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subjectivity as shifting and elusive after-images' even as the couplet structure allows Wordsworth to 'achieve statements of ringing generality' (p. 269). In this flexible mode Wordsworth 'explores the unexpected perspectives brought on by age', and Fulford argues that at their best the Evening Voluntaries 'achieve great poetry of old age, of a kind only a highly experienced poet who had come to terms with his art and its forebears could have written' (pp. 242–43).

How, precisely, does Wordsworth write about the 'unexpected perspectives brought on by age'? Consider the fourth of the Evening Voluntaries, 'Soft as a cloud is yon blue Ridge—the Mere'. Fulford explains that by this point in Wordsworth's life (the poem was composed in 1834) his eyes had become so sensitive to light that it was painful for him to gaze upon nature during the full sun of day. But this affliction becomes if not fortunate then at least fruitful, as Wordsworth turns his attention to subtler beauties:

Observe how dewy Twilight has withdrawn
The crowd of daisies from the shaven lawn,
And has restored to view its tender green,
That, while the sun rode high, was lost beneath their dazzling sheen.
(ll. 8–11)

This is not the evening of the *Prelude*, with darkness proffering sublime obscurity, but a more empirical mode that departs from the negative poetics of nightfall that had occupied Wordsworth at least since *An Evening Walk* (1793). Inverting the comparative visual grammar of 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', in 'Soft as a cloud is yon blue Ridge—the Mere' Wordsworth reveals a new beauty available to one whose vision is neither strong enough for the brightness of day nor, in an epic register, fully lost (p. 271). He cherishes the boons that lingering in a kind of phenomenological gloaming might bring. It is difficult not to turn reflexive here and notice that Fulford's sensitive attention helps us to see the verse of the late Wordsworth with fresh eyes. Fulford's chapter on 'Evening Voluntaries' is notably strong, but in truth the book's close readings tenderly sparkle throughout. *Wordsworth's Poetry: 1815–1845* is essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the long arc of Wordsworth's career.

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Swinburne's Style: An Experiment in Verse History. By LAURA MCCORMICK KILBRIDE. Cambridge: Legenda. 2018. xi+219 pp. £75. ISBN 978-1-78188-791-2.

Since the first reactions of mid Victorian readers to his poems and especially since the publication of T. S. Eliot's notoriously influential essay on his verse, no critical study of Swinburne's poetical oeuvre seems to have been able to dispense with some form of assessment of the poet's virtuosic, exuberant, and charmingly musical style. Laura McCormick Kilbride's ambitious book, possibly the first monograph entirely devoted to the form of Swinburne's poetry, tackles this centrality of style through

an original formal–historical approach to some of the most challenging linguistic features of his poems.

As is shown in the rich Introduction to the volume, the stylistic traits of Swinburne's poetry that Kilbride mostly focuses on are neither its imaginative metaphors nor the intricate structure of its tropes, but its quintessentially aural qualities. In order to examine rhythmic aspects such as line lengths and inter-ictic intervals, Kilbride draws on Derek Attridge's beat prosody, a method that, as she rightly observes, is particularly suited to describe Swinburne's favoured metres. Her choice of not representing metrical patterns through scansion symbols, however, does not help to identify metrically complex lines, nor indeed to check the validity of her scanning.

At her best, Kilbride provides the reader with insightful textual analyses that shed new light on a selection of Swinburne's poetical works, some of which are canonical, others still fairly neglected. Through a subtle reading of the metrical variety of the tragedy *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), Chapter 1 shows how the four-beat dolnik of the choral odes is progressively associated with a sense of menace, as opposed to the more serene tunes of the five-beat dialogues. These two competing rhythms are masterfully mixed in the third chorus and even more so in the fourth, where their alternation strongly contributes to express the core idea of the play, 'the total insufficiency of human action in the face of a cruel [. . .] divine force' (p. 71). Chapter 2 explores the labyrinthine stanzas of 'The Triumph of Time', a demanding poem from *Poems and Ballads* (1866), in order to build a comprehensive repertoire of Swinburne's various types of repetition. The poem's iterations of monosyllables and prefixes, estranging collocations, and echo effects are described carefully, and Kilbride's use of Swinburne's unpublished college essay on analogy is exemplary. However, one feels that the link between Swinburne's repetitive style and the 'renunciation of the ego' (p. 79) could have been developed a little further.

