Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English
Amin Malak

Examines novels and short stories by Muslim authors who write in English.

This is the first book to explore the works of Muslim authors who write in English yet take their inspiration from Islam. Through close readings of novels and short stories by Salman Rushdie, Ahmed Ali, Attia Hosain, Nuruddin Farah, and others, Amin Malak reveals their aesthetic and discursive merits as well as their idiomatic and metaphorical enrichment of the English language. He explores the many implications of writing about one culture (and language) from within another, including the ambivalent attitudes many of these writers have toward English, a language associated with a colonial past yet adopted as a medium of artistic expression and a critical tool for demystifying and dealienating Muslims and their culture. Malak’s analysis shows how Islam, as a critical identity signifier in the contemporary world, informs these texts’ discursive foundations and thus becomes crucial for understanding Islam.

“Rather than fruitlessly opposing ‘authentic’ feeling to mere convention, Malak argues that we would do better to acknowledge how difficult it is to separate them: plurality of voices is the hallmark of his analysis. This is genuinely helpful to those of us who are still trying to show that our story is worth telling. This book may indeed prove a revealing cultural phenomenon.” — Mustapha Marrouchi, author of Edward Said at the Limits

Amin Malak teaches English and Comparative Literature at Grant M acEwan College.

January / 208 pages
$24.95 pb ISBN 0-7914-6306-0
$78.50 hc ISBN 0-7914-6305-2

Through the Reading Glass: Women, Books, and Sex in the French Enlightenment
Suellen Diaconoff

Argues that women’s relationship to books and their promotion of reading contributed greatly to the cultural and intellectual vitality of the Enlightenment.

Through the Reading Glass explores the practices and protocols that surrounded women’s reading in eighteenth-century France. Looking at texts as various as fairy tales, memoirs, historical romances, short stories, love letters, novels, and the pages of the new female periodical press, Suellen Diaconoff shows how a reading culture, one in which books, sex, and acts of reading were richly and evocatively intertwined, was constructed for and by women. Diaconoff proposes that the underlying discourse of virtue found in women’s work was both an empowering strategy, intended to create new kinds of responsible and not merely responsive readers, and an integral part of the conviction that domestic reading does not have to be trivial.

“The argument is compelling and its illustration convincing—eighteenth-century women writers used the Enlightenment ideal of virtue to redefine it in terms that empowered them and their women readers. This redefinition engaged women, as writers, heroines, and readers, in a ‘quiet’ revolution of gender politics, demonstrating, contrary to doxa, that women could be both sensitive and rational, could be both embodied and spiritual, that they could value themselves as independent individuals. Diaconoff’s insistence that this demonstration also traced an ethics of responsibility, communicated from writer to reader, and that this ethics constituted a new relationship between writer and reader, enabling and encouraging women to take responsibility for themselves and their intimates, is an original and powerful insight.” — Katharine Ann Jensen, author of Writing Love: Letters, Women, and the Novel in France, 1605–1776

Suellen Diaconoff is Professor of French at Colby College. She is the author of Eros and Power in “Les Liaisons Dangereuses”: A Study in Evil.

A volume in the SUNY series in Feminist Criticism and Theory
Michelle A. Massé, editor

April / 288 pages
Illustrated: 15 b/ w photographs
$75.00 hc only ISBN 0-7914-6421-0
**THE KING’S ENGLISH**

Strategies of Translation in the Old English *Boethius*

Nicole Guenther Discenza

Shows how Alfred the Great’s translations of Latin works exposed Anglo-Saxon elites to classical learning and Christian thought while bringing prestige to the king and his West Saxon dialect.

In the late ninth century, while England was fighting off Viking incursions, Alfred the Great devoted time and resources not only to military campaigns but also to a campaign of translation and education unprecedented in early medieval Europe. *The King’s English* explores how Alfred’s translation of *Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy* from Latin into Old English exposed Anglo-Saxon elites to classical literature, history, science, and Christian thought. More radically, the *Boethius*, as it became known, told its audiences how a leader should think and what he should be, providing models for leadership and wisdom that live on in England to this day. It also brought prestige to its kingly translator and enshrined his dialect, West Saxon, as the literary language of the English people.

Nicole Guenther Discenza looks at the sources Alfred used in his translation and demonstrates his selectivity in choosing what to retain, what to borrow, and how to represent it to his Anglo-Saxon audience. Alfred’s appeals to Latin prestige, spiritual authority, Old English poetry, and everyday experience in England combine to make the Old English *Boethius* a powerful text and a rich source for our understanding of Anglo-Saxon literature, culture, and society.

“This is a pioneering book. One of its most appealing aspects is the author’s unwavering control over both the primary texts (in Latin and Old English) and the always-growing secondary bibliography.” — Christopher A. Jones, author of *Ælfric’s Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*

Nicole Guenther Discenza is Assistant Professor of English at the University of South Florida.

May / 240 pages
$60.00 hc only ISBN 0-7914-6447-4

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**THE PERVERSITY OF POETRY**

Romantic Ideology and the Popular Male Poet of Genius

Dino Franco Felluga

Explains why poetry gave way to the realist novel as the dominant literary form in nineteenth-century England.

