Book Reviews

Rocio Montoro, *Chick Lit: The Stylistics of Cappuccino Fiction* (New York and London, Bloomsbury, 2012); pp. 253; paperback; ISBN 978-1-4725-2718-9

Chick Lit: The Stylistics of Cappuccino Fiction is a curious work that analyses the popular literary subgenre of 'chick lit' (romance fiction that is largely written by women, about women, and for women readers) using the theoretical insights and techniques of language analysis of the academic discipline of linguistics. The result is definitely of more interest to linguistics scholars than to *aficionados* of modern romance novels. Montoro's "Introduction" sets out the historical context of chick lit, which is generally said to have become a phenomenon in 1996, with the publication of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary*. Chick lit is then related to older forms of romantic fiction (for example, Jane Austen), and various offshoots ('lad lit', 'hen lit', and 'tart noir', the last of which is a chick lit meets crime novel hybrid, and so on). Chapter 2, "The Packaging," analyses the cover art and type-faces using the model of multimodal stylistics, drawing attention to the pastel shades (especially pink), curly extravagant fonts, and particular motifs (high-heeled shoes, handbags, and so on. For example, the cover of Maggie Alderson's *Pants on Fire* (2000) depicts the heroine, Georgia Abbott, "wearing rather short, bright pink hotpants … walking along a city street with a bottle of … champagne in one hand and a bright fuschia cowboy hat in the other " (p. 32) The chapter also examines the iconic cover of *Bridget Jones' Diary*, which is quite different; it features a photograph, not sketch art, sepia tints, and a plain *sans serif* font.

Chapter 3, "Who is the 'Chick' in Chick Lit," explore the qualities of heroines of such novels; their obsession with their appearance (and in particular, weight), alcohol consumption, consumerist habits, emotional neediness and lack of self-confidence, concern re having or not having boyfriends, female friendships, and their ambiguous relationship with (or deliberate tendency to misunderstand) feminism. This chapter features a large number of tables in which the language of a range of chick lit novels is analysed using corpus stylistics. Chapter 4, "Chick Lit in Context," is focused on two issues; the relationship of chick lit to feminism, and the subgenre's connections to other forms of romance fiction. Different types of novels are examined, including the 'series-embedded' model of Mills and Boon (that publishes separate series such as 'Blaze', 'Medical', 'Desire' and 'Historical') and the more 'respectable' stand-alone novels of authors including Marian Keyes, Jenny Colgan, and Adele Parks. The chapter is very dry reading, largely

due to the extensive use of transitivity analysis, which is "the grammatical system that projects experiential meaning as defined in Systemic Functional Linguistics" (p. 104). Nonetheless, some interesting observations regarding the representation of mental processes in chick lit, and the presentation of direct speech, are made.

Chapter 5, "The Chick Lit Reader," explores current scholarly approaches to the emotions and the 'language of evaluation' in respect to chick lit. Montoro uses book clubs and blogs to examine why women read chick lit, whether they draw distinctions between certain authors and works (for example, regarding some examples of the genre as 'trash' but according genuine quality to some writers, most often – it seems – Marian Keyes), and how their evaluations are framed in language. There are numerous tables and charts and the quantitative data from the textual analysis is brought into conversation with the qualitative data that Montoro collected from a small sample of informants. Chapter 6, "Concluding Remarks," revisits chick lit's status as 'cappuccino fiction' (with its twin referents of comfort and 'froth'), and links it to other forms of recreational interest in the contemporary West, such as cuisine and shopping, in which what matters is not so much that the choices women make are high quality, but simply that they have choice in the first place. Montoro's *Chick Lit: The Stylistics of Cappuccino Fiction* is an original contribution to the field and of (admittedly limited) interest to those working in literary studies and popular culture studies.

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Judith Godden, *Australia's Controversial Matron: Gwen Burbidge and Nursing Reform* (Burwood, NSW: College of Nursing, 2011); pp. i + 357; paperback; ISBN: 978-1-921375-49-1

Judith Godden's portrait of Gwen Burbidge, the Matron of the Queen's Memorial Infectious Diseases Hospital, commonly known as Fairfield Hospital, Melbourne from 1939 to 1960 is the second book to demonstrate the difficult of nursing reform in Australia. Her previous portrait of the first Nightingale trained matron in Australia in *Lucy Osburn, A Lady Displaced: Florence Nightingale's Envoy to Australia*, published in 2006 illustrated the difficulties of instituting nursing training at Sydney Hospital in the 1860's. Now Godden turns to the mid-twentieth century to explore the difficulties of placing nursing education in a professional context.

Gwen Burbidge's efforts to reform nursing education are described by her nephew, Richard Burbidge QC, in the Foreword as engaging student nurses intellectually, asking them to explore why nursing instructions 'made practical sense' (p.ii). In line with her nephew's view, Burbidge can be seen as an early advocate for nursing education, rather than the narrower concept of nursing training introduced by Osburn. Yet, as Godden says, she faced the dilemmas still present in healthcare today: how do you provide an effective nursing workforce in a cost efficient manner? This biography has presented Godden with an opportunity to explore nursing history and changes to the wider Australian community through Burbidge's career.

Burbidge's biography begins with an examination of the training she received at (Royal) Melbourne Hospital commencing in 1925 under the 'formidable' matron Jane Bell (p.5). The emphasis of nursing training at the time was the development of character and integrity through 'unquestioning obedience, strict discipline, self-sacrifice and hardship' (p.6). The description of the nurse's duties and working conditions provides a lively picture of the struggles faced by the trainee nurses during this period and is a contrast to the educational opportunities pursued by Burbidge and her own program of reform.

