Book Reviews

Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. xvi + 637, ISBN 9780199243556 (Hbk).

In 1992 Eamon Duffy published *The Stripping of the Altars*, an immensely influential work, which posited that traditional Catholicism in England prior to the Reformation of Henry VIII was a vibrant faith, not the ailing institution that some scholars had argued crumbled before the greater spiritual authenticity of Protestantism. In it Duffy detailed the removal of church plates and Catholic artworks from churches, and the grief and confusion of the devout when confronted by the severity and plainness of Reformed churches. Alexandra Walsham's *The Reformation of the Landscape* is an important companion volume to Duffy, in that she too deals with the shift from late medieval Catholicism to Reformed Protestantism; the theatre of change on which her attention is focused is the landscape, the physical environment itself. Chapter 1 '*Loca sacra*: Religion and the Landscape before the Reformation' sketches the shape of the British and Irish landscape with reference to monuments of pre-Christian paganisms such as stone circles and barrows, which were overlaid with medieval Catholic monuments. Springs and trees were incorporated into Christian pilgrimage, and also into vernacular beliefs about healing and the power of the saints.

Chapter 2 'Idols in the Landscape: The Impact of the Protestant Reformation' details the multitudinous ways that Protestant theology attacked the beliefs and practices of medieval Catholicism. Pilgrimages were unable to affect the condition of a Christian in the afterlife; and Catholic devotions were equated with the heathenism of the Gentiles (p. 85). The overarching Reform narrative was the eradication of idolatry; hard-liners like John Know called for what Walsham terms "a holocaust of medieval churches and monasteries" (p. 91). Statues were destroyed, stained-glass windows broken, convents demolished, and holy trees and wells vandalised. This also affected recreational activities such as maypole dancing. Protestant divines taught that the de-sacralisation of the landscape and the re-use of Catholic ecclesiastic materials for secular purposes were pious acts. What remained were ruins and broken standing crosses, and during the Civil War woods were also cut down for revenue and fuel by the Parliamentary army (this was not for theological purposes, but nevertheless contributed to the changed landscape).

Chapters 3 and 4 consider the ways in which the Catholic Counter-Reformation and developments within Protestantism re-sacralised the British and Irish landscape. Walsham discusses recusant piety, the hallowing effect of the Catholic martyrs, and the Jesuit employment of the landscape as a devotional tool for the Catholics. For Protestants, landscape acquired a spiritual value partly through the desire to separate from the vain world, and partly through the link between minority religion and the open spaces (from Lollards through to the Methodists of the eighteenth century). At this time, feelings of regret emerged regarding the destruction of Catholic antiquity and remorse for the extremes of Protestant iconoclasm, as well as renewed interest in antiquities and even the creation of fake ruins and monuments for aesthetic reasons.

Chapter 5 'God's Great Book in Folio' is an exploration of nature, providence, and God's sacred presence in the physical world. Chapter 6 treats the way holy wells were re-packaged in the language of emerging science as 'healing waters.' Health and well-being became a new narrative that permitted the resacralisation of these sites, and spa bathing became fashionable in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chapter 7 'Invented Traditions: Legend, Custom and Memory' examines folklore regarding dissolved monasteries, biblical figures (like Joseph of Arimathea and Glastonbury), prehistoric monuments that rehabilitated Catholic tradition, and devotion to the Protestant martyrs which functioned similarly among Reformed Christians. To call this book a *tour de force*, a remarkable study that will be important for decades to come, is to give it no more than its due. This is a fascinating book that demonstrates wide-ranging erudition and original thought, which is deserving of a wide readership.

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Jan N. Bremmer, Wout J. van Bekkum, and Arie L. Molendijk (eds), *Cultures of Conversions* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), pp. viii + 207, ISBN 9789042917538 (Hbk).

Edited collections of essays often struggle finding a cohesive narrative, and this problem is apparent in *Cultures of Conversions* by Jan N. Bremmer, Wout J. Van Bekkum, and Arie L. Molendijk. While this selection of essays is united by a familiar theme of conversion, the work, which is impressive in scope, if not in the rigor of its methodology and content, still at times struggles to

develop a firm theoretical framework or conclusion. Divided along religious lines, the first two essays deal with conversion narratives within Hinduism, while most of the rest of the book is divided essentially equally between essays on Jewish conversion to Christianity and conversion to Islam, both historical and modern. Confusingly, and perhaps a testament to a limited pool of acceptable material, the last essay focuses on the conversion narratives in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Each essay, on its own, is an intriguing vignette. Simon Schoon's chapter on Noahidism is fascinating, if perhaps only for being one of the earliest academic treatments of this emerging religious movement, although it ultimately fails to draw any meaningful conclusions, focusing instead on the history of conversion to Judaism. Similarly, Johannes J.G Jansen's 'The History of Islam in the Light of the Rational Choice Theory' is a thought-provoking work, particularly in the light of Rodney Stark's recent work on Christianity and economic modelling. '"Islam is your Birthright." Conversion, Reversion and Alternation: The Case of New Muslims in the West,' by Karin van Nieuwkerk, is a worthy addition to the large corpus on Islamic conversion, focusing on the role of the internet in developing *communitas* between new converts, and how the terminology (reversion vs. conversion) is important in legitimising religious change in Islam.

Nevertheless, despite these highlights, the reader ultimately comes away no wiser about the nature of conversion. Confusing additions, such as Ivy Imogene Hansdak's 'Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: The Convert as Heretic,' which provides nothing more than a mini-biography of a single (albeit influential) Brahmin convert to Christianity, and the aforementioned work on Dante's *Divine Comedy* by Jan R. Veenstra, do not help to answer questions about whether conversion is best understood as an individualistic response to 'changes of the heart' or whether 'top down' models are better explanatory frameworks for mass conversion. This edited collection, while worth reading, is probably best understood as an addition to existing case studies of religious conversion, rather than a comprehensive work on theories and methodologies of cultural and religious change and transformation.

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Helen Young, *Constructing 'England' in the Fourteenth Century: A Postcolonial Interpretation of Middle English Romance* (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Mellen, 2010), pp. iii + 289, ISBN 9780773412934 (Hbk).

Helen Young's objective is to explore how England, or Englishness, is constructed in a range of Middle English romances using the framework of postcolonial theory. She argues that although many scholars have observed how postcolonial theory does present a new avenue in exploring medieval texts, the underlying ideological concerns of Middle English romances have not been fully investigated from a postcolonial point of view. Young investigates how England was imagined as "a self-represented political body for the first time since the Norman Conquest" (p. 13) in fourteenth and fifteenth century vernacular romances such as *Athelstan, Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Hampton, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, St Erkenwald, Wynnere and Wastour*, and *Of Arthour and Of Merlin*. In order to do this, each romance is interpreted in the context of its time to understand the presentation of its historical dynamics (p. 57).

