

## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Consensual Fictions: Women, Liberalism, and the English Novel.* By Wendy S. Jones. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2005. 255 pages. \$55.00.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that eighteenth-century Britain witnessed a revolution in thinking about—and living—sexual relations. Evidence of this revolution permeates the period: the rise of marriage by choice, a new complementary model of sexual difference, the dominance of domestic ideology, women's substantial entrance into print culture, a sexual division of labour, and 1790s feminism. What is not universally acknowledged is whether these revolutionary shifts were good for women. Did the ideological and material conditions of women's lives change for the better or for the worse? Lawrence Stone's celebration of companionate marriage as unequivocally positive for women (*The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* [1979]) has been tempered by recent scholars who demonstrate that what companionate marriage gave women with one hand (freedom to choose), it took away with the other (constraining them within domesticity). Wendy S. Jones's book enters the debate with a precise analytical focus: how marriage for love, or "consensual marriage," gave women the right to choose a husband, and, by so doing, how it instilled women with a liberal "contractual subjectivity" that had radical feminist potential.

She plots the efficacy for feminism of liberalism's consensual marriage contract by focusing on the representation of love in fiction across two centuries and four novelists (Samuel Richardson, Jane Austen, Anthony Trollope, and Margaret Oliphant). While Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* celebrates women's freedom to choose, the novel ultimately takes the radical edge off this freedom through a sexual ideology that punishes women who marry outside the bounds of virtue and familial duty. Austen's *Persuasion*, on the other hand, sets up a conflict between familial duty and the choice of Anne's heart and ultimately sides with passion over prudence. Turning to the Victorian period, Jones sees consensual marriage increasingly placed within a binary between love and interest, and Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* celebrates consensual marital love as opposed to the demands of a capitalist marketplace. With Oliphant's novels, however, "the happy union of liberalism with feminism begins to unravel" (185). Oliphant illustrates how women's dependence after marriage compromises whatever freedom they had in choosing whom to marry. Jones's four novelists allow her to trace a historical arc with Austen and Trollope in the top positions for exploiting the radical possibilities of liberalism for women and Richardson and Oliphant, in very different ways, standing at, and demonstrating, its limits. Where does this leave liberalism and feminism? Is there a radical potential yet to be unleashed? Can love promise freedom?

Jones nods to contemporary debates about the political value of liberalism for feminism. She contrasts Wendy Brown's critique of liberalism's exclusionary subject with Martha Nussbaum's endorsement of the efficacy of liberal feminism, and the introduction positions *Consensual Fictions* as contributing to this debate. But, disappointingly,

she never plots a future for liberal feminism and continues to sit on the fence: "I do not choose sides in the contemporary debate among feminist scholars" (12). Why not? If history is relevant to these contemporary debates, what can we learn from her careful study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fictional representations of consensual marriage practices for our contemporary moment? Her book opens the question in insightful ways but it never risks an answer.

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*John Henry Newman.* By Avery Dulles. London: Continuum, 2002. xii + 740 pages. \$30.95.

*John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion.* By Frank Turner. New Haven: Yale UP, 2002. viii + 176 pages. \$60.30.

Newman is dead. Long live the (next) Newman! Born in 1801, safely within the bosom of Anglicanism, Newman seemed unwilling to give up the ghost for the longest time after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, to the chagrin of both erstwhile friends and perpetual foes. Newman finally died, of course, in 1890. But he has been resurrected or reincarnated repeatedly, pretty much from the point of his death. Some might say that his shrine was doomed to be visited by generations of his adulating followers and their hostile opposites—grave robbers all. Newman's own attempts in later life to understand his spectacular conversion from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism seem to have set going generations of polemical appraisals and reappraisals by his posthumous supporters and enemies, forever correcting one other.

The most recent era in Newman's posthumous life began in the early 1980s along with the sesquicentennial celebrations of the sermon (by Newman's colleague John Keeble), that was said to have launched the movement known at times as the Tractarians, the Puseyites, the Anglo-Catholics or simply the "Oxford Movement." There have been substantial books on Newman before this and quite a few after. But a few substantial works stand out. Ian Ker's *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (1988), Sheridan Gilley's *Newman and his Age* (1990), and Peter Nockles' *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760–1857* (1994), are large studies with much to say about Newman. They are modern and scholarly but certainly not beyond prejudice.

