

## Poetry

This year saw a slight increase in the number of studies in eighteenth-century poetry that were published. The authors and themes surveyed were various, and no one single interpretative school, method, or approach can be said to have dominated the field. Nevertheless, it remains the case that much of the work which seeks to look beyond or reframe the traditional canon takes place in period-specific journals, and is therefore less visible within the wider discipline. In several especially prestigious journals focusing on the broader scope of literary history, rather than just the eighteenth century, there was a notable tendency to concentrate on ultra-canonical authors, with Alexander Pope particularly well represented. Much of this work on Pope, as will be discussed later, was highly innovative, and sought to show that his work is not as fully or concretely understood as his ultra-canonical status might at first suggest. Even so, this method of critique-from-within surely has its limits; and in future years, it would be good to see more articles in these ‘flagship’ journals about other, equally interesting, but less celebrated poets. As the wider corpus of articles published in 2020 shows, and as this review underscores, significant research is currently taking place on a whole range of eighteenth-century poets, many of whom fall outside or on the margins of the traditional canon. Before turning to examine this corpus of articles in greater detail, however, it is important to notice the books on eighteenth-century poetry published this year. In the current publishing landscape, and particularly given what has been said here about the distribution of articles between non- and period-specific journals, books obviously have a particularly important role to play in refocusing broader critical attention on centrifugal poetic traditions. Of course, not all the books published this year attempted to do so, with some naturally sticking to the canon; and of those books which did undertake this labour of redefinition, not all were equally successful. Yet in a few cases, a

centrifugal approach to eighteenth-century poetry was developed very convincingly. It is with two of these works that this review will now begin.

The first book is Jennifer Batt's monograph on *Class, Patronage, and Poetry in Hanoverian England: Stephen Duck, The Famous Threshing Poet*. This will inevitably be read alongside Sandi Byrne's wide-ranging study of *Poetry and Class*, also published in 2020, which includes a substantial chapter on the eighteenth century (pp. 149–212).

Individually, each work does much to sharpen our understanding of the art, market for, and political significance of poetry in Hanoverian England, and the way that these factors intersected with economic inequality. Taken together, meanwhile, the books indicate the strength of the gathering re-emphasis in eighteenth-century studies on labour and social stratification, issues which have become more prominent objects of analysis and historical reflection in roughly the last decade. It would not be an overstatement to say that some of the most exciting work in the field is now done in this area, and that Batt and Byrne are good representatives of its intellectual productivity. At the same time, and before moving to provide a more sustained account of their principal arguments, it is worth flagging up one significant weakness which these books share. This relates to their use of the term 'class'. As they themselves point out (Batt, p. 3; Byrne, p. 6), few concepts are as multiply contested as class, and this makes thinking with it necessarily complicated. In the early Hanoverian context, immediately the question of anachronism arises: should the term 'class' be reserved for analysing political and economic formations in more heavily industrialised societies, such as Britain in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? But this question is not where the real difficulty lies, for here Batt (p. 3) and Byrne (p. 164) are each able to invoke the rich tradition of scholarship on 'plebeian' and 'labouring class' poetry in the earlier eighteenth century. The real difficulty, and what is truly extraordinary in these books, is that both Batt and Byrne refuse to do much independent or explicit theorization of class. Although this is a

conscious decision on both the authors' parts, in practice it does leave a gap at the centre of each book.

To understand this decision, it is first necessary to identify what it is that Batt and Byrne are positioning themselves against. In both cases, this is an earlier tradition of Marxist class analysis, associated particularly in eighteenth-century studies with Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson. The impulse here is complexly revisionary. Both Batt and Byrne acknowledge a debt to this tradition of cultural and literary criticism. Nevertheless, both critics suggest that this earlier mode of theorizing is ultimately too prescriptive, inhibiting attention to important aspects of labouring class poets' experiences. Unfortunately, as part of this move to strategically distance themselves from what they take to be the shortcomings of 1970s Marxist class analysis, both Batt and Byrne make the concept of class non-prescriptive to the point of vagueness. This has contrasting, but equally deleterious consequences for each book. Byrne's decision not to 'define class' (p. 3), means that in *Poetry and Class* the concept sometimes feels underspecified, and evaporates into, instead of being deeply articulated with other modes of social hierarchy. Meanwhile, in *Class, Patronage, and Poetry in Hanoverian England*, 'class' often seems to mean something quite restricted: class as a ceiling, or barrier to social mobility (p. 141). This more restricted concept does of course have currency in some sociological theories of class; and it would have been interesting to see Batt arguing the case for this usage over, for example, the earlier Marxist concept of class as a system of violent dispossession and exploitation. This confrontation never arrives, however, because as stated before Batt and Byrne resist explicitly theorizing class. This is the most frustrating aspect of both books, and from a certain perspective it will sound like a serious limitation. However, seen from another perspective it undoubtedly matters less. Once these books are accepted and read on their own terms—as highly detailed empirical studies of

some aspects of inequality and labouring class culture in eighteenth-century society—then their value becomes obvious.

Batt's study, in particular, is a masterpiece of its kind. The scholarship here is meticulous, collating, comparing, and elegantly drawing together previously unexamined manuscript and print sources to shed new light on Duck's life and poetic career. What provides a focus for this careful philological work, energizing it, is Batt's sensitivity to the politics of memory. She shows that from the very start, Duck's sudden rise into literary celebrity provoked wider cultural-critical speculation; and from the 1730s up to the present day, much of this speculation has ignored or actively distorted some of the key facts of Duck's life. Most egregiously, in an example which Batt discusses in both her Introduction and Conclusion (p. 1 and p. 192), during the 1780s, an anonymous and widely circulated article titled 'The Wisdom of Content' seized upon Duck's alleged suicide to preach the virtues of quiet forbearance to the poor, and to warn prospective patrons against elevating labourers beyond their natural station. In the face of this reactionary moralism, and its lingering influence on Duck's posthumous reputation, clearly there is a need to set the record straight. Batt does so, in nine closely-argued chapters. The first two chapters focus on Duck's intellectual formation, his reading, and the composition of his most famous poem *The Thresher's Labour* (1730; 1736). Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 then turn to examine aspects of this poem which are less often considered: its publication history, and the numerous conflicting reviews which it received in periodicals. Finally, the last five chapters provide a thematic and roughly chronological account of Duck's subsequent career, first as a Hanoverian panegyrist at the margins of George II's court in the 1730s and early 1740s, and later as a clergyman in the Church of England (1746–1756). The number and distribution of chapters here is pointed. That the majority of the chapters focus on Duck's career after *The*

*Thresher's Labour* offers a corrective to the tendency, among previous studies, to restrict detailed critical attention solely to this early poem.