In the introduction, Young examines postcolonial theory and its contribution to understanding the medieval texts from several points of view including the medieval as 'other,' defining the postcolonial, premodern nations, and postcoloniality in Middle English romance. Each aspect is informed by a discussion of the relevant literature. Young then explains how she will use postcolonial theory to uncover "an explicit statement of political purpose" (p. 55) in each romance. Central to this statement is the development of nationhood by the creation and construction of English history. Young argues that the romances can be read as "valorising and centring both marginal aspects of English history and England as a marginalised culture in relation" to Europe (pp. 60-61). Thus aspects of Englishness, such as Anglo-Saxon culture, were rewritten back into existence following their marginalisation after the Norman Conquest.

The following chapters are devoted to the discussion of the romances. Chapter 1 looks at the tail-rhyme romance *Athelstan* and investigates how two systems of law operate within the romance, contrasting differences between English and French law in the medieval period. These two systems are the right to trial by jury and the separation of the monarch from the legal system. This examination, Young argues, emphasises English identity because it is concerned with "uniquely English legal procedures" (p. 95) that operated in the fourteenth century. English identity is, however, further reinforced by the placement of the romance in Anglo-Saxon times signalled by the use of the name Athelstan in the title and as the major protagonist. Therefore,

contemporary legal processes are legitimised by the construction of a historical precedent located in what is envisaged as a legal golden age during pre-conquest times.

Chapter 2 examines *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* to show how two chivalric heroes are placed in Anglo-Saxon contexts to promote English, rather than continental, chivalric role models. Both Guy and Bevis are presented as exemplars whose martial and moral superiority are intimately "connected to his nationality" (p. 160). Chapter 3 focuses on the use of the myth of Trojan origins for Britain and how this influences readings of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Sir Erkenwald,* and *Wynnere and Wastour*. Young argues that reference to Trojan origins should not be considered conventional but that this recurring motif has a specific purpose in each poem. All romances presented in Chapters 2 and 3 invoke a noble past and in doing so valorise the English, rather than French, aspects of nationhood.

In Chapter 4, the last romance discussed is *Of Arthour and Of Merlin*. It is an early Middle English version of the beginnings of the Arthurian legend. Although this poem is based on the French *Estoire de Merlin*, Young argues that it is far from a direct translation. The poem demonstrates that the illegitimate origins of both Arthur and Merlin are less important than their noble deeds. Englishness is thereby defined by a person's deeds rather than their birth. Young extends this argument to the presentation of the 'Sarrazins,' agreeing with Thorlac Turville-Petre that they are a representation of the Saxons (p. 214). Hence, English, rather than French, origins of the nation are privileged in this romance.

Young has successfully shown how postcolonial theory can produce fresh insights into Middle English romances. Each of the romances discussed are concerned with how the nation, England, is represented in the creative imagination. As Young explains, this differs from how postcolonial theory is presented in modern texts because the Middle English romances are not explicitly interested in portraying a reaction to and against an imposed culture. Each promotes the marginalised English past over the more recent French past, emphasising the nation's inherent Englishness. Young's use of postcolonial theory to interpret the romances makes a significant contribution to developing new understandings of the texts. As such, this clear and well-written volume will be of great interest to both researchers and students interested in postcolonial theory or Middle English romance.

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Rupert Till, *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. vii + 215, ISBN 9780826432360 (Pbk).

Rupert Till's book *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* sets out to address the question of whether the culture generated by popular music can be seen to be performing the social functions formerly served by mainstream religions. He posits this query as part of the general scholarship on religion in the postmodern age and the effects of secularism and re-enchantment. This book comes from the years of research that Till has dedicated to analysing the interplay between music, culture, and spirituality. His previous work includes fieldwork in the electronic dance music scene, explorations of postmodern Christian worship music, and innovative research into the archaic acoustics of Stonehenge. *Pop Cult* attempts to be an encompassing study of the religious themes present in a variety of popular music genres; however, it falls short of providing a consistently convincing argument for such a weighty project.

Till uses the term "pop cult" as a play on words, alluding to 'popular culture' while also being intentionally provocative by labelling his subject matter as 'cults.' He claims that this choice of words is a "glorious transgression" of the negative connotations of 'cult' as used by anti-cult and New Religious Movements scholars alike (p. 1). He then however ascribes some of these negative connotations to pop cults, for example, the charismatic frontman, the fanaticism of groupies, brainwashing activities such as the repetitive chanting of lyrics, and risk-taking rituals like the consumption of illegal drugs. These correlations do nothing affirming for the re-interpretation of the term 'cult,' nor do they suggest that pop cults are functioning like institutionalised religions which, Till notes, "avoid cult-like behaviour." Hence, from the outset, the statement of purpose of this book appears confused.

Over the following eight chapters, Till tirelessly recounts a selective but nonetheless detailed history of popular music with a focus on sex, drugs, personality, the local, the virtual, death, and trance. He traces the influences and impact of Britpop, the Beatles, Elvis, Madonna, and Prince amongst other pop idols and rock gods. As a musicologist and a musician in his own right, Till has approached his study from an etic/emic perspective. The academic quality of Till's book, however, is compromised by the fact that much of his biographical content is unreferenced. This is problematic because it typically suggests that the information is common knowledge, presuming that popular culture is something that his audience will be well versed in. Furthermore, it leaves the reader with little comprehension of where common knowledge ends and Till's independent research begins. However, Till is not the first scholar to tackle this field, and thus the book is not a groundbreaking contribution.

Much of the ground has been trodden for decades. Till's chapter on Madonna focuses on her career as the basis of a cult of sex, using the songs 'Like a Virgin' and 'Like a Prayer' from the 1980s as source material, and largely eschewing references to the New Age, Kabalah, and transcendence which other scholars have shown to be significant themes in Madonna's music as well as her construction as a celebrity (for example, Bill Friskics-Warren, *I'll Take You There: Pop Music and the Urge for Transcendence*, New York: Continuum, 2005). It is disappointing that in focusing on her early material, Till has missed an opportunity to present some interesting insights on such a mass media mogul. In the chapter on Prince and the cult of personality, Till uses the term 'mediapheme' to describe the phenomenon of the modern day icon, likening the hyper-real celebrity of Prince to the veneration of images in Medieval Christendom. While this theory has great potential, the conclusion is disparaging: Till chalks up the religious importance of Prince to consumer capitalism, artificial beliefs, and commodified godhood.