While Chapter 3 convincingly likens Swinburne's idiosyncratic faith to his handling of the couplet in *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882)—his lyricized version of the Arthurian narrative—the fourth and last chapter chronicles the poet's philologically informed reworking of the Pindaric ode, from his juvenile 'Ode to Mazzini' to the the third choral ode of *Erechtheus* (1876), and reads this form as a purely lyrical alternative to the dramatic monologue. The persuasive strength of these two chapters lies in Kilbride's tactful use of bibliographical and archival evidence dating to the poet's time. Her close look at the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reception of *Tristram of Lyonesse* and *Erechtheus* offers a solid documentary background for her stylistic considerations. By the same token, Kilbride's discussion of an allusion to Mazzini in the manuscript of *Erechtheus* may be viewed as the cherry on the cake of her well-organized argument.

For all its merits, this book is not without flaws. Kilbride's conclusion that Swinburne 'has no personal style, because he had many styles' (p. 196) is highly debatable both because the number of Swinburne's works that she examines is too restricted to make such a general claim and because there *are* in fact some common formal features of his poetry that recur throughout the book (such as his proclivity for

repetition). Moreover, the volume's most theoretical reflections—primarily based on Adorno's aesthetics—risk, at times, obscuring its skilful stylistic analyses. It is the latter, rather than their philosophical framework, that constitute the main contribution of the book to Swinburne criticism.

SCUOLA NORMALE SUPERIORE (PISA)

GIOVANNI BASSI

Practices of Surprise in American Literature after Emerson. By KATE STANLEY. (Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2018. viii+241 pp. £75. ISBN 978-1-108-42687-9.

Practices of Surprise in American Literature after Emerson uncovers a historical line of literary thinking and practice rooted in Emersonian surprise. The first upshot of Kate Stanley's book is that through Emerson's influence on figures such as Marcel Proust, Henry James, and Gertrude Stein, surprise presents itself as a valid alternative to the more familiar occurrences of shock and crisis in the modernist period. The second is that by selecting a methodology that is primarily about positive biographical and conceptual influence, rather than any anxiety of influence, Stanley approaches surprise as a pragmatic and perpetual process rooted in life rather than a merely theoretical term limited to its aesthetic appearance (for instance, in lyric epiphany or plot twist).

From the start, the book seeks to overturn several antagonisms. In Chapter 1, Stanley turns to Proust and Charles Baudelaire to show that surprise and order are not mutually exclusive, especially because artistic practices can 'generate states of spontaneity through forms of discipline' (p. 33). The trainability of perception and the cultivation of a concentrated attention advances the book's investment in pedagogical potential, since surprise becomes compatible with teachability without a collapse of the former into a convention. In Chapter 2, Stanley shows that surprise is not necessarily bound to the 'instant', since the belatedness of writing and retrospection are often necessary for discovery. The strongest development of this occurs in a study of James's late syntax, where the simultaneous use of prolepsis and analepsis opens up the present as a space where surprise is compatible with recollection and interpretative variety. Surprises, as it turns out, not only take time but also sharpen with it, so that 'spontaneity and inspiration can spring forth readily, even under the most familiar and reiterative circumstances' (p. 6), a point reiterated in Stanley's fourth chapter, on Stein.

Such insights into the nature of surprise risk seeming secondary, since the book initially steers towards a redemptive tale of Emerson's legacy (contrasting with accounts of his participation in American exceptionalism and the over-vigilant preparation attached to Puritan culture); and Stanley also offers throughout her discussion an examination of how to be *prepared* for surprise. The latter points to a slippage of terminology between actual surprise and a more general mindset of receptivity, curiosity, and adaptation, all of which open up the possibility of surprise. As a result, a systematic account of surprise proper partly gives way to a more liberal study of the conditions and terms surrounding it. Such latitude