes, and Commentary.” *Asian Music* 26.2 (1995): 24.

LITERATURE AND LITERARY THEORY IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA. By Zhang Jiong. Translated by Yang Limeng and Wu Yisheng. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017. 188 p.

Zhang Jiong, director of the Institute of Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, composed this ambitious scholarly monograph to introduce some of the basic ideas of Marxist

literary theories and outline their spread and development in China. The latter portion of the book scrutinizes more specifically major issues relating to modern literary theories and aesthetics. The final two chapters are edited transcripts of the author’s speeches—the former delivered to Capital Normal University in Beijing titled “Recognition of literature and humanology”; and the latter an article prepared based on the recording of a speech on “The present and future of literature” delivered at the University of Nanchang. The author demonstrates a deep knowledge of Marxist theory, often citing and paraphrasing theorists such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping. Jiong also demonstrates an adequate knowledge of other theorists such as Freud and Sartre. Though Jiong’s book focuses largely on contemporary Chinese literature, Jiong’s erudite knowledge of classical Chinese literature and literary theory is also readily apparent, occasionally quoting from a work of classical Chinese literary aesthetics, like Liu Xie’s *Wen Xin Diao Long (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons)*. The book also provides solid empirical information regarding the quantity of literary publications appearing in contemporary China, observing that in the present age literature and art is indeed flourishing in China (61; 172). I dare say even the most decadent, bourgeois scholar would still find the work informative in its nuanced discussion of the history of contemporary Chinese literature. As a scholar of Chinese literary theory and history for over sixty years, Jiong brings in a breadth of knowledge to this volume that is quite impressive.

However, the book is unfortunately mired by stylistic deficiencies that litter this otherwise fairly competently reasoned work. The sheer quantity of typos, awkward phrasing, and grammatical errors brought about through translation is not negligible; nevertheless, I do sympathize as a native English-speaking editor with experience in the humanities, continually battling with these stylistic deficiencies that occur with even the most diligent and assiduous Chinese scholar’s translation. I dare say this work could have greatly benefited from a native English-speaking scholar’s careful perusal of the content because this edition is not well edited by any stretch of the imagination. Many of the errors are careless misspellings of names like “Hussel,” (4), “Lev Tolstory,” (23) “Mao ZedongMao Zedong,” (109) or “George Bernard Show” (168). Ordinarily, I might say I’m nitpicking, but the sheer frequency of the editorial flubs cannot be overlooked. Occasionally awkward and unique phrasing is conspicuous as with the term “closed-doorism” (47), “authoress Yang Hongying” (181), or with the “bringism” of the United States (181), along with the omnipresent Chinglish omission or faulty inclusion of articles like “a” “an” or “the.” In sum, I dare say some form of nationalistic pride, permeating throughout the book, may have served as its own deadly sin or Achilles heel in not allowing a foreign, native English-speaking scholar to carefully edit this work prior to publication. My advice would be to clean this volume up considerably and publish a second edition in order for this book to receive the serious appraisal and consideration it most certainly deserves.

The book does well to tackle an issue common to most claims against Marxist literature and theory; that is, regarding the purported subordinate relationship of literature to politics. After the Cultural Revolution in China, scholars were understandably wary of literature being used once more solely as a tool for government propaganda. The consensus was that the development of literature and literary studies should remain unhindered by any sort of political intervention and that while literature and art cannot be detached from politics the function of literature and art is not necessarily to serve politics (26). Deng Xiaoping strongly stipulated that literature and art do not belong to and should not be subordinate to politics (66). The book also does well to state that Marxists, while advocating socialist realist art and literature, still place no restrictions on the development of romantic art and literature (11).

At times some of the quotations become redundant, particularly with the repeated appearance of Mao Zedong’s advocating for “letting a hundred flowers blossom in the field of arts and letting

a hundred schools of thought contend in the field of literature,” which is quoted eight times (17, 27, 55, 59, 61, 64, 74, 188).

Lastly, while I certainly understand the aspiration to make a book on literary theory socially relevant to our modern age in crisis, I doubt the author did well to open a can of worms with this paragraph:

Marxism came into being more than 160 years ago. When the Soviet Union collapsed and the Eastern European nations changed their banners, some Western scholars felt overjoyed and declared bankruptcy of the Marxism and ultimate victory of the capitalism. After the financial crisis erupted in 2008, however, socialist China managed to stay immune to the crisis while the capitalist world went into a total panic. People once again recognized the value of Marxist theories. In many European countries, Marxist works had been reprinted over and over again and even sold out.