Burbidge's interest in nursing education began at the Royal Melbourne when she was appointed the PTS (Preliminary Training School) Sister Tutor in 1930. Burbidge's first taste of teaching involved dictating basic procedures which were written down verbatim by the trainee nurses and then checked for accuracy by Burbidge. The matron, Jane Bell, insisted that no part of the notes dictated to the trainees were to be altered. However, Burbidge's next appointment as PTS Sister Tutor at The Alfred Hospital in 1933 allowed her to reform the PTS. One of her major achievements during this period was the publication of the first Australian nursing textbook, *Lectures for Nurses*, in 1935. This was also the same year that Burbidge began she own tertiary education, enrolling in Psychology and Methods in Teaching in a new diploma-level course for nurses. However, after completing the first year, Burbidge set her sights on greater educational attainments and travelled to England where she completed a Diploma in Nursing from King's College and gained valuable work experience that would fuel her reforms at Fairfield Hospital.

Fairfield Hospital was a challenging environment because infectious disease nursing was considered to be especially difficult. Not only was there the fear of infection, there was a constant 'feeling of hopelessness and death' associated with this type of nursing (p.73). Patients remained on bed rest for extended periods, thereby adding to the nursing workload. Burbidge began her reform process with a makeover of the hospital and the appointment of a nurse-

dietitian, reflecting new scientific thinking about the importance of diet. She also improved hospital food and food services, and the need to educate patients about what constituted good dietary habits. There were further improvements in domestic services and in the working conditions of the nurses, such as the provision and laundering of uniforms, suitable furnishings for the rooms in the nurses' home and the reorganisation of nurses' meals so they could use the nurses' dining room.

Later attempts at healthcare and nursing reforms were driven by Burbidge's experience as on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow in the USA and Canada in the late 1940s. The difficulties and failure to implement much of what she had learned on this fellowship is discussed throughout the second half of the book and demonstrate how hard it is to change practices in healthcare. Perhaps frustratingly for Burbidge, many of her proposed reforms were implemented in healthcare facilities after her retirement, but discussions of the politics found in the upper levels of the nursing hierarchy show how conservative the nursing profession can be.

This is a fascinating book that will be of interest to a wide and general readership because it does give a lively and informative depiction of healthcare in the mid-twentieth century. It is well written and easy to read. However, for nurses this is a book that celebrates a hero of the profession, a nurse who challenged assumptions and although she may not have been successful in all her reforms at Fairfield Hospital, these reforms did become commonplace in nursing following her retirement. Nurses will easily recognise Burbidge's struggles in their own quest for healthcare improvement today.

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Michael Kelly, *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demands of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. xxii + 242; Hardback; ISBN 978-0-231-15292-1

In *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demands of Art*, Professor Michael Kelly (from the University of North Carolina) identifies five main themes to explore and illustrate the recent mutations of aesthetics and art theory since mid-twentieth century. His philosophical demonstration draws from some key thinkers who are often quoted, celebrated and convened in Anglo-Saxon Art Theory: Jacques Rancière, John Dewey, Susan Sontag's book *On Photography*

(1977), Arthur Danto, plus a reflection on Doris Salcedo's thoughts about watching others' suffering as it is represented in art (see pp. 82, 135). One of the main questions brought forward here asks whether twenty-first century art should be aesthetical, moral, political, or politically-oriented? Another question asks whether art can satisfy all of these trends simultaneously? In other words, must art, and therefore artists and art theoreticians choose between artworks that are considered as either aesthetical (that is, made to create an artistic emotion) or moral-politics driven (to make people aware of issues)?

In his preface, the author claims there is nowadays an anti-aesthetic stance that has become "canonical," which he definitely condemns: "to deny aesthetics is to deny art because no work of art can be produced, experienced, or judged without some kind of aesthetics" (p. xviii). In the first pages, Kelly mentions a couple of authors who highlighted the apparent aesthetic withdrawal and the "negation of art" (p. 9). However, he adds an accurate counterargument into the debate seemingly opposing artists and theoreticians: "But such determination can come only from the aesthetic strategies enacted by artists, not from the philosophical arguments of theorists" (p. 9). Here, aesthetics is conceived by Kelly as "critical thinking about the affective, cognitive, moral, political, technological, and other historical conditions constitutive of the production, experience, and judgment of art" (p. xviii).

Definitely not for newcomers but rather for graduate students in aesthetics who are already familiar with the aforementioned authors, *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demands of Art* provides a deep discussion about art theory and aesthetics, but it does not aim to provide a new aesthetic theory as such. It rather criticizes some recent positions in the field of philosophy of art and the disappearance (or mutation) of morals in twentieth and twenty-first century art. The reflection about the status of art remains central: "A main goal of aesthetics today… is to explain how the transformation of demands *on* art to demands *by* art is already a reality in some contemporary art" (p. 22). The author's theoretical position oscillates between modernism and post-modernism, questioning both trends alternatively, for example in the context of Pop Art during the 1960s, when postmodernism in art was not a common discourse in philosophy and aesthetics (p. 52). Regarding Kelly's style, one should note this is an essay written in the first person where the author often uses the word "I" (see pp. 12, 13, 26, 83, 124, 125, and 156).

Appearing in the "Columbia Themes in Philosophy, Social Criticism, and the Arts" Book Series, this *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demands of Art* can be situated at the conjunction of aesthetics, art theory and ethics, especially in its discussion about the spectacle of suffering as represented in contemporary art. Kelly writes meticulously and obviously

masters his topic, and therefore I was disappointed not to find footnotes but instead endnotes; because his numerous endnotes are in themselves very instructive. The quality and relevance of these endnotes is the strong point of this book. For example, Kelly notes that Rancière argued "The proliferation of voices denouncing the crisis of art or its fatal capture by discourse, the pervasiveness of the spectacle of the death of the image, suffice to indicate that a battle fought yesterday over the promises of emancipation and the illusions and disillusions of history continues today on aesthetic terrain" (p. 215).

