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pages, which traces Harriet Brackett Spence Lowell's carriage ride from Cambridge to McLean Asylum for the Insane in 1845, a place where Lowell too was hospitalised, a century later. Jamison's book never feels disjointed, however, as it is artfully woven together, with meticulous care and even love.

What ties together Jamison's book is a series of tropes that connect *Setting the River on Fire*. All taken from Lowell's own poetry, they form the anatomy of Jamison's reconstructive operation. Midway through her study, Jamison dwells, for instance, on Lowell's early poem "Mr. Edwards and the Spider." In his Puritan ancestor, Lowell recognised how he too was playing "against a sickness past [his] cure," was fighting "the treason crackling in [his] blood," and ultimately wonders: "How will the heart endure?" In previous biographies, by Paul Mariani and especially Ian Hamilton, Lowell was depicted as a boorish, womanising character whose poetry suffered from that. In *Setting the River on Fire*, Lowell rises as a sensitive and kind man whose exceptional fortitude made him succeed against all odds. Jamison catches how Lowell is caught in his own spider web, and she shows how he sought to overcome his own condition. In that remarkable attempt, Jamison manages to revive and deepen the readers' interest in Lowell's own poetry, which is perhaps her most laudable achievement. *Setting the River on Fire* is in the end a heartbreaking book tracing a heart and mind that could not endure long, but the book will revive Lowell's posthumous career for years to come.

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Rancière and Literature, edited by Grace Hellyer and Julian Murphet, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2016. xi + 272pp., £19.99 (paperback), ISBN: 978 1 4744 0258 3

Few philosophers have made literature as central to their writing as Jacques Rancière, who begins *Mute Speech* (1998) with an extended disquisition on Jean-Paul Sartre's 1948 question *What is Literature?*, and suggests in the introduction to *The Flesh of Words* (1998) that philosophy from Plato onwards "wants to separate its language from all the glamour of mimesis and its effect from all 'literary' vacuity" but "does so only at the price of uniting with the most radical forms by which literature mimics the incarnation of the word" (*FW*, p. 5). Such unavoidable imbrication of literature and philosophy is one of the topics explored in this valuable new essay collection, which reflects on the ongoing significance of Rancière's thought for readers of literature, both by revisiting such key Rancièrian ideas as the distribution of the sensible, dissensus and the relationship between the ethical, representative and aesthetic regimes (concepts helpfully and critically outlined in Hellyer and Murphet's "Introduction"), and through readings of specific texts by Milton, Gaskell, Melville, George Eliot, Joyce, Michel Houellebecq and Eli Yaakunah.

The book's contributors are divided roughly equally between those working in philosophy and English literature, giving a sense of encounter between disciplines that is perhaps inevitable given the "theoretical *indiscipline*" (p. 43) that Eric Méchoulan argues is a key feature of Rancière's thought. Méchoulan links this indiscipline to Rancière's interest in democracy and the avoidance of mastery, which for literary critics requires rejecting traditional

hermeneutic analysis "in terms of surface and substratum" in favour of "horizontal distributions" (p. 44), a move exemplified by Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987), a reference point for many contributors. Democracy and non-mastery are themes which recur throughout this book, and which for Rancière must be thought in both political and aesthetic terms. The relationship between politics and aesthetics, which Hellyer and Murphet find to be linked to the "opposition between the logic of actions and the 'movement of life'" (p. 16), is itself far from simple in Rancière however. For instance, Oliver Feltham, writing on Rancière's apparent rejection of tragedy, and Arne de Boever, writing on Houellebecq, both emphasise the importance of performance in understanding how literature and politics speak to one another. For Feltham this takes place most successfully through Rancière's "open theatricality" (p. 67), which activates the question of "who speaks and who remains silent in the business of politics" (p. 69), as opposed to his "tragic theatricality" (p. 63), which is unable to articulate a positive politics beyond the disruptions of dissensus. De Boever's preferred term is "performative realism" (p. 229), referring to realist writing that is not political because of what it purports to represent, but because "through its staging rather than through its description" it "interrupt[s] *any* 'realist' account of reality" (p. 232), contributing to a redistribution of the sensible.