Such broad sweeping claims do little to enhance Jiong’s argument here, while consequently giving rise an elephant in a room—arguments against socialism in China. Let me be clear—I certainly possess scant love for capitalism, especially having lived in the United States and witnessed firsthand the horrific state of income inequality and political corruption capitalism has wrought on a strong Western nation aspiring toward democracy. However, the ideology of “democratic socialism” has recently entered into the political arena of American politics and will hopefully check the havoc of unbridled capitalism set loose today. The aims of socialism and a government ruled by the people are noble, but unfortunately the reality of Marxism as manifest in Chinese politics is a different story. Chinese Marxism in literary scholarship is undercut by government policies of censorship of literary and artistic works which has forced many authors and artists to leave the mainland in order to engage in free expression. Even certain classical works of literature such as *The Golden Lotus* and *Sex and Zen* have been banned by the government due to their strong sexual content, branding them as obscene and pornographic (160). This suppression of free, artistic expression ultimately brings about unhealthy repression and does more harm than good for society. Furthermore, even engaging in basic research is undercut by the Chinese Internet firewall that can make it difficult to access even a research tool as basic and simple as Wikipedia. Serious scholars can usually get around these impediments by using a VPN, but why must it be necessary? At least, though, foreign databases are easily accessed through university libraries. Lastly, scholarship is also undercut by the government’s use of propaganda and the lack of a free press, which in turn creates an understandable and automatic skepticism among foreign scholars in evaluating works pertaining to Chinese Marxism. None of these crucial issues or obvious counter arguments was discussed in this book; and therefore, I think it would have been better for the author not to grapple with such a sticky wicket in the first place and address more poignantly the topic of Marxist literary theory in China.

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AN OLD MELODY IN A NEW SONG. AESTHETICS AND THE ART OF PSYCHOLOGY. By Luca Tateo (Ed.). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018. 244 p.

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The volume is aimed at exploring the relationship between cultural psychology and aesthetics, by integrating historical, theoretical, and phenomenological perspectives. The book chapters presented are result of the international workshop “Aesthetics in the History of European Psychology: How to Play an Old Melody in a New Song,” at the Centre for Cultural Psychology, Aalborg University in 2016. The workshop was led by Luca Tateo and he is also the editor of this collection.

The twelve contributors have different backgrounds: psychology, social work, education, artistic learning and creative processes, philosophy, history of ideas, psychology of arts, empirical aesthetics. The meta-code to their works is Science as Art; their studies cover different issues from eighteenth-century classical aesthetics to twenty-first-century science. First six chapters represent the metaphor “Old song” – they concern the historical development of arising psychology of 18th century, debates between philosophers and psychologists, aesthetics as a part of knowledge that also emerged at this time and is in indestructible relation with both philosophy and psychology.

Gordana Jovanovic discusses the democratization of aesthetics. She makes a short historical overview of subjectivist (psychological) approaches to this research field. In this overview, David Hume, Alexander Baumgarten, Immanuel Kant, Wilhelm Wundt, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Franz Brentano are included. Her conclusion is that “aesthetics could have served as a fruitful source for more encompassing psychological conceptualizations of human experience and activity” (p. 29).

Christian Allesch makes a historical review about the interactions between psychology and aesthetics which includes Baumgarten, Sulzer, Kant, Zchokke, von Hartmann and Croce. He discusses different topics, related to psychological aesthetics—empathy, *Gestalt*, phenomenology, cognitive paradigm. The chapter of João Pedro Fróis “Psychological Aesthetics in Russia at the Threshold of the Nineteenth Century” analyses the contribution of Tsezar Pavlovitch Baltalon (1855–1913) to psychological aesthetics. This Russian literary critic, philosopher, and pedagogue repeated Gustav Fechner’s experiments on the golden section. He is a forgotten figure of the early period of psychology and his case illustrates how the founders of psychology were actually involved in a serious debate about aesthetics.

Sven Hroar Klempe’s research focus is on how aesthetics is related to rationality in music. His discussion is about the relationship between aesthetics and psychology through some peculiarities in Kant’s conception of music and its relationship with the beautiful and the sublime. Klempe points out some often ignored commonalities between Kant and Sigmund Freud’s analyses of laughter and joke. He analyzes some of the modernists in literature who pointed toward music as a permanent theme: Hugo von Hofmannsthal and James Joyce.

