

over Kantwise's iron furniture is a bitter Ruskinian comedy of modern debasement.

The brilliance of the configuration is that once it has been pointed out, it seems obvious; but I had never thought of Kantwise and Rouncewell quite like that.

The book is strategically priced at just under three figures (\$99). For that money you ought to get footnotes but the fact is that these days you don't. Endnotes are apparently Cambridge University Press policy: see Vanessa Smith's *Literary Culture and the Pacific* and Catherine Waters' *Dickens and the Politics of the Family* (both 1997). But each of these books has a bibliography, which *Fiction and the Law* lacks. This is deplorable, for Dolin has mined wonderful material from Victorian periodicals, and his range of reference to legal scholarship as well as literary scholarship in both English and non-English speaking cultures is vast. Was a bibliography too much trouble, or too expensive? Its absence undoubtedly cheapens the book. The index is largely nominal but although it does contain such legal concepts as "equity," "evidence," and "natural law," there are no entries for "narrative" or "modernism." The scholarship is sometimes far from impeccable. Albert Venn Dicey's *Lectures on the Relation between Law and Public Opinion in England During the Nineteenth Century* was published in 1905; the second edition came out in 1914. On page 40 Dolin refers to *Lectures on the Relation of* [not "between"] *Law and Public Opinion in England in* [not "during"] *the Nineteenth Century*; his subsequent quotation is then documented to *Lectures on the Relation Between Law and Opinion* [no "Public"] *in England During the Nineteenth Century*, second edition, 1913 [not 1914]. A suggestion made by Dicey that is alluded to on page 76 is footnoted to *Law* [no "Lectures on the Relation between"] *and Popular* [not "Public"] *Opinion in Nineteenth-Century England* [rather than "England During the Nineteenth Century"]. Very Dicey variations. The author should not have made such errors but editors too must earn their corn, especially at prestigious university presses, and these errors should not have found their way into print. There is an ambush for the unwary reader only three pages from the end: "effective and meaningful outcomes" is a gratuitous genuflection to the gospel of accountability whose impoverished language has no place in such a well-written and imaginative book as this.

The social landscape mapped by *Fiction and the Law* sweeps from William Blackstone's "noble pile" of the English law to Henry James's "house of fiction." It should engage all readers of nineteenth-century English fiction.

Simon Petch

Late-Victorian and Edwardian British Novelists: Second Series, edited by George M. Johnson. Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 197. Detroit: Gale Research, 1999.

Reviewing a book such as the 197th volume of the massive *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is a sobering task because it brings home to me the troubled publishing times we're going through. Probably most of us will have consulted at various times some of

the volumes of the *Dictionary*. They have been going since 1978, and they've covered a huge range of topics, beginning—as their first “plan of the series” outlined—with the laudable intention of making “literature and its creators better understood and more accessible to students and the reading public while satisfying the standards of teachers and scholars,” and with the focus squarely on the “intellectual commerce” of the US. In fact the North American focus only lasted for the first nine volumes; thereafter the project widened to include most literatures, although for the most part the only pre-twentieth-century volumes are those dealing with major European and English-language literatures. The general editors have retained most of the initial “plan of the series” description in their introduction, which gives the impression of a strangely imperialistic emphasis in the whole project; paranoia sees appropriation here. My perception of the heavy North American hand is no doubt exacerbated by the fact that most contributors and individual editors are from North America, although in this latest volume Sue Thomas (a member of AVSA) has contributed articles on Cicely Hamilton and Elizabeth Robins, and Laurie Clancy the one on Henry Handel Richardson.

I'd like to come back to some of the more worrying general issues the *Dictionary* raises later, but I must first review this volume, very favourably as it happens. It is a companion volume to No. 153 (1995) which dealt mainly with lesser known novelists writing in the romance tradition from about the 1880s to the end of World War I. This volume looks at writers in the realist tradition in the same period. Entries are arranged alphabetically and consist of a substantial biographical and bibliographical overview of the individual writer's work, with a list of major references attached. Each entry is illustrated where appropriate by photographs of the writers and reproductions of title pages and/or special editions. There are also a very useful introduction by George M. Johnson, a checklist of further reading applicable to the period as a whole, and a cumulative index to the whole series (a very useful appendix). It might be useful to list the writers in this volume because many of them are quite unfamiliar names, although well known in their day: Martin Donnisthorpe Armstrong; Elizabeth von Arnim; J.D. Beresford; Phyllis Bottome; Thomas Burke; Mona Caird; Gilbert Cannan; Mary Cholmondeley; Lucy Lane Clifford; Victoria Cross; Clemence Dane; Gertrude Dix; Ella Hepworth Dixon; W.L. George; Douglas Goldring; Sarah Grand; Cicely Hamilton; Mary Agnes Hamilton; Margaret Harkness; Frank Harris; Stephen Hudson; Oliver Madox Hueffer; Violet Hunt; Ethel Colburn Mayne; Stephen McKenna; C.E. Montague; Arthur Morrison; Barry Pain, George Paston; Henry Handel Richardson; Elizabeth Robins; Ethel Sidgwick; G.B. Stern; Netta Syrett; Robert Tressell; E.L. Voynich; Israel Zangwill. I presume that most of these names will be included in the *New CBEL*, but it is still rare to find some of them in standard literary reference books, certainly with the amount of detail allowed to the contributors here. Sue Thomas's excellent introduction to the work of Elizabeth Robins for instance is the length of a major journal article. I suppose the presence of Henry Handel Richardson in a volume devoted to what might be thought of as “minor” British novelists of the period raises the hackles somewhat, but Laurie Clancy neatly justifies Richardson's inclusion in the volume by pointing out that although her work is much better known and appreciated in the land of her birth, she did in fact live and work in England for most of her quite long life and all but one of her works were first published there.