Even though it is not groundbreaking, Kelly's newest contribution is not without merits, but it owes much to other thinkers from Rancière to Sontag. The main weakness of this book is that it reads like four separate essays; the absence of a conclusion in this essay is a real disappointment. As professors often tell their students, each demonstration needs a recapitulation and there is none to be found here in this book. Although not essential for university libraries, *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demands of Art* will be useful for scholars in philosophy who are reflecting on the links between aesthetics and beauty in contemporary art. But sociologists, art historians and curators should look elsewhere for a discussion on "the demands of art".

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Jeannette Bicknell, *Why Music Moves Us* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); pp xviii + 165; Paperback; ISBN 978-0-230-20990-9

In *Why Music Moves Us* Jeanette Bicknell undertakes the difficult task of examining why music arouses strong emotional responses in listeners. Drawing on studies on aesthetics and music in fields of philosophy, experimental psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, ethology, and the social sciences, Bicknell admirably attempts to unite a range of perspectives on the topic, piecing together a larger puzzle that might explain how and why music effects listeners as it does. Her central argument is that musical experience is intrinsically social, rather than personal, in that it creates and reinforces social bonds. Even so-called 'private' musical experiences carry social meaning. With recourse to neurobiological studies Bicknell shows how music affects the body, brain and mind in ways that connect listeners in groups, and take solitary listeners out of themselves temporarily. In this way Bicknell argues against the widespread conviction among musicologists that the correct philosophical approach to understanding music is to concentrate on the 'music itself', setting

aside 'extra-musical' factors such as the lyrics of songs, associations prompted by certain musical works, or the social and material context of listening.

In her first chapter Bicknell explores different notions of the physical and psychological effects of music on living things, which have received much attention through history. She highlights key ideas found in a variety of ancient texts, cultures and religious traditions about music's capacity to provoke strong emotions and trance states, its influence on the soul, its power over evil spirits, its connection to the divine, and its characterisation as sublime. It is likely that many of these ideas will already by familiar to readers. The second chapter goes much further in assessing the philosophical concept of the sublime and its relationship to music. Bicknell tracks its progression from ancient times through the eighteenth century, when it was a prominent topic in philosophy, up to its peak in the late nineteenth century. After comparing different interpretations of the concept in the works of Longinus, Edmund Burke, and Immanuel Kant, Bicknell shows that the concept retains for these thinkers the key characteristic or conviction that sublime objects and the responses they provoke subvert reason and take down one's defences.

The third chapter gives a number of retrospective first-person accounts of strong emotional responses to music of a variety of genres. Although these responses clearly reflect listeners' backgrounds and musical tastes, Bicknell hones in on commonalities between responses, such as physical reactions like crying and chills, and a general feeling of being overcome by the music. She links her finds in the previous chapter with this data, demonstrating how the key characteristic commonly given to the sublime, as stated above, can be found in listeners' accounts of their responses to music. However, Bicknell admits that so far, no satisfying conclusions can be made about music and the emotions. For this reason she takes a fresh approach to her question of why music moves us in the following chapter.

The fourth chapter considers specific musical works as Bicknell questions whether some works are more likely than others to provoke strong emotional responses. For example, Bicknell cites Tchaikovsky's *Pathetique*, the symphonies of Mahler and Beethoven, Albinoni's Adagio, Bach's St Matthew Passion, Mozart's "Tuba Mirus" from his Requiem, and Whitney Houston's rendition of "I Will Always love You." She explores common structural features in these works, such as melodic appoggiaturas and harmonic movements through the cycle of fifths to the tonic, though she concedes that these cannot fully explain the phenomenon of why these works invoke particularly strong emotional responses in listeners. Nothing definitive is achieved in this chapter as Bicknell concludes that emotional responses to music cannot be fully explained by the features of the music itself. A similarly

disappointing conclusion is made in the fifth chapter, which examines cognitive, expressive-aesthetic and reductive explanations regarding why music elicits such strong emotional responses. Ultimately none of these explanations are wholly satisfying.

Bicknell's own arguments emerge in the sixth chapter, which is the most solid, convincing and original section of the book. Here she demonstrates how even a solitary experience listening to music can best be conceived as a social phenomenon. In line with Plato and Aristotle, Bicknell defines human beings as inherently social animals that cannot exist apart from a social order. She then emphasises the notion that music is a human product, before exploring links between music and social bonding among both humans and other animals. Through this chapter Bicknell builds the case that the social character of music accounts for its capacity to arouse experiences of the sublime in listeners. She argues that music affects the body and mind in ways that both connect listeners in groups and take solitary listeners out of themselves; it is within social relations that we undergo some of our strongest and most significant emotional experiences. The chapter ends with a discussion of intimacy and of the role intimacy might play in art and music appreciation. The final two chapters evaluate links between music and morality, and explore the relationship between the sublime, beauty, artistic value and emotion in music, and what it means when music is designated 'profound'. In these chapters Bicknell draws together and evaluates discoveries and discussions from previous chapters.

In *Why Music Moves Us* Bicknell energetically tackles the notoriously difficult task of making sense of music's effects on our emotions; what she calls 'strong emotional' and 'sublime' responses to music. Bicknell's examination is comprehensive and ambitious, though there are many more questions than answers in her book and one comes away from it still asking the same question of why music moves us. Bicknell's core argument is that music is intimately connected with our emotional repertoire and cognitive skills, but this does not fully address the topic at hand, which continues, intriguingly, to remain too elusive and intangible for definitive answers.

