

AND THE KIT-CATS

Autumn 2014



Much of this fine book is outside the chronological range covered by the *Scribnerian*, but not the opening chapter on Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* (1731). There is a large body of theory and scholarship on taste, "the most potent evaluative term in eighteenth-century British culture," and Mr. Noggle converses with it. He considers "the two temporal modes of taste," the "compound character of taste," in the 1730s to the 1780s. Taste was understood as an individual's immediate capacity to appreciate and judge a thing, an intense, instantaneous unmediated act of a particular sensibility. But taste also works through time, reflecting slowly evolved, collective processes and outcomes that consolidate into such descriptors as modern, Gothic, classic, British, Chinese, or feminine taste.

The book proceeds principally through close reading of exemplary canonical texts that thrive on the exchange between taste's two temporal components." Chapters consider writings on landscape gardening by William Gilpin, Joseph Warton, and Horace Walpole; taste and history in Hume's work; taste in works by More, Barbauld, and Burney; and taste as fashion in the work of Adam Smith, and Joshua and Frances Reynolds. The final chapter is an absorbing account of William Beckford's writings on connoisseurship and collecting. The book is based on contemporary texts and contexts, but in its Introduction and Epilogue especially, it engages with modern theoretical accounts of eighteenth-century taste and culture. Mr. Noggle contests the view, prominently articulated by Pierre

JAMES NOGGLE. *The Temporality of Taste in Eighteenth-Century British Writing*. Oxford: Oxford, 2012. Pp. viii + 234. £60; \$110.

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can do. interdisciplinary techniques and compelling juxtapositions of evidence and analysis detachable slabs of learning or paraphrased nuggets, a sense of possibility: what one. All forms of brilliance, however, evade most of us. The book offers, more than would have written a consistently brilliant book rather than a quirky and patchily brilliant Lamb had pursued the argument and the desire to be lucid rather than high-sounding, he but what is its precise valency in the history of ideas? One sometimes feels that if Mr. then, but fidelity to the consequences of an imagined beginning." This sounds grand, sense of identity or nationality is founded . . . it is not reality in itself which is disclosed, imagination itself to create the materialities and propel the continuities upon which the did. An example is the account of fictionality in chapter seven, where the defining characteristic even of one kind of fiction is not formal realism per se, but "the power of whether Mr. Lamb is making a positive claim that paradigm shifts in thought took place; or whether he is merely saying that it would be interesting to think, or argue, that they historicized, seems insufficiently historical. At several points it is difficult to determine logue and missing the chapter on Shakespeare altogether. At times, the argument, usually pre-established filters. In practice, the reading experience of the book is unusually variable. Some of it is brilliant; some, impenetrable. I recommend not starting with the prologue and missing the chapter on Shakespeare altogether. At times, the argument, usually pre-established filters. In practice, the reading experience of the book is unusually variable. Some of it is brilliant; some, impenetrable. I recommend not starting with the prologue and missing the chapter on Shakespeare altogether. At times, the argument, usually

Bourdieu, which sees eighteenth-century taste as a "denial of the social." "It is a fantasy of recent scholarship," Mr. Noggle argues: "the double discursive temporality of taste" enabled contemporary writers to use taste to criticize the very ideological constructs that many scholars think it upholds. Mr. Noggle conceives his book as a "defence of taste" against those cultural critics who would reduce it to the ideological function of serving hegemony and against a version of aesthetics that would isolate taste from its social and historical circumstances.

Taste was a much contested term. It was paradigmatic in the polite culture promoted by Whigs such as Addison. In this book's index, entries under "Whigs" greatly outnumber those under "Tories." Opposition satirists such as the author of *The Modern Englishman* (1738) had no doubt that taste was the servant of Hanoverian Whig hegemony: "The reigning Foible of the Times explode, / This Thing call'd TASTE, this new fam'd ALAMODE!" Mr. Noggle might perhaps have accorded more space to oppositional voices and their use of the two temporalities of taste. Swift's satiric commentary on taste and politeness across several works is not noticed. For Addison, taste is innate, but it finds its medium and is cultivated in conversation with men of polite genius. For Swift, taste was not to be attuned to the echo of Whig coffeehouse conversation. He looked to the period of Charles I's Personal Rule as the apogee of politeness in England. It is Charles I's architect Inigo Jones, Palladio's foremost English disciple, who exemplifies taste for Pope in the oppositional poem which Mr. Noggle treats extensively.