Frank Turner, Newman's most recent biographer, is intimately familiar with the archives and with the arguments of his fellow Newman scholars. He includes eighty pages of small-print footnotes, many of them discursive, with citations from letters and documents and books. These are the marks of a fine historian. But it is not this that catches the attention of the reader. It is Turner's tight polemical focus that does so; that is, both Turner's focus on the raging polemical debates of Oxford and the English religious world of Newman's days, and also Turner's own polemical approach to Newman (an approach Turner clearly thinks is well deserved). The latter is clearly signalled in the first few pages of his introduction. Here (amongst other complaints) Turner complains: of Newman's reputation being, from the beginning, in the hands of "a narrowly self-selected circle of sympathizers"; of "the radical high-church agita-

tion fomented by Newman"; of Newman's "self-styled Catholic religion"; of Newman "callously stereotyping his opponents"; and so on. Turner thinks that historians have on the whole given Newman quite an easy ride, and have often accepted Newman's self-interpretation instead of challenging his version of events.

Turner writes to set the historical record straight. So although he treats the first half of Newman's life chronologically, he is inevitably attracted to chew over those incidents and developments for which he feels Newman has not been sufficiently interrogated, and for which Newman's motives have not been properly probed. For instance, the section in which Turner examines Newman's approach to "catholic tradition" in *Tract 85*, is entitled by Turner "The Inadequacy of the Bible" (275)—hardly a phrase Newman would put over his views. Yet Turner feels "Newman indulged in a mischievous and inherently self-destructive analysis of Holy Scripture" (282). When it comes to Newman's celibacy and monastic preferences, Turner says: "The real issue for Newman was an unfulfilled desire for emotional intimacy" (429). Newman's personal life, in fact, constantly comes under Turner's scrutiny, and becomes a central explanatory device (by means of generic "psychohistory" claims—not in-depth arguments) for what Turner repeatedly sees as Newman's intellectual and argumentative excesses. He finds it hard to believe that Newman has been so tenderly treated by historians and biographers.

Near the end of his book Turner concludes, "Newman's theology solidified these relationships [with younger, formerly evangelical/protestant Oxford students]. Publicly and privately he reduced evangelical religion based on subjective religious experiences and biblical authority to a meaningless spiritual chaos. He conflated evangelical religion and historic Protestantism, thus closing off the latter as a path to spiritual solace" (626). It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Turner feels somehow (it isn't completely clear how) betrayed by Newman. That Turner still manages to retell, helpfully, many of the tangled stories of Newman's life and his age is to Turner's credit. And he is clearly fascinated by the man, this not being his first book about Newman.

Avery Dulles's tone, on the other hand, is as respectful as you might imagine one cardinal is of another's life and work though, unlike Turner, Dulles is really only interested in what Newman wrote. But beyond this respect is a desire to find coherence in the thought of an intellectual giant who was to spend his first forty-five years an Anglican and his second forty-five years a Roman Catholic—but who never stopped writing about the ideas he repeatedly encountered on his pilgrimage. For this reason Dulles's *John Henry Newman* reads like a kind of Newmanian systematic theology organized around classic theological themes rather than the controversial incidents and themes, historically organized, pursued by Turner.

After a brief factual treatment of Newman's spiritual pilgrimage, Dulles begins with "redemption, justification, and sanctification." He then proceeds to discuss issues of faith and reason, Christian "apologetics," and then "revelation, doctrine, development." He follows these with three chapters of ecclesiology—on the church and revelation, the role of theologians and "the faithful," and ecumenism. Dulles concludes with a reflection on Newman's own reflections on the meaning of the modern university.

Dulles is inclined to look for intellectual continuities throughout Newman's life in almost all cases, though Dulles cannot be said to have underplayed the significance of Newman's switch of allegiance from the Anglican communion to the Roman. In his key chapter in the midst of *John Henry Newman*, Dulles treats Newman's famous *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, begun when he was an Anglican and published in 1845, just after his conversion to Roman Catholicism. It was republished in 1846 and 1878 (after the first Vatican Council)—Dulles is inclined to credit Newman's conclusion that his ideas had not really changed over the years. On the other hand, where Newman first treats themes deep earlier in his Anglican years Dulles allows for some evolution of his thought into and across his Roman Catholic years.

Though Dulles's careful account sometimes reads like a condensed textbook it provides clear insights into Newman's mind. For instance he makes intelligent use of Newman's distinction between "the *constitutive* tradition, taught by bishops, [which] is not subject to discussion, [and] the *prophetic* tradition, which does not have the same binding force except where it coincides with the episcopal tradition" (100). And his assessment about the polemical mood of Newman studies is timely: "Newman is an extremely complex figure.... Theologians who claim to be his followers tend to quote different passages and thus use Newman against one another" (164). And then there are his detractors.

In the end, Dulles's modest little book is the more timely essay in aid of actually understanding the historical Newman. But it likely would not have been possible for such a book to be published so long after Newman's death had not controversy followed in his wake, resurrecting him regularly. For good and ill it is Turner's sort of impassioned, biographical book (scholarly or not) that makes it possible for us to keep writing about the mind of John Henry Newman.