Till's specialty area, electronic dance music culture (EDMC), begets the best-researched chapter. The only images in the book are found in this chapter, disappointing simply because the overall subject matter lends itself to such visual vivacity. As a long time participant-observer, Till combines cross-discipline methodologies like E.I. Bailey's implicit religion and the anthropology of African tribal music with his own fieldwork at raves, clubs, and festivals. This chapter provides a thorough and organised evaluation of EDMC as a numinous experience, covering themes of transcendence, trance, possession, community, and individualisation. For this reader, one of the most interesting insights offered here is how the spiritual experience of EDMC is subdued in the language of clubbers: Till comments that his interviewees intentionally tried to distance notions of Christian religiosity from their experiences, but concludes that this does not diminish the sacred significance of EDMC, rather it highlights the lack of an appropriate discourse with which to do it justice (pp. 145-146). This chapter reveals Till in his element.

Ultimately, Till sets out with a vision too broad to wrangle into a cohesive argument. Each chapter would work more effectively as independent papers, but together they lose sight of the purpose of the book. Nonetheless, *Pop Cult* will be of especial use to those who have an interest in the specific topics Till covers, and his easy-to-read style of writing means that this book should have appeal to both scholarly and non-scholarly audiences.

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Daphne Halikiopoulou, *Patterns of Secularization: Church, State and Nation in Greece and the Republic of Ireland* (Farnham and Burlington, Ashgate: 2011), pp. x + 190, ISBN 9781409403456 (Hbk).

The continued debates around the secularization thesis are some of the most prominent and long-lasting features of the sociology of religion. Even for those of us who are actively interested in this area, however, the repetitiveness of the arguments and the understandable prevalence of large-scale, statistical surveys can prove somewhat tiresome. Against this backdrop, Daphne Halikiopoulou's book, focusing upon the nuanced relationship between religion, politics, and national identity in two contemporary European nations, comes as a breath of fresh air.

Halikiopoulou acknowledges the difficulties in claiming universal inevitability of secularization and states that she aims to put "forward a middle range theoretical proposition allowing for different patterns that account for variation depending on domain-specific constraints" (p. 1). To do so, she adopts Wilson's definition of secularization (the decline of the social and political significance of religion) and works within David Martin's "cultural defence paradigm," whereby "secularization is likely if the Church obstructs the modernization process (precondition 1) and external threat perceptions are low (precondition 2)" (p. 61). In essence, Halikiopoulou wishes to demonstrate "how the brake that nationalism puts on secularization can be gradually removed or cease to function" (p.2) and limits her focus to one particular constraint on secularization – "the identification of religion with the nation" (p. 32).

The two countries chosen as case studies for this demonstration are Greece and the Republic of Ireland. Although I was initially sceptical concerning their comparability, Halikiopoulou eruditely sets forth the case for their suitability. Both Greece and Ireland are examples of countries where religion constitutes a signifier of national identity (Greek Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism respectively). They are small, relatively homogeneous countries that share a colonial past and membership of the EU. Crucially, however, the church in Greece has seen sustained legitimacy, whereas the majority of evidence points to an Irish church that is in increasingly rapid decline. It is, however, unfortunate that this book was committed to print before these countries gained a much more intuitive, yet unfortunate, similarity through their recent financial troubles. Halikiopoulou is quite open about the fact that these countries only exemplify two of a possible four cultural defence cases – church pro/obstructing modernization and secularization present/absent

– and suggests the possibility of future comparison with others such as Israel, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and Poland.

Halikiopoulou's analysis begins with an overview of nationalism and the secularization debate, and a number of broad, brief surveys of rationalisation, structural differentiation, and other key concepts. She then proceeds in more detail concerning the history of church, state, and nation in Greece and Ireland, through an analysis of public political discourse in both countries. Although Ireland had maintained a "special position" for the Catholic Church in its constitution until the 1970s (p. 50), Halikiopoulou posits the fact that "the Greek Orthodox Church is nationalised while the Irish Catholic Church is universal" as "the most significant distinction between the two case studies" (p. 55) because in Greece, the church is subordinate to the state, whereas in Ireland it is not. The significance of this distinction continues throughout the ensuing discussion on morality and modernisation, where the Irish Catholic Church is shown to "obstruct" modernisation through its focus on adherence to rules and "its 'obsession' with sex and morality" (p. 77) in contrast with the Greek church, characterised by "malleability" – "over the centuries there is not a single issue on which the [Greek] Church has absolutely refused to compromise with the state except one: their separation" (p. 66).

As one would expect, national fears of external threats provide religions with the opportunity "to mobilise the people in [their] favour by utilising external threat perceptions in order to safeguard [their] own political salience" (p. 79). Halikiopoulou successfully demonstrates that Greece has persistently high levels of national external threat, due to ongoing tense relations with Turkey, whereas Ireland's boost from EU membership and improving relations with the UK guard against the Irish Catholic Church participating in such nationalistic discourse. She then presents some further empirical work, involving "a comparative analysis of the Irish and Greek history curricula and textbooks" (p. 104) which contrasts an "ethnocentric" narrative where "Greek national identity is under severe threat and the Orthodox Church is pivotal for the survival of the Greek nation" (p. 104) with an Irish curriculum that avoids 'us' and 'them' distinctions and does not promote *current* external threat. Finally, she considers some contemporary issues such as immigration and sex abuse scandals to demonstrate the continued legitimacy of the Greek Orthodox Church in public perception, in contrast to that of the Irish Catholic Church. She concludes that, in the case of Greece, a willingness to modernise combined with the ability to mobilise the nation around perceived external threat has led to a brake being placed on secularization; in the case of Ireland, staunch traditionalism has alienated many from the church, and the low perception of

external threat, combined with the Northern Ireland peace process, have guarded against a nationalistic discourse – hence, greater secularization.

This book approaches the well-worn problem of secularization in an interesting, nuanced, and stimulating fashion, providing the reader with many valuable insights into the political and religious histories of Greece and the Republic of Ireland along the way. Halikiopoulou wisely focuses upon secularising *trends* rather than specific figures due to the difficulty of cross-country comparison, and it is refreshing to see the Republic of Ireland cited as undergoing one of the most significant religious declines in Western Europe, as opposed to the traditional focus upon its comparatively high levels of popular religiosity.