Once the dominant literary form, poetry was gradually eclipsed by the realist novel; indeed, by 1940 W. H. Auden was able to note, “Poetry makes nothing happen.” In *The Perversity of Poetry*, Dino Franco Felluga explores the cultural background of poetry’s marginalization by examining nineteenth-century reactions to Romantic poetry and ideology. Focusing on the work of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron, as well as periodical reviews, student manuals, and contemporary medical journals, the book details the period’s two contending (and equally outrageous) claims regarding poetry. Scott’s poetry, on the one hand, was continually represented as a panacea for a modern world overtaken by new principles of utilitarianism, capitalism, industrialism, and democracy. Byron’s, by contrast, was represented either as a cancer in the heart of the social order or as a contagious pandemic leading to various pathological symptoms. The book concludes with a coda on Alfred Lord Tennyson, which illustrates how the Victorian reception of Scott and Byron affected the most popular poetic genius of midcentury. Ultimately, *The Perversity of Poetry* uncovers how the shift to a rhetoric of health allowed critics to oppose what they perceived as a potent and potentially dangerous influence on the age, the very thing that would over the course of the century be marginalized into such obscurity: poetry, thanks to its perverse insistence on making something happen.

“By restricting himself to Scott, Byron, and Tennyson, Felluga advances a compelling account of a competition to decide the place of poetry in the modern English-speaking culture. The entire work is based on ranging and often truly original historical scholarship.” — Stuart Curran, author of *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*

Dino Franco Felluga is Associate Professor of English at Purdue University.

January / 256 pages
Illustrated: 2 line drawings
$65.00 hc only ISBN 0-7914-6299-4
STAGING HISTORY
Brecht’s Social Concepts of Ideology
Astrid Oesmann

Examines Brecht’s use of the theatre as a public arena for political change.

Staging History analyzes the commitment to social change present in the theatrical and theoretical writings of Bertolt Brecht. Challenging previous notions, Astrid Oesmann argues that Brecht’s work was less dependent on Marxist ideology than is often assumed and that his work should be seen as a coherent whole. Brecht used the stage to release political ideas into experimental spaces in which actors and spectators could explore the relationships between abstract thought and concrete social life. Oesmann places Brecht within the context of the major leftist theorists of the twentieth century, particularly Adorno, Benjamin, and Lukács, focusing on their discussions of realism, aesthetics, natural history, and mimesis. Oesmann elaborates upon the vision of a “counter-public sphere” in a number of Brecht’s theoretical texts and plays—especially The Three Penny Trial and Fear and Misery of the Third Reich—that present the emergence of such a sphere in the face of fascism. By exploring Brecht’s theoretical writings, selected plays, and recently published theatrical fragments, Oesmann reveals unpredictable constructions of history and surprising distinctions among various political ideologies, while also proving that Brecht remains vitally relevant to a “post-communist” world.

“I find Oesmann’s a welcome voice that needs to be heard. Her investigation is informed by Brecht scholarship but does not dwell on it, emphasizing instead new ways of understanding and approaching the texts under consideration.” — Marc Silberman, author of German Cinema: Texts in Context

“Aesmann shows a profound understanding of Brecht, his theories, and his stage practices, along with a thorough acquaintance with his philosophical and aesthetic sources. This calls for an unqualified endorsement.” — Guy Stern, coeditor of Introduction to German Poetry

Astrid Oesmann is Associate Professor of German and Comparative Literature at The University of Iowa.

March / 240 pages
$65.00 hc only ISBN 0-7914-6385-0

ROMANTIC POETRY AND THE FRAGMENTARY IMPERATIVE
Schlegel, Byron, Joyce, Blanchot
Christopher A. Strathman

Uses the concept of the poetic fragment to draw connections between romantic poetry and modern literature and literary theory.

Romantic Poetry and the Fragmentary Imperative locates Byron (and, to a lesser extent, Joyce) within a genealogy of romantic poetry understood not so much as imaginative self-expression or ideological case study but rather as what the German romantics call “romantische poesie”—an experimental form of poetry loosely based on the fragmentary flexibility and acute critical self-consciousness of Socratic dialogue. The book is therefore less an attempt to present yet another theory of romanticism than it is an effort to recover a more precise sense of the relationship between Byron’s fragmentary or “workless” poetic and romantic poetry generally, and to articulate connections between romantic poetry and modern literature and literary theory. The book also argues that the “exigency” or “imperative” of the fragmentary works of Schlegel, Byron, Joyce, and Blanchot is not so much the expression of a style as it is an acknowledgment of what remains unthought in thinking.

“Illuminating and even exhilarating to read, this book makes a powerful case for the contention that from Schlegel through Byron and Nietzsche to Joyce and Richard Rorty, the ironic strain of German romanticism—German romantic irony, one might say—has a continually liberating effect on philosophy, literary theory, and literature itself.” — James A. W. Heffernan, author of Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery

“Strathman offers a significant new perspective on the relationships between philosophy and literature, through his discussions of Byron and Joyce. He further (and productively) expands the book’s scope by establishing connections to ordinary language philosophy, most specifically the work of Stanley Cavell.” — Arkady Plotnitsky, coeditor of Idealism without Absolutes: Philosophy and Romantic Culture

Christopher A. Strathman is Assistant Professor of English at Baylor University.

May / 224 pages
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