This is characteristic of Batt's method as a whole, which could perhaps best be described as quietly iconoclastic. Throughout *Class, Patronage, and Poetry in Hanoverian England* she identifies residual myths about Duck's life and work, and thoroughly overturns them. At the centre of this project is an attempt to show that Duck was never a merely naïve, or untutored genius. Batt begins taking the last vestiges of this myth apart in her initial chapters, where, through careful archival work, she is able to provide the most comprehensive summary of Duck's early reading yet published (pp. 20–21). But it is not only Duck's "book learning" that Batt is interested in; her main purpose here is to emphasise that in *The Thresher's Labour* Duck engaged with existing pastoral tropes strategically (p. 42), just as elsewhere in his life he also acted strategically. In other words, Duck was never wholly subject to his patron's whims. Despite the obvious differences in power, Duck retained some independent freedom of action, and was thus an agent in the shaping of his own career. Nor does Batt deny that at times this strategizing, tactical intelligence, had a more Machiavellian side. In Chapter 7, 'Negotiating Class and Gender', Batt revisits a by now well-established theme in studies of Duck: the extent to which his poetry is bound up with a misogynistic worldview. Here, Batt is once more able to adduce fresh evidence by looking beyond *The Thresher's Labour* (with its notorious comments on the indolence of female gleaners and hay-makers), to later works, such as 'Felix and Constance' and 'On Mites. To a Lady' (1736). This reveals a disturbing pattern. 'Now he was no longer a labourer, Duck used the hierarchy of gender to trump the hierarchy of class; thus, as much as his misogyny was a product of the patriarchal culture in which he was writing, it was also a tool that he could strategically deploy in a variety of circumstances in the service of establishing his own credentials as a would-be gentleman' (p. 138). Yet despite this criticism

in Chapter 7, and despite the emphasis throughout the book on his tactical prudence, the image of Duck which Batt wishes to recover is not simply of him as a skilled opportunist. Instead, as she points out, there were certain principles of his work that remained constant throughout his life. His entrance into the clergy, for example, may well have had a financial motive; but it also resonated with his early interest in Milton, and with the poetic paraphrase of 2 Kings 4 which first brought him to the attention of the Wiltshire gentry (p. 173). By holding such complexities in view, Batt has produced a fascinating intellectual biography of the eighteenth century's most famous labouring class poet, and a book which will no doubt be an indispensable resource on Duck for many years to come.

For Byrne to match this level of detail and original research in her ambitiously broad survey would not have been possible. Nor does she attempt to. Instead, Byrne's aim in her chapter on the eighteenth century is to draw together some of the most important determinants for thinking about contemporary poetry and social hierarchies. Seen in this light, this work, too, is largely successful. Byrne's chapter can be divided into roughly two halves, each of which is internally subdivided. In the first half, she examines what she takes to be four crucial areas in the interplay between eighteenth-century poetry and class. These areas are: 1. Shifts in 'The English Language' and the way writers conceptualized linguistic purity; 2. The economics of 'Poetry and Bookselling in the Mid to Late Eighteenth Century'; 3. The emergence of 'Class and Two [Opposed] Cultures'; 4. The Sentimental concept of 'The Plebeian Poet of Genius'. The second half of the chapter moves to provide capsule biographies of the plebeian poets Stephen Duck, Ann Yearsley, and Robert Dodsley. Unsurprisingly given the space available to her, Byrne's commentary on Duck does not contain any information which cannot also be found in Batt's work. But the decision to place this commentary alongside profiles of Yearsley and Dodsley does nevertheless make certain things clearer. For example, the attempt by some of Duck's patrons to limit his access to the

money he had earned was later echoed by Yearsley's patrons in the 1780s, who explicitly referred to Duck's by now fraught reputation—*pace* 'The Wisdom of Content'—as a labourer who advanced too far, too fast (p. 185). Byrne's attention to this and other persistent anxieties surrounding social mobility during the eighteenth century will be particularly useful for students seeking to gain a synoptic overview of the shifting arenas of struggle during the period. Such readers will also be aided in this task by the rich bibliographies which immediately follow each of Byrne's chapters, and which provide a useful entryway into the major theoretical debates surrounding class in each historical period covered.

One factor which neither Batt nor Byrne discuss in much detail, although Byrne does mention it in relation to the economics of book-selling (pp. 157–60), is the relationship between class and capital. This omission is partly supplied by Peter Robinson's book *Poetry & Money: A Speculation*, which is another wide-ranging survey with substantial sections on eighteenth-century verse. Chapter 5, 'Poetic forms containing rampant money' (pp. 95–120), is a solid addition to the growing literature on early eighteenth-century 'capital satires'. Robinson gives detailed readings of several of the most famous examples of the genre, including works by John Gay, Jonathan Swift, and Alexander Pope. The best part of the chapter, however, is Robinson's commentary on an anonymous Pindaric ode titled 'Britannia's Lamentation, Occasion'd by the South-Sea' (1721). In this section, Robinson combines attention to the poetics of the ode with careful analysis of its author's Jacobite politics, the economic basis of Whig hegemony, and the different ways in which sectarian arguments were refracted through each of these areas of struggle. Indeed, while this book is not free (the reviewer received a PDF, and not a hard copy), it does sometimes feel like a gift to read.

We now turn from Robinson's and Byrne's relatively short contributions to Dustin D. Stewart's *Futures of Enlightenment Poetry*, a work which devotes hundreds of pages of

analysis to the relationship between eighteenth-century theology and poetics. This is a densely theorized book, and one which demands close attention from its readers. Stewart's central argument however is deceptively simple. From Milton through to the Late Romantics and Emily Dickinson, poets were often influenced by two competing interpretations of the Christian afterlife, and this theological perspective shaped not only their explicit reflections on the 'future state', but also subtly informed the texture of the poet's verse across their entire oeuvre. The first of these perspectives is 'mortalist', and believes that after death the soul itself either dies, or slumbers in the body until Judgement Day, when the body will finally be resurrected. Stewart associates this perspective with Milton, James Thomson, and with the Romantics, and argues that as a result their poetry tends to 'nudge the familiarity of normal embodied life, the present in all its comforting sameness, forward into the future' (p. 6). The second theological perspective, by contrast, is one that Stewart terms 'spiritualist', and which claims not only that the immaterial soul leaves the body behind after death, but also that under certain devotional circumstances it might venture beyond the confines of the body during mortal life. All of the poets who Stewart strongly associates with this latter perspective—Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Edward Young, Mark Akenside, Thomas Gray, and William Cowper—were writing during the eighteenth century, and Stewart argues that this is because they were reacting against a perceived upsurge in religious scepticism and materialism. Starting with Anna Laetitia Barbauld, who is here treated under the rubric of 'early Romanticism' (p. 200), subsequently poets began pushing back against what they took to be the excesses of eighteenth-century spiritualist theology. This pattern of response and counter-response thus explains the basic architecture of *Futures of Enlightenment Poetry*, which moves from Miltonic mortalism, through eighteenth-century spiritualism, and back to mortalism with the Romantics.



The way in which this narrative arc has been generated is not hard to grasp. Stewart has taken his foundational opposition between mortalist and spiritualist poetics, and then married this binary opposition up with a periodized vision of history. This is what gives the book its basic explanatory potency. However, having once firmly asserted this structure, Stewart also complicates it in a number of directions, answering to the complexity of the materials he is reviewing. The periodizing framework he introduces is more flexible than it may at first appear, because the shifts it describes are not total upheavals in theology, but something more like transitions in the dominant theological perspective. In other words, each period contains both spiritualist and mortalist elements. Furthermore, a similar variety of elements might easily coexist within a single poet's career (p. 13), or even across a single poem (pp. 189–94). Part of what enables poets to move fluidly between theological perspectives, in Stewart's account, is the crucial significance of rhythm in the Enlightenment controversy over the nature of the future state. Because mortalists did, also, believe that after an interval of slumber, the body and soul would rise up, and that the righteous would be liberated from their mortal infirmities, while the wicked would be cast down into hell, then from a certain standpoint, spiritualist theology begins to look like just an accelerated version of its mortalist counterpart (p. 140). The distinction here is both quantitative, and qualitative; and Stewart suggests that a poet might not even be wholly aware of crossing from one threshold to another. Poetry, of course, is itself a rhythmic art. So the tendency of Stewart's broader argument here is to strengthen the claim he makes elsewhere that poetic technique is also a form of theological thinking (p. 92). Poetic rhythm and "theological rhythm" are in some ways con-substantial for Stewart. Perhaps this is also why he divides his book not only into chapters, but also like a musical composition into a series of three 'movements', punctuated by 'interludes'?