As her departmental website would suggest, this work is clearly the outcome of Halikiopoulou's doctoral research – something to which the constant repetition of previous points *ad nauseum*, combined with the inclusion of a number of unnecessary tables and figures, clearly attest. As a Northern Irishman who is a rugby fan, I could not let the following fundamental misunderstanding go unnoticed: Halikiopoulou refers to a specific "rugby game between Ireland and Britain at Croke Park" (p. 88) as an illustration of the improving relations between Ireland and the UK, without seeming aware that "Britain" in this case is actually *England* or that, more importantly, rugby is the only sport in which Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland play as a united team. This simple unawareness of such major national distinctions suggests that Halikiopoulou's 'hands-off' methodology may have led to similar omissions in other areas. However, this work is on the whole remarkably strong and would be recommended to all with an interest in the study of secularization or in the highly interesting relationship between religion, state, and nation in the contemporary world.

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Oddbjorn Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam* [Second Edition] (London and New York, Continuum: 2010), pp. xi + 292, ISBN 9781441181602 (Pbk).

There are few works that match the scope of this text, presented in a succinct and engaging style, whereby Leirvik guides the reader through an instructive journey from the *Qur'an* and Hadith literature to vivid contemporary concerns and the application of new ways of methodological dialogue between faiths. One should also take note of an important, and somewhat complimentary,

study conducted previously by Lloyd Ridgeon in his *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2001), within which he offers a pertinent analysis of Jesus from the point of view of Islamic Mysticism. Other notable, and related, studies include that of Annemarie Schimmel ('Jesus and Mary as Poetical Images in Rūmī's Verse,' in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, eds Y.Y. Haddad and W.Z. Haddad, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995, pp. 143-157) and Kenneth Cragg (*Jesus and the Muslim: An Exploration*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

There is a long attested debate between Christians and Muslims concerning the nature of Jesus Christ or Isa ibn Maryam, as termed in the *Qur'an*. In part, this arises from Christological disputes that featured in the series of councils throughout the first half of the first millennium CE. While the Christian tradition steadily defined itself and developed a consistent theology and Christology by the end of the first millennium, the rise of Islam, in the seventh century, presented a new challenge to the established Christian dogma. The Muslim position, upon its encounter with the Christian communities outside Arabia, renewed the emphasis on the humanity of Christ, which for the most part had become a minority position among Christian pockets in the East. Quite radically, Muslims rejected the divinity of Jesus and deposed the idea that he was God Incarnate or the Son of God. Such ideas were completely foreign to the Arab Muslims who also rejected the belief that Jesus was crucified and resurrected, and, moreover, that he had atoned for the sins of mankind. Apart from this, Muslims held in common the view of the Virginal Conception and, generally, the sinless or stainless state of both Mary and Jesus, hence the use of Matronymic Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary).

It is, then, not at all surprising when reading Leirvik that he highlights significant parallels that exist across various cultures that link the Christian and the Muslim through fragmented, or rather dispersed, images of Christ. For instance, those images that are found within the *Qur'an*, among the Shi'ite, the Sufi, and other forms of literature in which Jesus is evoked by Iranians or Indo-Pakistanis, may not reflect, in full, the matured Christology of the Christian, but it does offer necessary doorways to and from the two worldviews. For example, remarkable syntheses are discerned in the Sufi poetry of Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273) who envisioned Jesus as the Ideal or Perfect Man, both filled with the divine as well as being grounded in the earthly. Certainly, in the Sufi sense, this was a category that stretched the boundaries of Islamic Christology and presented Jesus as a category apart from that of Prophethood (cf. p. 91).

At times, it would seem that Leirvik is suggesting that certain Muslim thinkers found, in Christ, the catalyst for renewed interpretation of spirituality and religiosity, which both invigorated and enriched their own standing within

the fertile soil of the Muslim tradition. In the Iranian post-Revolution setting, Jesus is imagined by the then leading academic Ali Shariati as a reflection of the martyred Hussein; as being deeply spiritual and engaged in the act of social retribution on behalf of the faithful (p. 161f.). For Shariati, the spiritual was qualified by the social in that he believed "[w]hoever has no worldly life has no spiritual life" (p. 161).

Among particular groups in Bangladesh there are those who are reluctant to call themselves "Christians" and thus have developed a hybrid identity consisting of Muslim and Christian elements. Calling themselves 'Jesus Imandars' (faithful to Jesus), this group upholds eclectic practices from the two religions, but members believe in the sacrificial death of Christ for human sin. While retaining respect for elements of Islamic religion, they represent subtle shifts toward a faith in Christ. That is, they differentiate their faith not as a conversion to Christianity, but to Christ (p. 242). Regardless, they are critical of both the churches as well as established Islam; it would seem that "the imandars emphasize the essential value of interiority and personal faithfulness towards God through following Jesus" (p. 242).

Oddbjorn Leirvik offers a work that reflects a lifetime of study and reflection on an important subject of religious dialogue between two of the world's predominant religions. Leirvik demonstrates his mastery over not just the primary and secondary sources, but also an intimate understanding of the social, emotional, and psychological dynamics of the Christian-Muslim interaction as it unfolds in everyday life. This is a comprehensive work that undoubtedly yields a wide, but thorough, topic range in its investigation of the subject. Leirvik skilfully traverses historical to contemporary concerns, connecting periodic themes while demonstrating the relevance of thematic continuity and the pertinence of traditional motivations upon the contemporary. Leirvik is attentive to detail in every aspect of relevance to Jesus in Islam, as he takes the reader through the variety of representations of this figure as found within the Islamic tradition. The book reads well in that it demystifies complex theological and philosophical ideas, making it digestible for the professional academic, yet, at the same time, accessible to the amateur. This book is a valuable resource for any who is involved in the study of Christian-Muslim relations, specifically to do with examinations of Jesus Christ in Islam, and a valuable sourcebook on a number of aspects to do with both Christianity and Islam in general. In this, Leirvik's contribution is also a reference guide to the enormous resource of scholarship on the subject. Likewise, this book is somewhat encyclopaedic, as it offers no particularly distinctive thesis on the subject; however, a sense of direction is clearly present in the work as Leirvik threads the enclaves of his discourse with the narrative of change and evolution

that is mutually beneficial to both the Christian and Muslim. This may not be significantly profound or new in itself, but Leirvik's own tendency to faith is dominant in that there is a quasi-spiritual solution to the problems of Christian-Muslim relations, even if this, to put it in a modern or postmodern sense, is comprised of appreciating harmony through difference:

> [P]articularism and distinctive identities seem to have come to stay, and there might be no return to the universalistic discourses of the typically modern projects of reform...Maybe only a conscience capable of containing pain and respecting difference can furnish Christians and Muslims with a hope of becoming *oneself as another* – without violating either of the two (p. 269).

All in all, Leirvik presents an unbiased view of the subject, exploring the positive as well as the negative aspects in a well-researched study that is both reflective and critically driven toward means and methods for perceived reconciliation.