Ubiquitous in the century's discourse of taste, the *Epistle to Burlington* satirizes false taste and emphasizes terms such as "use," "sense," and "nature," as well as "taste." Mr. Noggle writes that "Pope had every reason for distrusting taste's role as an index of modernity and the present of culture, promoted by Whiggish, Walpolean writers." Pope's project in *Burlington* aligns taste with Burlington's. To support an anti-commercialist civic humanist judgment that reflected his "Patriot," and perhaps "crypto-Jacobite" ideology, Pope invokes the instantaneous immediacy of taste. Wrestling taste from the Whig present, Pope, in Mr. Noggle's account, becomes an enthusiast. Taste is guided by an inner light of sense. It is a spontaneous appreciation, not something to be derived from social exchange or ruled by Addisonian conversation between gentlemen. Unsubordinated to external canons of style, taste resides in individual intuitive experience. The poem's "architectural authorities Jones, Palladio, Le Nôtre, and Vitruvius present models" because they exhibited this and cannot be reduced to external rules or prescribed content. For Mr. Noggle, Pope's vague reference, at the end of the poem, to future "kings" calling forth Burlington's ideas, is significant. Hostile to the commercialization of British Hanoverian building, it does not suggest that a specific monarch will set the nation's taste right. Burlington must exercise his own exemplary taste independent of any particular monarch or specific political-aesthetic authority. The poem's temporal politics, in Mr. Noggle's reading, do become rather muted and quietist. It seems that the tasteful future is to be found within the individual exercising this intense immediacy of discernment rather than in outside political imperatives or alternative regimes. Mr. Noggle observes, "taste in the eighteenth century and beyond always remains inside the cultural ideologies from which it arises."

Scholars of British eighteenth-century aesthetics and cultural history need to engage with Mr. Noggle's *The Temporality of Taste*.
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LISA SARASOHN, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: Reason and Fancy during the Scientific Revolution*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2010. Pp. xi + 251. \$75.

Explaining Cavendish's theory of nature as it evolved through her career is not easy. At a time when figurative language was eschewed by members of the Royal Society, her natural philosophy swells with correspondences and analogical resemblances. Her frequent political metaphors make it unclear whether she is presenting a theory of matter, satirizing political or social thought, or posing epistemological questions that undermine the new science's quest for certainty. And her generic experimentation further complicates the task of identifying her natural philosophy: she introduced her theory of atoms in verse, and she satirized the activity of the Royal Society in a beast fable. Much scholarly work on Cavendish either evades direct discussion of her theory of matter or fails to account for her literary play. Ms. Sarasohn reconciles what seem to be irreconcilable aspects of Cavendish's thought: "reason and imagination function as dual expositors of her philosophy."

We can see Cavendish performing at a meeting of the Royal Society in 1667. She self-consciously presented herself as a spectacle, playing up the ludic nature of her visit. For Ms. Sarasohn, this visit "was a reenactment . . . of her other self" in the already performed *Blazing World*. By appearing as "refined fancy," she insisted that her "visit must be read like her books, a fusion of the rational and the fantastic." As the show she staged that day ridiculed the deferential and baffled experimental philosophers, a child ran up and down the room. Ms. Sarasohn suggests that the child "knew that he was attending a show, even if the Royal Society did not."

A second chapter focuses on Cavendish's early atomism, reminding us that atomism was theologically suspect in the 1650s because it seemed to posit a materialistic and self-moving universe independent of God, with chance, not divine providence, governing matter. Earlier expositors of Cavendish's atomism, such as Robert Kargon and Ms. Sarasohn herself, argued that Cavendish embraced Epicurean atomism early in her career, but she now qualifies that claim by stating that by 1653, Cavendish's atomism was blurring into an idiosyncratic, vitalist theory of matter. Ms. Sarasohn also traces her deployment of both philosophy and fancy, even at this early stage. The early result of this dual exposition was the production of a mythologized vitalistic atomism with dancing atoms and fairies. Unlike Hobbes, who banished immaterial spirits, including fairies, from the realm of possibility, Cavendish posits their existence to register the effects of her theory of matter. A third chapter explores Cavendish's clear break with atomism to posit a vitalistic materialism first expounded in *Philosophical Fancies* and *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655). The hierarchic order within her vitalist system proved less heterodox than atomism; it also provided a more ordered metaphor for the body politic than atomism did.

HUGH ORMSBY-LENNON. *Hey Presto! Swift and the Quacks*. Newark: Delaware, 2011. Pp. 412. \$85.

Mr. Ormsby-Lennon's exuberantly erudite and deeply researched book presents a new reading of *A Tale of a Tub*. It is also a study of the contemporary popular culture of mountebankery, providing a psychogeography of Swift's London and the habitats of hack, quack, Quaker, tub preacher, and mountebank. Mr. Ormsby-Lennon's contemporary London guides include Ned Ward (for the East End) and Tom Brown (for the West End). Mikhail Bakhtin's work on Rabelais provides a modern theoretical lens on the heteroglossia of Swift's satiric territory. *Hey Presto!* displays its author's panache for comparison, juxtaposition, and analogue. Contemporary contexts are recovered for the *Tale* with precision and élan. *Hey Presto!* recovers the *Tale's* echo of the patois and spirit of contemporary charlatany and medicine shows. It describes Swift's mimicry of the argot of mountebankery (lay and learned). The *Tale* is seen as "a quack's book" to be "shelved under the classis of the stage-innereant," belonging to the genre of William King's *A Journey to London* (1698), Ned Ward's *The London Spy* (1698-1700), and Tom Brown's *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London* (1700). The strange texture of the *Tale*—its lexical, numerical, polemical, and scholarly idioms—is explained as simulation of the language of hacks, quacks, and showmen in the popular culture. The exhumation of forgotten demonic contexts for the *Tale* is an important achievement of this book.

