

## BOOK REVIEWS

ANDERSON, JUDITH H., AND JENNIFER C. VAUGHT (EDS.) *Shakespeare and Donne: Generic Hybrids and the Cultural Imaginary*. New York: Fordham UP, 2013. Pp. viii + 291.

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**Rick Bowers, University of Alberta**

Broad in scope and comparative in nature, this collection of ten essays on two key poets of early modern England is organized into four parts: I. "Time, Love, Sex, and Death"; II. "Moral, Public, and Spatial Imaginaries"; III. "Names, Puns, and More"; IV. "Realms of Privacy and Imagination". An informative Introduction, jointly authored by the editors, describes the essays of the collection as "broadly cultural, theoretical, and imaginative" with recurrent "cultural themes of skepticism and imagination and various philosophies of thought, sensation, and meaning" (3). Of the various philosophers of thought named in the Introduction, Aristotle, Wittgenstein, Cavell, and Agamben feature most prominently within the volume, indicating attention and sensitivity to language throughout. The Introduction provides a brief summary of each essay, making connections between arguments within each of the four parts and across the range of the diverse essays included.

The first part opens with a piece by Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker titled "Sites of Death as Sites of Interaction in Donne and Shakespeare." The authors employ unusual but informative comparisons to argue for the significance of sites of death as ecstatic and paradoxical meeting places in "The Extasie" and *Romeo and Juliet* as well as within Donne's "Epitaph on Himselfe" and the epilogues to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. The essay is closely focused in terms of language and wide-ranging in terms of citation. In the second essay, titled "Nothing like the

Sun': Transcending Time and Change in Donne's Love Lyrics and Shakespeare's Plays," Catherine Gimelli Martin links idealized male fantasies of unchanging love in Donne's early libertine lyrics and Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, pitting the comic hyperbole of both against the destructive misogynistic idealism of *Othello*. In "None Do Slacken, None Can Die: *Die* Puns and Embodied Time," Jennifer Pacenza focuses on Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* and Shakespeare's first fifteen sonnets addressed to the Young Man to argue both poets' work as, in her words, "containers of pure potentiality that utilize the *die* pun as an escape from the confines and damages of linear time through what I term 'embodied time'" (62). Herein, death, time, and orgasmic perpetuity figure very prominently.

Part II gets interestingly "public" and "spatial." In "Donne, Shakespeare, and the Interrogative Conscience," Mary Blackstone and Jeanne Shami focus on the performative impact of preacher and playwright, and on their mutual ability to generate intimate self-reflection as well as to reinforce powerful public commonalities. Observing that Donne and Shakespeare "construct their audiences in the active rather than the passive voice" (95), Blackstone and Shami adduce Lenten sermons and *Henry V* to argue convincingly for the achievement of transformative cultural effects in early modern English audiences. Douglas Trevor's essay "Mapping the Celestial in Shakespeare's *Tempest* and the Writings of John Donne" resituates the "other-worldly" through Montaigne's skepticism as well as some literalism by asking, among other things, "What happens to a colonial reading of *The Tempest* when we focus on Caliban's close associations with the lunar?" (118) followed by some intriguing spatial and skeptical considerations.

What might be considered the intriguing heart of the volume follows in Part III with an essay by the late Marshall Grossman titled "Inserting *Me*: Instances of Predication and the Privation of the Private Self in Shakespeare and Donne." This short meditation grasps an important linguistic insight concerning both authors: "the realization that the self can be possessed and confirmed only through and as acts of predication in which the immediacy of the self is sacrificed to the hegemony of its signifiers" (133). David Lee Miller responds to the essay of his friend and fellow scholar with "Improper Nouns: A Response to Marshall Grossman." This thoughtful reply engages even as it considers and enlarges on Grossman's associations of resistance, excess, and self-possession. Observing that "Early modern theology is every bit as rigorously grammatical, in its way, as modern psychoanalysis and language philosophy" (142), Miller considers Luther, Donne, and Milton in relation to death and "the unknowable force of the Other" (147). Julian Lamb's essay "Aspects, Physiognomy, and the Pun: A Reading of Sonnet 135 and 'A Valediction: Of Weeping'" finalizes Part III with a sharp and provocative reconsideration of the experience of puns, ambiguities, and Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances. Lamb considers the flexible semantic use of "mock" in *Henry V* in relation to Shakespeare's punning "Will" and Donne's punning "More." As Lamb puts it, "Under the infinitely perceptive readership of God the Father, every word becomes a cognizance, an object enclosing unknown mean-

ings, always signifying in excess of what a speaker intends, always signifying more” (165).

The final two essays consider “Realms of Privacy and Imagination.” In “Fantasies of Private Language in ‘The Phoenix and Turtle’ and ‘The Ecstasy,’” Anita Gilman Sherman adduces Wittgenstein via Cavell to argue that “Shakespeare and Donne entertain the idea of an elusive tongue not so as to probe the cosmological mysteries of the universe and its divine order but rather so as to investigate the possibilities of Edenic intimacy” (170). Herein, visions of intimacy, ecstasy, and personality contrast each other in surprising and informative ways. Finally, Judith H. Anderson concludes the volume with a wide-ranging essay that brings into play the Aristotelian tradition of faculty psychology in relation to the mental and imaginative concerns of Hamlet, Macbeth, and Leontes, as well as to the lyrical poetry of Donne, including especially “The Canonization,” “A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy’s Day,” and “Good Friday, 1613.” Titled “Working Imagination in the Early Modern Period: Donne’s Secular and Religious Lyrics and Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Macbeth, and Leontes,” this piece integrates widely-informed cultural and historical consideration with scrupulous attention to cognition and grammar even as it engages and explicates the intense imaginative complexities of these agitated poetic forms and dramatic characters. This erudite tour-de-force reflects back on the collection and in many ways informs the whole volume.

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Donne and Shakespeare, Shakespeare and Donne, “poetic playwright and self-dramatizing poet” (149) as Lamb styles them in his essay, deserve fuller comparative attention than they have enjoyed over the past half century. This new collection of essays is full of information, discovery, reconsideration, and surprise as well as a sense of caring deeply about language and culture and the hybrid generic complexities of these two key poets of early modern England.