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Conor Kostick (ed.), *The Crusades and the Near East: Cultural Histories* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. xvi + 271, ISBN 9780415580410 (Pbk).

The Crusades and the Near East is one of a long line of collected studies on crusading history, and it has much to live up to alongside the classics like *Outremer*, *Dei Gesta per Francos*, or *In Laudem Hierosolymitani*. The theme uniting the articles in the present work is apparently the Near East, although in reality, this subject unites the various papers only very loosely. The articles are themselves of varying quality, some being welcome discussions of important issues in crusader studies, others unfortunately less compelling. For this reason, I shall give some descriptions of the various articles individually.

The volume begins with a sort of military miscellany by John France, an important and respected scholar on military aspects of the crusades. This article lacks direction and readers would be better placed reading France's well-known monograph *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades*.

An innovative and important essay provoking a new direction of research can be seen in Alan Murray's article on national differences within the crusader camp. Natasha Hodgson's article on marriage as a diplomatic tool in the Crusader States is likewise valuable. Yehoshua Frenkel also provides an important article deconstructing the modern belief in a unified Muslim response to the arrival of the Franks. Other papers were less compelling, such

as Jürgen Krüger's article on the architecture of the crusaders in the Holy Land, which sets up an interesting conceptual question (Was crusader architecture the first European colonial architecture?), and then completely fails to answer said question. What we have here, then, is a collection of articles of varying quality on a number of aspects of crusading, mostly cultural phenomena, with a focus on the Crusader States and their interactions with the world around them.

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Matthew Charet, *Root of David: The Symbolic Origins of Rastafari* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), pp. 257, ISBN 9788184651010 (Pbk).

The themes of millenarianism, redemption, and journeying to the Promised Land are regularly found in Black new religious movements of the twentieth century, but rarely so strangely and powerfully as in Rastafarianism, the subaltern faith that emerged in the slums of Jamaica in the 1930s and 1940s. Matthew Charet's monograph focuses on one specific Rastafarian doctrine, the conviction that His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, was in fact Jah, God Almighty. Selassie, born Tafari Makonnen, was crowned the 225th Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930, and this significant event spurred a movement that drew on a range of sources. These included Marcus Mosiah Garvey's (1887-1940) Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA); the traditions of a slave society, including African storytelling and the *King James Bible* (from which comes the central conviction that White society is Babylon and Ethiopia Zion, the Promised Land); Myalism and the Native Baptist Churches of Jamaica; and Pan-Africanism and the Ethiopianism of Alexander Bedward (1859-1930).

Central to the origins of Rastafarian religion was the impoverished and disadvantaged condition of the Jamaican peasantry. As was the case with many oppressed peoples in British colonial contexts, Black Jamaicans had been denied education and even the benefits of Christian evangelism by the White elites of the colony. Rebellions were frequent since the general strike organised by the Black Baptist slave Samuel Sharpe, who was executed for his role in this protest in 1832. Rastafarianism, Charet argues, possesses the features of a millennial movement, a messianic movement, a nativist movement, and a revitalisation movement. Early Rastafarian theologians including Leonard Howell (author of the core text *The Promised Key*), Joseph Hibbert, and Henry

Archibald Dunkley, recognised Selassie as the living Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, and God Himself. They drew on the *King James Bible* and on Selassie's alleged descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and his imperial titles, particularly 'Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah' (*Revelation* 5:5).

Jamaica was granted full independence in 1962, and by that time Rastafarianism had gone through several phases and was fully established as a counter-cultural (to use a slightly anachronistic term) religious movement characterised by the wearing of the dreadlocks, the adoption of Ethiopian colours (red, yellow, and green), the smoking of *ganja* (marijuana or 'the herb'), and the practise of a gnostic process of 'reasoning' arrived at through communal gatherings called 'grounations.' Much of what the West knew of Rastafarianism was through the career of the first Third World superstar, the man Matthew Charet calls the 'reggae prophet,' Robert Nesta 'Bob' Marley (1945-1981) who, since the release of the album *Catch a Fire* (with his fellow musicians and Rastas, Bunny Wailer and Peter Tosh) in 1973, uncompromisingly preached the message of Jah though his phenomenally popular reggae music career, until his untimely death from untreated melanoma at the age of thirty-six.

This short monograph provides invaluable background to the emergence of the Rasta religion and thus renders explicable the complex and seemingly irrational doctrines that the 'Natty Dreads' adhere to. The ascendance of a Black messiah, Haile Selassie, who after the Italian conquest of Abyssinia was a constant presence in the United Nations arguing for the dignity and equal rights of all Black citizen of the world, became a beacon for dispossessed Blacks everywhere. These days, reggae musicians are as likely to come from the United Kingdom (UB40), South Africa (Lucky Dube), or Australia (where Indigenous band No Fixed Address carved out a loyal following in the 1970s and 1980s and supported Peter Tosh on his Australian tour in 1982). Rastafarianism is now a global phenomenon. Charet's monograph is elegantly written, well-researched, and a solid contribution to scholarly knowledge of a fascinating and often not easily comprehended religious movement. It deserves to be on the shelves of every academic library, and among the books of all students and scholars interested in the study of new religious movements in general and Black new religions in particular.

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Warren Bonett (ed.), *The Australian Book of Atheism* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2010), pp. 442, ISBN 9781921640766 (Pbk).

The value of this book is its discussion of local Australian issues from an openly atheistic perspective. The resurgence of atheism as a publicly discussed phenomenon in the Anglophone world has been largely confined to Britain and the United States, and this book brings those messages to the antipodes, putting them to work on the Australian situation. Warren Bonett – a bookshop owner from Queensland's Sunshine coast who casts himself as "just another bloke on the street" (p. 441) – had a specific agenda in bringing the book into existence, namely to expose the role that religion plays in Australian society and politics and motivate change to bring that to an end. Indeed, if there is one overall message that is presented by the various essays collected here, it is a plea to salvage the ideal of secularism from the muddy, Christianised politics that apparently plague our country.

In his introduction Bonett emphasises the broad range of opinions that atheists hold and by inviting thirty-three authors to write short essays on topics seemingly of their own choosing, he has ended up with a smorgasbord of issues and styles. This approach is the book's most charming feature and at the same time its greatest fault. Taken together the various contributors show how atheism informs "the full gamut of the human experience" (Bonett, p. 6); however, the requisite space limitations that result from cramming so many authors into a single book means that the essays last an average of only thirteen pages, insufficient to deal with the majority of the issues discussed in any nuanced or comprehensive way.

