

things do not add up too neatly: Starr often emphasizes the dissonances, the meaningful absences that are created when lyric appears in novels, and novelistic tricks in poems.

The book is a pleasure to read for reasons that are as much local as general—and the detailed readings in *Lyric Generations* are richer and more learned than can be contained in a summary of its broad-brush arguments. Starr is an excellent close reader, and her observations about so large and diverse an array of texts are fresh, striking, and downright smart. She is talented in describing the fabric of a lyric, and she has a way of finishing up sections of text with memorable, often beautifully written insights that jump off the page startlingly. This is a memorable book.

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Felicity A. Nussbaum. *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 336pp. Hbk US\$75; Pbk US\$27. Pbk ISBN-10: 0521016428; ISBN-13: 9780521016421.

Felicity Nussbaum's *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* introduces the term "anomaly" to the now familiar triad of "race, class, and gender" that is central to so much recent work in early modern cultural studies. For this reviewer, this addition is a welcome innovation, one that might be asked to carry even more weight than it does in the analysis she develops.

Beginning with a discussion of the fictions of Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood, and continuing through to an examination of the theatrical performance of racial identity on the late eighteenth-century stage, Nussbaum's argument divides into two parts: "Anomaly and Gender" and "Race and Gender." Implicit in that organization is a suggestion that, somewhere in the middle of the eighteenth century, an emergent process of racialist thinking began replacing earlier models that stressed anomaly and defect. Nussbaum does not argue that case explicitly, but she does assert the importance of a mid-century transformation:

The middle of the eighteenth century is a critical turning point in the argument I am weaving for several reasons: it marks women's alleged retreat into the private sphere and the ascendance of domesticity; in 1745 the question of the Protestant succession (which had dominated English politics for seventy years) is finally put to rest; the Seven Years War beginning in 1757 radically changed the outlines of Britain's empire; and the category of "monster" was first introduced by Linnaeus as a scientific classification in 1758. All of these developments

relate to the constellation of factors I am considering, and they demonstrate both the superficiality of difference and its immutability. (60)

For this reader, it is the suggestion here that is at once the most intriguing and frustrating feature of Nussbaum's argument. The continuity and coherence of argument provided by deploying the analytic of gender stands in stark contrast to the divide suggested at mid-century between "anomaly" as an appropriate cognate term of analysis for the early half of the century, and "race" for the latter half. When one reflects that the very binomial nomenclature introduced by Linnaeus at roughly mid-century offered to systematize the world in a naming practice that effectively minimized (if not erased) anomaly, while at the same time offering a means for reifying racist categorization, such a suggestion exercises significant appeal. Yet, repeatedly, Nussbaum backs away from arguing any strong case for historical change, ultimately resting content merely to pair her terms of analysis without precise articulation of their relation: "racial categories, closely aligned with anomaly, are highly adaptable within England in the eighteenth century" (254).

Opening with a discussion of Behn's *The Dumb Virgin* and *The Unfortunate Bride*, Nussbaum focuses on those fictions by Behn and Haywood that complicate and realign expectations that femininity will prove defective. In her analysis, these "fictions of defect" "celebrate, refine, and counter the prevailing construction of femininity as deformity" (24). Through such fictions, women writers deploy a counter-narrative of femininity as "perfect difference, an inferior perfection" in competition with a misogynist tradition that identified femininity as defect. By mid-century, feminized and effeminized bodies are perceived as corporeal indicators of national values, interests, and anxieties. Sarah Fielding's satire escapes predictable attacks "against Amazons and macaronis," and instead becomes "a vehicle for imagining a nation strengthened by an interlacing of affective communities" (67). Elizabeth Montagu's defence of Shakespeare from the criticisms of Voltaire becomes the focus of a supple analysis of the gendered terms of that debate, in which "it is [Samuel] Johnson, not Shakespeare, who becomes monstrous" (81). In the intellectual conversations of the Bluestockings and the curious sentimental sociability of *Tristram Shandy*, oddity and singularity come to articulate national anxieties of degeneracy and defect. And, particularly in the writings of women, the disfiguring scars of smallpox hint at alternative constructions of femininity and masculinity. Especially sensitive to the contributions of women writers, Nussbaum maps how "authors—especially women—frequently find within defect a metaphor or a material fact that releases them into writing, and into a subjectivity that can manipulate a print culture's assumptions about their capabilities" (132).