KAISER, MATTHEW. *The World in Play: Portraits of a Victorian Concept*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012. Pp. 203.

**Sara K. Day, Southern Arkansas University**

Perhaps one of the most famous images of Victorian literature is that of young Alice, who, rejecting the boring picture-less book before her, tumbles down a rabbit hole and finds herself in a Wonderland of games and wordplay come to life. Alice’s seemingly aimless wanderings in Lewis Carroll’s novels provide a useful starting point from which to consider the thesis of Matthew Kaiser’s compelling, challenging *The World in Play: Portraits of Victorian Modernity*, which provides an important disruption of long-held assumptions regarding Victorian culture, modernity, and literature. The ludic nature of Alice’s adventures, in other words, reflects a much

larger phenomenon throughout the Victorian era in which the concept of play came to symbolize the tensions and struggles of a world whose boundaries were not firmly established, as well as the more positive possibilities reflected by that elasticity.

At the heart of Kaiser's argument is the claim that the Victorians' experience of modernity depended upon the unsettled and unsettling nature of what he calls "the world *in* play"—and Kaiser attends carefully to the importance of that preposition. In contrast to a world *at* play, which might be understood as lighthearted and boisterous, the world *in* play refers simultaneously to "a world in flux" and to "a world that throws itself headlong *into* play, inside it, where it constructs a parallel universe, a ludic microcosm of itself, which eventually displaces the world" (2-3). Although such a concept did not emerge for the first time in the nineteenth century, Kaiser argues that this world in play crystalized during the Victorian era, as the Victorians were the first to "identif[y] in the frictional and reflective space within play a world severed from the past. The Victorians, modernizing play, put modernity in play" (40). Having established both the terms and the scope of his argument, then, Kaiser sets out in the chapters that follow to demonstrate the particular relevance of this concept to discussions of Victorian literature.

Aside from his fairly traditional introduction chapter, Kaiser embraces a ludic impulse in the construction and organization of *The World in Play*, which takes the form of a "cartography" and individual "portraits," as he proceeds to play with flexibility and tension in the organization of his ideas. In the chapter "Mapping the World in Play"—in which he efficiently links Victorian history and literature to Brian Sutton-Smith's seven logics of play, tweaking the famous game theorist's concepts where necessary—Kaiser presents a map that is intended to function less as a set of directions for the work and more as a broader means of recognizing the "lay of the land." He follows this discussion with the titular "portraits," four loosely connected chapters that consider some of the major trends and authors of the era. Though arranged in chronological order, the portraits are otherwise fairly disparate, ranging from a focused examination of a single text to a broader consideration of a genre that spans decades.

The latter category is demonstrated in the first portrait, "Fair Play in an Ugly World: The Politics of Nautical Melodrama," in which Kaiser tackles and begins to untangle the complex network of cultural, legal, and literary events of the 1820s through '40s that came to shape the popularity of nautical melodramas. He argues that melodrama (both in form and content) allowed for subversion of laws and questioning of government without explicit challenges to either. By exploring a number of popular plays of the era, Kaiser "outline[s] an alternative theory of melodrama, making the case that melodramatic authors, performers, and audiences were more savvy and pragmatic than they have been given credit for being" (56). In the process of sorting out the plots and characters of various melodramas, Kaiser simultaneously provides solid evidence for this case and allows the reader to begin tracing some of his most important claims about "the world in play" before moving on to a much

more focused textual analysis.

In contrast to this broad treatment of his ideas, the second portrait offers an exclusive examination of a single text. In “Toying with the Future in *Wuthering Heights*,” Kaiser engages with the extensive critical conversation regarding this famous novel (perhaps the most discussed of any work included in this study) by pursuing a single-minded concern with her representations of Catherine and Heathcliff’s child’s play. Relying on narrative theory and historical evidence, he locates Brontë’s mentions of the children’s wild, “shameless” play in the moors within larger Victorian attitudes toward the usefulness of play as a tool that could teach and shape children, effectively taming them. His presentation of Brontë’s work both fits neatly into existing scholarship and cannily reframes this aspect of the novel as potentially obscene, uncontrollable, and troubling—in other words, as reflections of Brontë’s own attitudes toward and resistance to the tendencies of Victorian modernity.

The third portrait, “A Joy on the Precipice of Death: Muir and Stevenson in California,” considers the relationship between these two Scottish-born authors and California as a space of play. Both authors, Kaiser argues, experienced California as a ludic space, as fundamentally *boyish* space, and—conversely—as a graveyard. Within such a space, the two authors recognized and reflected upon “the simultaneity of death and play” (119), embracing the possibilities of the sublime. Though Kaiser’s discussion does uncover important considerations of each author’s works, this is perhaps the least convincing chapter: the pairing of the authors (who never met and whose time in California overlapped for only two weeks) seems at times an arbitrary extension of their common geographical locations, despite notable differences in their experiences of both Scotland and America. Furthermore, the slippery organization of ideas here does not ultimately lend itself to an effective comparison of the authors’ experiences or works. Indeed, the chapter might have more effectively examined Stevenson alone, as the inclusion of Muir may be considered a distraction from rather than support for Kaiser’s central interests.

Finally, Kaiser dissects the work of Oscar Wilde within this now firmly established view of the Victorian era as a world in play. “Wilde’s Folly” considers the Irish author’s literature and life as paradoxically too playful and not playful enough for the ludic Victorian impulses that surrounded him. In other words, Kaiser posits, the famously witty playwright and novelist—who might arguably be categorized as among the most playful Victorian writers—frequently angered the Victorians because his mockery called attention to his awareness of and resistance to the games he was expected to play. Kaiser notes that, in his writing and in his behavior, Wilde “detaches himself from the game precisely by submitting to it, not by resisting it, but by purposefully losing at it” (153). Kaiser’s sympathetic and moving treatment of Wilde’s downfall as a direct result of his unwillingness to play the game to win—indeed, his apparent insistence upon “playing to lose” (153)—filters the now-familiar story of Wilde’s trial and its impact on his life through particularly useful new lenses. As the final chapter of the study, “Wilde’s Folly” proves to be the most provocative

and compelling, as well as a fitting end to the work as a whole.