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Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); pp. x + 342; Paperback; 978-0-19-926930-3

This is, for anyone interested in the history of travel writing, a terrifically interesting book. More than this, however, this book provides some useful insights to the history of ideas about otherness, exploration, and science. Of course, as should be clear from the title of the volume is that Leask is concerned with travel writing, not the travel practices of travellers. Even where there might have been significant disconnections between what was done and what was written, Leask is careful to remind the reader that the focus is upon the discourse, not the embodied practice. While at first a little disappointing, Leask quickly takes the reader to an anteroom full of compelling questions that cause this feeling to disappear. The picture painted from the outset is that the genre of travel writing, as tentative and nebulose as it was, struggled with the tension between literary and scientific discourses then being aligned against each other.

The popularity of books about voyaging and travelling reflected the expansionist drive of the twins, empire and commerce. To this end Leask takes an unexpected turn in his analysis of travel literature. In the first chapter Leask draws upon the work of Bruno Latour to conceptualise the centre-periphery epistemology and encounter of 'vulnerable colonial' with 'authoritative native' upon which so much travel writing was dependent. It is Latour's 'cycle of accumulation' from *Science in Action* (1987) that Leask borrows, and the application is intriguing. Indeed the combination of sociology and literary analysis is intriguingly delicious, setting the rest of the book up as an investigation of not simply the genre of travel writing in Western Europe, but a critique of the social dynamics between the writers and the written.

Egypt, of course, features large in the field of Romantic travel literature. Chapter 2 looks at Scottish traveller James Bruce's multivolume account of his travels in Africa in search of the source of the Nile. The work appeared, so we learn, after Bruce's disenfranchisement at the hands of critics, and following the death of his second wife. While in Chapter 6 we learn of the drive behind Alexander von Humboldt's five year journey in South America with Amié Bonpland. Expressing the hunger of the era for curiosity, wonder, and scientific discovery (or at least affect), we learn that Humboldt saw in the contemplation of the natural world an escape from the international strife of a then war-torn Europe. The chapter, notes Leask, "is concerned with this constitutive tension in Humboldt's travel writing, a sophisticated version of the struggle between literary modes of travel writing and 'geographical narrative'" (p. 245) which

characterises the tension of the whole book. Quoting from Humboldt's later Cosmos, Leask depicts Humboldt as at seeking to create an aesthetic scientific account of lush, large tropical biota, more noble and grand that was an attempt to account for a supposed link between morality and the physical world. Indeed, "in the Humboltdtian version of romantic imagination, aesthetic and emotional responses to natural phenomena counted as data" (p. 248). Humboldt, already a complex character, is cast as a romantic moreso than he is a scientist.

I admit that I struggled to find much to dislike about this book; it is comparative but without being trite; it is comprehensive but without losing pace or interest; it is erudite and yet eminently readable. Some readers may find there to be too much overlap with other volumes on travel writing; Holland and Huggan's (1998) *Tourists with Typewriters* or Mary Lousie Pratt's (1992) *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* in particular. However, Leask's focus upon scientific exploration and in particular on the tension in the subsequent texts between literary narrative and aesthetics, wonder, curiosity, and the scientific method is what marks it as a distinct and important contribution. However, Leask's claim in the introduction that he was not interested in the embodied practice of travel is also proved somewhat false, following the amount of explanation of acts of travel required to make the argument. It is a rather odd statement, in hindsight, that was perhaps meant to refer to cultures of travelling than travels per se.

As much as anything, this book illuminates the wealth of the travel writing genre, problematic and maligned as it has been in the wake of postcolonial critiques. It makes one want to pick up the laptop and explore the websites of the world's booksellers, looking for a monograph about distant lands. The fact this is a reprint of the original 2002 publication is a testament to the value of the work.

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Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics, and Materiality*, Oxford and New York, Berg, 2005; vii and 189 pages; paperback; ISBN 13-978-184520-077-0; RRP ?.

This brief and strangely beautiful book considers the place of the ruined building in the contemporary British landscape. In Chapter 1, 'Introduction', Tim Edensor recalls a crumbling country house and garden in which he played

as a child. The site has now been transformed, 'a guarded private estate where the mansion and surrounding buildings have been adapted into expensive flats' (p. 3). The sense of loss evoked by the ruined house is thus double; the author regrets both the elegant mansion it once was, and also the overgrown ruin that was the site of his youthful leisure. In five chapters the reader is introduced to a range of different industrial ruins, to which Edensor journeyed, all richly illustrated in black and white plates, that are mysteriously uncaptioned, rendering them all jointly anonymous, and filled with a certain essential power, as if each embodied the core of what ruination means.

Chapter 2, 'The Contemporary Use of Industrial Ruins', discusses the ways that ruins avoid regimes of planning and order, and are used for illegal, subcultural, and other illicit or semi-licit purposes (plunder, adventurous play, home-making in the for m of 'squats', and as intentional communities of homeless, 'greenies', artists, and others). A contrast is drawn between the Romantic representation of ruins and the ways in which Western industrial ruins have been co-opted by film makers to serve as the bombed-out landscapes of war-time films (a Vietnam film, *Full Metal Jacket* by Stanley Kubrick was shot in and around a 1930s gasworks at Beckton, on the Thames). Industrial ruins can also become unintended nature reserves and be gradually re-absorbed into the landscape.