In any case, what the foregoing discussion seeks to indicate is that *Futures of Enlightenment Poetry* is a book which can be read on several levels at once. This narrative experimentalism, and theoretical sophistication of argument, is to be welcomed. So too, is the historical erudition which Stewart brings to his subject. Particularly impressive in this relation is the chapter on Akenside, which reads *Pleasures of the Imagination* (1744) alongside the poet's directly contemporaneous Leiden MD thesis, *De Ortu et Incremento Foetus Humani*. In his analysis of Akenside's spiritualist theory of sexual reproduction, Stewart reveals not only his familiarity with studies of 'religious Enlightenment'—a body of scholarship with which he maintains a close dialogue throughout his book—but also his working knowledge of Early Modern medicine, and of recent Queer Theory. Nevertheless, Stewart's book is not without problems. As Henry Weinfield has pointed out in an earlier review, there is an occasional tendency here to misconstrue the work of poets to make it fit with the mortalist and spiritualist categories. Something similar can be said about the way Stewart sometimes aggressively reframes the work of other literary critics and historians to suggest that their interpretations of poems are unconsciously mirroring theological debates from the eighteenth century (pp. 33–6; p. 231). More often than not this feels like it muddies, rather than illuminates the underlying stakes of the critics' arguments. But these issues, while they must detract from the overall value of the work, do not threaten to overcast Stewart's achievement, which here is considerable. Each chapter adds something to our contemporary understanding of the poet under discussion.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Richard Hillyer's book, *Four Augustan Science Poets: Abraham Cowley, James Thomson, Henry Brooke, Erasmus Darwin*. This is a strange and seriously flawed study, which in many ways feels incomplete. It does not have an introduction or a conclusion, so the task of framing the book's overarching claim has instead been delegated to a short preface (pp. vii–xiii). Here, Hillyer explains that he remains

convinced by Richard S. Westfall's secularization thesis in *Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (1958). Hillyer then proposes to trace the contradictions produced by the effort of holding together natural philosophy and theology in the works of his four chosen poets, and particularly in relation to the contrasting aesthetics of the sublime which he claims to identify in their writing. What immediately undermines this project, however, is Hillyer's failure to engage with obvious counterarguments to his and Westfall's theory of secularization. Again very much unlike Stewart in *Futures of Enlightenment Poetry*, Hillyer does not show any familiarity with the revisionist literature on religion and Enlightenment—a literature which, thirty-five years after the publication of J. C. D. Clark's *English Society, 1688–1832*, has by now swollen into a torrent. This lack is notable throughout Hillyer's book, but is most sorely felt in the chapter on James Thomson (pp. 27–45). Despite the fact that he is examining Thomson's verse in relation to Newton's *Opticks*, Hillyer does not mention any of the recent studies of Newtonian 'physico-theology'. Indeed, Hillyer cites few literary-critical studies published after 2000, and he tends to rely on significantly older studies. As a result, it often feels as if Hillyer is mostly talking to himself.

Daniel Cook's study *Reading Swift's Poetry* is, on the other hand, a carefully crafted intervention. It is written against the tendency to think of Jonathan Swift's poetry as a sometimes brilliant, but often uneven appendage to the more thoroughly dazzling prose satires. The poetry, Cook argues, is just as good as the prose. Indeed, Swift's verse deserves the same kind of minute attention which his friend and rival, Alexander Pope's verse has always received. To make good on this claim, Cook provides readers with an intimate and largely chronological survey of Swift's work, ranging across the entire breadth of his poetic career. Chapter 1 thus begins with Swift's panegyric odes of the 1690s, poems which are here interpreted as meta-poetical commentaries on the limitations of the genre. The next chapter focuses on Swift's political satires from 1700 through to the early 1710s. In Chapter 3, Cook

turns to examine the peculiar kind of love poetry which Swift sent to Esther Johnson and Esther Vanhomrigh in the 1720s. Both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 lace together an account of Swift's coterie networks, the often light-hearted squibs he wrote for this extended circle of friends, and the directly contemporaneous, defiant, and politically effective satires he wrote on 'Wood's Halfpence' and the Irish coinage crisis. Finally, in a chapter which aims to rehabilitate some of the most enduringly controversial works—the so-called 'unprintable' poems (p. 225)—Cook analyses Swift's efforts in the 1730s to anticipate and overdetermine his posthumous reputation. The main feature of this large and intricately varied poetic corpus which Cook keeps returning to throughout the book is what he calls Swift's 'appropriative poetics' (p. 86), or elsewhere his poetics of 'impersonation' (p. 3; p. 284). By this, Cook means Swift's technique of mimicking other authors, taking over their habitual gestures and idioms, but at the same time reinventing these idioms by pushing them to new extremes, or placing them in a jarring new context. This goes hand in hand with Swift's critique of modernity, which involves turning the ruins of modern civilization against itself. Or, as Cook nicely puts it, 'Swift breathes new life into tired contemporary poetry while laughing at it' (p. 76).

*Reading Swift's Poetry* is thus in large part a celebration of variety wrested from unpromising circumstances. To make this argument, Cook necessarily exposes himself to two related dangers. First there is the risk of miscellaneity, that his claims about the variety of Swift's verse will lose their critical, argumentative edge, and the book will finally lapse into a hodgepodge of disjointed anecdotes. The second risk faced by Cook is that by relentlessly foregrounding his main thesis, the argument about Swift's appropriative poetics and the self-reflexive aspects of his verse, then eventually all the poems will come to look the same: yet more poetry about poetry. Cook does not always manage to walk this tightrope successfully. Some of the readings *are* repetitive. (He twice points out the way the metre of a line from

Swift hobbles on gouty feet, which is rather like the joke which fizzles from being told again.) Some of the connections between poems which are grouped for chronological reasons *do* feel forced. In these moments, Cook's long chapters (most are around 50 pages), start to feel too long. They certainly do not have the same momentum as Batt's nine tautly argumentative chapters in *Poetry, Patronage, and Class in Hanoverian England*. Yet at the same time, many of the local readings here are excellent. And although the meta-poetic interpretation of Swift's verse keeps on coming back, Cook is able to ring a series of complex variations on it (pp. 17–8; p. 124; p. 218). The lasting impression here is thus of generosity.

Some of the most tightly focused sections of Cook's study examine Swift's role as an Anglo-Irish 'Hibernian Patriot' (p. 158). More generally, 2020 saw a number of scholars grappling with the history of the British Empire in Ireland, and the diverse ways in which this history continues to be mediated by eighteenth-century poetry. This formed part of a broader trend, in which literary critics scrutinised a wide array of texts bearing witness to the complexly variegated process by which English dominion was expanded, consolidated, and indeed resisted, throughout the imperial periphery. In part, the growing influence of this literature must be attributed to the gradual "bedding in" of new scholarly paradigms. The 'archipelagic' approach to the literature of the British Isles has now evidently taken root. At the same time, it is impossible to deny the impact which recent current affairs have had in adding to this general ferment. Britain's exit from the EU has once again heightened the uncertainty surrounding the future of the United Kingdom; and in this political climate, research on the cultural history of the four nations often takes on a polemical charge. As will be seen shortly, something of this charge can certainly be felt in the background of several articles and chapters on Scottish and Irish poetry. First, however, and in some ways more strikingly, it is important to note that this year there was a comparable sense of political urgency in the scholarship on Welsh literary culture. There has, of course, long been an

interest in eighteenth-century Welsh poetry viewed through the lens of ‘Bardic Nationalism’, and recently this interest has intensified. Nevertheless, the historical argument for a distinctively Welsh Enlightenment has never felt as securely established as the corresponding arguments for the distinctiveness of the Scottish and Irish Enlightenments. Despite all the interesting work in this field, the parameters of this intellectual tradition have often felt somewhat hazy. This is why Jane Aaron and Sarah Prescott’s book, *Welsh Writing in English, 1536–1914*, represents such an important landmark.