While Kaiser's insights throughout the study are convincing and often surprising, the thoughtful, thorough considerations Kaiser offers in these portraits of Victorian authors and texts also serve to highlight the absence of one line of inquiry that seems to be a necessary and logical component of this conversation—namely, literature for and about children. Although Kaiser makes a few fleeting references to Carroll's Alice as an example of the Victorian experience of modernity, the study as a whole does not engage with the works that have come to define the Victorian Era as a "golden age of children's literature" or even make mention of the famous Cult of the Child. Bringing his ideas about play into conversation with current scholarship about Victorian literature for children—particularly works such as Marah Gubar's *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (2009), which likewise undertakes the daunting project of disrupting contemporary assumptions about 19th-century British literature and culture—might have offered Kaiser the opportunity to even more fully explore the implications of this concept of modernity.

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On the whole, though, this lively work admirably challenges long-held views of the Victorians and their attitudes, rescuing them from damning stereotypes and reframing them as playful and played upon. In the process, Kaiser deftly draws connections between literature, class, gender, sexuality, religion, psychology, ethics, politics, and place throughout the Victorian era, offering a sense of the true breadth of "the world in play" phenomenon. As Kaiser himself frequently anticipates, this study may be troubling and even controversial among Victorian scholars; however, it also does the important work of encouraging 21st-century readers to embrace the potential for play in not only the works of Victorian authors but also, and perhaps more importantly, in our own readings and expectations of those works.

STOVEL, NORA (ED.); GRAHAM GUEST AND GRANT STOVEL (PRODUCERS).  
*Jane Austen Sings the Blues*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2009. Pp. xviii+251.

### **Lorrie Clark, Trent University**

This book commemorates the shockingly untimely death of Bruce Stovel, professor emeritus of English at the University of Alberta, mere months after his retirement in 2006. A genre-defying miscellany of personal tributes, reminiscences, academic essays on Jane Austen's novels and their film adaptations, essays on blues music and poetry, interspersed with blues poetry throughout and concluding with an attached CD of blues music, the collection perhaps equally defies critical review. How does one "review" such a moving and eclectic tribute (with over 60 contributors listed), as improvisational as the blues themselves, so deeply private yet now also public, especially for those readers who (like this reviewer), alas, did not personally know

Professor Stovel? Can all this love and grief, laughter and tears, find a wider public? Should it?

The answer is a decided yes. Besides the personal tributes, the book contains stand-alone essays by such noted Austen scholars as Isobel Grundy, Juliet McMaster, Peter Sabor, Professor Stovel himself, and novelist Margaret Drabble. Of pedagogical interest is “Blues in the Academy,” the blueprint of an undergraduate course on “Blues Lyrics as Lyric Poetry” taught by Bruce Stovel. Musically speaking, the attached CD by blues musicians hailing from Edmonton, Calgary, Chicago, Texas, Montreal, Winnipeg, New York, is a delight. The warm, deep mellowness of Kat Danser’s “The Other Side” (where “Jane Austen sings the blues all night”) offers an especially soothing tribute.

Taken as a whole, the book offers all the pleasures of a biography—that highest of literary genres, in Sam Johnson’s view—lovingly compiled in almost scrapbook form through the multiple authorship of the family, friends, colleagues, former students, Austen scholars, and blues musicians who constituted the overlapping communities Professor Stovel made so central to his life. And it is a biography not just of a life lived, but of a life well-lived; more, it chronicles an academic life well-lived: no mean feat these days, given the current state of the humanities.

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As such, it leaves the ideal legacy to which all great educators aspire: a vibrant example of how to live a certain kind of life. This is the living legacy Johnson attributed to biography as a genre; and it is the living legacy Jane Austen left us through the remarkable characters so vividly animating her fiction, as real and alive to us now as they were 200 years ago. One of the contributors, a former student, indeed singles out precisely this teaching as the Stovels’ gift to her: not only did they inspire her to become an academic, but as an academic couple they showed her that “loving one’s work is important, but so is doing what one loves and being with and present for those whom one loves” (25). Every lonely struggling Ph.D. student, every intellectually and emotionally isolated academic, knows all too well how what and whom one loves can atrophy, or worse, never come to life at all, under the single-mindedness of mental pursuit.

Professor Stovel, by all accounts, never lost sight of his loves (although his early love of the blues apparently went underground for awhile before being revived by the Edmonton music scene). His daughter’s Epilogue, “in keeping with his nature,” forgoes listing his many academic accomplishments to catalogue instead his many loves, the “things he enjoyed.” Here again the spirit of Johnson implicitly prevails: “No man is a hypocrite in his pleasures,” as he so wisely observed. What a man loves, what gives him pleasure, his “hobbyhorses,” provide the very best window on his soul and character, as 18th-century novelist Laurence Sterne so brilliantly remarked before him. “Taste” is really always *moral* taste, revelatory of personal character, Jane Austen’s credo as well.

Perhaps this is why so many of the contributors worry, a little, about the perceived inconsistency, even incongruity, of Professor Stovel’s great love of the blues on the

one hand, and Jane Austen on the other. Was his character, his life, therefore somehow inconsistent (a great sin in Austen novels, after all)? “*How can Jane sing the blues / But in your mind?*” asks Jonathan Locke Hart’s delightful little poem “Jane Sings the Blues”; “*How could / You resolve the young woman / Of the manse with the delta heat / Pushing up the Mississippi / To Chicago?*” Is it that, as son Grant Stovel proposes, they share “a common love of life, a profound understanding of human nature, and a wicked sense of humour”(xvii)? Are there comedy and tragedy, laughter and tears, in both? The various “resolutions” to the apparent conundrum (including in Hart’s poem) provide the great pleasure of the book, which rises to a sombre and indeed sublime meditation in the closing essay, “Blues for Bruce,” by philosopher-colleague Martin Tweedale. Essentially on why the blues are “a gift to the humanities,” this perfectly-placed essay with its brilliantly apt concluding quotation stamps the collection for what it is: something far beyond the merely personal and private.