The contributions are helpfully organised under a number of headings. 'Overview' gives a number of historical surveys, reclaiming the role of atheism and atheists in the development of modern Australia. The book's emphasis on politics, legislation and the (lack of) separation of church and state is evident from these first essays. Next come the 'Personal' accounts, autobiographical stories that present the many different routes to atheism: apathy, apostasy, birth, and so on. The essays gathered under 'Education' dispute the National School Chaplaincy Program and the teaching of theology and creationism in Australian schools. The 'Social and Cultural' articles discuss religious fundamentalism, euthanasia, so-called progressive Christianity, abortion, feminism, the New Age, and Humanism. More practical essays continue under 'Politics,' calling for the end of parliamentary prayer, a commitment to secularism, and an exaltation of our right to freedom of speech. We are taken in a different direction with 'Philosophy,' with essays attempting to show that morality and meaning can both be grounded in an atheist worldview. The final

section is named 'Religion and the Brain,' providing a simple introduction to some of the neuroscience research exploring the nature of religious experience; religious responses to this research are not mentioned.

Unfortunately, the same criticism of many contemporary atheists can also be levelled at some of these authors; their understanding of religion tends to be simplistic. If religion is nothing more than the mindless adherence to ancient, sexist documents, then of course it deserves vilification. But religions are social constructions, constantly being re-imagined, with their beliefs and values subject to continual processes of change. Most of the authors seem to have no care for any believers other than those with conservative and fundamentalist positions. The essays are littered with little asides poking fun at such extreme views. Progressives or moderates are predicted to be the "first to go" (Alex McCullie, 'Progressive Christianity: A Secular Response,' p. 211) or are seen as cause for more serious concern through their invisible use of faith in politics (Bonett, 'Why a Book on Atheist Thought in Australia?,' p. 333). Refreshingly, there are some dissenting voices amidst the anti-religious majority, who present religious moderates as liberal and realistic (Kylie Sturgess, 'Atheist 2.0: Reflections on Teaching in Faith Schools') and worth working with on issues of common concern (Martin Bridgstock, 'Fundamentalism, Religion, and Science,' p. 190). Tamas Pataki, in 'Religion and Violence,' also criticises Hitchens and Dawkins as failing to see beyond the notion of religion-as-doctrine. His identification of the "fundamental motives" (p. 394) behind religion – human dependency, fear of abandonment, self-respect, and group identity – is a more perceptive analysis of religion than any other in the book (although his "intrinsic connection" [p. 395] between religion and violence via quasi-Freudian narcissistic, hysterical, and obsessional needs fails to convincingly exclude other, similarly functioning social groups).

In a world where public atheism has taken on a particularly masculine hue, a notable strength of the book is its ongoing attention to women. Approximately one third of the contributors are female, and three essays focus exclusively on religion's role in the oppression of women. Some of the female contributors (Tanya Levin, 'Far Above Rubies'; Lyn Allison, 'Ever Wondered Why God is a Bloke?') discuss how they came to atheism as a natural consequence of their feminism. Attention is repeatedly drawn to the ongoing encouragement of conservative gender roles on the part of many forms of Christianity, most worryingly in the school programs run by the Sydney-based Hillsong Church (Levin; Hugh Wilson, 'Public Education in Queensland').

A number of articles either suffer from a lack of clear focus, or are mere recounts of events within a certain field. Nevertheless, the strongest essays are

worthy of note for having a novel idea, robustly argued. Leslie Cannold's critique of various arguments against abortion, named 'Abortion in Australia,' is passionate and well informed. She explains how the foetal-centred strategy excludes women from consideration, while women-centred arguments are patronising and often factually incorrect. Atheism is not mentioned in Cannold's essay; it is more an indictment of religion than a promotion of atheism. John Wilkins, meanwhile, mounts the argument that secularism in fact benefits religion in 'The Role of Secularism in Protecting Religion.' By simultaneously protecting and empowering all religions equally, no single religion can be repressed by any other; even majority religions should agree to this, argues Wilkins, given that they cannot guarantee their status into the future. Many believers feel that secularism is an atheist conspiracy, and Wilkins in part blames secularists themselves for this perception. Later in the book, Robin Craig, in 'Good Without God,' provides an objective justification, albeit a brief one, for why morality can be drawn solely from the natural world. After finding the fundamental requirements of human life, which he identifies as thinking and the ability to apply the results of thought, moral behaviour is seen as that which promotes and sustains reason.

The Australian Book of Atheism says little that has not been said elsewhere, and academics and students of these topics will probably not draw much from it. It is valuable, however, for its application of atheist thought to the Australian context, and for its explicit call to political action. It will suit those who are still confused as to their faith position or those seeking an overview of the current state of religion in the public sphere in Australia.

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Wang Keping (ed.), *International Year Book of Aesthetics*, vol. 14 (Beijing: International Association for Aesthetics, 2010), pp. 273, ISSN 1402-2842.

The International Association for Aesthetics (to which the SSLA is attached as a National Society) regularly produces a yearbook collecting scholarship on aesthetic trends. This review deals with volume 14 published towards the end of 2010. Reflecting the connections being made with China by the IAA and celebrating the 2010 International Congress at Peking University, this edition is edited by Wang Keping of Beijing International Studies University.

The first article, 'Of Human Nature and Aesthetic Metaphysics' by Li Zehou, seeks to lace the more outstanding elements of Chinese aesthetics into

the Western philosophical project. Using language that is, in part, Buddhistic, the author considers how one might move aesthetic pleasure from the realm of sensual satisfaction to that of personal transcendence. Hence the author's promotion of an aesthetic metaphysics, which Li hopes can extend notions such as Heidegger's *Dasein*, through Confucian ideals of self-transformation towards perfection. Regrettably, the article is very short on a detailed exposition of later Confucian thinking in this field, which provides a vast array of thinking on the possibility of transcendence and self-transformation.

Joseph Margolis, in the second article 'An Ounce of Prophecy,' strikes one as having as positivist a nature as the first article. Margolis champions an evolutionary spirit in aesthetics developing directly from Kant's aesthetic as realigned by Hegel. The problem of the trajectory is that it is interrupted by Darwin's massive influence, indirectly, on modern ideas of the self and of beauty. Here Margolis believes that the work of Pierce and Cassirer make significant contributions towards a hybrid, yet total, understanding of the biological and cultural potentiality of life. Tantalisingly, Margolis promises that this project will soon end, but keeps us hanging.