So why the paranoia? These are very handsomely produced, large-size reference books. The entries do not pretend to be definitive critical assessments of the subjects, and with the amount of bibliographical detail each contains they provide a fine jumping-off point for those who wish to undertake a more sustained study of these writers. But as a *Dictionary* it must necessarily remain incomplete in its present form. Of the total of 197 volumes my own library has fewer than fifty. I don't know whether there is any library in Australia which has collected all the volumes over the years—I suspect not if they have all been comparatively as expensive as the current volume which is a whopping US\$173.65! It is obvious that one of the factors driving the development of more and more online knowledge banks is economic. It is also patently clear that nice shiny CDs cost less to produce and to market, take up less space, and can be disseminated more widely than cumbersome multi-volume reference books such as the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, so that it becomes not a question of if the change will happen, but when it will happen. The answer to that of course is now. And I note that it has recently been announced that the new 40-volume *OED* to appear in 2010 will most likely only be available online, with the suggestion that one thousand sets might be produced for commemorative purposes only.

I attended recently a presentation by the Gale Group representative for Australia and New Zealand at which the CD-ROM future was outlined—very convincingly, I must say. The *Dictionary* has now become part of the Literature Resource Center which comprises the *Contemporary Authors* and the *Contemporary Literary Criticism Select* databases in addition to the *Dictionary*. Gale has also entered into partnership with Chadwyck-Healey's *Literature Online* and Macmillan Reference's *Scribner Writers Series* and *Twayne's Authors Series* to include their material in the Literature Resource Center database. The boast is that the Center now covers ninety-thousand novelists, poets, essayists, journalists and other writers, with additional in-depth coverage of two thousand of the most-studied authors. At the presentation there was some excitement about the ease with which one could summon up information about an author, a title, a subject, a genre, even a theme—you know, all the things we're supposed to be able to access on the library catalogue. Some areas of concern were raised, and it was clear that they all hinged on the narrowing rather than the enlarging of knowledge. We were invited to suggest an author's name to test the resources of the Center, and without really trying (in other words suggesting names people had been working on recently) several colleagues came up with names which were not recognised by the database. Another big worry is that students will inevitably limit their own enquiries when so much is available from the one source. This is a particular problem with regard to criticism especially when you take into account that a large part of the critical material available comes from sources such as Twayne. And then there is the fear that such databases will represent the excuse for getting rid of more books off shelves.

Am I worried about the globalisation of knowledge? Yes, because it relates to the ownership of knowledge and thus to the vexed question of what is worth knowing and what is seen as "useless" knowledge. Much of what might be deemed "useless knowledge" will be decided upon by the producers of databases like the Literature Resource Center, so much so that when we all consult the screen rather than turn the pages we will in fact be exploring a much narrower and smaller rather than an infinitely expandable world. In a peripheral way this is very much the same issue as that raised by

John Sutherland in the *London Review of Books* early this year in his article "Who owns John Sutherland?" The concerns he raised about the ownership of knowledge and the correspondence which ensued in subsequent issues are certainly worth heeding.

Barbara Garlick

***Melville's Anatomies*, by Samuel Otter. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California P, 1999.**

With Melville we need all the help we can get. Samuel Otter's *Melville's Anatomies* doesn't exactly open new windows onto the texts (Michael Rogin and others have been there before him, showing ways to understand Melville's anatomising of his society). But it does give us some different views from the windows, and in so doing enlarges our picture of Melville as one of the deepest and most committed scrutineers of nineteenth-century life. Focusing on *Typee* (1846), *White-Jacket* (1850), *Moby-Dick* (1851) and *Pierre* (1852), Otter anatomises Melville's anatomising of "the disorders of antebellum eyes" (206). He teases out of Melville's texts ways in which they illuminate, talk back to and ultimately, as he sees it, become overwhelmed by what Philip K. Fisher calls the "hard facts" of American national identity: race and dispossession (*Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel*, 1987). As Melville through his texts seeks an understanding of the relationship between personal and national identity he is, like his narrator Pierre, ultimately confounded by his own practice.

Apart from the extraordinary amount of cultural detail Otter presents, his picture enlarges our view because it goes beyond the "quarrel with fiction" thesis to show us a Melville whose practice of writing, like that of his narrator and character Pierre, can be seen as "complicit" in the cultural heritage he shares with his readers (259). Otter has been concerned to counter a view of Melville's work that "can peel the popular from the profound and the disturbing from the exhilarating" (243). Joining Jane Tompkins and other new historicist scholars of American literature who have brought the "popular" out of its canonical invisibility and helped us to see the canonical texts of American literature as part of the intricate web of a culture, Otter goes further than most—where Melville is concerned—to show him at work not in the distanced dialogue with popular conceptions that seems safe to a twentieth-century audience but "strain[ing] and tear[ing] the fabric" out of which his work is inescapably made (243). Otter has taught me a valuable lesson: not to feel I always somehow have to "rescue" Melville at awkward (to me) moments.

Otter's thesis about Melville is worth attention. There are some refreshingly new insights here. But I sometimes feel, with new historicist criticism, that the material with which the texts under discussion are set in dialogue runs away with the game. This is the book to read on the texts surrounding *Typee* (taking the Pacific and its writers seriously) and on the connections between *White-Jacket* and the discourse of slavery. The discussion of antebellum ethnology in the US in relation to *Moby-Dick* is extraordinarily interesting, this section meriting a book in its own right. But only with the *Pierre* chapters, which relate to this text both to the American landscape tradition and to the sentimental novels of Donald Grant Mitchell and Fanny Fern, did I feel that