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Writing for the Rising Generation: British Fiction for Young People 1672–1839 by Sylvia Kasey Marks (review)

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controverts the political history of E. P. Thompson and John Bender with the “New” Criticism of William Empson. No recent critic has cited Empson’s once-famous 1958 *Kenyon Review* article on Fielding as fruitfully or persistently as Mr. Stevenson. Empson’s “double irony” underlies all of Mr. Stevenson’s readings. “Double irony” describes Fielding’s penchant in *Tom Jones* (not in his political or social writing) to “poise [his narrative] between apparently irreconcilable positions.” Specifically, “Fielding’s most characteristic stance with regard to historical questions” is “Janus-faced.” Identifiable as a strong Hanoverian Whig in his political pamphlets and journals, Fielding the novelist is free to register the attractions of the Stuarts, with their romance associations, and the cost of Hanoverian accommodation.

While Mr. Stevenson honors Empson, he disagrees, powerfully and convincingly, with Coleridge. Rather than a “perfect plot,” *Tom Jones* is full of—my undergraduates would appreciate this claim—“digressive episodes, minor characters, and vaguely sketched backgrounds.” While hardly a postmodernist, Mr. Stevenson chooses to work in these margins. Black George Seagrim and Partridge are not characters so much as they are “sites of association.” The ‘45 is not a mere backdrop to the narrative, but an horrific event (Mr. Stevenson compares it to September 11) from which Fielding, bravely and remarkably, educes comedy.

At the heart of *Tom Jones*, Mr. Stevenson locates “allegorical reversibility.” Readers who locate, say, anti-Stuart satire in the King of the Gypsies must note how attractive he is to Jones and how successfully he rules as a magistrate. The same holds true for Partridge’s

response to *Hamlet*, and for the affinities between Fielding’s *Life of Jones* and Johnson’s *Life of Savage*. Because Fielding “overwrote” his *Life of Savage* and suggested, in Jones’s various lapses, sexual possibilities that Johnson feared, Johnson, Mr. Stevenson argues convincingly, hated Fielding.

At its seemingly remotest margins, *Tom Jones* remains a book about legitimacy, property, and claims to political authority—the very issues that Jacobitism raised in Great Britain from 1688 onward. Jones and Bonnie Prince Charlie both appear as romance protagonists, although Fielding carefully limits his references to the ‘45 to the “road” section, the middle third of the story.

In a fine conclusion, Mr. Stevenson meditates upon Partridge, particularly upon the story of his life Partridge tells to Allworthy near the novel’s end—a story, like so many in *Tom Jones*, for which there is no need. If Jones lives out Fielding’s dream of a happy resolution to his own uncertain social position (gentleman and hackwriter, second cousin of the Earls of Denbigh and Desmond, and frequenter of debtor’s prison), Partridge, whose seven years in prison for debt are easy to overlook, has translated those possibilities into a nightmare. Servant and master equally reveal the double irony, the allegoric reversibility that, Mr. Stevenson convincingly argues, bespeaks Fielding’s genius.

SYLVIA KASEY MARKS. *Writing for the Rising Generation: British Fiction for Young People 1672–1839*. British Columbia: Victoria, 2003. Pp. 171. \$23.

Restoration and eighteenth-century juvenile fiction has been neglected if not derided. The only children’s literature from this period that most of us are fa-

miliar with was written by a handful of authors (known primarily for their other fiction), such as Bunyan, Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth, and Sarah Fielding. Throw in Goody Two-Shoes and Mother Goose, and call it good.

Such fiction has been marginalized not only because of the patronizing tendency to equate overt didactic purpose with inferiority, but also because of the restricted availability of the works themselves. Most surviving volumes are deteriorating in rare book rooms, where they are unread if not untouched. This limited access allows for limited evaluation. For more of us to be able to study and critique (if not appreciate) these works, editions must exist outside of the odd copy in a special collection.

Especially because these works are not readily available, Ms. Marks's study is an invaluable condensed survey of neglected eighteenth-century children's fiction. Her mission is nothing less than to reclaim a tradition, rediscovering authors who were popular and esteemed in their own time but who are now ignored. Her revisionist analysis of children's literature takes the form of descriptions, summaries, and quotations, at times as compelling as they are charming. Although her extensive survey is supplemented by a comprehensive Bibliography, it is the tip of the iceberg.

Ms. Marks extends and develops her previous work *Sir Charles Grandison: The Compleat Conduct Book* (Bucknell, 1985), a groundbreaking exploration of the social context of *Grandison* in terms of the British conduct literature that influenced it. Such assumptions inform her argument here, where she connects literature for children with literature for adults. Contextualizing fiction written for young people, she maintains that

eighteenth-century British juvenile literature focused primarily on conduct-book instruction that delineated a child's reciprocal duty to parents, to community, and to God. Established literary techniques transformed these sentiments into didactic stories meant to delight in order to instruct and to form character. The "children's best friend" was the instructive writer who provided guidelines for self-improvement.

This important contribution to the developing field of children's literature helps re-establish literature that has been excluded from serious critical consideration. Her work not only complements our ideas about the rise of the novel, it also helps us better to understand the emergence of early modern constructions of childhood. This is because stories written for young people were conduct books in sheep's clothing, molding character even as they provided entertainment.

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The Universal Spectator (London 1728–1746): An Annotated Record of the Literary Contents, compiled by Edward W. R. Pitcher. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2004. Pp. iv + 412. \$129.95.

Mr. Pitcher has produced roughly two dozen Indices and other compilations on periodicals for Mellen Press between 2000 and 2004. The present volume's tools for the study of the important literary periodical the *Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal* are all the more valuable for allowing these analyses to be compared to those Mr. Pitcher has prepared for other eighteenth-century periodicals. In addition, he has here performed a considerable service in supplying a record of contents for the many