Another case study on participatory aesthetics is provided by Falk Heinrich who discusses the relationship between aesthetics and psychology regarding participation as an art strategy and an art form. Luca Tateo provides philosophical reflections from cultural psychology by discussing temporal dimension of *psyche* and revealing the aesthetic dimension of imaginative processes that are fundamental for everyday life, art and elaboration of scientific theories.

The second part of the book presents the New Melodies in psychological research. The first two chapters are related to human development, education and learning. The topic of Marina Pinheiro’s chapter is the aesthetic reflection in the field of developmental psychology. She presents a study on children’s identity involving an experiment with 13-year-olds, asked to create a comic strip about “a character who goes to a school where nothing is forbidden” (p. 115). She discusses taking into account the aesthetic experience in understanding the creative process and provides a theoretical problematization concerning aesthetics and human uniqueness in a dialogue with the psychoanalytic approach. Tatiana Chemi develops the topic of aesthetic experience and learning. She considers *reflectivity* and *reflexivity* in arts-based research methods in education.

The last three chapters explore the relationship between aesthetics and different fields of psychology. Justin Christensen writes about the phenomenological and neuropsychological dimensions of aesthetic experience in relation to the organism-world relationships. He analyses the process of developing knowledge about our sensory modalities, our world and ourselves.

Dany Boulanger and Bo Allesøe Christensen attempt to connect Moscovici's social representations theory with Simmel's. They treat social representations as aesthetic phenomena. Their focus is on the tension between the contextualization and decontextualization of representations as a way of connecting Moscovici's and Simmel's conceptions.

The final chapter by Morten Bech Kristensen offers an unexpected and original example of the fruitful collaboration between cultural psychology and aesthetics. He makes a critical cultural-historical and psychological comparison between the mediaeval age pilgrimage and a visit to IKEA. Journeying through IKEA showrooms is interpreted as a guided pilgrimage with purpose to encourage the consumer-pilgrim, by buying goods, to buy ideas, identities, and meanings both maintained by and reflecting society from the outside.

All the authors in this volume share the idea that aesthetics has a potential to be a powerful contribution to psychological science as a subtle way of understanding human beings. It is all the more important today, when phenomena of contemporary cultural and social realities need an updated and often a totally new aesthetic and psychological conceptualization. The traditional aesthetic concepts and theories of perception naturally need further development, require a new theoretical framework, an interdisciplinary approach, and a new terminological basis for defining and processing information about new social, cultural, technological realities; as well, aesthetics and psychology of today face new challenges concerning new manifestations of art.

Society now is a huge producer and consumer of aesthetic experiences—the modern man is constantly seduced by various sense stimuli which means that the complexity of current life cannot be presented anymore by historically established forms of art. Topics, problems and issues of utmost importance for contemporary aesthetics and psychology are embedded in their attempts to make non-psychological art, digital and hybrid forms, with different interactions and rules of perception concerning art formation.

The psychological and aesthetic experiences of the viewer when interacting with site-specific objects, installations and other contemporary forms of art require the updating of existing theoretical models of interpretation. Very interesting are the transformations in psychological and aesthetic roles and accents: the viewer transforms from a reactor to participant, actor, interactor, mediator, object or co-author of the aesthetic phenomena of art. In contemporary aesthetics and psychology, new accents emerge—the emphasis of the art as a *piece* of art or object shifts to the *process* of interaction between the object and the subject. In some cases the distinction of object and subject is quite difficult or even impossible; the interactor and the work of art are simultaneously transformed.

Contemporary art is interesting not only in its modes of a creative process or perception but also as a socio-psychological experiment, communication, industry, service, ideology, or/and propaganda of consumption society. Now aesthetics not only has political implications and power functions much more explicit and clear in comparison with its previous stages in historical philosophical thought (aesthetics of Antiquity, Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Modern age) but we also should regard it as a regulating factor. We shall not forget the subtle mode in which aesthetics is capable of suggesting the right aesthetic values and ideas needed in society but at the same time both political and economic ideologies and interests can exploit the very definition and apprehension of what is “right” and what is “needed.”

The fluid and changeable objects of psychological perception, as well as the lack of a certain perceiver and recipient subjectivity within aesthetic phenomena itself, create new challenges for both psychology and aesthetics.

Aesthetic and psychological judgment becomes very relative especially while perceiving and conceiving the works of incorporeal, intangible art and their pledge. Sometimes it is difficult to define an art effect as a meaning, image, or experience. Despite the claims of post-psychologism of contemporary art, the very possibility of a discourse on art that does not contain the subject's psychology tends to zero. It is impossible to psychologically exclude the subject from the field of art, respectively aesthetics, and aesthetic experience in its broadest sense.

