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Review

Modernism and the Orient by Zhaoming Qian

Review by: Shuangyi Li

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'literary communism' and Michael Warner's work on 'counterpublics'; yet even this draws on new examples to illustrate its thesis, discussing two unfinished works: Pater's *Gaston Latour* and Beardsley's *The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser*. The book ends with a refreshing postscript, a close reading of Mallarmé's memorial sonnet 'Hommage'/'Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire' that interprets 'pubis' not as a sexual reference but as an allusion to the Latin word *pubes*, referring to the adult male population. For Potolsky, Mallarmé recuperates Baudelaire as a public figure representing his community, symbolized by the street light depicted in the poem; similarly, Baudelaire emerges from Potolsky's own book as a more complex figure, both modern and anti-modern, Decadent and anti-decadent.

The Decadent Republic of Letters is a rewarding and stimulating study of the nineteenth-century literary field that wears its impressive erudition with a pleasurable lightness. My one reservation concerns the opening claims that Decadence was a movement with a manifesto (p. 3) or 'produced a remarkable number of collective manifestos' (p. 6): the evidence for this seems to rest principally on Luca Somigli's work on manifesto-writing, but considering Anatole Baju's editorial 'A nos lecteurs!' in the first issue of *Le Décadent* (April 1886) as a manifesto is a contentious point, and the same objection can be raised against similar claims for 'textes manifestaires' by Gautier, Bourget, and others. In fact the lack of a manifesto would actually support Potolsky's overriding argument that Decadence is an amorphous stance that continues to permeate our culture today (did the hippies or the punks need manifestos?), and this minor caveat does not detract from the overall quality of the work, which demonstrates how Potolsky has successfully written himself into the Decadent community.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

RICHARD HIBBITT

Modernism and the Orient. Ed. by ZHAOMING QIAN. New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press. 2013. 294 pp. \$24.95. ISBN 978-1-60801-074-5.

In recent studies of modernism there has been an increasing emphasis on its global context, marked by multilingualism, cultural transfer, and creative adaptation. This collection of twelve essays, based on the third International Conference on Modernism and the Orient which took place in Hangzhou, China, in 2010, contributes precisely to this burgeoning field of study. The term 'modernism' is used to indicate a time-span from the late nineteenth to the second half of the twentieth century in predominantly Anglo-American and Irish contexts, Marcel Proust being the only exception. Half of the essays focus on 'high' Modernist writers such as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, Robert Frost, Marianne Moore, and Proust. The others cover two 'proto-modernists', Oscar Wilde and Emily Dickinson, and three 'post-war modernists', Louis Zukofsky, Harry Guest, and Lee Harwood. The 'Orient' in this book refers to Japan and especially China. One of the contentious points that Zhaoming Qian hopes to demonstrate is that 'Of the Orient, the Far East proved more productive than the Near East as a source of

literary models for twentieth-century Western writers' (p. xiv). The volume revisits a group of works by modernist writers that manifest their individual as well as collective fascination for, or in Qian's words 'instinctive affinity' (p. xvi) with, Far Eastern art, literature, and thought.

Most of the essays are well documented. In some cases the documentary discovery itself is highly original. Ronald Bush's essay on Pound and the figure of Buddhist bodhisattva centres on his close examination of the poet's unpublished manuscripts or avant-texts of *Pisan Cantos* in Italian and English. Qian's essay on the late Moore and Taoism is based on the newly discovered recording of Moore's 1957 lecture 'Tedium and Integrity', which, as Qian insists, 'provides essential clues about the development of Moore's late modernist poetic' (p. 214) manifest in *O to Be a Dragon* (1959) and *Tell Me, Tell Me* (1966). Christine Froula takes surprisingly varied approaches to 'Proust's China'. She astutely explores the historical details in and behind one of the most celebrated paintings in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Vermeer's *View of Delft*, highlighting various fascinating Sino-Dutch connections in Vermeer's time. Many of the findings seem to anticipate Proust's characters' remarks on Chinese objects centuries later. This is further supported by details of Proust's close contact with Jean-Louis Vaudoyer (who reviewed the Vermeer exhibition) and by the genesis of the passage on Bergotte's death. The overall argument revolves around modernists' "'new" historic sense of our time' (p. xv) (Ezra Pound) as well as André Benhaïm's claim about Proust's intention to "disorient" radicalized ideas of France, Frenchness, and the nation' in the context of 'a new century of nationalist violence and ethnic persecution' (quoted by Froula, p. 75). This article is certainly one of the most extensive exegeses of what is often seen as an intriguing connection between Bergotte's artistic regret and his final revealing observation of an essential detail in Vermeer's painting, 'the tiny section of yellow wall', which is compared to 'a precious Chinese work of art' (p. 81).