- 420 Sam Johnson, so prone to what Boswell termed “morbid melancholy,” would have loved—and feared—the blues in all their intensity of life. And who could confidently say otherwise of Jane Austen—whose novels speak of love and death, adultery and addiction, seduction and abandonment, melancholy and self-destruction, poverty and slavery—after all? She might suggest of the genre, as Anne Elliot says of romantic poetry, that “the strong feelings which alone could estimate it truly, were the very feelings which ought to taste it but sparingly”—and recommend a larger allowance of Mozart as the medicinal prose in our daily study. But if the contributors to this volume are right, such a recommendation might just be “eloquent on a point in which her own conduct would ill bear examination.”

MANNANI, MANIJEH, AND VERONICA THOMPSON (EDS.) *Selves and Subjectivities: Reflections on Canadian Arts and Culture*. Athabasca, AB: Athabasca UP, 2012.

### **Kit Dobson, Mount Royal University**

*Selves and Subjectivities*, edited by Manijeh Mannani and Veronica Thompson, moves between literary and cultural studies in order to probe what it means to exist in Canada. It is, as Mannani and Thompson announce in their introduction, a book whose central themes are “Canadian identity and its manifestations in the arts,” particularly “emerging concepts about the representation of the Self and the Other in contemporary arts and culture” (1). *Selves and Subjectivities* provides specificity to these themes through a focus on contemporary examples as well as some enduring texts.

It is helpful to begin with the final essay, Mark McCutcheon’s provocative theorization of what he terms “dubjectivity,” in order to witness how *Selves and Subjectivities*

pushes thinking in new directions. His essay argues for a remixing of the notion of subjectivity through dub music that he terms dubjectivity. He argues that dubjectivity might better reflect the ways in which the subject is redoubled by electronic media. This redoubled self is an impressively articulated and theorized understanding of the anxieties of the contemporary moment, an understanding that runs in continuity with understandings of Canada that have relied on technologies to provide a narrative of the nation-space.

Other essays in the volume focus more squarely on subjectivity. Elizabeth Dahab's essay on Hédi Bouraoui's *The Woman Between the Lines*, for instance, attests to an experimental, border-crossing aesthetic practice that quite literally situates itself between lines. Similarly reconsidering where and how subjectivity comes into being, Janne Cleveland's essay on Ronnie Burkett's marionette play *Happy* examines how "the processes of mourning are...constitutive and sustaining of the Subject-Self in the traumatic encounter with death" (41). Cleveland's analysis seizes upon the ways in which Freudian theorizations of melancholy and mourning can function in a contemporary framework in order to push towards hope. Acts of mourning in the context of subject formation also underlie Gilbert McInnis' examination of Colleen Wagner's play *The Monument*. McInnis reads this play through the history of the École polytechnique massacre of fourteen young women in Montreal on December 6th, 1989. McInnis' reading focuses on processes of the memorialization of brutal events. One inclusion that would further help McInnis' argument would be to include the names of the women killed at L'école polytechnique: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte, and Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz. As processes of memorialization of the massacre have evolved, it has become a widespread practice to remember the names of the women who were victims of violence in the massacre, rather than to focus on the perpetrator. Nevertheless, McInnis' focus on "whether humans have the selfless grace needed to forgive one another" (87) provides a helpful analysis of how subjectivities and selves are formed and refashioned.

Anne Nothof's "Representations of the Self and the Other in Canadian Intercultural Theatre" subsequently demonstrates how "visible minority theatre artists in Canada dramatize their distinctiveness through the stories they tell" (95). Her documenting of a wide range of theatrical practices from the 1980s onwards shows how theatre artists exist in tension and resistance with their audiences as they interpret visible minority experiences. Veronica Thompson's essay on Daphne Marlatt's experimental novel *Ana Historic* similarly displays such a resistance, this time through questions of gender. Marlatt's reconstructions of history, history that pulls away from the pages on which it is grounded to become a commingling of lives across time, allow Thompson to reexamine the relationship between women and language. Dana Patrascu-Kingsley's reading of Marusya Bociurkiw's novel *The Children of Mary* in the following essay combines a concern for racialization, ethnicity, and gender in

its examination of the transcultural interactions between queer Ukrainian-Canadian and Métis characters as they move between Toronto and Winnipeg. Patrascu-Kingsley's reading demonstrates ways in which the text performs the instability of norms, allowing "for new beginnings" for all involved (172).

Yet new beginnings may not always be possible, as Jesse Rae Archibald-Barber demonstrates in his reading of Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*. Archibald-Barber is concerned with how "a legacy of cultural displacement" (175) is on display in the novel, a legacy that has provided many Canadians with a Romantic impulse to identify with Indigeneity that readers must resist along with the novel itself. Such displacement and appropriation continues to be active in Canada, as Thor Polukoshko shows in his analysis of the Indigenous hip hop band War Party. Polukoshko examines how War Party demonstrates ways in which "Natives are often forced to 'play Indian' as a means to validate their own identities" (210), all the while negotiating terrain that has been racially ascribed to African-American culture in the case of hip hop.

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Mannani and Thompson ask in their introduction that readers explore "the multiplicities of Canadian identities" (3). The essays collected in *Selves and Subjectivities* demonstrate ways in which artists in Canada are continually in the process of creating "new possibilities of selfhood" (9). As a result, this volume contributes to that long-standing conundrum of what it might mean to be Canadian.

DAVIS, NATALIE ZEMON. *A Passion for History: Conversations with Denis Crouzet*. Kirksville, MO: Truman State UP, 2010. Pp. 218. US\$ 24.95 softcover.

### **Edwin Bezzina, Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland**

This candid and enlightening book is a series of interviews conducted by French historian and Sorbonne professor Denis Crouzet with Natalie Zemon Davis. Davis is a world-renowned historian noted for her work on Early Modern France but also for her engagement with a variety of other contexts and disciplines, including literature (she is currently Henry Charles Lea Professor of History Emerita at Princeton University and a Senior Fellow and Professor Emerita of History and Medieval Studies in the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto). There have been many published interviews with Dr. Davis, but this is the first book of the sort. Readers can thus expect from this text more extensive insights about her recent works and about how her thinking and approach have evolved over recent years. Overall, the book is an incisive commentary about history by one of its most accomplished and influential practitioners, integrating autobiography with thoughts about

methodology and the real value of history as a humanist discipline.

