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Review of: George Butte, *I Know That You Know That I Know: Narrating Subjects from 'Moll Flanders' to 'Marnie'*

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a close and persuasive reading of *Frankenstein* based on disentangling the few words spoken by William Frankenstein, the monster's first victim, *Wild Enlightenment* actually ends with a welcome retrieval of Peacock's *Melincourt*, which features the wonderfully named Sir Oran Haut-ton. Nash makes a good case for appreciating the topical radicalism of *Melincourt*, which, "positioned in a Romantic era but looking backward to Augustan models of satire and literary involvement in the public sphere, brings both sociability and language use centre stage in seeking to redefine the role of the responsible citizen" (187).

Wild Enlightenment can interestingly be compared with Felicity Nussbaum's *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2003). Although their periods and general approach are close, the two books hardly overlap at all—only Dr Johnson is a significant figure in both. However, both books bring new material into eighteenth-century studies in exciting ways, demonstrating the relevance of the period to twenty-first-century concerns through careful attention to the historical background of the works they discuss. Both books offer the very best of contemporary eighteenth-century scholarship.

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George Butte. *I Know That You Know That I Know: Narrating Subjects from "Moll Flanders" to "Marnie."* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004. viii+270pp. US44.95. ISBN 0-8142-0945-9.

In a pivotal scene from Austen's *Persuasion*, Captain Wentworth places a fatigued Anne Elliot into a carriage, and his delicacy implies he may yet have feelings for her. Worded thus, a simple enough action and implication—yet as George Butte adroitly demonstrates in *I Know That You Know That I Know: Narrating Subjects from "Moll Flanders" to "Marnie,"* Austen's rendering is, in fact, considerably more intricate, suggestive, and skilful. Using an omniscient narrator to voice the heroine's consciousness, what the text actually represents is a series of reverberating perceptions in which Anne, grasping that Wentworth has noticed her weariness and reacted with surprising tenderness, responds to her-sense-of-his-sense-of-herself with a mix of pleasure and pain. Wentworth speaks his part with "his will and his hands," and for Anne too, the exchange is about bodies as well as intentions (112–13). *I Know That You Know* looks to novels and films from *Persuasion* to *Broadway Danny Rose* for selves defined in such complex relational terms—characters and sometimes

narrators linked to others in a close economy of words, looks, and touch. This book does so in the service of two general claims. The first is historical: that with Jane Austen we see a shift towards stories newly able to narrate the kind of "deep intersubjectivity" illustrated above. Butte supports this assertion with illuminating comparisons of "before" and "after" novels: *Moll Flanders* and *Great Expectations*; *Pamela* and *The Turn of the Screw*; *Tom Jones* and *Middlemarch*. The second claim is metacritical: that French philosopher Merleau-Ponty—whose notions of enmeshed subjects and embodied consciousnesses underwrite this book—may serve not only to theorize subjects in positive conjunction with one another but also, in the process, to suggest a more historically situated phenomenology, revised away from its idealist origins.

Butte is not, of course, the first to identify late eighteenth-century England with such new formations as a consolidated middle class, a modernized disciplinary regime, and—of primary importance here—a psychologized subject whose rich interiority is both produced and figured by the realist novel. This rather standard periodization nevertheless gives Butte occasion for some wonderfully sensitive and original readings. One is grateful to be shown, for example, the subtlety and poignancy with which Dickens depicts young Pip's endangered intimacy with Joe: the boy's exquisite awareness of and constitution by Joe's view of him; his pained sense of the fragile, reciprocal nature of their ties; his unwillingness to confess his theft, lest Joe's shifted perception of him—and his knowledge of that perception—be woven thereafter into every word, every movement between them (49–51). Butte poses this in revealing contrast to Moll's undiscerning, largely mechanical relationships with characters whom she apprehends only in the broadest generic terms as "the Wretch," "a Fop," "such Gentlemen," or "a Man heated by Wine." Even the emotional transaction with her beloved Jemy is, we are made to see, single rather than serial—unable to set into motion an extended sequence of echoing responses (40–48). A key contribution of this book, in my opinion, is its attention to the way that deep (as opposed to Moll's shallow) intersubjectivity involves a pattern of reciprocated gestures accumulating over time, so that its telling necessarily takes a narrative form—*is* one form that narrative takes, beginning with Austen and continuing into our own day.

The second half of *I Know That You Know*, denying that film's language of surfaces prevents it from exploring dramas that are internal as well as external, adds cinematic narratives to the mix. In chapters juxtaposing such disparate works as *Emma*, *To Catch a Thief*, and *Broadway Danny Rose*, Butte considers the role of deep intersubjectivity in modern comedy: the way it may effect a comic plot of recognition, purification, and renewal; or, having raised the stakes of this plot, how it may also be the vocabulary of failure to reach comedic goals. Despite an obvious investment in the joyful, comic potential of intersubjectivity—its ability to achieve what Merleau-Ponty calls "espousal"—Butte takes care to acknowledge (citing Sartre here) that our

intercourse with others may equally well conduce to shame and exploitation. Indeed, in a formulation I found particularly apt, Butte credits Austen with introducing a "new comedy of anxiety" (113). As Butte explains, alongside the will and capacity to connect, a text such as *Emma* stages in rather stark terms a fear of connections that fail, shame, or otherwise injure. Later he will turn to *His Girl Friday* for a still darker example of speedy, comic banter driven by underlying hysteria, despair, and aggression. Hawks's screwball comedy, he observes, is rife with "intimate performances of separateness ... between [the two main characters] Hildy Johnson and Walter Burns" (182).