Peter Lamarque is much less positive. In 'Aesthetics: Retreat, Advance and Fragmentation' he examines the retreat from beauty in the twentieth century and the rush towards an art of concepts that leaves aesthetics atomised, and, in many quarters, the idea of beauty treated with high suspicion. This breakdown leads to a more pervasive use of the concept of aesthetics, but removes, or at least suspends, the consideration of beauty as a transcendent ideal. Nevertheless, Lamarque considers that the ideal of beauty shall never completely disappear and a possible resurgence is mooted. It is here that the author warns, however, against the current philosophical aesthetics that continue the process of fragmentation of aesthetics: the analytical approach and the historical, examining the experiential and the philosophy of art. I wonder if this perceived fragmentation is actually responsible for the resurgence in the multi-methodological study of aesthetics. Still, the author does much in the remaining part of the article to consider aesthetic experience, particularly in an ecological frame.

At a point in the book when the concept of 'beauty' starts to turn meaningless, we find David E. Cooper's 'Edification and the Experience of Beauty' in which he gives two views of beauty. Firstly, the facilist; where one simply cannot describe the power of the experience of the beautiful. The second approach to beauty he describes as the edificational; one experiences beauty and uses the experience to build on previous encounters of the beautiful. The edificational view is held by the soul who knows that he or she must study, achieve, and acquire skills to continue the interaction with beauty; in short, this

approach is edifying to the subject. The author then maps the historical engagement of these two views starting with an examination of the work of Francis Hutcheson (facilist) and, to a much smaller extent, Jean-Pierre de Crousaz and Charles Baudelaire (edificationalists), leading, in the Anglo tradition at least, to a victory for the facilists in G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* and supporting work from A. J. Ayer. The author then spends the rest of the article in a way aligning himself with many of the Chinese papers, in this volume and at the 2010 congress, who saw the need for maintaining an edificationalist dimension to the future of aesthetics. The author concludes by considering the deep links between virtue, beauty, and the potential for art's edification. His sentiments go to the heart, I think, of a current possibility in the future of aesthetics.

The second section consists of two papers, Richard Shusterman's 'Somaesthetics and the Utopian Body' and Jale Erzen's 'The World is my Body: Ecology and the Aesthetic Perception.' Shushterman develops his paradigm of somaesthetic, "the lived, sentient, purposeful, dynamic human body" (p. 82), which is not simply a conscious artefact in time and space but an "active perceptive centre that generates our sense of place and defines the spatial coordinates we live in" (p. 83). From this perspective, the author is able to give his own 'embodied' rereading of the aesthetics question with reference to various utopian projections on and of the body. Part of this project, then, is to examine the body in its aesthetic relation to its environment. Schusterman uses Merleau-Ponty in this direction, but could easily have developed his notions from a developed reading of Ervin Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959).

"The World is My Body," proclaims Jale Erzen; the title of her essay in this collection has the same name. Here, Erzen is attempting to develop rational parameters around the emerging field of environmental aesthetics, and does so by emphasising the role of wide context in the discussion of aesthetics: "aesthetics is not seen merely as concerned with beauty, art, and sensory qualities, but essentially as a matter of relationships and their congeniality to life processes" (p. 94). Erzen sees the establishment and adherence to false categories in the field of knowledge as the most dangerous element in the misunderstanding of the true aesthetics of the environment. In a way, Erzen also uses Merleau-Ponty to suggest the importance of a Shushterman-like somaesthetics of time and place that admits not only of immediate personal concerns, but of a developing world body consciousness so that "I can equally feel when the earth is ill [as] all matter interacts and reciprocates" (p. 100). Erzen is on the start of a journey for aesthetics which will reconnect its study

with the ethical and moral dimensions of an environmentally engaged philosophy.

The third part of the book concentrates on 'Tradition and Intercultural aesthetics' and opens with an article by Gao Jianping on the Book of Music ('Man and His Relationship with Society and Art: A Case Study of *On Music*'). *On Music* is attached to the *Liji*, or *Book of Rites*, which is one of the five classic works of China. Gao's reading of this work is not particularly developed, but the author does illustrate one of the earliest and most foundational ways of approaching music aesthetics in China, and the related issues of ethics and good governance that are attached to both music and its aesthetic study.

Robert Wilkinson starts with a discussion of the "ontological ultimate of pure experience" that is at the heart of *An Inquiry Into the Good* (1911) by Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945). This pure experience forms the bedrock of truth that then goes on to be conceptualised through deliberative discrimination through a consciousness that has "unsoundable depth" (p. 122). Aesthetic consciousness is placed by Nishida at a very deep level of consciousness, and in the role of a kind of intuition that comes from deeply grasping the operation of the world. That is, to create we grasp at what there is and do not rationalise the creative into existence because there is little difference at the point of creation between the self and the created. Wilkinson then goes on to argue that Nishida saw the development of morality not as arising from this deep creative process but from a negotiated interpersonal reality.

Tanehisa Otabe, on the other hand, examines aspects of aesthetic and self-awakening in the work of Motomori Kimura (1895-1946), himself a student of Nishida's. The article establishes Otabe's strong philosophical dichotomy between the inner nature of humanity and its various connections with the outer world of forms. Otabe focuses on the connective points of these two realms as expressed in Kimura's idea of "expressive love," but, delicately, does this throughout what he sees as distinct periods of thought in the philosopher's *oeuvre*. The ability of the outer world to call creative acts from the autonomous subject, which is the height of this connectability in Kimura's middle period of thought, undergoes additional significant levels of thought towards the end of the philosopher's short life. And that is how a national culture seeks to relate to universal imperatives. To this extent, Otabe provides us with paths for how inner national concerns can adapt and develop world-historical expansion of the human endeavour. In this manner, he turns away from the unapologetically nationalist concerns of some of the Kyoto aestheticians throughout the war.

Section four contains 'Towards and Understanding of Sculpture as Public Art' by Curtis Carter, and Tyrus Miller's 'A Geography of Dispersion: Central Europe and the Symbolic Spaces of the Avant-Garde.' Carter addresses historical and definitional issues concerning recent developments in Public Art. He considers a move from static monumental works as being the *all* of such a definition and considers how one may include more temporary manifestations of public performance as public art; a more complete concretisation of the field of what constitutes the 'public,' however, could have here been tested. Tyrus Miller gives a welcome update to his work on emphasising the subtleties between national and internationalist art in respect to more radical art movements in Eastern Europe.

The final section investigates aspects of Artistic creation and imitation. Wolfgang Welsch tackles a fascinating division in his 'At Point Zero of Creation' between, on the one hand, the Western artist who must formulate an artwork *de novo* and, on the other hand, those artists who work within traditions that call for particular adaptations in fields where artistic convention is well established. To flesh out the process of working from Zero, Welsch considers both Christian and evolutionary approaches to this idea of a zero start in creation. Welsch suggests that recent changes in the understanding of world concepts breaks down these ideals, so that today an artist cannot start from a zero-point if they put their work in a context of cosmic evolution. "From now on the artist can no longer understand her work in the context of art alone, but must perceive it as a happening in the context of evolution" (p. 206) and by nature comprehend the creative act as a small development of the evolutionary process *in toto*. This, Welsch suggests, should lead ultimately to a dissolution of the Romantic ideal of the artist who creates *de novo* and lead to an art that is beyond ideals of creation.

