Reviews

double consciousness. Her comments are more suggestions than in-depth analyses, but they encourage readers to explore that tradition.

Larson succeeds in meeting the needs of students and serious non-academic readers. Those familiar with Mosley’s work will want to know more about important novels not discussed, in particular the second and third books in the Socrates Fortlow trilogy and RL’s Dream (1995), an experimental blues novel, because they illustrate connections between Mosley’s fiction and non-fiction.

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Owen E. Brady

Scotland the Brave? Deconstructing Nationalism in Contemporary Scottish Novels.


Marie Hologa’s provocative study, the first volume in the new Scottish Studies in Europe series, examines the way ‘Scottish devolution literature’ from 1984 to 2004 can be seen to challenge ‘former nationalist discourses and constructions of a mythical Scottish past’ (p. 9). Focusing specifically on questions of postcolonialism, racism, sectarianism, gender, addiction, and nostalgia, Hologa argues that contemporary fiction demonstrates the extent to which Scottish society has never been homogeneous or unified and has largely benefited from union with England. The first half of the book focuses on the history of Scottish nationalism from 1707 to the present, including both historical and political accounts. Although the emphasis given to the nineteenth century might surprise some readers of the book, the account is very well researched, and successfully introduces some of the key concerns of Scottish nationalism to readers from a wide variety of disciplines and backgrounds. As Hologa argues, Scottish nationalism cannot be viewed in terms of clear trajectories, but has moved in various phases, a desire for independence or separation growing more apparent in times of economic crisis. At times the book conflates questions of nation and nationalism, such that any positive depiction of the Scottish nation is assumed to be politically nationalist. However, Hologa’s central argument that Scottish fiction does not merely reflect society but constitutes an intervention in the political imaginary is largely persuasive.

The second half of the book turns to studies of a broad range of novels from the designated period. The combined focus on canonical and less-studied authors, such as Luke Sutherland and Christopher Brookmyre, enlivens the argument, and will introduce readers to a variety of new texts. Hologa’s ultimately pessimistic analysis of the way racism is depicted in works by both white writers and writers of colour is convincing and original (although it would have benefited from consideration of authors of Asian origin). Although the focus on the nation as such can be somewhat limiting, in so far as little is said about regional or linguistic differences, the analyses are focused and well employed to serve the book’s central thesis. Throughout the study, Hologa explicitly rejects postcolonial readings of Scottish literature, instead arguing that her chosen texts both demonstrate the merits of the Union and the
impossibility of returning to a cohesive vision of Scottish society, if such a society ever existed. While such an argument might benefit from more counter-examples, the clarity of Hologa’s argument presents an interesting challenge to readers from many political perspectives.

At times, the book’s argument is overstated. It is unusual, to say the least, for a contemporary critic to defend the Highland Clearances, or to propose, in passing, that the often negative depiction of Scotland in the novels under discussion may have dampened enthusiasm for independence. Likewise, the monograph might have benefited from more engagement with post-2010 literary criticism within a Scottish or international context. Hologa’s larger emphasis on the connections between the political and literary imagination, however, is well handled. She adeptly demonstrates the continued importance of Scottish literature to an international audience. Read alongside monographs such as Marie-Odile Pittin-Hedon’s *The Space of Fiction: Voices from Scotland in a Post-Devolution Age* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2015) and Stefanie Lehner’s *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), which cover many of the same texts from very different perspectives, Hologa’s volume demonstrates the diversity of perspectives on contemporary Scottish fiction and the continued importance of reading these texts in a political context.

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Timothy C. Baker

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After recent forays by Darrin M. McMahon (*Divine Fury: A History of Genius* (New York: Basic Books, 2013)) and Ann Jefferson (*Genius in France: An Idea and its Uses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)), Jean-Alexandre Perras explores genius from the literary perspective by linking the term’s contested genealogy to the invention of the French language between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. As he sets out to show in *L’Exception exemplaire: inventions et usages du génie*, genius’s birth in the French language was anything but easy. Perras locates the beginning of his enquiry in 1532, when, under the pen of Rabelais, Pantagruel encounters the *écolier limousin* who, on account of his ‘génie’, feels emboldened to innovate linguistically through Latin borrowings. Perras retraces the uneasy assimilation, and even at times overt hostility, with which the intrusion of seemingly barbaric terms into the French language, and in particular the concept of *ingenium*, was met. The great classical authors had founded the *belles lettres* through their mastery of a strict set of rules and linguistic codes. The true poetic genius emerged as the figure who simultaneously embodied and transgressed those laws; for Boileau, for instance, each poet was born to express his own unique genius. The genius was simultaneously exceptional and exemplary, in this manner replicating the tension...