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*Theology and the Political: The New Debate*. Edited by Creston Davis, John Milbank, Slavoj Žižek. Durham & London: Duke UP, 2005. xii, 476 pages. \$40.13 paper.

This provocative collection of diverse essays wrestles with one of the central issues in contemporary critical theory and continental philosophy: the nature of the political subject. The volume's dialogue between theology and political theory, therefore, is not one that revisits questions of how to implement the dogmatic claims of Christianity in political life. Instead, the contributors intend to suggest that, in a "postpolitical" age, social theorists and philosophers should recognize that all political action hinges upon a prior, and often unacknowledged, ontological framework.

It is this concept of the "postpolitical" that is presupposed by most of the contributions to this collection. This viewpoint argues that, with the emergence of a global market economy, traditional perspectives on political sovereignty have become outdated. The concept challenges how political agency has often been understood in terms of the inclusion or exclusion of otherness, or as resistance to the dominant discourse of mediating political institutions. What "postpolitical" theory intends to signify is the

recognition that such assumptions regarding the influence of political representation, along with traditional strategies of resistance, have been outflanked by the depth and breadth of capitalism's determinative power. A postpolitical perspective warns that the usual political choices between "right" and "left" are both absorbed into this global dynamic, leaving traditional political categories and rhetoric blind to the forces that shape them.

Beginning from this perspective on political agency, the volume revisits "how we understand human action" (1). It does so by diminishing theory's emphasis on the subjective "will," and by alerting the reader to the ways in which human agency is delimited by broader material and discursive forms of power. Though there is considerable diversity among the numerous contributors, their general view is that attention to religious practices and to hidden ontologies (which serve to shape human actions) shed considerable light on the challenges of the "postpolitical" era. Thus, though some of the authors mean the Christian tradition by "theology," most understand it as "the study of the veracity, value, significance, and construction of religious thought" (151).

Some of the contributors (Terry Eagleton, Slavoj Žižek, Simon Critchley) focus their engagements with "theology" on reading myths, literature, and (in Žižek's case) the writings of St. Paul, as sources for a "particularized universalism" that breaks through the cynical relativism of the age. The more overt examples of Christian theology (Philip Goodchild, Daniel Bell, Graham Ward, John Milbank), offer sophisticated readings of the way in which a Christian ontology shapes human subjectivity. John Milbank, for example, argues that without the "transcendent superabundant plenitude" announced by the Christian narrative, progressive political action will always contain an implicit "ontology of violence" lurking beneath its engagement with social reality (423).

Though none of these essays engages directly with the specificities of contemporary religious communities (which results in a highly abstract philosophical discussion) a patient reader will be rewarded with some intriguing perspectives and insights that take seriously the difficult challenge confronting political action in the context of global capitalism.

Christopher Craig Brittain

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*And Then They Loved Him. Seward Collins and the Chimera of an American Fascism.*  
By Michael Jay Tucker. New York. Peter Lang: 2006. 206 pages. \$64.95 US.

The 1920s have always held a particular fascination. Fragile years between the two wars, the jazz age, a time of adventure, of social and artistic exploration, *joie de vivre*, and a certain doomed feeling of helplessness in the face of the seemingly inevitable descent of the world into chaos. Tucker's book explores the life and ideas of one of the lesser known but nonetheless significant figures of American letters of the period: Seward Collins—editor of *The Bookman* and *The American Review*, writer, critic, friend of all the people who were somebody in the intellectual circles of that era, colleague and lover of Dorothy Parker, associate of Edmund Wilson, H.L. Mencken, Gilbert Seldes, Theodore Dreiser and Scott Fitzgerald, possible model of characters by Hemingway

and Upton Sinclair. Collins espoused quite publicly an ideology that ended up, one way or another, being labelled *fascism*. The book considers his rather striking parabola from leading intellectual to virtual pariah, and asks a few important questions on the true nature of Collins' presumed opinions, and on whether the nefarious foreign influence that his critics denounced may not in reality have been much more the effect of a purely home-grown set of circumstances.

In this process we get acquainted with the various political ideologies that were trying to sway public opinion at the time and with the people who represented them. Following Collins' steps, Tucker brings back to the forefront the Ultra-conservatives, the Southern Agrarians, the New Humanists, the Distributists inspired by England's Chesterton and Belloc, and the Nazi sympathizers of the German-American Bund. One of the several qualities of this book is that it does not shy away from portraying this still recent past in a manner that makes it clear how much large parts of it have become almost unimaginable to the contemporary reader, while also showing how present-day ideologies have evolved from these now largely forgotten predecessors. In a way, it could be said that it gets an almost literary *verfremdung* effect to work towards historical understanding.