This book is the third volume in a series of four, which together make up the *Oxford Literary History of Wales (OLHW)*. As the general editor, Damian Walford Davies, explains in his introduction to the series: ‘[t]he *OLHW* does not offer a survey. Rather, balancing the claims of coverage with the focus and insight offered by thematic engagement and case study, the authors pursue a conceptual engagement with their subject’ (p. v). The particular merits of this approach are clearly visible in Aaron’s and Prescott’s volume, which combines traditional literary-historical research with insights from recent feminist, socialist, and post-colonial theory. More specifically, Prescott, who wrote the sections on Welsh literature before 1800, seeks in this work to dismantle the view that after the Tudor ‘Act of Union’ (1536), assimilation was relatively swift and complete. Her two chapters on eighteenth-century poetry offer a sustained critique of Linda Colley’s influential thesis, presented in *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (1992), that the period witnessed the development of a tightly unified sense of Britishness, at the expense of other plausible imagined communities. Chapter 3 argues that from 1700 to 1760 Welsh poets often signalled their loyalty to the Protestant, and from 1714 Hanoverian Succession, in a move that was intended to contrast favourably with the more turbulent politics in Scotland and Ireland, but which also preserved a sense of local patriotic Welshness. In other words, Welsh nationalism and imperial cosmopolitanism co-existed and mutually conditioned each other in a dynamic

which, now, on first glance may sometimes appear paradoxical (p. 85). Without downplaying the extent of Welsh Loyalism in the second half of the century, Chapter 4 then moves to trace the emergence of a more ‘combative’ tradition of Welsh patriotism, beginning with the neo-Bardic verse of Evans Evans (p. 91). One of the strengths of Prescott’s scholarship here is that she not only discusses a wide range of individual poets in detail—there are sections on Francis Price, John Dyer, Jane Brereton, Evans, and Lewis Morris—she also examines the institutions which sustained this cultural production, both locally, and in the metropole. Finally, the quality of the paratextual material in this book also deserves praise. Alongside a full and meticulously constructed index, *Welsh Writing in English, 1536–1914* includes a section of useful ‘Author Biographies’, as well as ‘Suggestions for Further Reading’. Thus, although it forms just one part of a composite, multi-volume work, this study feels unusually and admirably complete in itself.

It is helpful to compare the *OLHW* with the new six-volume series on *Irish Literature in Transition*, produced under the general editorship of Claire Connolly and Marjorie Howes. Though both are authoritative works, and though they share some obvious thematic similarities, they nevertheless approach these themes differently. This is perhaps most obvious in relation to the role played by post-colonial theory in each series. Whereas in the *OLHW* post-colonial theory provides the general structuring framework for the entire series, in *Irish Literature in Transition* it does not. Instead, post-colonial theory is woven throughout the series as one structuring element among many. The aim of this latter approach is to foster methodological pluralism, and the same principle lies behind the decision to divide the work into a series of edited collections of essays. The result is a more familiar—i.e. less obviously innovative—work; and one in which there are also notably fewer paratextual bells and whistles. On balance, therefore, it seems fair to describe the general design of the *OLHW* as slightly more rigorous. At the level of its constituent parts, however, *Irish Literature in*

*Transition* is still impressive; and both works set new standards of scholarly rigour and sensitivity in their respective fields.

Students of eighteenth-century poetry will be particularly interested in *Irish Literature in Transition, 1700–1780*. This volume, edited by Moyra Haslett, is the first in the series. It contains two chapters on poetry, both of which shed new light on the social contexts of contemporary literary production. The first of these chapters is Andrew Carpenter's contribution, 'Land and Landscape in Irish Poetry in English, 1700–1780' (pp. 151–70). Beginning with the immediate aftermath of the Battle of the Boyne, Carpenter describes how poets often courted new sources of patronage by celebrating the houses and gardens of the major Protestant landlords. Beyond these estates, many polite authors saw the surrounding Irish countryside as an ugly, and potentially dangerous wilderness (p. 154). This started to change during the second half of the century, when the vogue for the sublime and the picturesque helped to make poems about rugged Irish scenery fashionable – so long as 'the dispossessed subsisting in hovels at the roadside, for instance' were thoroughly occluded (p.158). Such readings are no doubt quite orthodox (the influence of John Barrell is particularly marked), yet Carpenter's examples are well chosen, and his commentary manages to convey a sense of the sharpness of social antagonism during the period. The second relevant study is Aileen Douglas's chapter, 'The Province of Poetry: Women Poets in Early Eighteenth-Century Ireland' (pp. 227–43). Despite her expansive title, Douglas mainly focuses on the women who participated in the Dublin-based literary coterie surrounding Swift—in other words the so-called 'Triumfeminate' of Mary Barber, Laetitia Pilkington, and Constantia Grierson. Most attention here is lavished on Barber. (Readers specifically interested in Pilkington should consult Annie Persons, 'Stealing Wisely: Laetitia Pilkington, Alexander Pope, and Print Culture' (*MP* 118[2020] 70–86)). Here, Douglas is able to demonstrate that Barber was a more influential, and strategically accomplished poet than has



hitherto been recognised. In both these chapters, there is ample evidence of what Haslett, in her introduction to the volume (pp. 1–27), defines as its principal task: reframing ‘generalisations and broad-brush distinctions’ (p. 5), and replacing them with greater nuance.

Sometimes however, nuance is not enough, and a more fundamental re-alignment is necessary. This is the argument advanced by the contributors to *Birds in Eighteenth-Century Literature: Reason, Emotion, and Ornithology, 1700–1840*. The change they wish to see is an end to the reckless destruction of the environment, and to the human subjugation of animal life. As the editors—Brycchan Carey, Sayre Greenfield, and Anne Milne—explain in their introduction to the volume (pp. 1–15), the essays gathered here all identify particular resources for this struggle in eighteenth-century moral philosophy. At the level of individual essays, the usefulness of this framing is mixed. This is clear from the two chapters on poetry. The first of these chapters presents Lucy Collins’s work on ‘Avian Encounters and Moral Sentiment in Poetry from Eighteenth-Century Ireland’ (pp. 17–37). Here, Collins examines encounters in the wild, and encounters with caged birds. In the first half of the chapter she plausibly argues that the ‘representation of wild birds from this period is a key area for the advancement of ideas about human stewardship of the natural world’ (p. 22). When she turns to caged birds, things become more difficult. At this point Collins focuses on the allegorical significance of the birds, which, as she points out, would seem to ‘place birds once again in the service of human meaning’ (p. 26). But while Collins notes this issue, she still wants to talk about the poems, and this generates a tension which is never fully resolved. The second chapter on eighteenth-century poetry is more consistent and philosophically assured. This is D. T. Walker’s essay “‘In Clouds Unnumber’d’: Anna Letitia Barbauld’s “Birds and Insects”, Speculative Ecology, and the Politics of Naturalism’ (pp. 51–70). Barbauld’s nature poetry is political, Walker suggests, because it unsettles hierarchies by showing the interpenetration of animals and their environment. The way that Barbauld describes birds

dissolving into a cloud, for example, makes the distinction between sentient and non-sentient nature seem unusually porous, even ‘functionally coextensive’ (p. 58). From this position, it might also be possible to reconceptualise the relationship between humans and the natural world, as well as relationships between humans, according to an ethics of universal empathy. Such, at least, is Walker’s hope, and the hope of many of his co-authors.