Contemporary art forms deconstruct traditional concepts of artwork. The subject is no longer a frozen, solid, complete, definite construct, but is fluid, indeterminate, variable, relative, as a matter of interpretation and a point of view. Post-psychological models of art move from object arrangement to activity engagement, from passive perception to participation.

Aesthetics today takes on a new meaning in its common efforts with psychology, psychoanalysis and psycho-social practices as a guide for man in a world of decaying values, who lacks the value compass which was once a sure thing, denied in its absoluteness, a world of pluralism and fast-changing fashions, where there are no clear criteria and definitions for distinguishing life from art, fiction from reality. In this sense, there are a lot of New Melodies still unrevealed and waiting to be discovered and developed, and the collection has made a decisive step to provoke further actions among the aestheticians and psychologists.

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THE GODDESS IN HINDU-TANTRIC TRADITIONS: DEVI AS CORPSE. By Anway Mukhopadhyay. London and New York: Routledge. 2018. 164 p.

By a meticulous examination of ākta-Tāntric texts, Mukhopadhyay's book manages to deliver exactly what the subtitle reads—Devī as corpse. The appendices attached, which contain the outline of *Mabābhāgavata Upapurāna*, *Bribaddharmapurāna* and *Annadā Mangal* (texts that he maintains are grossly neglected in the Sati-iva myth), provide a glimpse into the extensive research the author has taken up. In *The human death, the divine corpse*, the author delves into the concept of the corpse and by extension, the difference between the dead body and the living one. The Sāmkhya philosophy of Puruṣa and Prakṛti is broken down by introducing the element of energy (a separate category) that allows the passive Puruṣa to see and the inert Prakṛti to dance. akti, thus, is presented as the “mediatrix between consciousness and matter” (8), existing as much in the corpse as in the living body. He introduces the Sati-iva myth, its various versions and the problems they pose to the ākta-Tāntric texts. The problems including the nature of Sati's embodiment, Sati-Shadow as fiction, the nature of Sati's agency/passivity and dismemberment leading to the plural energy-self accompanied by iva's self expansion, excessive sexualisation of the dismembered body parts and the erotic-spiritual nature of iva's love in general, are explored in detail in the next two chapters.

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Using Biernacki and Shaw as preliminary points for his research, Mukhopadhyay's concern in his next chapter, *Reinterpreting the myth of Sati: the devoted husband and the corpse of his wife*, is that the iva-akti myth is not studied in its entirety and that the exclusion of "the Kamakhya centric narratives of the myth and the tantric discourses of the Sati *pithas*" may encourage "fallacious generalizations" (31). His observation of Spivak's resistance to admitting any proto-feminist elements to the Sati myth establishes his argument: there is no mention of the works that posit Sati as 'Absolute.' By the inclusion of Kashmir Shaivism, the author's analysis stands as more wholesome and encompassing. The concept of *Svatantrya akti* linked to the Divine Feminine is used expertly to advance the idea of Sati as the free and Absolute power. *Annadā Mangal* is also consulted to demonstrate how iva understands Sati as the World Mother and, that the corpse is as much Sati as the *Divine Mother*. Focusing on the embodied Sati, the author essentially cancels Spivak's remark of "sanctioned suicide" (37), settling the Sati-Shadow Sati debate with flair. In fact, his painstaking research has unearthed vital textual evidence, that of Neela Bhattacharya Saxena's, which points out how Shiva himself forbids widow immolation.

The author is efficient at dethroning Sati from the homogenous, subaltern status that Spivak has attempted to assign her and instead, poses a fundamental question-problem: Are we ready to see Sati "as the emblem of the "feminism of classical Hinduism" (38)? Looking at *Mahābhāgavata*, he also emphasizes that Sati is not *pativrātā* but instead, a paradox of power that is uncontrollable and at the same time, in control. He mentions a string of actions wherein Sati is not a passive observant but a force that acts, whether it is by choosing to enter Shiva's life or ascending the pyre as an "embodied wife." Mukhopadhyay comes back to the connection between the corpse and the self, something that can never be separated completely. Sati's case is that of a perpetual physical presence as, unlike a corpse, her body has not been burnt but scattered. This physical presence creates a perpetuated existence that is loved and preserved in memory. But that is not all, the Sati *pithas* become concrete evidence of Sati's self-assertion, as opposed to the reiterated image of Sati as an ideal wife ascending the pyre. The *stbals*, then, become a sight for celebrating the agency of Sati, not the subdued sacrifice of a wife. In *Dismemberment as pluralization*, the author talks of the two aspects of the dismembered trope. The liberatory one, which focuses on the unbounded body destabilizing not only the image of the body but that of social order giving way to a "horizontal cartography," places Sati as the "deathless Mother of the Universe."