In the final essay, Wang Keping examines possible similarities and differences between the Platonic idea of mimesis and the Chinese concept of *moxie*. The article is interesting for the way that Wang provides a substantial reading, from a Chinese perspective, of mimesis. Despite this work, the author argues that the two terms sit too unshakably in their cultural contexts to be of much use to each other. He concludes by warning scholars who try to use these terms interchangeably.

Overall, the collection has strengths and weaknesses that provide us with a series of essays of varying standards. The discussions on Japanese aesthetic thinking stand out as clearly useful. Many of the China-focused essays, although of variable quality, cover aspects of Chinese aesthetic thought that is, at present, little discussed in the West (and should be). The remainder of essays that take new turns in aesthetic theories were, for me, the most

welcome, for somaesthetics and considerations of environmental aesthetics present new and exciting challenges to the field. The collection thus presents an ongoing dialogue between traditional thinking on what constitutes aesthetics and new ways to read the field. As such, the collection is an impressive snapshot of the present development of aesthetics with a welcome East-Asian focus.

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Roger Scruton, *I Drink Therefore I Am: A Philosopher's Guide to Wine* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. viii + 216, ISBN 9781441170675 (Pbk).

Having recently written on the production of wine using Rudolph Steiner's Biodynamic agricultural method, I was interested to broaden my knowledge of how scholars have conceived of this subject with Roger Scruton's recently published book on the matter. What I found was, in some ways, the philosophical counterpoint to Steiner's cosmological urgings and, in other ways, an equally subjective reading of the purpose of wine. In many ways this is an autobiography rather than a philosophical treatise on wine. Scruton, the famous conservative writer and philosopher, provides the reader with an account of his relationship – loves and hates – with wine over the course of his lifetime, before getting into philosophy proper. The early chapters in the book meander, rolling between existential reverie, dusty memory, fleeting European history on the topic, and musings on just how wrong those silly Marxists were. All of this is punctuated by Scruton's insistence that wine is more than just a drink, more than a grape and a brand, more than a collection of chemical and biological phenomena. It is also a love letter to France, from an unashamed Francophone; or, as he calmly points out, a Francophone in spirit if not ontologically. You see, France – 'real' France – can only now be visited in the glass, according to Scruton. The country has been decimated by revolution, reformation, secularisation, and immigration. One can feel the longing the poor man has for the country he never knew, only tasting the echoes of such (so he believes) in the glasses of wine he so lovingly speaks of.

Philosophically, the book really begins at Chapter 5, 'Consciousness and Being.' Here, Scruton dives into the problems of reason, consciousness, and being. However, for some pages, in which Scruton understandably engages with philosophical discourse, the book loses its character and becomes

somewhat dry and predictable. Gone is the provocation and subsequent infuriation at Scruton's argument. However, Chapter 6 brings the discussion back on track, launching into a fascinating debate about the status of the experience of wine; specifically asking if it is an aesthetic or cognitive experience. Scruton concludes it is a cognitive one that exists as "an object of thought and a vehicle of reflection" (p. 123), rather than a purely sensory experience. Finally, in Chapter 7, we get to the meat of Scruton's argument and the true purpose of the book; to argue that wine drunk with temperance, with virtue, and with an eye to understanding a problem (rather than drowning it out) is, in fact, a very positive thing. In a society that Scruton believes is giving way to brutish, speedy consumerism, ruled by Narcissus, the cultured and considered consumption of wine symbolises a slower, civilised approach to life in which Bacchus reigns.

Indeed, for Scruton, the experience of drinking wine, its intoxicating effects, and the social context we are able to shape about the rituals of its consumption, are worthy of great praise. "I have not swallowed the wine as I would a tasteless drug; I have taken it into myself, so that its flavour and my mood are inextricably bound together" (p. 123). However, there are odd moments in which it seems this positive social dimension is reserved for wine alone of all the intoxicants. Mescalin and LSD, he claims, cannot help with "the goal of philosophy" just by mere ingestion. "Wine, properly drunk" can help to "shine a light upon that path" (p. 115). But surely there is at least the possibility that other intoxicants can act similarly? What of the rituals that groups of people continue to construct for their consumption? Why are these not positive? Scruton does not sufficiently explain this. In fact, his description of the 'transfiguration' the world undergoes through the lens of wine drunk reads to me like any number of LSD/cannabis/peyote/MDMA consumers' descriptions I have seen over the years. Why is wine so special in his eyes? The reader is not told. The "world of amniotic tranquillity" (p. 116) to which the wine drinker returns with each glass is, it appears, only accessible through (French) wine.

Scruton prefaces the book by stating that it "is not about drinking wine, but about thinking it" (p. vii). Indeed, he sees wine "as an accompaniment to philosophy, and philosophy as a by-product of wine" (p. 5). Certainly the biographies of many thinkers do not lack references to such, but often Scruton renders his discussion from this to an extreme; at times the hyperbole is thick. "Unlike every other product that is now manufactured for the table, wine exists in as many varieties as there are people who produce it" (p. 22), is just one example of the brash exaggeration Scruton employs occasionally to carry his argument. Unfortunately, this kind of language undermines an otherwise

charming and affable approach to the philosophy of wine. 'Pretentious twaddle' was my wife's comment after listening to me read a paragraph aloud. Nonetheless, the author stays true to his preface, and maintains a steady focus on why and how we should drink wine and philosophise. If there is one thing this book is not, it is gimmicky. Scruton rises above that, and maintains an intellectual rigour that challenges.

One of the things reading this book has done – and I thank Scruton for this – is rekindle my relationship with wine. I find myself thinking of misty evenings with family in the Hunter Valley sipping that region's acidic semillon; late nights with my father arguing about global warming or the war in Iraq through the garnet hues of Barossa shiraz; and the cool still of late autumn in the Central Massif while walking the *chemin de Compostelle*, stumbling in French to talk about what I was researching. One should always talk with wine, and this is something Scruton illustrates well in this book. The social aspects of drinking wine are to be praised. Thus, while I often found myself at odds with the author concerning his opinions, or his contradictions, or his pretentious affectations, the overall result is positive. As a reader I have been provoked, and this, surely, is the measure of the currency and the import of any work provided for the consideration of others. This is certainly a book that anyone interested in wine, in any respect, should read.

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