There are two final edited collections which must be noticed here, before shifting focus to this year’s articles. The first of these collections is *After Print: Eighteenth-Century Manuscript Cultures*. Compared to the ecocritical approach of *Birds in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, or the postcolonial perspective of the *OLHW*, the attention given here to Book History might initially appear somewhat old-fashioned, even fusty. Yet this response would not be correct, for, as Rachel Scarborough King argues in her editorial introduction to the volume (pp. 10–25), by keeping the interplay and porous boundaries between different media in view, historians can better recognise the full complexity of early literary modernity. This argument is certainly borne out by Philip S. Palmer’s chapter on ‘Manuscript Verse in Printed Books of the Long Eighteenth Century’ (pp. 93–110). Palmer’s basic claim is that there is a vast and largely unstudied archive of manuscript notes, scattered throughout the eighteenth-century holdings of libraries across the world. This archive is at risk of disappearing because, so far, there has been no systematic attempt to index or digitize this marginalia, most of which is simply not captured by collections like EEBO and ECCO (p. 107). The process of cataloguing this material is labour-intensive, but it can turn up hidden gems. (see my summary below of Palmer’s article on John Dennis.) And even when the ephemera encountered is more quotidian, it provides a useful window onto the reading habits of people who, more often than not, are excluded from the historical record (p. 104).

A similar sentiment characterizes *Paper, Ink, and Achievement: Gabriel Hornstein and the Revival of Eighteenth-Century Scholarship*. This volume, edited by Kevin L. Cope

and Cedric D. Reverand II, offers a collection of essays in celebration of an extraordinary businessman. As Reverand outlines in his biographical preface to the volume (pp. vii–xii), in 1969 Gabriel Hornstein became president of AMS Press, which under his direction not only printed numerous articles and books on eighteenth-century culture, but also for many years published the *Eighteenth-Century Current Bibliography* (1975–2009). The tributes paid to him in this volume are often moving. Regrettably, however, the two chapters on eighteenth-century poetry are of uneven quality. Manuel Schonhorn's essay, 'Pope's *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and Justus Lipsius: Sources and Images of the Writer' (pp. 115–27), feels like work in progress, rather than a completed chapter. He suggests that Pope's self-portrait in the epistle might have been influenced by reading Lipsius's autobiographical anecdotes in *Physiologiae Stoicorum* (p. 117). The evidence adduced here, however, is slight. By contrast David Venturo's chapter, 'Swift, Dryden, Virgil and Theories of Epic in Swift's *A Description of a City Shower*' (pp. 151–75), is more thoroughly researched. His later sections, which use Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of parody to analyse political allusions in Swift's verse, are enjoyable (pp. 163–73). But it is not clear why Venturo feels the need, in the earlier sections of his chapter, to argue that a young Swift might have met Dryden (p. 151), and, assuming he did, that the meeting might have gone badly—thus sparking Swift's animosity towards the older poet, and his life-long suspicion of modern epic. Again, this all feels rather hypothetical. It is also redundant, because as Venturo himself points out (p. 153), the political differences between the poets are sufficient to account for the venom. Furthermore, as Daniel Cook shows in *Reading Swift's Poetry*, Swift's satires on modernity were all-encompassing, and cannot be attributed to any single, particular, instance of poetic rivalry.

Turning now to journals, 2020 saw the publication of numerous articles on eighteenth-century poetry, with a corresponding breadth of critical priorities and methods.

Within this variety, it is nevertheless possible to discern a few significant groupings, gathered (sometimes albeit loosely), around a shared problematic. The first of these loose constellations emerges from work on heroism, war and faction, slavery, and empire. What connects these articles is their shared interest in the question of how a literary tradition often associated with the “rise of politeness” might coexist alongside, thrive on, critique, disavow, or ultimately come to express profoundly brutal political and economic logics. This question is of course particularly urgent when it comes to assessing the links between eighteenth-century poetry, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and British colonialism in the Americas. However, whilst acknowledging the vast differences in scale and intensity, it is also a pertinent question in the context of English, Hanoverian, repression of enemies nearer to home, especially in Scotland and Ireland. Some of the articles considered in the next few paragraphs might thus be put in useful dialogue with the chapters of the *OLHW* and *Irish Literature in Transition, 1700–1780* mentioned earlier in this survey. Before examining these articles, however, this section begins with ~~two studies~~ a study-of eighteenth-century epic poetry, a genre in which the notions of “civilization” and “barbarism” have long been contested. The following ~~two studies~~ study-focus particularly on the languages of virtue associated with the poems, languages which other articles will subsequently interrogate.

As we have just seen, in his chapter on Swift for *Paper, Ink, and Achievement*, David Venturo draws upon Bakhtin’s philosophy of literature to make a sharp distinction between epic poetry and satire. Although presumably unaware of Venturo’s arguments, this position is one that Anna M. Foy would doubtless contest. This whole Bakhtinian framework is one which she seeks to refute in her article, ‘Historical poetics and the definition of epic in the eighteenth century’ (*LitComp* 17[2020] 1-22 ). The problem with Bakhtin’s philosophy, in Foy’s view, is that by positing the existence of an extremely durable repertoire of characteristics for each genre, it risks essentializing the categories, binding genre-criticism to

a rigidly deductive form of hermeneutics. As Foy goes on to demonstrate, in the impressive negative section of her argument, neither Bakhtin's, nor many other more recent philosophers' definitions of epic fit well with eighteenth-century examples of the genre. In order to formulate a definition which will be more useful for discussing these works, Foy then turns to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theorists from René Le Bossu to Hugh Blair. Across these texts, she notices that critics keep returning to the idea that epic is 'a genre for "forming the manners"' (p. 7). It is this normative function which Foy takes as the cornerstone of her own revised definition of eighteenth-century epic. But this, the positive section of Foy's argument, is weaker than her critical section, because it fails to address some important questions. Would her new, and more permissive, definition of the genre allow Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* to be described as 'epic'? And what about Addison and Steele's *Spectator* papers, which surely also aim to form the manners? Likewise, it is surprising in this context that Foy does not refer to 'civic humanism', or any of the scholars, mostly working at the interface between intellectual and art history, who discuss *virtu* and the 'Grand Style' in eighteenth-century poetry and painting.

~~The next article to be considered here is well-versed in this literature, at least on the side of intellectual history, and falls squarely within the terrain of Foy's broader arguments. This is Aris Della Fontana's "Constructing "Englishness" and promoting "politeness" through a "Francophobic" bestseller: *Télémaque* in England (1699–1745)" (*HEI* 46[2020] 766–92). What has never been disputed is that François Fénelon's eighteen-book epic, *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), is a work that attempts to form the manners of its readers. However, Della Fontana argues that previously historians have taken a too limited (and partly mistaken) view of this audience's identity. In England, historians have suggested that the Jacobites were the main disseminators of Fénelon's work, drawing upon what they took to be the Absolutist theory of monarchy allegorized in the text (p. 766). Yet, as Della Fontana shows, there were~~

~~also competing Whig interpretations of the epic—both from the ‘moderate’ Court wing of the party, and the ‘Patriot opposition’ (p. 768; p. 781). Indeed, Court Whigs were the group who most successfully appropriated Fénelon’s work, in which they found a theory of restrained and wise kingship, underpinned by an ethos of civility.~~