*A Passion for History* has a refreshing degree of spontaneity and even serendipity as these two historians delve into some of the most central themes and methodological problems of their discipline. The first theme involves interdisciplinarity. In recent decades, historical writing has drawn increasingly upon other disciplines, especially anthropology but also literature to some extent. Both Crouzet and Davis posit guidelines for navigating the challenges of this interdisciplinary interaction in a circumspect and productive way. Second, Davis contemplates the factors that shaped her perspective and approach to the past, factors that include not only a myriad of scholars from different disciplines but also her personal life experiences: her early youth in an immigrant Jewish middle-class family, her political engagement against McCarthyism, her struggles to establish an academic career and a research program in male-dominant departments at the University of Toronto, Berkeley, and Princeton. Underlying this investigation into the formation of an historian is an accent on the imperative of objectivity.

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The third theme involves the intersection between aspects of the historian's life and the ways in which she writes biography, how she "fashions" historical characters. Rather than writing lengthy classic biographies, she has produced thematic micro-studies mostly about individuals who existed on the margins, micro-studies that reconstruct the strategies that these individuals used to survive in very complicated settings. Fourth, Davis reflects on the need to examine the history of Europe and the West "from the outside," applying increasingly, and yet not uncritically, non-Western approaches to interpreting the past but also writing an extensive work of an intriguing sixteenth-century North African Muslim author, Leo Africanus (al-Hasan al-Wazzan). Above all, *A Passion for History* offers a dialogue about the uses of history for the present and the future. Davis speaks of a "history of hope": the past is too different from the contemporary world to provide models to imitate, certainly, but the past does show the realm of the possible, the different and unbeaten paths that were chosen in past historical periods, the alternative ways of living and thinking that departed from expected norms but that proved surprisingly to be equally viable. Davis does this while insisting on the need for the historian's objective eye and fidelity to the sources.

The seven chapters in the book explore each of these themes, but in different ways. In the first chapter, Davis explains the factors that inspired her to study history, and Early Modern French history in particular. Both historians then discuss the interpretive problems and unintended consequences inherent in primary historical documents, especially archival sources. In this regard, the fashioning of the life of Africanus constitutes a considerable portion of the chapter. She discusses the dilemmas involved in interpreting the "silences" in the available documentation, but also presents his strategies of *métissage* and cross-cultural explorations as a counter-example to the emergence of monolithic doctrinaire movements in our contemporary world. Chapter Two explains Davis' encounters with the historians who influenced

her but also her encounters with other disciplines. The accent here is on anthropology and ethnographers such as Arnold van Gennep (this scholarship was given concrete application in her study of the workers' revolts in sixteenth-century Lyon and that bizarre ritual of social cohesion and retribution, the *charivari*). Through this, the reader understands more fully why historians need to draw upon other disciplines in order to frame their analysis of the documentation. Davis then reflects on how she has tried to balance her personal religious views with her treatment of such topics as the seventeenth-century Jewish merchantwoman Glikl bas Judah Leib and the hitherto confessionalized topic of the French Reformation. The third chapter probes the relationship between the historian's "self-fashioning" and the historian's fashioning of historical characters. Here, Davis and Crouzet discuss the nature of violence, juxtaposing the carnage of the twentieth century with the sixteenth-century religious wars. Within the turbulent context of sixteenth-century France arises a discussion about how historical figures such as Montaigne constructed a sense of self in a bipolarized world. Gravitating towards the analysis of non-European historical characters has brought Davis to postcolonial literature and methodologies, particularly that of Dipesh Chakrabarty, but in contrast with him she insists on an agreed system of evidence among historians, a common and universal language about what constitutes an historical argument. Chapter Four, entitled "Memories," provides details about Davis' family history and upbringing as factors in her formation as an historian. Crouzet is intent to probe the connections between this heritage and her choice of such subjects as Glikl. On a broader level, Davis notes how her doubts about a supernatural God and the Afterlife led her to bring to light, decipher, and give voice to "these unmarked lives" who traditionally have not received their due in this life or in standard historical narratives.

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The subject of women's history and gender history form the bulk of Chapter Five. Davis was part of the pioneering movement to develop this subdiscipline and incorporate it into the greater historical narrative, and much of that commitment emerged in part from her own experiences as a female academic in the 1960s. Again, the accent is on the historian's formation, but also on expressing hope and inspiration through the survival strategies and resourcefulness of even peasant women, such as Bertrande de Rols, who was abandoned by her husband Martin Guerre but then tried to use her village-bred ingenuity to retain her honour and forge a new existence with a substitute. Chapter Six focuses on Davis' political commitments and political opinions. This spills into the religious sphere as she remarks on her adherence to and understanding of Judaism as a religion that demands its adherents to speak out against injustices. Crouzet draws some fascinating parallels between the struggles of sixteenth-century confessional divisions and the tenacious challenge launched by Davis and her husband Chandler Davis against McCarthyism and the House Committee on Un-American Activities during the 1950s and the 1960s. The final chapter illuminates further what is meant by the history of hope, one that is given ever increasing relevance as she considers the plight of displaced Palestinians

as well as the prevalent emergence of militant eschatological movements around the world. While early in her career, she tended to focus on dualities and polarities (such as dominance/resistance, Catholic/Protestant), she has come to stress the unexpected and varied forms of exchange, the crossing of boundaries, and the realm of the possible. The past is a constant reminder that change can occur when least expected, that people can think differently.

*A Passion for History* is a carefully edited and reliable translation of the French edition, published in 2004 (*L'Histoire tout flamme tout feu: Entretiens avec Denis Crouzet* [Paris: Albin Michel]). Davis translated her answers while the Early Modern French historian Michael Wolfe succeeded in making accessible Crouzet's complex questions and prose. That prose is well worth reading, because Crouzet does not merely pose questions to Davis, but also speaks of his unique understanding of history and the subjects that he has examined. In fact, one of the strengths of the book is that both historians have worked on similar subject matter at some point in their respective careers. The result is a lively and animated meeting of two minds that speak a very similar language. The different backgrounds and perspectives of Davis and Crouzet make for fascinating comparisons, although of course Davis provides most of the dialogue. This English edition also contains an engaging foreword by Orest Ranum, another historian of Early Modern France. Readers will find useful the thorough bibliography of the work of Davis and Crouzet as well as the chapter endnotes that provide background on the movements, scholars, and historical figures mentioned in the dialogue. As such, this English edition would be suitable for undergraduate courses in historiography or historical methodology. The book may lack the tight structure of a primer in historical methods, but students will certainly appreciate how well the autobiographical discussions interweave with broader questions about subjectivity and objectivity, the historian's personal experience, and the formation of an historian's dialogue with the past. The intersections with some of the climatic events of the post-war world also add to the book's dynamism.

