

points about the limitations of the historical models that have organized Romantic studies, and it attests to the rewards of critically examining scholarly clichés and cultural givens.

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Emily Hodgson Anderson. *Eighteenth-Century Authorship and the Play of Fiction: Novels and the Theater, Haywood to Austen*. New York and London: Routledge, 2009. xiii+181pp. US\$95. ISBN 978-0-415-99905-2.

Emily Hodgson Anderson's interesting but ultimately frustrating book analyses work by five women writers, Eliza Haywood, Frances Burney, Elizabeth Inchbald, Maria Edgeworth, and, briefly, Jane Austen. All are best known as novelists, but they also wrote plays, and their novels incorporate, and are shaped by, tropes of theatricality. They "depict characters who perform their feelings" (7), thereby challenging eighteenth-century, and our, assumptions about subjectivity. The stage offered a "model of identity that assumed the possibility of a gap ... between external appearance and internal essence" (9), and the authors appropriate this model in their prose fiction. In different ways, they "privilege emotion as the defining, consistent component of identity": for Haywood the key emotion is love; for Burney suffering; Inchbald "treats feelings much more comprehensively"; and Edgeworth, for whom drama is primarily a tool of her lifelong concern for education, "associates thinking and feeling" (10, 11). Hodgson Anderson meticulously and suggestively shows how key themes and techniques of the plays are continued in the prose fiction. Moreover, she considers not only the literary work of these writers, but also the work of self-construction, emphasizing how the obstacles they face as women writers are represented through theatrical metaphors. For an eighteenth-century woman, writing, and even claiming a self, become "theatrical" acts (12). These assumptions are substantiated in some subtle and suggestive close reading.

Today's recession-panicked scholarly publishers favour short books, and Hodgson Anderson's (only 139 pages exclusive of acknowledgments and notes) has the strengths and weaknesses that this truncated format imposes. It is concise, focused, and properly selective; but at the same time I would have liked to see some links developed more, or at least made more explicit, and at points more time needs to be spent on signposting the argument and explaining key terms. As well, surprising gaps remain: Aphra Behn, an obvious candidate for consideration as an author of both fiction and drama, is relegated to a few brief mentions.

(Admittedly, she is not an author of the eighteenth century, technically considered; but neither is Jane Austen, who dominates the epilogue.)

More seriously, the pressure to be concise generates abstractions and generalizations when the reader would sometimes like something more weightily specific. It can also sometimes leave the reader wishing for clearer development of some of the identified paradoxes. Is Haywood's *Fantomina* raped by *Beauplaisir*? She forms a "Stratagem" to enable her to be "sweetly forced," a stratagem that might be as much about her "desire for expression" (23) as her desire for sex, but is being forced a mode of expression? When *Fantomina* is exposed by going into labour in public at a ball, in what sense is what betrays her not "the body per se" (33)? The reader is mobilized to take part in the debate, to fill in those parts of the argument that seem to be missing or vestigial.

In addition, the argument sometimes has odd holes in it. The enlightening section on Burney's *Cecilia* (1782), for example, focuses on "what happens to women who are silenced," and argues that "Burney's fascination with the spectacle of the insensible female body" manifests itself in scenes of the performance of "collapse and insensibility" (56, 57) that are central to the novel. This is demonstrated entirely through the figure of Albany's nameless fiancée, dead long before the novel opens, whose story is read in detail as symptomatic of what happens to women who internalize injunctions to be silent, proper, decorous. Burney's life-writings show numerous examples of performances of femininity so exaggeratedly decorous that one suspects them of being acts of rebellion, and so this reading is convincing. But it is strange to read this marginal figure but not the central episodes in which *Cecilia* herself also collapses into insensibility. *Cecilia* is, after all, the heroine, and Hodgson Anderson's appropriation of the term for this nameless woman only draws attention to the absence of the central character from her analysis.

Occasionally, interesting issues are raised but then not really developed or incorporated into the overall argument. In the reading of Haywood's *Fantomina*, for instance, Hodgson Anderson argues that Haywood emphasizes "the redemptive nature of repetition," and repetition also appears as a "growing and articulated anxiety" in late Haywood, and as a species of imitation that must be disavowed in Burney, even something "scandalous and misleading" (34, 42, 43). A cultural narrative is clearly beginning to emerge, but the issue is not defined, teased out, or signposted, and simply disappears. Burney's longer novels are, structurally, notoriously repetitive, but the relevance of this is not explored, and I am uncertain whether this is too literal-minded an understanding of repetition, while Hodgson Anderson possibly means something altogether more complex and subtle. Word

limits, however narrow, need to allow for clear signposting and full discussion of potentially difficult terms.

Anderson's argument is complex and nuanced—indeed, to my taste, a little too subtle sometimes in the distinctions drawn: the connections between the authors are not always absolutely clear. If, in Edgeworth's work, "staging emotion becomes a test by which the performer may discern otherwise convoluted personal sentiments" (109), does this make her similar to, of different from, Burney, Haywood, and Inchbald? Is silence in *Mansfield Park* different from silence in *Evelina*? If in *Belinda* "performance functions to communicate emotional truths" (126), how is that different from *Fantomina* or *Evelina*, or for that matter *Twelfth Night* or *Two Gentlemen of Verona*? A broader cultural history of theatricality and women writers is being told, but the relationship between this broader history and the individual analyses is not always crystal clear.

In the way of reviewers, I have emphasized my frustrations with this book, but I guess there is a kind of backhanded compliment in wishing for more. It is certainly full of revealing observations and thoughtful cultural reflections. I found much to think about in Hodgson Anderson's analyses, especially her detailed exploration of the relationships between the drama and prose fiction of these major writers.

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