Chapter 3, 'Ruins and the Dis-Ordering of Space', issues a challenge to what the author terms 'normative, regulatory modes of perception' (p. 57), and argues that capitalist modernity is geared to the production of waste, such that working factories produce 'stuff' deemed useful, whereas ruins are characterised by stuff that is no longer useful. Ruined factories and associated sites create 'disorderly aesthetics' (pp. 72-79) and make possible new sensations and experiences. Ruins are sensually saturating, in that their lack of perceived order overwhelms the experiencer. Chapter 4, 'Materiality in the Run: Waste, Excess, and Sensuality', continues this line of reasoning, exploring how discarded industrial items may be re-housed in museums, and may take on a new value even if that does not occur. Ruins are aggressively material; dust, dirt, rust, rot, stagnant water, spilled oil, and other forms of what Mary Douglas termed 'matter out of place' (p. 108) abound in them

Chapter 5, 'The Spaces of Memory and the Ghosts of Dereliction', focuses on the pluralities of time that are evident in ruined spaces. Memory conjures the former uses, and objects embody history. Museology and reclamation of urban spaces are discussed as ways that capitalist modernity enforces the 'eternal present' and the 'nostalgia industry' is identified as a site of producing conformity in the remembrance of the past (p. 127). The heritage industry produces a history that is fixed and static, as opposed to the living

dynamism of ruins and the processes of ruination. As such ruins can summon what Edensor calls 'involuntary memory' and draw attention to the unfamiliarity and constructed nature of the hitherto familiar. Ruins render the signs of industrial capitalism indecipherable and have the capacity to shatter the myth of constant progress. They are to be celebrated as potential agents of liberation, harbingers of enlightenment. Edensor's book is thought-provoking, beautiful, and unexpected. It is highly to be praised and deserves the widest possible readership. I recommend it unreservedly.

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Martha P. Nochimson, *David Lynch Swerves: uncertainty from Lost Highway to Inland Empire* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013); pp. ix + 275; ISBN: 978-0-292-72295-8

David Lynch Swerves provides imaginative possibilities for interpreting Lynch's films from *Lost Highway* to *Inland Empire* through Lynch's fascination with uncertainty theory, and Vedantic philosophy. Much previous Lynch criticism has focused on Jungian readings of the surreal nature of his oeuvre; however, Nochimson's research, particularly her extended conversations with Lynch, have led her to see his filmic ambiguities and 'uncertainty' in terms of quantum mechanics more than in the psychological relationship between dreaming and waking reality. Nochimson stresses, however, that Lynch's 'second-stage' films 'are not *about* Hindu religion and/or modern physics' (pxv.), but may be read through those frames of reference.

Nochimson points out how Lynch's representation of mystery is grounded in a literal reality, that for him, matter: its construction, its mystery, its changeability, is enigmatic enough it itself. Regardless of the influence of Hindu religion on his worldview, this championing of the wonder of materiality bears some resemblance to the atheist argument against the need for the supernatural (that is, why would one need spirits and gods when matter is already so strange and multifarious?). Nochimson refers to Lynch's invocation of the wondrousness to be found in the flux of matter as part of a unified cosmos. Further, Lynch himself contends in interview (disc 2, *Lost Highway*, 1997, Roadshow Entertainment) that dreams, memories, psychological fugue states, abstractions, threshold moments, intimations of the ineffable have the same value - and are as real - as the most banal aspects of quotidian life.

Nochimson brings all this to our attention in her analysis of Lynch's focus on the interrelationship of inner and outer realities, and in the interlinking of material and physical.

David Lynch Swerves displays a fascination with what Nochimson reads as representations of the way in which quantum mechanics seems to violate the logic of cause and effect. It does seem fair to read Lynch's imagery this way; indeed it profoundly enriches the experience of watching his films, at least for this viewer. But Nochimson does seem to draw rather a long bow when discussing *The Straight Story*, which deviates from typically Lynchian temporal reversals, digressions, and 'forays into the mystery of space' (p61), in being quite a straightforward, linear narrative. Nochimson contends that for Lynch, 'linearity is miraculous', and that although there is no apparent twist, the twist is nonetheless there, inhering in the passion with which he has embraced this 'straight' tale. This is not entirely convincing, as one might argue that it is not passion that makes a straight story more or less intricate.

However, when Nochimson compares entangled particles with 'mysterious entanglements in the "neurotic fairy tale world" ' of Hollywood, in *Mulholland Dr.*, the strength of her thesis is apparent, and her insistence that 'we need to avoid imposing certainties of our invention on situations that are intentionally sketchily defined' parallels the warning that certain Lynch characters (eg. 'Betty' in *Mulholland Dr*., 'Fred', in *Lost Highway*) fail to heed. Rather than embracing the strangeness of reality, these characters feel compelled to maintain the illusion of the possibility of control. Similarly, the viewer is abjured to forgo control: 'if we "let go" we enter into the film Lynch made for us'. (p97)

Throughout *David Lynch Swerves*, Nochimson notes the particular moral sensibility that permeates Lynch's worldview. Where other critics have seen physical transformations and metamorphoses of characters as symptoms of their delusions, Nochimson claims that Lynch's 'ideal spectator' would see such manifestations as potentially enabling 'sudden eruptions of freedom'. (p31) To refuse such redemptive opportunities - to cross that liminal threshold; to open-heartedly respond to that mystery - she presents as Lynch's illustration of both imaginative and moral failure.

However, hallmark Lynchian strategies such as non-linear structure and eerie manipulations of space, time and nature - along with his concern with possibilities for transformation, his collisions of banal reality and dream, sweetness and monstrosity - are apparent also in his earlier pre-'Swerve' work, from *Elephant Man*, through *Twin Peaks* and *Wild at Heart*. And although this book comments insightfully on the latter part of Lynch's oeuvre and clearly articulates ways in which his Vedic mapping of the world and his interest in

physics informs his work, one might question whether there actually is such a strong change of direction into a 'second stage'. Perhaps the latter films demonstrate, rather than a departure or a 'swerve', a more intense engagement with 'strange' on levels that indeed do defy psychological interpretation. Indeed, as Lynch mentions in interview, ideas and fragments of ideas transfer themselves from earlier through to later works in a (delightfully unreliable) progression.