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Her use of ideas and documents to change the world around her might remind one of the call to moral action that underlay the existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir. Yet the book does not pose as a panegyric of Davis' accomplishment. Rather, the book offers a model of how an historian can balance political engagement with sound historical scholarship that is not presentist or uncritical but respects fully the rules of argument and evidence. No one could question how well grounded in scholarship and evidence her works are. In *A Passion for History*, Davis is forthright about her political and religious views, to be sure, but one never has the sense that this has compromised her historical objectivity. Nor is there a bitterness of tone in Davis' dialogue, despite the sacrifices that she and her husband were forced to make. This is not brash didactic history or an attempt to fit history into an ideological template; in her works, the lessons to be learned from this history of hope are more implied to the reader than stated, but certainly understood.

Readers will also appreciate the epilogue that Davis added for this English edi-

tion. In it, she reflects on the changes in the political landscape that have occurred since Crouzet interviewed her in 2004. She sees another intersection between the idea of history as the realm of the possible and the surprising election of an African-American president in the United States. In addition, by this time she had finished her book on Africanus, and hence in the epilogue she offers some additional insights about that project. The book as a whole thus offers much material on the motives, approaches, and imperatives that underlie her approach to specific historical topics, in the same way that a documentary about the making of a film provides insight into the director's perspective and intent.

Scholars from various disciplines will find much in this work to help them contemplate the relationship between their personal background and how they have approached and interpreted their subject matter. The book demonstrates the real windfall to be had through interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange, and it should be noted that not all the scholars who shaped Davis' approach and ideas were historians.

**426** Scholars in general might also take comfort in the idea of a history of hope, an attainable ideal that remains faithful to the drive towards historical objectivity but also sees in this discipline, as perhaps in others, an antidote to narrow one-dimensional thinking. When one studies such major turning points in history as the French Revolution or the European Reformations, one cannot help but remark on the power of ideas and attitudes held by the broader segment of the population to effectuate dramatic historical change. Not everyone was a militant during the French Wars of Religion and ideas about the liberty of conscience in fact gained traction in such a context.<sup>1</sup> The past as the realm of the possible can convey a sense of fragility and foreboding, but it can offer a sense of optimism, too. Today, as universities feel increasing pressure to emphasize career skills and vocational training, at the expense of Arts programs, it is heartening to listen to a sophisticated and persuasive conversation about the true benefit of the study of history for present and future generations.

## NOTE

1. See Philip Benedict, "*Un roi, une loi, deux fois*: Parameters for the History of Catholic-Reformed Co-Existence in France, 1555-1685." *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation: Papers from a Conference held at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in September, 1994*. Eds. Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 67-74. Print.

DERRIDA, JACQUES; JOHN P. LEAVEY (ED.), TOM CONLEY, JAMES HULBERT, JOHN P. LEAVEY, AND AVITAL RONELL (TRANS.) *Parages*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011. Pp. 268.

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Derrida's *Parages*, originally published in French in 1986 and comprising essays that had first appeared in French, Italian, or English during the preceding decade, has spent a long time coming—or in some cases returning—to the English-speaking world. The long wait has nevertheless been worth it. The book now offers for the first time in English translation Derrida's first published text on Blanchot's narratives, "Pas" (1975), together with updated translations of three further, better-known seminar presentations or conference papers from the same period, likewise concerned with Blanchot's work as an writer of fiction: "Living On" (1979), "Title To Be Specified" (1981), and "The Law of Genre" (1979). Care too has been taken to revise earlier published English translations on the basis of the second, extended edition of *Parages* (2003), though the present volume unfortunately omits Derrida's final contribution, a paper entitled "Maurice Blanchot est mort [Maurice Blanchot is dead]," delivered, only weeks following the latter's death, to the first international conference on the writer's work to be held in France.

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When *Parages* first appeared in 1986, it not only affirmed the enduring philosophical and literary importance of a writer and critic active since the 1940s but at the time increasingly relegated (at least by some) to the margins. It also made an incisive intervention into contemporary debates about the thing called literature, and spoke powerfully to the largely unacknowledged metaphysical assumptions implicit in that influential body of literary and textual theory produced in the wake of structuralism in the 1970s. Revisited today, when its author and addressee are both deceased, it is perhaps even more apparent how the book also bears witness to an extraordinary pact: of thinking, writing, and understanding. "Your thinking never leaves my side. I read you constantly and always endeavour to keep what comes to me from you, with gratitude, fervour, and admiration" ("Cartes postales" 12), Derrida wrote to Blanchot on the back of a postcard in August 1996 from Èze, that town in the South much frequented in earlier times by Nietzsche, where Blanchot wrote several of his narrative texts of the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> "You know, I will forever be by your side," his correspondent replied, in a handwritten note sent at around the same time. "Those who would wish to distance me from you do not know us very well. I write with the insistence of what brings us together," he added, before signing off: "In inexorable fidelity, Maurice" (Blanchot 469).