The pitch for Mr. Ormsby-Lennon's virtuosos performance (puffed on the back cover) is that *Hey Presto!* reveals how the stage-innereant is not only the model for the *Tale* but is "that missing link, long sought, that conjoins the dual objects of Swift's ire: 'gross Corruptions in [both] Religion and Learning.'" The putative hack author of the *Tale*, Swift's Grubian impersonation, is read against the careers of real quacks (such as William Salmon), fake quacks (such as Rochester in masquerade as a mountebank), stage-innereants (such as Jo Haines), and many hack authors. The three brothers in Swift's religious allegory, Peter (Roman Catholicism), Martin (the Church of England), and Jack (Protestant Dissent), are viewed as three mountebanks, related by Mr. Ormsby-Lennon to the three impostors (Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad) in the clandestine manuscript book *De tribus impostoribus* (*The Three Impostors*). Mr. Ormsby-Lennon draws on this notorious infidel text, Celsus's diatribe against Christianity as charlatany in *On the True Doctrine*, and other atheistic and heterodox works, ancient and modern, to explain Swift's satire on corruptions in religion. Contemporary religious polemicists vilified each other as mountebanks, and so did the scholars. In Swift's satire on learning, early modern scholars appear as mountebanks. J. B. Mencken's *De charlataneria eruditiorum* (1715) is his touchstone text for the *Tale's* theme of the charlatany of the learned, "the professor as mountebank." Swift's satiric inspiration is traced to the Tripos entertainments at Trinity College Dublin, and the scandalous and subversive *terrae-filius* tradition at TCD and Oxford.

Mr. Ormsby-Lennon also has an old tale to tell. He seeks to resurrect Wotton's con-

temporary verdict that *A Tale of a Tub* "shews at bottom [the author's] contemptible Opinion of every Thing which is called Christianity." His thesis of an irreligious *Tale* is provocative. The "heterodox sallies" of Swift's Tubbian author are said to "mimic Swift's own." Mr. Ormsby-Lennon performs a kind of Whiggish midrash on the *Tale* and other works in the Swift canon, teasing out atheistic or heterodox meanings and secrets. He repeatedly contends, for instance, that Swift's satiric reference to the neo-Pythagorean and peripatetic magician Apollonius of Tyana (whose miracle working was compared with Jesus Christ's in anticlerical deist and freethinking works) implies that Jesus was a mountebank and magician. Through Apollonius, a floating signifier and proxy for Christ, Swift can "jab at Jesus."

Hey Presto! asserts that as a priest Swift was the stage-itinerant he impersonated. Contemporary witnesses of Swift's liturgical practice and frequent celebration of Holy Communion suggest that, as a priest, he emphasized the sacraments and ceremony, rather than preaching and sermons. Such practice identifies Swift as a Laudian High Churchman, and such emphases in High Church worship were often criticized as residual popery. For Mr. Ormsby-Lennon, however, Swift's performance in the pulpit and at the communion table in St. Patrick's Cathedral displays the mountebankery and "hocus pocus" of the *Tale*'s Peter.

This book tendentiously claims that Swift's work is deliberately anti-Christian. Mr. Ormsby-Lennon assumes what he should demonstrate. It is a non sequitur that because there is no reference to Jesus in *A Tale of a Tub* that Apollonius, because of his use by infidel polemicists, must be the "stalking horse for Jesus." It might just be that the early career priest is not sati-

rizing Jesus. There is just one reference to the neo-Pythagorean philosopher in the *Tale*, in a satirical list of atheistic materialists who have introduced new schemes in philosophy. Apollonius is not compared or juxtaposed with Jesus Christ in the *Tale*, though such juxtaposition is the rhetorical procedure in infidel works by the skeptical deist Charles Blount and others. That Swift has activated an anti-Christian reading remains an assertion. In the *Tale*'s religious allegory the doctrine and faith of Christianity become corrupted over time, with the blame directed at popery and Protestant sectarian schism. Does such an allegory of the later history of Christianity really have a "family resemblance" to *The Three Impostors*, where Christianity itself is an imposture? The *Tale* would seem to have closer ties to those seventeenth-century polemical allegories, adduced in Swift scholarship though not mentioned by Mr. Ormsby-Lennon, in which Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Puritanism are siblings or worldly travelers.

The claim that Swift satirizes Martin (the Church of England) depends upon a work that is not securely canonical, "The History of Martin," published in a Dutch edition of 1720. There is no external evidence linking the "History" to Swift, and its account of Martin and Jack is incongruous with the rest of the *Tale*. Wotton recognized that the Protestant Dissenters were the main target in the profane scorn and mockery of the *Tale*'s satire. But "The History of Martin" is sympathetic to Protestant Dissent, hostile to Charles I, and identifies Martin with Peter, presenting the Church of England as persecutory and popish. There is nothing in Swift's contemporaneous writing in the 1690s, or after, that expresses such anti-Anglican sentiment and sympathy for Dissent.

This dense work contains typographical

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