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zation of the fiction in the material and economic history of the Depression-era South will be of interest to scholars of environmental literary criticism.

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

DOREEN FOWLER

C Day-Lewis: A Life. By PETER STANFORD. London: Continuum. 2007. x+368 pp. £25. ISBN 978-0-8264-8603-5.

Writing to Day-Lewis in 1963, W. H. Auden congratulates his old friend on his recent *Selected Poems*: 'The critics [. . .] think all our lot stopped writing 25 years ago. How silly they are going to look presently' (p. 283). Peter Stanford agrees. In a passionate epilogue, he argues that because Day-Lewis's work is 'unusually autobiographical', a biography is a necessary 'spur to read more of it', while putting his money on poems written after the 1930s, in particular his narrative verse (p. 325).

Despite his former celebrity, Day-Lewis has become a marginal figure in accounts of twentieth-century poetry. The general view has followed the vituperations of his *bête noire* Geoffrey Grigson that he was an Audenesque also-ran, whose most characteristic work—the sequences *From Feathers to Iron* (1931) and *The Magnetic Mountain* (1933)—refract Auden's influence, vocabulary, and politics without sufficient creative independence. In contrast with MacNeice and Spender, Day-Lewis has come to seem a poet whose work was conditioned by writing in Auden's overbearing shadow. As Stanford shows, such views are unfair. He exposes Grigson as motivated more by malice and jealousy (pp. 133–34). Similarly, the account of the friendship between Auden and Day-Lewis suggests that this was initially a more equal relationship, in which the older Day-Lewis often disregarded Auden's categorical advice. But when reading Auden's strictures on *Transitional Poem* (1929), it is hard to disagree with his criticism ('you are not taking enough trouble about your medium, your technique of expression') of lines such as 'From him rise up the litanies of leaves | From the tormented wood, and semi-breves | Of birds accompany the simple dawn' (p. 81).

One of Stanford's great strengths is that he quotes copiously from the *œuvre*. Yet as the last quotation suggests, this becomes a double-edged virtue. On the one hand, Stanford gives a real sense of the range of Day-Lewis's poetry; on the other, the reader is inevitably prodded into asking questions about the value of the work.

Stanford is rightly wary of the biographer's 'temptation [. . .] of reading autobiography into every line in [the subject's] published work' (p. 13). With Day-Lewis, however, 'refined' autobiography is never far away and became a cornerstone of his poetic. In a lecture as Oxford Professor of Poetry, he argued 'We must love the poet, in his work, before we find critical reasons for approving that work' (p. 249). Stanford suggests that this position repudiates Leavisite orthodoxy and aligns Day-Lewis with his heroes, Hardy and Wordsworth. Yet it also poses the question of how lovable Day-Lewis's poetic persona is. His personal life was troubled: he had a difficult relationship with his clergyman father after the early death of his mother. His two marriages were punctuated by a series of affairs, including a

long, ultimately unhappy relationship with Rosamund Lehmann. Though Stanford seeks to exculpate Day-Lewis from the charge of having affairs to get poetic copy (p. 287), his poetry is less reticent. In 'The Widow Interviewed', the widow of a poet justifies his extra-marital sallies on the grounds that 'One place he might find [. . .] a poem's crude and filthy ore, was | Between a woman's legs' (Day-Lewis, *The Complete Poems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 631). The critical issue is not so much whether Day-Lewis should have behaved better, but whether his behaviour led him to write good poems: the evidence from this biography, as from the *Complete Poems*, is mixed. Though the affair with Lehmann provoked strong individual poems during the 1940s, too often the reader gets the sense that Day-Lewis uses poetry as a means of moral self-justification.

In this respect, though this sympathetic and detailed portrait makes a thoughtful case for Day-Lewis's poetry, it also suggests some of the reasons why it has been eclipsed in recent years. If the 'ideological' poems of the 1930s now read as rather too earnest and humourless in their advocacy of social levelling (see 'Learning to Talk' from *A Time to Dance* (1935)), then the later personal poetry seems too often to settle for a special pleading for poets which ultimately does poetry few favours.

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RICHARD DANSON BROWN

J. G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination: Spectacular Authorship. By JEANNETTE BAXTER. Farnham: Ashgate. 2009. xi+243 pp. £55. ISBN 978-0-7546-6267-9.

The rationale for Jeannette Baxter's study on Ballard and Surrealism is the fact that, while his writing has often been linked to Surrealism, no thorough analysis of this connection exists. Baxter hence seeks to address this shortfall, tying Surrealism to the concept of 'spectacular authorship', which she delineates in her introduction. It is Baxter's belief that this spectacular authorship allows readings of Ballard's fictions as historically situated; much of her work is therefore concerned with contradicting established readings of Ballard, such as those of McHale, Jameson, and Baudrillard.

Throughout, Baxter seeks to argue these contradictions through three main strategies. Firstly, she draws out careful intertextual relationships between Ballard's work and the (politically engaged) texts and images of the Surrealist movement, and in doing so she often, and convincingly, makes use of Surrealist images within her text (it contains twenty-one black-and-white illustrations, including images from Ernst, Dali, and others). Secondly, she traces the evolution of Ballard's texts. Thirdly, she makes reference to specific historical events which she argues can be read into Ballard's texts.

After using the introduction to locate Ballard firmly in relation to the historical Surrealist movement, Baxter employs all three of these strategies throughout the five chapters of the book. The first of these strategies is most apparent in the first section, 'Mapping a Surrealist Historiography', in which Baxter makes extensive use of images, mainly from Max Ernst, to identify Ballard's fiction as Surrealist, and therefore as a means of access to historical consciousness.