The texts contained in *Parages* belong to that exceptionally fertile period in Derrida's thinking stretching between *Glas* (1974; translated 1986) and *La Carte postale* (1980; *The Post Card*, 1987), during which, at least superficially, and without sacrificing either rigour or clarity, he began to abandon the norms and rituals gov-

erning French academic prose, particularly in the field of philosophy. Showing their commitment to the complexities of what Derrida in *Glas* had analysed earlier under the rubric of signatures, each of the texts devoted to Blanchot experiments with a different format and idiom. A case in point is the lead article, “Pas,” translated here by John P. Leavey as “Pace Not(s),” in an endeavour to capture the double binding of Derrida’s title, inspired in its turn by Blanchot’s *Le Pas au-delà* (1973; *The Step Not Beyond*, 1992), and exploiting the strange etymological fact that what is here a step (*pas*, from Latin *passus*, meaning: step) there is also a not (*pas*, from Latin *passus*, meaning: barely a step at all). Derrida’s text, the longest in the book, is in the form of an intermittent fictional dialogue between a male and a female voice (or voices), interlarded with extensive commentary and numerous quotations, among others, from such narrative or fragmentary works as *L’Arrêt de mort* (1948; *Death Sentence*, 1978), *L’Attente L’Oubli* (1962; *Awaiting Oblivion*, 1997), *Thomas l’obscur* (1940 and 1951; *Thomas the Obscure*, 1973), and *Le Pas au-delà*. Other papers in the collection

**428** are more regular in appearance. “Living On,” next in sequence, which first appeared in English in the 1979 volume *Deconstruction and Criticism*, and at the time, at least to some (who only time would prove wrong), seemed to confirm Derrida’s status as a deconstructionist literary critic, for its part adopts another kind of double presentation, with a second layer of writing, dubbed “Journal de bord” or “Border Lines,” occupying the lower fifth of every page and commenting on issues arising within the main text, not least the question of its (un)translatability. This unusual, innovative approach quickly gave Derrida the reputation of being little more than a playful stylist. But nothing could be further from the truth. Derrida’s use of different philosophical, literary, critical and other idioms across the texts contained in *Parages* is the result of a concerted strategy, announced from the very first word of “Pace Not(s),” which is: “Viens,” “Come.” What is at stake in that word, as Derrida went on to show, is what Blanchot once called “the decisive Yes”: not a structure, not a presence, not an entity, but an event—that appeals, interrupts, gives, and calls to responsibility and to reading.

As Derrida is at pains to point out in his 1986 introduction, translated here for the first time, *Parages* is not a work of literary criticism or of literary theory, though it was not indifferent to the possibilities and impossibilities of either. At any event, it does not see its task as seeking to determine what Blanchot meant in or by his stories, nor does it attempt to constitute those texts as autonomous literary objects subject to laws, norms, or overarching structures, nor does it endeavour to promote Blanchot as an exponent of a new kind of transgressive modernist or postmodernist textual-ity. It is rather almost exactly the reverse: Blanchot’s stories, Derrida insists, are not reducible to meanings; if his writing remains faithful to the law, it is only in so far as the law itself is only possible because of an always prior, hybrid, impure counterlaw; and if Blanchot’s text is somehow exemplary, it is only in so far as it challenges the very possibility of all exemplification. True enough, *Parages* is one of the earliest of Derrida’s books to gather itself around a single literary *œuvre*. The appearance is,

however, deceptive. For any number of reasons, the book is not a unified summary or summum, rather a series of singular, contextually overdetermined encounters with Blanchot's texts and different audiences, one whose concerns are perhaps most readily fixed, albeit provisionally, by the multiple connotations of its title, found in French in this sense only the plural, and referring to a stretch of navigable coast, and to any number of possible (textual, architectural, geographical) places, approaches, precincts, and environs, which Leavey, finding himself in the unenviable position of translating the untranslatable, proposes, in the body of the text, to render as "Parages/Waters/Parts."

Derrida's texts on, around, under, over, in proximity to, or at a distance from Blanchot are not interesting only for what they say about Derrida. They have already played and, in this renewed guise, it may be hoped, will again play a significant role in winning new audiences for Blanchot's writing, in particular for his narratives. Earlier translations of Derrida's essays on Blanchot had significant impact not only on the availability of the writer's work in English, but also on the amount of critical analysis and discussion of his work in both French and other languages. Prior to the mid-1970s, critical work on Blanchot, particularly the author's *récits*, with some notable exceptions, was meagre and largely conventional. Even in 1984, the special issue of the *Cahiers de l'Herne* that Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy were due to edit, as the latter recently had occasion to recall, fell by the wayside, a casualty of the sheer difficulty of finding contributors willing to commit themselves. For many, Blanchot remained and remains an imposing, intimidating figure, and in 1979, notwithstanding the enthusiasms he shared with Blanchot (the fragmentary, the neuter, the piano music of Schumann), Roland Barthes was not alone in gesturing disparagingly (and inaccurately), in a surprising fit of resentment, towards a fellow writer he could only describe as "a leader of negativity—with a capital N." To have reversed this impatient and surprisingly blinkered response was one of Derrida's key achievements. What counted above all for Derrida in Blanchot's writing was its affirmative difference, its suspensive force, its singular intensity. Today, much remains to be done in reading and rereading Blanchot. But few commentators will hope to match the philosophical and literary finesse, the acute sensitivity and far-reaching profundity, in a word, the justice and *justesse*, of who in 1976 was able to pay tribute to Blanchot in the following words, words that today demand to be cited or re-cited in homage not only to their addressee, but also to their author: "If there were, which I do not believe, some relevance in praising him for this, if it did not amount to a crude attribution of magisterial power, and if *Le Pas au-delà* did not render such a metaphor already obsolete, I would say that never, as much as today, have I imagined him so far ahead of us. Waiting for us, still to come, still to be read and reread, by the very ones who have been doing so ever since they first learned to read and *thanks* to him."

## NOTE

1. It was in 1995, taking of course as his text Blanchot's *L'Instant de ma mort* (2004; *The Instant of My Death*, 2000), that Derrida first presented the paper that would later be published as *Demeure: Maurice Blanchot* (1998; *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, 2000).

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- 430 KAHAN, BENJAMIN. *Celibacies: American Modernism & Sexual Life*. Durham: Duke UP, 2013.

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What does queer theory do with the asexual, the celibate, the virgin, the single person? In many ways, these motivate Benjamin Kahan's innovative, rich, and exciting *Celibacies: American Modernism and Sexual Life*, which positions itself as a contribution to and an intervention in queer theory. Kahan's *Celibacies*, in a certain regard, echoes some of the concerns and questions found in Michael Cobb's *Single: Arguments for the Uncoupled* (NYU 2012); however, Kahan's argument is squarely focused on the idea of the celibate, as a practice and as an identity.