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Geir Farner, *Literary Fiction: The Ways We Read Narrative Literature* (New York and London, Bloomsbury, 2014); pp. x + 394; paperback; ISBN 978-1-6235-6024-9

Geir Farner's *Literary Fiction: The Ways We Read Narrative Literature* is a very detailed work that both synthesises older approaches to reading literature and attempts (successfully, in the main) to integrate newer, cognitivist approaches to the topic. Farner's opening gambit is a rumination on the difficulties surrounding the term 'fiction'; for example, how does it relate to narrative more broadly, what does it mean to say that fiction is non-referential (to what?), and what of texts that embed historical or otherwise real elements into fictions? These admittedly tough questions are generally resolved using the baseline that a) fiction does not require extra-textual verification, and b) that differing truth-claims accompany the two types of texts. In Chapter 3, he tackles how fictions are communicated to readers (with careful restatement of theoretical positions involving the signifier, signified, and referent, compared to newer models that ask about plot, story, narrative and discourse). The specific roles played by the author, the narrator – whether an individual character or an 'omniscient' speaking voice that is not a character - characters, and the reader who puts all the elements together and receives the cognitive content of the novel. Cognitive content is important, as it has been hypothesised that humans enjoy reading stories because they are based on the 'real world' and engage readers (and listeners in oral cultures) to rehearse and improve knowledge of other individuals and the society in which they live.

Chapter 4 is titled 'The Cognitive and Aesthetic Dimension' is of particular interest as many literary critics have de-emphasised the aesthetic dimensions of literature (vis a vis other artistic modes), and instead foregrounded the cognitive dimensions. Yet 'literary fiction' is a form that to

depends somewhat on the idea that it is superior to popular fiction, in terms of its beauty of language, formal experimentation, or noble and serious subject matter (to name but a few things that are invoked as separating 'highbrow' novels from bestsellers). Farner is admirably clear when separating out philosophical notions about aesthetics, noting that there is a great difference between the use of aesthetic 'when it indicates an artefact's belonging under the philosophical discipline *aesthetics*, that is, *art*' and when it is applied to the response that the viewer/reader has to the poem or painting, that is 'aesthetic *attention*/*attitude*/*experience*' (p. 80). He then interrogates the text, the action (plot or story), the mental model of reading fiction, and the cognitive qualities of fiction, as potentially possessing an aesthetic dimension. He concludes that the interplay of these multiple levels does not demonstrate that an aesthetic dimension must exist in literary fiction. He also notes that influential critics of the past like Roman Ingarden (1893-1970) assigned the aesthetic 'a major role in literature' because he failed to define the aesthetic (looseness of conception of the term led him to over-value it and to deny the cognitive dimension, which contemporary critics foreground at the expense of the aesthetic).

Chapters 5 to 14 treat separate aspects of the experience of reading literary fiction including theoretical problems that arise when: a) literary works are delimited (for example, the novel form rather than the epic poem form; b) their intention and message is interpreted by the reader; c) the role of the narrator is considered in detail; d) the structure of the action is analysed to determine the relationship between characters and the action (story); e) issues of voice that arise when studying both the temporal relations in a text and also the types of indirect communication that may be present (humour, irony, and so on); f) the questions of viewpoint that manifest when the different roles of narrator and author are interrogated; g) the frequency of certain events in the novel's action; h) the order in which information is provided to the reader; h) and questions of suspense and how it functions in narrative texts. The last two chapters address what the function of literary fiction is, and whether the act of evaluation of such fiction is inevitable, and if so, how to avoid entirely subjective (and theoretically invalid) evaluations. *Literary Fiction: The Ways We Read Narrative Literature* is highly recommended; it is informative for those readers seeking to acquaint themselves with the field of literary criticism, and similarly useful to those who are seeking a clear and authoritative study of the impact of newer cognitivist approaches to literature and the challenges they posit to traditional approaches to fiction, for both readers and scholars.

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Barbara Larson and Sabine Flach (eds), *Darwin, and Theories of Aesthetics and Cultural History* (Farnham, Ashgate 2013); ISBN: 9781409448709

With a new focus on the biological determinants of beauty being much in focus at the moment in the field of aesthetics, this present collection adds significantly to the debate on how culture as much as science is encouraging scholarship in this area. In her introduction Barbara Larson sets the stage of the book by reconsidering the aesthetic influences on Darwin himself through an historical examination of the connections between the Midland and Scottish Enlightenments with a focus on Burke's and Reynold's influence on Darwin. The later's assertion that in the process of natural selection the female will choose the most "beautiful" male is the link required to try to understand further the evolutionary principals behind beauty, through to questions relating to camoflage and eugenics as evolutionary choices. The author also weaves into her story recent work done by the likes of Lisa Zunshine on the development of literature and its possible evolutionary/aesthetic scope. These themes Larson follows up in her initial chapter on Burke and the possibility of a biologically-determined sublime.