Butte performs a similarly deflationary reading of a famous romantic moment in Hitchcock's *Notorious*. Referring us to one of the book's usefully interpolated film stills, he notes that a linear shadow in the background actually marks a division between the two ostensibly intimate lovers (141–42). Unlike many of us who come to film from the study of novels, Butte is highly attuned to such visual details (the way space is organized within a particular frame, graphic matches from scene to scene, etc.). Authoritative in his handling of the technical as well as narrative aspects of his movies, he also, in the easy intertextuality of his analyses, displays a thorough knowledge of and infectious enthusiasm for the film archive. This ability to treat pictures and words with equal aplomb is a notable strength of *I Know That You Know*. One of my favourite moments is its glossing of an image from *To Catch a Thief*: a close-up shot of Frances's hand grasping Robie's elbow, their two arms "twisted together like the fibers of a rope" (146). Butte describes the shot as revisionary in several senses—because it is Eve instead of God reaching out to Adam; and because its horizontal line of arms references and counters the vertical/hierarchical line of arms we see later in this Hitchcock film and in two others (*Saboteur* and *North by Northwest*).

Butte is always astute when it comes to gender, and the final section on *Jane Eyre* and *Marnie* offers a well-informed discussion of such topics as female monstrosity, gender masquerade, and the maternal body. Yet much of this is familiar ground, and this chapter seemed less integral than the rest in advancing Butte's overall claims. It must also be said that, despite the historical framing of part 1 and the explicit goal of modelling a more historically sensitive phenomenology, part 2's miscegenation of nineteenth-century fiction and twentieth-century film only confirms our hunch that the tradition originating with Husserl may be recuperated for various purposes—and doing history is not one of them; even Merleau-Ponty's more materialist version is insufficient in this regard. What Husserl's successor does do, however, is help Butte to affirm a particular notion of the subject: non-essential but corporeal in a way that both relies on and exceeds language; psychologically elaborate and deliberate; capable and desirous of profound communion with others. This deep subject—theorized, as Butte puts it, somewhere in the space between Locke and Lacan (5)—is a welcome and

even moving figure in a discourse more often dominated by a blanket suspicion of identity, interiority, agency, and attachment. And if Butte seems at times to rely excessively on Merleau-Ponty, it is perhaps only a credit to his own habits of intersubjectivity—the purposeful orientation towards others that makes this book such a morally bracing and critically rewarding work.

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Michèle Bokobza Kahan. *Libertinage et folie dans le roman du XVIIIe siècle.* La République des Lettres 1. Louvain, Paris: Éditions Peeters, 2000. 291pp. 45euros. ISBN 90-429-0942-0.

Il y a quelques années, Jean-Marie Goulemot avait cherché à montrer en quoi la dimension « pornographique » du roman libertin fait naître, chez son lecteur, un « désir de jouissance » qui, lui-même, illustre au mieux « le fonctionnement de l'effet de réel de la littérature » (*Ces livres qu'on ne lit que d'une main*: 1991). Suivant un tout autre point de vue, Philippe Sollers a mobilisé « la liberté de vivre » qu'incarne le libertinage contre « l'incessante propagande romantique et dépressive » (*Liberté du XVIIIe siècle*: 1996). Plus récemment, Michel Delon appréhende le libertinage dans sa plénitude, à la fois comme savoir et savoir-vivre, « non comme un système fantasmatique ou narratif fixe, mais comme la concurrence de modèles idéologiques [...] qui en assure la dynamique » (*Le Savoir-vivre libertin*: 2000). Dans tous les cas, cependant, le libertinage apparaît comme un art de dire, de sentir et de penser propre à favoriser un bonheur fondé sur la critique rationnelle des préjugés et indissociable des caprices du désir.

Au rebours de ces lectures, l'ouvrage de Michèle Bokobza Kahan, *Libertinage et folie dans le roman du XVIIIe siècle*, propose moins d'envisager le roman libertin comme une promesse de jouissance, d'affranchissement ou de bonheur, que comme le fruit d'« une doctrine aliénante » (258) dont la folie procède de « la monstruosité de la raison » (266). De fait, Bokobza Kahan se détourne de ce qu'elle appelle « le roman libertin heureux » au profit de textes qui, en empruntant « des voies plus fécondes », dépeignent une société mondaine où la « contrainte auto-produite [...] amène l'individu à s'éloigner de sa vérité personnelle » (263–64). En faisant du libertinage « une interrogation sur la nature pathogène de la société mondaine » (2), l'auteur place la folie au cœur de l'écriture libertine, ce qui, dès lors, lui permet de prendre en compte aussi bien le « rôle joué par la société dans la