Yet, at times, that emphasis of argument on women writers seems to limit (and perhaps distort) the range of her analysis. Samuel Johnson, according to this argument, is rendered "monstrous" in Elizabeth Montagu's contending *Essay on Shakespeare*, an essay that figures the best drama as resembling "a perfect human body." Such an argument seems to invite consideration of the

oddity and singularity of Johnson's own person, a feature much written about in recent years; yet no mention—let alone sustained consideration—is forthcoming. The index identifies two citations for “Johnson, Samuel ... And oddity”; but neither refers to how anomaly inflects his own output. Rather, the first alludes to Montagu's characterization of his style, while the second alludes to Johnson's famously inaccurate assessment of *Tristram Shandy*: “nothing odd will do long.” Still more striking is the virtually complete neglect of Alexander Pope in a consideration of “anomaly and gender” in the eighteenth century. While Pope's line characterizing women as “fine by defect” appears from time to time, no attempt is made to consider that line within the autobiographical context of that author's own reflections on “fictions of defect.”

In the second half of *The Limits of the Human*, attention turns to how racial categories come to be articulated along the axes of gender and nation. One very real strength of this part is Nussbaum's ability to resist easy and reductive formulations:

rather than congealing into modern racism, incongruent manifestations of “race” in language and culture coexist in the eighteenth century, and the strategic confusions persist regarding the meanings assigned to skin colorings, physiognomies, and nations ... . These unfamiliar hybrids of racial attitudes suggest that the twenty-first century's pleading against race or to move beyond its boundaries may perhaps find more in common with earlier racial confusions and contingencies than with the nineteenth-century's scientific racism. (136)

One of the more compelling and persuasive articulations of these “strategic confusions” is her detailed exploration of “Why Imoinda turns white.” Reading the plot of *Oroonoko* as a sustained and violent negotiation between white men and black men over white women, she argues that both white male and white female subjectivities, particularly with respect to English masculinities and femininities, configure black femaleness as distinctly different. The whitening of Imoinda, in this analysis, serves to distance black women yet further.

I find Nussbaum's argument here particularly instructive, and I am interested in the possibility of introducing a further complication to it—one that suggests yet another wrinkle in the enfolded tapestry of race, gender, and anomaly. She notes how William Hogarth's “The Discovery” (1743) reverses the trope of a familiar boudoir scene in Restoration and eighteenth-century frontispiece illustrations: “a woman lying deshabelle on a heavily draped bed with an audience of men observing or even threatening her” (164). “The Discovery” reverses the power politics when a bare-breasted black woman surprises the men, simultaneously reversing the dynamics of the frontispiece convention and the Othello narrative that underwrites the print. It seems to me, however, that the print also closely echoes an earlier print by Hogarth, “Cunicularii,” that represented the Mary Toft hoax of 1726, an

event also described in verse by Alexander Pope in a poem titled “The Discovery.” There, the familiar power dynamics seem to be at work, except for the trail of little rabbits escaping out the door. The Mary Toft hoax has become something of a staple in recent critical conversations of gender, anomaly, and monstrosity in the early eighteenth century, and its absence in this account is a bit surprising. As I read Nussbaum’s argument, one way to read Hogarth’s two prints might be in terms of how the same trope is deployed in two different historical contexts as the power relations of class and masculine privilege remain consistent, while an earlier threat of subversive female agency is figured through anomaly, but by mid-century that threat is figured through racial difference. *The Limits of the Human* is at its best in provoking us to think of ways to extend the arguments that it sets in motion.

If black femaleness is configured as distinctly different by white male and white female subjectivities, then so, too, do the various eighteenth-century representations of Othello, Oroonoko, Equiano, and Sancho configure black masculinity within a cultural negotiation that sought to reconcile masculinity with sentiment while avoiding effeminacy—in that context, these black men become “the locus of fascination and pathos, at once threatening and appealing to white women and white men alike” (212). Nussbaum’s exploration of performative identity along the axes of race and gender in the eighteenth century culminates in a chapter on racialized theatrical performance in England prior to the first appearance of a black actor, Ira Aldridge, on stage in 1825. This chapter powerfully reinforces and underlines the developing argument of the second half of the book: “racism’s very uncertain boundaries in relation to other social issues makes tracking its labyrinthine workings difficult. Though sometimes transparent, racism also disguises itself in the clothes of class or gender privilege, and in impure and hybrid forms” (237).

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Colas Duflo et Luc Ruiz, éd. *De Rabelais à Sade* (Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne, 2003). €20. 131pp. ISBN 2-86272-305-3.

Les grandes philosophies de l’âge classique ont fait de la réflexion sur les passions un objet essentiel de la pensée. Parallèlement, c’est d’abord dans le genre dévalorisé du roman, dont la plasticité permet toutes les expérimentations depuis le regard extérieur d’un narrateur juge de ses personnages jusqu’aux introspections du roman par lettres, qu’on trouve une description du phénomène passionnel à l’œuvre. C’est précisément ce phénomène que tentent de retracer les articles du collectif dirigé par Colas Duflo et Luc Ruiz, *De Rabelais à Sade. L’analyse des passions dans le roman de l’âge classique*.