That ~~both *virtu* and~~ politeness ~~itself was a~~ ~~were~~-factionally charged ideals—and not, as some of ~~its~~ ~~their~~-advocates in the eighteenth-century claimed, a politically-neutral stance—has come to seem obvious. Nevertheless, if over the last few decades, literary historians have come to regard the imposition of politeness (especially) as a mode of ‘hegemony’, then this thoroughly sceptical, disabused perspective might itself continue to harbour certain illusions. This point was made slightly differently by two articles this year, both of which focused on poetry and war. Of the two, the more theoretically ambitious article was Thomas Keymer’s ‘Civil Rage: Poetry and War in the 1740s’ (*ECL* 44:iii[2020] 8–29), a work which merits close attention, and which I will return to momentarily. First, however, and more briefly, there is the challenge posed by Jonathan Taylor’s article, “‘Who Bravely Fights, and Like Achilles Bleeds’: The Ideal of the Front-Line Soldier during the Long Eighteenth Century’ (*J ECS* 43:i[2020] 79–100). Taylor usefully reminds us that the hegemony of politeness was never absolute. Thus, while John Dryden and René Le Bossu favoured Virgil’s Aeneas over Homer’s Achilles, precisely because the latter seemed to relish more in carnage than in diplomacy, for many other poets and critics, Achilles’s bloodlust could be interpreted as masculine virility, and therefore as an antidote to the enervating effects of contemporary modernity, including excessive politeness. This brings us to Keymer’s article, which warns that although some eighteenth-century writers certainly did associate politeness with modernity, this teleological view of history could itself be used to legitimate extremely bloody ‘Achillean’ acts of violence. Keymer argues that this is what happened at Culloden in 1746, when the Duke of Cumberland and his senior officers urged

Hanoverian forces to slaughter wounded Highlanders (p. 11). Had Cumberland recognised the Jacobites as combatants in a civil war, he would have been forced to acknowledge their rights as fallen adversaries. Instead, he and his commanders viewed the Jacobites as a mix between Popish invaders and primitive mutineers—hence, foreign and archaic elements against whom absolute force was justified. Interestingly, in the aftermath of the war, amidst all the panegyrics on Cumberland, the pro-Hanoverian texts which came closest to acknowledging the fratricidal dimension of the conflict were William Collins’s *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects* (1746). Keymer suggests that it may have been something about the embedded technical resources of the genre which enabled Collins’s odes to hold this more complex vision of history in view (pp. 17–8).

While also interested in the politics of memory, Kimberly Takahata’s article in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* focuses on the opposite dynamic to Keymer. In “‘Follow me your guide’: Poetic Empire in John Singleton’s *A General Description of the West-Indian Islands*” (*SECC* 49[2020] 45–65), Takahata is concerned with moments when poetry becomes complicit in the erasure of historical knowledge. More specifically, she argues that the first edition of Singleton’s loco-descriptive poem (printed in Barbados in 1767) grapples with, and ultimately tries to eliminate his ‘troubled reliance on Afro-Caribbean practices and knowledge’ to be able to safely navigate and catalogue the useful flora of Barbados, Montserrat, and St Croix (p. 46). Like other colonial writers, Singleton was dependent on Afro-Caribbean informants to provide him with information about these islands; but he almost everywhere occludes this dependency in the poem, by attributing his erudition to the intervention of his muse. Only in one key place, in a footnote, does he acknowledge his reliance on enslaved people to guide him down the slopes of the Soufrière Hills Volcano. As Takahata points out (p. 47), this footnote was dropped from the 1776 and

1777 editions of the work (which were printed in London), effectively redoubling the deliberate process of forgetting in the poem.

To extend and reshape the archive on Transatlantic Slavery is always unsettling. This is true both when traces of resistance are restored to the archive, and when further layers of oppression and self-justification are uncovered. This latter dynamic can be seen in an important second article by Anna M. Foy: ‘George Wallace, Population, and the Problem of Slavery in *The Sugar-Cane*’ (*MP* 117[2020] 393–421). Grainger has long been viewed as a figure whose life encapsulates many of the broader ambivalences and contradictions of sentimental abolitionism in the eighteenth century. Foy’s work reveals further complexity. In her article, she prints one of Grainger’s unpublished notes from the draft manuscript of the poem held at Trinity College, Dublin (c. 1762). In this note, drawing upon Hume’s writing about population-growth and commerce, Grainger rebukes the anti-slavery arguments of another Scottish philosopher, George Wallace. What makes this still more difficult to process is that the note accompanies some of Grainger’s most strident (and again, ultimately unpublished) poetic lines *against* slavery. Foy offers a range of interpretations, some of which are more optimistic. But she does not ignore the likelihood that the ‘meditations in the Wallace note were on some level genuine expressions’ of Grainger’s personal beliefs (p. 413). By making this note available, Foy has opened a new chapter in Grainger criticism. All future scholarship on *The Sugar-Cane* will need to reckon with this text.

This marks the end of the first constellation of articles. The second important cluster takes us away from historical reflections on colonialism and empire, and instead foregrounds links between poetry and occasion, duration, temporality, and experiences of fleeting but potentially repeatable significance. Alongside these themes, the articles here are all linked by their interest in poetic genres which share a historical association with the meta-category ‘lyric’. (Thus, the following articles focus on ballads, songs, odes and hymns.) However, not



all the articles here actually use the term ‘lyric’, and of those which do there is a clear sense that the term has become problematic. Nor is it hard to intuit why this might be the case. More than two decades after Yopie Prins published *Victorian Sappho* (1999), it would seem that the influence of ‘New Lyric Studies’ is still increasing in discussions of eighteenth-century poetry. Certainly, this is the impression given by the first article in this cluster, Chris Chan’s study, ‘Anne Finch’s “Contemn’d Retreat” and the Politics of Lyric’ (*ECS* 53[2020] 463–80). For Chan, the principal strength of the New Lyric Studies is that it does not abstract works from their historical and political contexts. This sets the approach of scholars like Prins and Virginia Jackson apart, in his view, from the competing interpretation of lyric poetry recently put forward by Jonathan Culler. Indeed, Chan’s article presents something like an imminent critique of Culler’s *Theory of the Lyric* (2015), testing the latter’s presuppositions and argumentative moves against the emphatic test case of Finch’s Pindaric ode ‘Upon the Hurricane in November 1703’.

Without engaging with the same specific theoretical debates about New Lyric Studies, Yosefa Raz is also interested in the process of ‘lyricization’. The text she focuses on is the Hebrew Bible, and its reception in the eighteenth century as a collection of sublime poetry. In ‘Robert Lowth’s Bible: Between Seraphic Choirs and Prophetic Weakness’ (*MLQ* 81[2020] 139–67), Raz argues that Lowth’s famous lectures *On the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (delivered in Oxford 1741–1750), together with his translation of *The Book of Isaiah* (1778), replace the religious authority of the biblical text with an aesthetic authority (p. 142). This authority was grounded in the neoclassical ideal of harmonious symmetry – an ideal which Lowth discovered in the parallelism of thematic and syntactic elements in Hebrew verse, and which he believed were ultimately derived from early antiphonal church music, in imitation of angelic song (p. 150). However, Raz directs attention to moments in Lowth’s work where he could not sustain this emphasis on symmetry and balance, and thus turned to the ‘sublime’

as a kind of supplement (p. 153); this move later enabled William Blake to exacerbate the unruliness of the prophetic texts, pushing them towards antinomianism. It is an exciting thesis, and Raz successfully makes her case for the pivotal nature of Lowth's works in the history of English lyric. Nevertheless, it is interesting to imagine what the response from a scholar like Dustin D. Stewart would be to Raz's arguments about secularization. Is the aesthetic necessarily always opposed to the religious?