In the second chapter Laurence Shafe ('Why is the Peacock's Tail so Beautiful') builds a lineage of thinkers, such as Ruskin, who have considered the interplay between beauty, morality, and biology in their considerations of the beauty of the peacock's tail. What begins to emerge, and possibly haunt this book is the goal of somehow being able to precisely use hard science to flesh out, as it were, a certain sense of what is beautiful. Shafe's article, however, does more to show that, in the nineteenth century, this was still an emergent hope. Marsha Morton's contribution ('Art's Contest with Nature: Darwin, Haekel, and the Scientific Art History of Alois Riegel') examines Austrian art historian Riegl's quest to balance evolutionary thought with his own theories of *Kunstwollen* or that which "art wants to do" given its reaction, in a Hegelian sense, to cultural givens and the *Zeitgeist*. She concludes by linking art's will as an evolutionary (although strongly cultural) reaction to the times. This thematic then flows quite naturally to chapter four. Here Larry Silver ('Cultural Selection and the Shape of Time') seeks to make a connection between the financial and social pressures of Holland and a very particular response in the evolution of Dutch art from the late medieval period into modernity. It is a speculatively delightful article, but I doubt its conclusions.

By chapter five ('The Evolution of Culture or the Cultural History of the Evolutionary Concept') Sigrid Weigel brings us into the twentieth century. She

begins her chapter with a discussion of Dawkin's 'meme' concept of which she writes,

> Without studying the media through which fashion or architectural production methods, for example, are communicated, Dawkins' paradigm of cultural evolution remains mired in a metaphorical attempt to describe the processes of cultural transmission using the image of biological reproduction (p.84).

Weigel then continues to study even more recent moves to link evolution and cultural development through a number of paradigms including systems theory. It is this theory which she believes is the most advanced link between culture and the evolutionary concept and provides readings of Riegl, Wuketits, Luhmann, and Fögen in this direction. In the following chapter ('Communicating Vessles: On the development of a Theory of representation in Darwin and Warburg') Sabine Flach compares usefully Warburg's developments of Darwin's ideas on expression and memory. Jan Söffner's 'On Mimicry in Dawin and Surrealism' is a delightful attempt to link culture and the game space of mimicry. Finally and fittingly Ellen K. Levy in 'Contemporary Art and the Aesthetics of Natural Selection' seeks to draw out influences by Darwin and his theory on some of the most recent artists' practices.

The book itself traces its heritage to two conferences. One held in Berlin in 2008 and the second in London in 2009. In this way the tome engages with recent German thinking on aesthetics and evolution that enunciates a sphere of work on aesthetics not always readily available in English. The chapters walk a fine line between discussing the cultural manifestations of possible biological determinants to beauty, and soundly documenting the uses of Darwin and his theory in aesthetics debates over the last two centuries. *Darwin and Theories of Aesthetics and Cultural History* makes a significant contribution to this field.

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Raphael Lataster, *There Was No Jesus, There Is No God: A Scholarly Examination of the Scientific, Historical, and Philosophical Arguments For Monotheism*, Self-Published, 2013; 190 pages; paperback; ISBN-13 978-14922-34418; RRP ?

While it is not customary to accord self-published works reviews in academic journals, this book by Raphael Lataster (a doctoral candidate at the University

of Sydney) merits consideration, in that it speaks to revived interest in the facticity of religion in general (and Christianity in particular) in the wake of the media phenomenon commonly termed the 'New Atheism'. Lataster's Master of Arts (Research) dissertation concerned general problems and specific flaws in the historical method usually applied to the 'quest for the historical Jesus' (as opposed to the 'Christ of faith'), in particular, the so-called 'criteria of authenticity' (p. 18). The argument, reproduced in the first part of *There Was No Jesus, There Is No God*, is that there are no primary sources for the historical Jesus (if a primary source is taken to mean an eyewitness account), and that it is more probable that the core of Christianity is a mythical, rather than a historical, Jesus. The published version has only a modicum of scholarly footnotes, and is cast in a conversational, rather than formally academic, tone. Further, the second part of the book looks forward to Lataster's doctoral research in the field of philosophy of religion, and considers the 'classic' arguments for the existence of God (coming to the – unsurprising – conclusion that they are inadequate).

There Was No Jesus, There Is No God: A Scholarly Examination of the Scientific, Historical, and Philosophical Arguments For Monotheism has proven very popular with skeptical audiences, being highly rated on Amazon (4.1/5 stars, with a majority of low-rating reviewers clearly having not read the book or being clear conservative Christians), and reaching the Number 1 spot on Amazon for 'religious philosophy', and the Number 2 spot for 'atheism', behind celebrated New Atheist Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (2006). One of the important selling points of Lataster's approach is that – unlike Dawkins, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens – he does not attack religion *per se*. The emphasis is on a critique of the evidentialist position with regard to the historicity of Jesus and the existence of a personal deity. Lataster has built up credibility through an appearance in person at a debate on the historical Jesus in Sydney in 2012 (online at http://www.pantheismunites.org/Articles.htm), and has a future appearance booked on the Skepticality site (a podcast repository linked to *Skeptic* magazine). The most important issue, however, for Religious Studies as a discipline, is how popular *There Was No Jesus, There Is No God* has proved to be with non-specialist readers.

The book has already sold several thousand copies, which far exceeds the traditional average sales of scholarly books. This has been achieved without support of a publishing house or sponsorship, and sales are ongoing. For the academic study of religion, New Atheism has rebooted the field of atheism studies and given significant impetus to the emerging area commonly called 'non-religion and secularity' studies. Within Religious Studies, there is a sense

that traditional philosophy of religion (the five 'classic' arguments, ontological, cosmological, teleological, moral, and the argument from religious experience) are old-fashioned and (perhaps) irrelevant, but among popular audiences these arguments are still interesting and explaining how and why they do not work as watertight 'proofs' is a valuable exercise in communication from the Academy to the wider world. Lataster's book is also commendably brief, expressed in very clear and unambiguous language, and possesses a warm tinge of humour and authorial self-deprecating. It is not difficult to see why *There Was No Jesus, There Is No God* has proved popular, and in the age of online publishing, social media, blogs, and YouTube, Lataster's approach to the dissemination of his work is a useful lesson for other postgraduate researchers thinking about the best way to build a public profile (and perhaps even a career).