There are some fine examples of comparative study. Zhang Longxi's essay on Wilde and Zhuangzi's Taoist philosophy, Qiping Yin's examination of Frost's poetic imagery in Taoist perspective, and Ira Nadel's study of Joyce and Chinese writing are refreshing rereadings of canonical texts. Their approaches move smoothly from the traditional notion of 'influence' to what one might call 'confluence' studies, as their analytical foci gradually shift from empirical textual evidence to aesthetic and poetic cross-fertilization. On the other hand, some scholars may find Fen Gao's reading of Woolf's notion of truth in the light of Chinese poetics slightly forced and schematic, precisely because her approach completely breaks away from influence studies and cross-culturally compares two 'similar' concepts, which may appear historically and epistemologically difficult to justify in Woolf's case.

Because of the relatively unfamiliar Far Eastern angle, a good amount of 'new' material is almost guaranteed even for specialists in modernism. Scholars and students working in comparative literature are likely to benefit most from this book. However, it makes little effort to problematize traditional concepts of modernism as an elitist, anti-Romantic/Victorian, and male-dominated artistic and literary movement. How important is this Far Eastern Orientalism to the overall Modernist

movement and how could this 'new' perspective challenge any of our received understandings of modernism? These questions could have been taken further. On a minor note, the English translations of *Ru Shi* and *Chu Shi* should be matched in reverse order on page xix—a tiny error, but one that could be misleading for those unfamiliar with Chinese terminology.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

SHUANGYI LI

Literature and Psychoanalysis. By JEREMY TAMBLING. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2012. vi+169 pp. £60 (pbk £12.99). ISBN 978-0-7190-8673-1 (pbk 978-0-7190-8674-8).

At the beginning of this book, Jeremy Tambling explains why he is interested in studying the key texts of three major psychoanalysts—Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, and Jacques Lacan—and applying their findings to the study of literature. Those authors 'have decentred "man" from being the centre of his own world' (p. 6): they have shown 'the ego that it is not master in its own house but must content itself with scanty information of what is going on unconsciously in its mind' (p. 5). What Freud says about literature, then, enables 'some exciting ways of considering it' (p. 6): literature's essence might eventually be 'that it has no essence. Its precise words turn out to be not quite what is meant to be said, because language condenses and displaces' (p. 13). Psychoanalysis has also circulated a large number of concepts and expressions that literary scholars cannot ignore: Oedipus complex, Freudian slips, *déjà vu*, death drive, superego, the uncanny, and so on. Finally, no approach to theory can 'fail to engage with Freud's legacy, and his legacy as, substantially, that theory's diversity' (p. 6). The first two chapters of the book—devoted to Freud's decentring work and to analyses of literary texts in the light of Freud's discoveries—have an introductory approach and target interested but not highly knowledgeable readers. Subsequent chapters are more testing and challenge competent readers, sometimes with rather cryptic references. Complex texts by Freud, Klein, and Lacan, and by authors as different as Wilfred Bion, Jacques Derrida, W. R. D. Fairbairn, Julia Kristeva, and D. W. Winnicott, are used to discuss what memory and guilt may mean in Freud, the significance of the mother in literature and psychoanalysis, the mechanisms of introjection and projection in the development of the infant as described by Klein, and the roles that alienation, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real play in Lacan's thought.

Tambling claims the right to be selective in his choice of topics, and the texts written by the authors he studies are so many and dense that few would argue with him. The criteria that drive his selection, however, are rather vague. He is interested in what is relevant for literature—but what is not? He repeatedly stresses his personal fascination with 'that sense of repressed meanings being always a potential in the text', with the liberation entailed in 'statements that mean the opposite of what they say' (p. 13) and in the assumptions that 'truth' cannot be 'single, unitary' (p. 23), that 'we cannot ask "what did Beckett really mean by Godot?" in