The second trope is of dismemberment as pluralisation, which does not view dismemberment as fragmentation but as pluralisation of Sati accompanied by the self-expansion of iva. The corporeal divide between Sati and iva gives way to the arrival of Parvati and instead of closure, the narrative of Sati *pithas* continues the story in a loop like structure. This narrative presents iva in a new light: temporally situated/meditative iva as well as a passionate iva frozen in time in his pluralistic form, expanding himself to preserve a love that is erotic as well as spiritual. Although the akti Pithas focus on dismemberment, they celebrate the holiness of the dismembered parts as well and the union of the plural-selves of Sati and iva.

In *The Shakti Pithas*, the author points out that the Devi's energy, unlike Shiva's, continues to be her essence both in life and in death (which he refers to as "Devi-as-corpse" (72)). Citing an anecdote from Bharatchandra's *Annadā Mangal* and the *Bṛihadbārmapurāṇa* on how the linga-yoni myth was created in the first place, he interprets it as "prefiguring the active corpse of Sati, and how pivotal a role it plays in our understanding of the larger philosophy of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Philosophically speaking, the spirituo-moral examination that the Devi undertakes and the choice that she settles, for invites a broader opinion – deification (the balance struck between the individual deity and the public avowal of his/her accomplishment), under all circumstances, is a

positively inclined struggle, rather than a settled fact between *deitizing* (continuous assertion of the entity that the deity is) and *deitification* (the objective approval or acceptance of the deity's right to evolve into higher virtues of the same form).¹

As the author demonstrates in Spinozean terminology later in the chapter, the energy-entity of Sati's corpse stands for the simultaneous existence of *natura naturata* (the permanent, created characteristic of nature) and *natura naturans* (incremental naturing of the nature that will be), thus justifying their coterminous being (76). In response to Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's comment on the linga-yoni myth, Mukhopadhyay charts two inconsistencies in her criticism that I find admirable: first, the "erotic motif" can be understood as a trope that "successfully problematizes the epistemologies (I think cosmologies is a more accurate word here) of life and death, as the corpse-turned-yoni may represent not just the "strong tie between life and death" but also the porous border between death and life" (73), and second: while Sati may or may not be a subject of "erotic death", her corpse that is capable of being a *yoni* can continue symbolizing a corpse while being able to "emerge as a birth-giver" (73). As the clarification follows immediately after, her body, from a philosophical perspective, is always *existent* (75). This assertion is furthered when Mukhopadhyay re-reads Rana P. B. Singh's unidimensional understanding of akti pithas by remarking that each of the 51 pithas are in fact a "microcosmic manifestation of Her" (80-81), instead of being representative of partial wholeness. This is carried forward into *Shava Sādhana* where the linga-yoni complex interpenetrates into the larger philosophical domain of Puruṣa, Prakṛti and Pralaya (86), and that the yoni is "the active womb that has an agential role to play in the emergence of the *linga* and not otherwise.

While applauding June McDaniel's assessment of the relationship between the *Sādhaka*, the Devi and the Corpse, Mukhopadhyay finds it behovely to mention that her study overlooks among other things some important aspects of religion: the *sui generis* status of Hinduism in its interpretation of death and the soul, and that the Devi's powers "should not be seen as an external intervention but rather as an internal reorganization of Shakti" (92). The myth of the Sati pithas, through Sri Aurobindo, foregrounds a "theo-aesthetics of fragmentation" (100), where Prakṛti willingly sacrifices her being so that "unenlightened beings", through the practice itself, can uplift themselves spiritually. In perhaps the most poetical line recorded in this book, the author puts forth the penultimate argument of his thesis: "Nature is both the womb and tomb, the motion of life and the stasis of death, the continuum of living and dying beings" (104). To sum up, if the reader can willingly ignore all the Sanskrit diacritical marks missing in the book and a few printing errors (pp. 77, 100, etc.), it is most definitely a must-read for academic scholars worldwide.

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Notes

¹ That Shiva wins the prize for true devotion is an act of defiance against the implied covenants of aesthetics. In the words of P. B. Shelley: To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite/ To forgive wrongs darker than death or night/ To defy power, which seems omnipotent/ To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates/ From its own wreck the thing it contemplates. (*Prometheus Unbound*, IV: 570-74)