Kahan's work builds on a range of queer theories, particularly, or most notably, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, for whom the figure of Henry James proved to be a nearly endless source of inspiration. It is therefore hardly surprising that Kahan spends time with James in his first chapter, in which he reads celibacy into *The Bostonians* and argues that celibacy becomes itself a kind of authorial performance and theory of authority. This argument is rich and nuanced and contributes to James scholarship as well as to the larger theoretical questions of what we are not talking about—or not talking about loudly enough—in queer theory: figures that are fundamentally queer in heteronormative culture but are either too queer or not queer enough (depending on perspective) for queer theory. Is celibacy "queer" or is it something "pre-queer," which naturally leads into Kahan's next chapter on "Celibate Time."

"Celibate Time" builds on a growing concern in queer theory for discussions of temporality<sup>1</sup> while articulating a reading of Marianne Moore. This chapter recalls the opening words of *Celibacies*, "The *time* has come to think about celibacy" (1) and this chapter is explicitly interested in time. The celibate feels "out of sync [...]" because queer theory's revolutionary force grows out of a sexual revolution, which

connects sexual expression and freedom” (61). For Kahan, we must therefore attend to the ways in which theory has engaged the celibate and to ask if celibacy has been foreclosed by queer theory. What is of interest to queer theorists is the “potentiality model of celibacy, celibacy’s future is vastly indeterminate, purely becoming” (62). In this regard, Kahan builds on discussions surrounding futurity as a temporal gesture.

The third chapter attends to “the Other Harlem Renaissance” and asks “why Father Divine is excluded from literary history of the Harlem Renaissance and how his celibacy might begin to reshape that history and modernism more generally” (84). In a particularly fascinating discussion, celibacy becomes an economic model that allows for “a group based identity that takes the form of cooperative housing” (90) and further that “unlike the nuclear family [...] the celibate structure is not only economically stable but financially beneficial” (90). In many ways, though not elucidated, we have another fabulous critique here of the rise of homonormativity and heteronormativity, one that moves beyond the family as a structure towards other modes of living together.

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In the fourth chapter, Kahan considers the possibility that “prior to 1952 [...] celibacy provides a legal refuge for the queer citizen,” which will be displaced following the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act. Perhaps, here, what is most threatening about celibacy is that what it is not doing becomes a site of paranoid reading, much like Susan Gubar’s article (1981) on “the blank page,” wherein, after a wedding night, the bed sheet is hung for all to see and no tell-tale sign of consummation to be found. Celibacy becomes a kind of blank slate upon which all we can do is imagine a range of possibilities.

The final chapter turns its attention to Andy Warhol as a queer figure, celibate figure, virgin(al) figure. The central concept developed in this chapter is “the alloeroticism of cockblocking [which] is celibate in that it is not the object itself that gives the desiring subject pleasure, but the autoerotic satisfaction of keeping another desiring subject from pleasure” (133). What becomes a useful model to think about, particularly for queer theorists, is a model of sexuality, such as “cockblocking” that “foregrounds the nongenital nature of this sexual practice” (133).

The book is perhaps at its finest in its introduction and its conclusion, where the stakes are most explicitly declared, and from which we can imagine any number of future directions for study. The epigraph to *Celibacies*—taken from Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*—sets the intellectual project into motion: “Many people have their richest mental/emotional involvement with sexual acts that they don’t do, or even don’t *want* to do” (Sedgwick 25). Indeed, this may very well be the most fascinating aspect of *Celibacies*, the ways in which it imagines anew sexualities beyond the “genital.”

At its core, *Celibacies* argues that “celibacy troubles one of our most familiar narratives of twentieth-century modernism,” particularly its penchant for being “open to aesthetics, subject matters, politics, and sexual cultures that fall outside mainstream semiotic systems” (6) and therefore *Celibacies* “traces a long genealogy that under-

stands celibacy as deeply ingrained in the history of authorship” (9). In the opening chapter, we receive a working definition for what “celibacy” might be, at least within the contexts of *Celibacies*: that delineates it from other notions, such as “chastity” and “virginity” which, we are told are “moral categories.” Celibacy moreover, unlike these morally loaded categories, “refers to both men and women” (11) and thus Kahan’s project takes its cue, at least initially, from Melville’s short story, “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids.”

432 *Celibacies* is especially rich and nuanced when Kahan works to deflate ideas around celibacy as a kind of repressed homosexuality. In many ways, Kahan encourages his reader to imagine celibacy outside of discourses of repression, and by so doing, we turn towards Sedgwick’s “reparative reading.” Kahan’s reading practice builds on the Sedgwickian model and affords what he calls a kind of “depthless hermeneutic,” which positions itself “in opposition to symptomatic reading, depthless reading does not try to decode queer content. The hermeneutic practice leaves the knottedness of coding and difficult intact, reading the blockage not as an impediment obstructing a flow elsewhere but as an elegant formation in and of itself” (5). As much as this “depthless hermeneutic” may be deeply entangled in a project of celibacy, one cannot help but note how the language mimics the kinds of language we use when speaking about virginity: “blockage not as an impediment” almost sounds like the reification of the hymen as a symbolic referent from which we interpret everything. Indeed, in his conclusion, Kahan turns our attention to the ascendant Abstinence movements and rise of Asexuality in critical circles. In many ways, these complications are left unanswered, or rather, we are left, as readers, with the “knottedness” amongst these terms which are often quite similar, but nonetheless, markedly different.

*Celibacies* is a remarkable book that contributes to a growing body of scholarship in queer theory and American modernism, but also its reach is potentially far beyond the American modernist context. *Celibacies* reminds queer theorists, once more, that we still have a great deal of work to do, in spite of the numerous death knells that have tolled in recent years. Ultimately, *Celibacies* reminds us, once more, of the importance of Eve Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* and subsequent work, and the many untouched passages that remain to be explored in significant detail and with a critical eye for the “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning” (Sedgwick, “Queer and Now” 8) that remain unwritten.

## NOTE

1. See, for instance: Judith Halberstam’s *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005); Elizabeth Freeman’s *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010), and *Queer Times, Queer Becomings* (2011), edited by E.L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen.

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