From Lowth's seraphic choirs, we now turn to more quotidian harmonies: the songs, ballads, and tunes which were so much a part of eighteenth-century life, but which now often require considerable labour to excavate. There were two articles this year which thematised this labour. The first is Moyra Haslett's short essay on 'Print, Manuscript, and Oral Literary Cultures: The Case of Eighteenth-Century Irish Song' (*SECC* 49[2020] 349–54). Here, Haslett presents reflections arising directly from the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded "Irish Song Project" conducted at Queen's University (2012–15). The second article is Dianne Dugaw's more wide-ranging work on 'Transcendent Ephemera: Performing Deep Structure in Elegies, Ballads, and Other Occasional Forms' (*ECL* 44:ii[2020] 18–42). Both of these articles emphasize the intermedial and highly mobile nature of the texts they discuss, which often circulated in multiple versions, across national borders, and simultaneously in polite and popular culture. For Haslett—here returning to some of the questions surrounding the future of the eighteenth-century archive which were discussed earlier in this review—this mobility poses a particular challenge for the Digital Humanities: 'The scale possible through new digital technologies is undoubtedly useful but it does not overcome the inherent problem of having to categorise in the first place. Within song culture in particular, combinations of texts and tunes and their inevitable traveling make it often impossible to assign a song to a specific social, ethnic, or political tradition' (p. 351). Meanwhile, Dugaw draws upon techniques from folklore studies to examine the way this perpetual making and re-making of

ephemeral texts constituted a kind of cultural poetics. She is particularly interested in the interplay between medium and message, and the way such occasional works give voice to ‘the touching, aspiringly transcendent energy of a passing moment’ (p. 33).

The last work in this cluster illustrates just the properties of brevity and cross-cultural mobility that Dugaw and Haslett aim to theorize. Michael Griffin and Anthony John Lappin’s *Notes and Queries* article on ‘The Spanish Sources of Oliver Goldsmith’s “On a Beautiful Youth Struck Blind with Lightning” (1759)’ (*N&Q* 67:iii[2020] 426–30) plausibly suggests that the quatrain Goldsmith translated from Spanish and included in the first number of the *Bee* was modelled on a poem by Juan Rufo (1547–1620). Goldsmith might have encountered this poem in Ireland in the widely disseminated Jesuit text *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* (1648), or perhaps through a more recent French translation.

In the closing section of this review, we now leave behind broader thematic constellations to focus on articles grouped around individual authors. The first author of note is James Beattie. Two articles examine connections between Beattie’s *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* (1770) and his neo-Spenserian poem, *The Minstrel* (1771–1774). However, the authors handle these connections quite differently. Ian Cameron Robertson’s article ‘Some Archaeology on James Beattie’s *The Minstrel* (1771 and 1774)’ (*ScotLR* 12:ii[2020] 137–58) uses Beattie’s correspondence to try to track down the un-specified stanzas which Beattie mentioned having added to the first book on the eve of its publication. Robertson believes these are likely to be the stanzas which most nearly express ideas from Beattie’s essay, which seems reasonable. More impressive, R. J. W. Mill’s ‘James Beattie, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the character of Common Sense philosophy’ (*HEI* 46[2020] 793–810) explodes the assumption that Beattie’s arguments against Humean scepticism were largely cribbed from earlier Common Sense philosophers, especially Thomas Reid (p. 798). Beattie was more innovative than this, eclectically combining aspects from Reid and

Rousseau to buttress orthodoxy. In particular, Mills suggests that Beattie took inspiration from reading the ‘Profession of Faith by the Savoyard Vicar’ in *Émile* (1762), and that the episode informs not only the sentimental theodicy in his essay, but also the character of the Hermit in his poem (p. 802). It is surely to be hoped that the ‘[c]rosspollination’ of literary and intellectual history which Mills calls for in this article (p. 794), and attempts to initiate, will indeed be picked up by other scholars working on both sides of the disciplinary boundary.

Elsewhere, a more sustained effort was made this year to rehabilitate John Dennis. This effort took the form of a lengthy special feature in Volume 25 of the annual journal and book *1650–1850*. Guest-edited by Claude Willan, ‘The Achievements of John Dennis’ (pp. 107–235) makes a significant addition to the literature on this semi-canonical author. Dennis is well known of course, but still primarily as the defeated enemy of Pope. The five articles gathered here want to open space for Dennis to be read on his own terms. First of all, this means coming to recognise the sheer extent of Dennis’s writings. As Willan emphasizes in his introduction to the feature (pp. 107–28), Dennis was prolific on an enormous range of subjects. The quality of his thought was also emphatically systematic, so much so, that Willan can argue that Dennis’s writings on poetry and on naval reforms are inherently connected, forming part of a single sprawling project to oppose tyrannical arbitrariness with rules, order, all-encompassing harmony (p. 109). This very feature of Dennis’s oeuvre can make it difficult to divide the scholarship on him into neatly defined groups, and as a result, several of the articles in this special feature may be somewhat relevant for historians focusing on eighteenth century poetry. In this latter category is Philip S. Palmer’s ‘Anatomy of a Pan: John Dennis’s Copy of Blackmore’s *Prince Arthur*’ (pp. 181–200), which investigates Dennis’s compositional habits as a critic and polemicist, but which does, also, have an obvious link to Dennis’s poetics. Similarly, readers might be interested in Pat Rogers’s

contribution, ‘My Enemy’s Enemy: Dennis, Pope, and Edmund Curll’ (pp. 201–16), which examines Dennis’s and Pope’s poetry, but mostly as a way of talking about the business of book-selling. There were also two articles in this volume that spoke more directly to the present concerns of this review. The first to be considered here is Sarah B. Stein’s essay on ‘Ovid Made English: Dennis’s Translation of *The Passion of Byblis*’ (pp. 217–35). According to Stein, what Dennis found in Ovid’s description of Byblis’s incestuous love for Caunus, her brother, was a way of reflecting on his own efforts to balance rational design with inspiration and enthusiasm (p. 224). James Horowitz’s article “‘Natural Majesty’: The Occasional Sublime and Miltonic Whig History of John Dennis, Poet’ (pp. 154–80), is another intriguing essay that does not quite land its most daring arguments. Like Anna M. Foy in her *Literature Compass* article, but focusing on literary technique rather than on the normative force of the genres, Horowitz argues that in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the boundaries between epic and other kinds of poetry were more porous than is usually assumed. Dennis shifts between ode and epic in the series of occasional poems he wrote commemorating the Battle of Aughrim (1691), La Hogue (1692), the death of Queen Mary (1694), Blenheim (1704), Ramillies (1706), and the accession of George I (1714). These nominally ‘Pindaric’ odes are so long, narrative, and contain so many passages of monostichic verse that they often seem partly ‘Virgilian’ – a synthesis which, in Horowitz’s fine reading, enables Dennis to ‘respond nimbly to the shifting needs of the Whig cause across a period of fierce partisan contestation’ (p. 156). However, whether or not the odes collected in the 1719 *Selected Works* were really ever read as, or intended to be read as a single coherent and internally allusive ‘Whig history in verse’ is more open to question (p. 157).

This year Leah Orr took upon herself the task of recuperating Laurence Eusden who, like Dennis, is now mainly recalled as an enemy of Pope. In ‘Patronage and Commercial Print in Conflict: Laurence Eusden’s Reception and Afterlife’ (*JEMCS* 20:iii[2020] 32–57),

Orr is very good on the potential barriers to modern reader's appreciation of Eusden—the fact that as Dustin Griffin has argued, we now tend to view patronage as a failure of artistic autonomy; the fact that as Abigail Williams has shown, we have lost our ear for panegyric poetry, and find it embarrassing—but she does not really demonstrate what positive value we can find in Eusden's verse. That his early writing 'shows both his ability to work compliments into his poetry without seeming crass, and his classical knowledge' does not sound like something which demands further attention (p. 35). The suspension of reductively moralistic readings of eighteenth-century poetry needs to show us how tactics, skill, resist assimilation to the pieties of the day, opening up vivid new possibilities.