Tucker explores with ease the definitional swamps surrounding the notion of fascism, avoiding unnecessary simplification but managing to provide synthetic and clear judgements: in essence, Collins and his writers called for an estheticizing, static society, ruled by a benevolent and fatherly patriarch, animated by a non-rational spiritual ethos, in which capitalism (as well as the vulgar mob) would be kept on a short leash [131]. Furthermore, his reconstruction of Collins' editorial adventures is supported by an obvious and very useful familiarity with the publishing world.

Tucker has the easy style of a person who knows and loves his subject and manages to transform his historical narrative into something resembling a good, gripping novel. The research is sound, not limited to libraries but also completed by interviews with Collins' son and stepdaughter, as well as a good use of memoirs, correspondence and sundry other sources. There is human interest and human compassion, historical analysis and reasoned judgement, and that connection with the present that makes history come alive and become meaningful. Altogether, it is a very satisfying work of cultural and literary history in the better meaning of the term.

The one important drawback that needs to be mentioned is that the publisher has not put sufficient care in the editing. Because of that a fairly large number of typos remain that can become at times quite annoying. That is indeed a disservice considering the quality of the research. This particular case should be noted as unfortunately representative of the current state of much academic publishing. Publishing houses such as Peter Lang and several others, while providing a useful outlet for much needed research, cut their costs by leaving to the author almost the entire responsibility for the preparation and editing of the typescript, exercising no other editorial control than that provided by the original committee entrusted with the evaluation of the manuscript. The result is too often that valid and informative works such as this one are marred by an excessive number of typographical errors that could and should have been avoided, had the publishers done their work more thoroughly. A list of names cited and a com-

plete bibliography would also have been useful adjuncts to a stimulating and thought-provoking piece of work. One can only hope that these problems will be fixed for the second edition this book evidently deserves.

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*The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain.* By Betty A. Schellenberg. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. x, 250 pages. \$80.00.

Frances Sheridan, Frances Brooke, Sarah Scott, Sarah Fielding, Frances Burney, and Charlotte Lennox have been represented in the past as modest, domestic mid-century novelists who were overly dependent upon the style and patronage of their literary mentors, Samuel Johnson and Samuel Richardson. Betty Schellenberg's nuanced study amply observes the absurdity of this characterization. Each of these women, Schellenberg argues, opportunistically exploited the multi-generic British literary market to craft an unique writing career that was partly determined by her social rank, education, and patronage networks, and partly in conscious response to a growing sense of authorship as an adaptable identity and a respectable profession. As Schellenberg remarks in her discussion of Frances Burney, "the question was not whether a respectable woman author might have a public identity . . . it was a matter of what sort of identity she should pursue, and how she would negotiate those ascribed to her" (146).

Schellenberg's technique is one of "philosophical biography," Mark Salber Phillips' term for biography that fluidly integrates political and social history and interpretation (85). It is a method that might have been approved by her subjects, as Sarah Scott's preface to her history *Gustava Ericson* indicates: "General histories tend to a kind of false representation of cause and effect . . . The biographer enters into a detail which more properly develops [*sic*] the human mind" (qtd. on 85). Given the superbly detailed discussion and research that informs each chapter's case study (many are revised articles), one could wish for a more precise title for Schellenberg's book. "Professionalization" in this context suggests a guild-like approach to literary production, or a single professionalization narrative peculiar to women writers, both of which are at odds with Schellenberg's project. Second, with the exception of chapters six and seven, the book largely focuses on the period from the 1740s to the end of the 1760s, not on the entire eighteenth century.

Schellenberg maps the key determinants in the formation of each subject's identity as a professional writer. The chapter concerning Sarah Fielding and Charlotte Lennox offers a comparative consideration of the impact of geographical locus and social status upon the writers' careers; her examination of Frances Brooke's publications marks Brooke's considerable political engagements and shows the complexities of her evocation of the pastoral. The chapter on Sarah Scott is particularly well argued. Here Schellenberg asserts that although a stable authorial identity could be constructed by women writers, in some cases, as in Scott's, "the obscuring of a coherent public identity" might be desirable, and not incompatible with her participation in "a disembodied,

inclusive English republic of letters" (93). The final chapter, which looks at Clara Reeves' "naming" (176) and remembrance of these writers in her *Progress of Romance* (1785), demonstrates the value of investigating one's own investment in "narrating (women's) literary history" (180).

Schellenberg's book marks a fine step towards viewing women writers as professionals and agents in the "Republic of Letters" (181).

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