Some chapters use particular texts to develop or critique Rancière's account of the representative and aesthetic regimes. Justin Clemens on Milton's late pamphlet *Of True Religion* (1673), Grace Hellyer on *Moby-Dick* (1851) and Julian Murphet on *Ulysses* (1925) all fall into this category, with Clemens arguing that Milton's text is marked by the aesthetic regime's drive towards re-examination and "participation in contraries" (p. 91) even while it fails to wholly conform to any of the three regimes, so complicating Rancière's schema. Yet Clemens perhaps fails to sufficiently account for the fact that Milton's enforcement of the idea of Catholicism as heresy, because it goes "against Scripture" (p. 89), aligns him with the "Annales school and Michelet's romantic republicanism" (p. 145), which, as Hellyer points out in her chapter, are shown by Rancière to be "false solutions" (p. 145) to the problem of heresy – defined as "an excess of words that emerges with the democratic movements of the seventeenth century" (p. 145) – since "they attempt to eradicate the problem of heresy rather than incorporating it into their mode of representation as a limit or impasse" (p. 145). For Hellyer, *Moby-Dick* does incorporate such a meaning of heresy, embodying a split between the representative regime, as found in Ishmael's interest in "a classical logic of plot" (p. 150), and the aesthetic regime, evident in his discussions of whales and whaling. The latter registers aesthetically, if not politically, "a different way of conceiving the value of human life, and the way in which a kind of being in common can be constituted" (p. 160). Murphet's intricate commentary on *Ulysses*, meanwhile, constitutes a partial critique of Rancière, aimed at defending the importance of literary modernism as a distinct moment of the aesthetic regime, in response to Rancière's rejection of the realism-modernism-postmodernism divide. Murphet tracks a movement from "absolute style" (p. 214) in Flaubert to a new attention to form in Joyce; but form which is broken and petrified, so that literature continues to write autonomously rather than returning to representative hierarchy. As Murphet puts it, "To write amidst the ruins of a fallen language is to write *about* those ruins" (p. 213). Joyce thus maintains the "'principle of equality', which is simply the abolition […] of the authorised orders of things that had yoked words and bodies in hierarchical relations since the dawn of the social" (p. 215).

An interest in the broken and fragmented is also evident in Elaine Freedgood's chapter on *Mary Barton* (1848), which reads Gaskell's use of letters and epigraphs as a hierarchical attempt to hold apart the language of different classes, alongside the rejection of free indirect discourse, though this rejection paradoxically allows "a margin of freedom" (p. 138) for the thoughts and feelings of her characters. It is perhaps no coincidence that this chapter, which provides the clearest example of classic literary analysis, is the least directly engaged

with Rancière's writing. Fragments and ruins are also important to Alison Ross's chapter on Rancière and Benjamin, which draws connections and divergences between these thinkers' approaches to history, though Ross seems to somewhat underplay the importance of literature (especially Baudelaire) within Benjamin's historical project.

One of the most impressive chapters is Andrew Gibson's, which covers a lot of ground in exploring Rancière's relationship to the period 1780–1830, seen by Rancière as "in some sense decisive for modern politics and […] aesthetics" (p. 99) even while he critiques "historical master-signifiers" (p. 99) such as the concept of "modernity". Gibson makes the important point that many of the problems critics associate with modernity "remain only so long as we place the subject at the centre of modernity, as Rancière does not" (p. 117). Variations on this observation return throughout, such as Hellyer's comment that in the age of democracy "historical discourse had to abolish narratives organised around the primacy of proper names and events" (p. 144), Emily Steinlight's suggestion that in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) "plot gives up its fidelity to character" (p. 179), and Murphet's claim that "*Ulysses* […] is conclusive proof that literary politics belongs to no subject at all" (p. 223).

Beginning the book, but arguably its conceptual centre, is Rancière's own chapter, "Fictions of Time", rightly described by Hellyer and Murphet as a "magisterial intervention" (p. 16) on modern literary fiction. Drawing on Eric Auerbach's peculiar identification of the "random occurrence" (p. 27) or "any-moment-whatever" (p. 27) in Virginia Woolf as the height of Western fiction, and writing against Lukács's condemnation of "mere description" as anti-political, Rancière argues that in fact "disconnected" (p. 34) and "modern" (p. 35) time works against hierarchy and for democracy, by erasing the distinction between fiction and everyday experience. Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* is a key example, as it stages a disconnection of activity from "the specific end that it pursues" (p. 38), so resisting the subjection of life to use-value, whether in the form of capital or representation. Rancière once again insists on the vital importance of literature for democratic politics, if in a counter-intuitive way. Taken as a whole, this collection critically builds on his project, staging a compelling Rancièrian examination of the vital intersections between politics, aesthetics, literature and philosophy.

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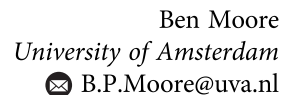
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A Middle English Syntax, Parts of Speech, by Tauno F. Mustanoja, with an introduction by Elly van Gelderen, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 2016. 702 pp., €99.00, $149.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-90-272-1240-5

A Middle English Syntax (2016) is the facsimile reprint of the publication issued in 1960 as volume XXIII in "Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki". The book was the fruit of twenty-five years of work and dealt with parts of speech only. Sentence syntax was going to be discussed in a second volume, which sadly never saw the light of day. In its time, *A Middle English Syntax* was reviewed by contemporary scholars, who praised it as an "ambitious effort" and a "painstaking and useful work", but also contributed a number of suggestions for improvement.[1]

[1]Cf.; Dobbie; Einarsson; Gradon; Miller; Samuels; Wilson.