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Cynthia Tompkins, *Experimental Latin American Cinema: History and Aesthetics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), pp. x + 294, ISBN 97801 95387841 (Hdbk).

In recounting the history and aesthetics of an experimental mode of cinema across Latin America, Tompkins presents a thesis about cinema and history that shows convergence and empathy with Jean-Luc Godard's notion of cinema as vocational pedagogical. At the core of Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1988 – 98), an eight-part video-sonic essay in montage that demonstrates the symbiosis and interdependence between cinema and the twentieth century, Godard laments what he sees as the ethical failure of cinema to attend and to record the greatest moral challenge of its era, the racism embedded at the dark heart of Western civilization that culminated in the Nazi genocide of Europe's Jewish and Roma populations, and the often lethal persecution of other racial and sexual minorities during World War Two. Like Godard, Tompkins recognises the concept of an idealised social and political role for cinema whose optimal expressive power resides in experimental techniques of montage. In short, an experimental cinema ought to actively resist hegemonic forms of classicism like the industrial Hollywood mode by showing a self-conscious commitment to registering the most urgent sites of contemporary inhumanity and social injustice, and hopefully precipitate revolutionary change through aesthetic radicalisation. Where Godard sees an abject moral failure by the cinema to meet its political and aesthetic obligations

during the European crisis of the 1930s and 40s, Tompkins offers a more optimistic reading of the history of avant-garde Latin American responses to pressing socio-political problems that reflects faith in the continuing potential for the different national cinema traditions of the region to effect revolutionary change in the formal and aesthetic criteria of creative cinema and in the experiential consciousness of film viewers.

Tompkins divides the book into six parts with an introduction. The intricate structure and framing of the argument is no doubt dictated by the complexities of covering such a broad selection of national cinemas and their peculiarities of genre and style. The discussion is arranged thematically with a strong emphasis on genre including neo-noir, the road movie, and what is termed "experimental pseudo-documentary" as prominent examples. Other categories include variations of the director as auteur, and the historical development and differentiation of national cinemas within a regional zone, i.e. Latin America, whose strategies of resistance to the cultural and political hegemon of the Hollywood industrial model of film production are presented by Tompkins as a unique series of independent but interconnected aesthetic responses.

Tompkins brings a keenly attuned visual acuity to her analyses of seventeen recent, experimental films by eleven different filmmakers from Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru between 1998 and 2010. What marks these films as experimental for Tompkins's study is the visible influence of the first (late 1920s – early 1930s) and second (1960s – 1970s) avant-gardes through "the deployment of montage as a paratactical structuring device", their similarities with certain features of Italian neorealism, the documentary, and what is termed "an anti-hegemonic stance regarding the industrial, Hollywood model" (p. 1). As Tompkins points out, while many Latin American films of the period share the conventions of documentary and neorealism, the difference for Tompkins's necessarily arbitrary sample is in the experimental deployment of a montage that results in breaks in causality. This key difference in turn gains purchase for Tompkins's reliance on Deleuze's definition of the "interval" as "a delay between an action and a reaction" (p. 1). As David Rodowick has suggested, and whom Tompkins quotes, this montage is understood broadly as more a logic of composition than a style of mere cutting (p. 1).

The tightly framed introduction provides a historic overview of developments in Latin American cinema from the early twentieth century and the global connections that it makes. Tompkins then offers a series of concise definitions of key terms such as montage and the documentary, before detailing their influence on the character of neorealism as an aesthetic of social change

that occurs most prominently in the New Argentine cinema and the Brazilian *Retomada* of the 1960s and 1970s. Tompkins's theoretical framework is resolutely Deleuzian and might possibly deter readers more accustomed to approaching the history and aesthetics of film through the various guises of so-called "SLAB theory" (Saussure-Lacan-Althusser-Barthes) associated with the neo-formalism of David Bordwell and Noël Carroll. This would be a pity because Tompkins's introduction provides a succinct account of Deleuze's key cinematic concepts as they pertain to her study; the apparent shift in the affective visual economy from the movement-image to the time-image most clearly identifiable for Deleuze in post-war Italian neorealism; a focus on genre as an effective framework "that allows for underscoring the inscription and subversion of established conventions" (p. 37).

In sum, Tompkins's book will have significant appeal to a postgraduate readership with a strong theoretical background in film as social and political critique. The value of this book lies in the transnational scope of its subject, and in the novel sophistication of its treatment of such well-worn theoretical tropes in film studies as "the neorealist aesthetic" and "the documentary", or the relationship between genre and social realist drama. The expansive subject material, its structural presentation, and the book's Deleuzian conceptual frame, makes for challenging reading and was, I suspect, a challenge but also a labour of love for its author.

Although the book undoubtedly increases our knowledge of its object, at times one meets with densities in expression that hinder the clear presentation of its ideas. The intricate structure and complexity of Tompkins's discussion of the experimental avant-garde in Latin American cinema, and its reliance on Deleuze, might deter readers seeking a general survey of Latin American cinema from persevering with its occasionally opaque style. Perhaps Tompkins's thesis might have gained more directness by engaging with the critical work of the Brazilian Deleuze collaborator Suely Rolnik, whose powerful essay, *The Geopolitics of Pimping* (2006), for example, speaks with a profound astringency and pointedness to the aspects of history and aesthetics that concern Tompkins here. In spite of these minor criticisms, Tompkins has clearly addressed a significant gap in our knowledge of the importance of the experimental avant-garde to Latin American film. It is to the credit of Tompkins excellent research and remarkable fluency and empathy with the material that, after reading her book, the knowledge gap has significantly decreased.

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