
Heath, Jeffrey. *The Creator as Critic and Other Writings by E. M. Forster*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008. Pp. 814. \$90.00.

This is a very large, very heavy book with several more lines on a page than most and with margins so miniscule that the eight-hundred-and-fourteen page count is something of an underestimate. Fewer than three hundred of those pages contain the unpublished talks, essays, and odd fragments that have been resting in the King's College archives, organized and reorganized, catalogued and recatalogued, and consulted (happily) by Forster scholars these many years. This collection of seventy-odd pieces ranges from the earliest college essay in 1898 on Dryden's relation to Milton and Pope to various memoirs and memoranda from the thirties, including the often quoted fragment about Forster's wanting to love and be loved by a "strong young man from the lower classes ... and even be hurt by him. That is my ticket, and then I have wanted to write respectable novels. No wonder they have worked out rather queer" (216), a not entirely inaccurate summing up, especially as it identifies precisely what recent criticism sees as queer in Forster's writing. Also included are a few late talks on Housman and Cavafy, his eightieth birthday speech at King's and several other pieces from the forties and fifties. There are also some thirty three broadcasts, although these are not all unpublished since a number appeared in *The Listener* not long after their delivery; the annotations allow one to observe the process of change from the spoken to the printed text. (In the same year as this book, a collection of unpublished BBC broadcasts appeared, constituting close to half of all Forster's broadcasts. With these two volumes one has an excellent opportunity to hear Forster's voice; it is wonderfully audible, even on the printed page). In addition, there is an appendix containing eleven poems, nine of which certainly and two probably are by Forster. They are not very good, but they do fill out the documentary record.

The Forster scholar can only be grateful to have clear and clean pages of text to replace her/his (often mysterious) transcriptions and notes, and there are certainly more pages here than I have ever transcribed. These are carefully annotated to record the various deletions and additions that Forster made. For the Forster scholar the collection is a gift, but a question nags: what is on offer here that would interest anyone else? After all, since Forster's death in 1970, there have been several volumes of unpublished writing, from letters to essays to stories, and scattered pieces in other publications, to say nothing of *Maurice*. Some of the talks provide interesting context for the ideas, themes, ways of speaking and thinking that one encounters in all Forster's writing.

Several of the talks to various audiences—the Weybridge Literary Society, the Memoir Club, or an audience in India—are good to have ready to hand and they are of some real, if limited, interest: “The Poems of Kipling,” “Meeting Old Bloomsbury,” “On Pornography and Sentimentality,” for example.

“The Creator as Critic” is another example: part lecture text, part notes for lectures delivered at Cambridge in 1931, it offers a fine glimpse into the workshop of Forster’s imagination as this set of lectures thinks its way back through a literary tradition). This item in the present volume does not only give its title to the whole; it is in an essential way what the book is about: how to chart and understand the relationship between the creative and the critical in Forster’s work, both as it informs his literary judgment (his consistently vexed response to James, for example), and his need for creative work even as he seemed to know that there were no more novels in his future.

This premise, along with remarks about nearly all of Forster’s writing prompted by the materials collected here are as they are made to evoke, recall, or implicitly comment on familiar texts, form the core of the Notes section. But it is no supplement; it is in many ways the primary text. Well over four hundred pages, this section constitutes a book-length unwritten book. Because Heath *knows* Forster so well and is able to hold all the texts ready for citation and comparison, he offers many probing and insightful observations. Commenting on the published essay “Cnidus” and the related fragment included here, he observes how the essay “draws attention to the way the irrepressible imagination continues to ‘recreate,’ even (or especially) in the presence of a gap—that is when it has nothing substantial to work on” (566). But for all the suggestive links and very wide ranging research to track down allusions, references, contexts, there are many unnecessary pieces of information: for example, a discussion of the age of King’s College and why Forster thought it was six years younger than it really was; or the mention of *Das Rheingold* in the Nassenheide memoir leading to a Wagner discussion, Valhalla, “The Celestial Omnibus,” “The Machine Stops,” *Howards End* and “the compartmentalized heart of Leonard Bast” (618), all interesting but only necessary as showing Heath thinking about the way Forster’s imagination works and the way his life informed his writing. Fair enough, but it really would have been a far better move to publish these texts with limited annotation (primarily textual and *immediately* contextual) and with the understanding that they were intended for the Forster scholar, and then to have fashioned a critical study developing the insights scattered here into a coherent argument and one that did not read Forster so entirely from within. As it now stands, there are chunks of biography, long passages of close reading,

and two appendices (“Pater, Novalis, Forster,” and “The whole Truth”) that are essentially stand alone essays. The materials for that study are here, but it remains to be written.

Works Cited

Lago, Mary, Hughes, Linda K., and Wells, Elizabeth MacLeod (Eds.) (Foreward by P. N. Furbank). *The BBC Talks of E. M. Forster 1929–1960*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2008.

Judith Scherer Herz

Richard Lane. *The Postcolonial Novel: Themes in 20th-Century Literature & Culture*. UK: Polity, 2006. vii + Pp. 146 \$ 24.95

It is through “listening again” that Richard Lane urges the reader to explore the postcolonial novel’s contribution to the development of modern critical theory and literary studies in general. His well-researched project focuses on how different postcolonial texts have enunciated a reforming of theory creating what he describes as “new ways of conceiving the world” (1). Analyzing postcolonial texts from India, South Africa, Canada and the Caribbean, the author juxtaposes the multiple ventures of postcolonial writing to emphasize a new method of decipherment that revitalizes our perception of the postcolonial novel in general. This method of re-examination is achieved through two critical procedures: first, an assessment of how these novels have been read (a “first reading” sub-section that studies the text in relation to recent scholarship); and second, a process of identifying the significance of re-reading the text, taking into consideration the impact these novels have on critical thoughts, postcolonial theory in particular. What the author achieves through this re-reading analogy is a critical perspective on how the text can be explored as a theoretical example of postcolonial creativity.

The “text-with-theory” model the author identifies in his reading of works like *Palace of the Peacock*, *Foe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* enables him not only to reflect on the oversimplified readings of the postcolonial text, but also how these novels have reformed the nature of critical analysis in postcolonial studies. While the first chapter serves as an introductory commentary to how Lane envisions the future of postcolonial studies, in the second and third chapters, he re-emphasizes how the postcolonial text has already presented a “counter-discursive writing” that challenges the way canonical works are examined.