This feels like an appropriate note on which to turn to Alexander Pope himself. Whereas the challenge involved in writing about Dennis or Eusden is that so little of their work is known, when writing about Pope there is the opposite problem: a thick patina of assumptions surrounds every text, and must be managed somehow. Four articles on Pope this year all attempted to break through this patina by arguing that aspects of his work which we take for granted are not what they seem. Sometimes this was very well done, as in the two closely-related and complementary articles on the musicality of Pope's verse from Marcus Tomalin and Courtney Weiss Smith.

Starting with Weiss Smith, her article 'The Matter of Language; Or, What Does "The *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*" Mean?' (*ELH* 87[2020] 39–64), brilliantly counters the view that *An Essay on Criticism* advocates a simple form of verbal mimesis. With careful reference to Pope's reading in Early Modern linguistics and natural philosophy, Weiss Smith first unpacks the complexity of the line's echo metaphor. For example, how close is the connection between sound and echo; and what kind of emphasis should be put on the word 'seem' here? These questions lead into a current debate in eighteenth-century philosophy. '[W]as there a kind of inherent appropriateness of sound to sense at least in the original

Adamic language? Or (as Locke argued) were all words merely arbitrary human inventions? Gesturing to both positions, Pope's line commits to neither' (p. 43). Weiss Smith wants to restore Pope's lines to us as a problem, as something to think with. Deftly drawing out the shifting nuances of the words 'sound' and 'sense' as they are repeated (or, echo) across Pope's verse essay, the readings which follow certainly do this. For Tomalin, too, in 'Justifying Pope's Unjustifiable Rhymes' (*RES* 71[2020] 486–507), we have no choice but to become active participants in the labour of poetic sense-making. The issue here is not polysemy, but in some ways a more fundamental concern with phonology. Because patterns of pronunciation have changed so much since the early eighteenth century, without first undertaking considerable research on contemporary grammar textbooks and orthoepic works, modern critics cannot authoritatively comment upon the "sound" of Pope's verse. Of course some unwary critics have done just this, and hence are frequently mistaken in their conclusions (p. 488). But the incentive to overcome 'the long-standing disconnection between literary-critical work in poetical prosody and linguistic studies in the history of English phonology' is not only to avoid errors (p. 490). As Tomalin shows, by paying close attention to pronunciation, critics can track Pope's artful appropriation of dialects and sociolects. To return briefly to Mikhail Bakhtin: this is the carnival of language on a newly micro-prosodic scale.

Pope was a musical thinker, but also, famously, a writer who thought in images. The next two studies address the visual element of his work, and his participation in visual culture. First, Timothy Erwin's 'Alexander Pope and a Carracci Venus at the Court of James II and Mary of Modena' (*HLQ* 83:ii[2020] 361–94). This is an interesting article, well referenced, and densely argued, but which also contains some troubling moments of overstatement. Erwin wants to suggest that there are important links between Pope's verse and the paintings of Francesco Albani (1578–1660). To make this claim, he points to two areas

of connection. The first is indisputable: whilst revising the two canto *Rape of the Lock*, Pope and his friend Charles Jervas studied Du Fresnoy's *De Arte Graphica* (1668), a work which expounds an academic theory of painting with influences from Albani and from the entire Carracci School. More problematically, Erwin also wants to suggest that the *Rape of the Lock* in some way visually echoes Albani's allegorical painting of *Venus at Her Toilet, or The Air* (c. 1621–33). Pope could not have seen the original, which was in the French royal collection at the time; but Erwin suggests that Pope would have known a 1672 engraving of the work by Etienne Baudet. Moreover, Pope would have associated this engraving with artworks by three women at the court of James II and Mary of Modena—Anne Killigrew, Ann Finch, and Aphra Behn—who Erwin believes all took inspiration from Albani's allegorical series, *The Loves of Venus and Adonis*. The problem is that Erwin's evidence is limited. In Behn's 1685 *Pindarick Poem on the Happy Coronation*, for example, he argues that the image of cherubs sharpening their arrows is 'unquestionably' taken from Albani (p. 377). Yet this is a common trope, and could just as easily have come from Horace (*Odes* 2.8). A great many of Erwin's links are like this. It leaves his broader argument feeling slightly brittle.

Helen Deutsch's article, "'True Wit is Nature": Wimsatt, Pope, and the Power of Style' (*Rep* 150[2020] 91–119), focuses on representations of the poet, and their function within W. K. Wimsatt's philosophy of art. Famously, Wimsatt rejected the 'affective fallacy', and was against the idea that poetry was reducible to biography. He was the great and austere father of New Criticism, a movement which identified style with objective universality – so why, Deutsch asks, was he fascinated by Pope (an intensely autobiographical poet), to the extent that he spent many decades building a collection of Pope images? The answer she gives here is that Wimsatt's entire theory of style was shaped by his work on Pope, and by the characteristic effort in Pope's verse to mediate between the universal and the particular. With a nod to Edward Said, she argues that Wimsatt's concepts of the 'concrete universal'



and ‘verbal icon’ are specifically indebted to the ‘later Pope’ style, where he rejected his own earlier emphasis on seemingly effortless beauty (p. 97). Deutsch’s handling of dialectic throughout the article is impressive. Nevertheless, there are some moments of slippage. Even without the capitals, it feels like a stretch to describe Wimsatt’s work as ‘critical theory’ (p. 96). Relatedly, Deutsch’s flourish on Wimsatt’s ‘trenchant’ criticism of the 1968 uprisings is compromised by its oddly one-sided theorization of iconoclasm (p. 100). In any case, readers may here wish to consult her article ‘We Must Keep Moving’ in Issue 9 of *The Rambling* (2020), which clarifies and slightly modifies the point, whilst also summarizing her current book project on Swift.

With this return to work on Swift, we now come to the final two articles of 2020. Both of these were published in the *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* as part of a special supplement on ‘Queer Swift’, edited by Declan Kavanagh and Ula Lukszo Klein. The subfield of Queer Eighteenth-Studies has flourished in the past few decades. And yet, oddly, Swift has rarely attracted sustained attention. In her article on ‘Swift’s Queer Camp’ (*JECSS* 43[2020] 293–302), Klein traces this omission back to Susan Sontag’s *Notes on Camp*, where Swift is explicitly excluded from the canon of camp (p. 294). To rectify this situation, Klein draws on more recent theorizations of camp which emphasize its preoccupation with death and finitude, as well as playfulness. These perspectives are here brought into contact with Julia Kristeva’s account of ‘abjection’. Klein then uses this syncretic theoretical approach to develop close readings of ‘The Progress of Beauty’, ‘A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed’ and ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’. Much like Cook’s interpretation in *Reading Swift’s Poetry*, Klein’s argument here works to recuperate and even celebrate the so-called “unprintables”. Meanwhile, in her article on ‘Jonathan Swift and the Transgender Classroom’ (pp. 303–14), Julia Ftacek suggests a more measured and ambivalent response. Swift may not have been writing about trans women in his verse; but the horror which Celia’s body

provokes in 'The Lady's Dressing Room' is nevertheless reminiscent of the way that 'trans femmes tend to be conceptualized in the cis gaze' (p. 307). Since a significant and growing number of students identify as trans, Ftacek suggests that teachers need to consider carefully how they present this material. Careful thought is always the hallmark of good teaching, so this call for a more trans-aware pedagogy is useful. The link here between theory and pedagogy is also a good place to conclude this year's review of work in eighteenth-century poetry studies.