

synthesis of eighteenth-century coincidences and/or differences between novels and romances, to illustrate the origins of the genre.

As Ricardo Navarrete and Tejedor suggest, chapters 7 and 8 offer a slightly different structure and method. As the literary cannon is not so well established for nineteenth- and particularly twentieth-century literature, their answer is to offer a more general study without singling out literary figures, although—as the volume proves—some writers can never be overlooked in any study.

The two Appendices: “Writing a Paper” and “Terminology” represent a very complete synthesis, giving students a solid guide on how to write essays, including not only general ideas, but also pointing out general mistakes, offering even synonyms, and describing strategies on how to write for meaning. Appendix II supplies a time-saving “map” for problems big and small concerning literary terms. It proves essential when trying to check for the appropriateness of the terms we use and their exact meanings, thus serving as a veritable dictionary of dictionaries.

In view of the favourable aspects reviewed above, I feel this book will be of great interest to all those involved in literature, be they students or teachers. It contains clear insights and the issues are intelligently presented. A useful guide that will be invariably revisited.

María Jesús Lorenzo Modia

**Susana Onega, ed. *Telling Histories: Narrativizing History, Historicizing Narrative*. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1995, 208 pp.**

The interest in the relation between historical texts and fictional narratives is, in many ways, typically “postmodern.” The question of how historical figures, events and social attitudes can be thematized and appropriated in fiction is a subject that has enjoyed currency throughout the 1980s—now partially enhanced by the practice of the so-called “cultural studies.” Supported by the works of several contemporary philosophers and critics, such as those of Jean-François Lyotard, Paul Ricoeur and Hayden White, literary studies have over the last two decades witnessed the foregrounding of the common links between history-writing and fiction-making and, consequently, the growing relevance of the principles of historiography to our understanding of the different cultural and literary traditions.

As a (foreseeable) consequence, literary critics and theorists also share this concern with the question of historical representation. Susana Onega’s edited collection of essays is a good instance of this contemporary interest in what Linda Hutcheon has labeled “historiographic metafiction”—that is, the tendency of fiction to engage the question of how the discourse of history is constructed, (self-)validated and imposed on individuals by institutions (sometimes by thematizing it, sometimes in its own structure). *Telling Histories*, which brings together papers and lectures read at a Symposium on History and Literature held at the University of Zaragoza in early 1993, is intended to add new and refreshing considerations to the study of the interchange between history and literature. The

purpose of the volume is to offer a various and comprehensive study of the relation between these two disciplines in different literatures in English. Ranging from Salman Rushdie to Angela Carter and from Victorian to postmodern fiction, the essays collected intend to provide analyses of the different ways in which the fictional integration of historical elements affects (and is affected by) narrativization and the structure of the novel (both as individual work and as genre). The essays explore issues related to genre criticism and authorial intention (1) showing how the construction of concepts such as subjectivity or social representation, among others, are historically determined and (2) unveiling how these historical constructions are subject to the kind of rhetorical deconstructive (postmodern) readings that disclose their institutional interests.

To sum up, "historical understanding" appears, in the context of contemporary fiction, as a notion hardly distinguishable from that of "literary study," given the reflexive interests of so many postmodern novels. The fictional examination of history through its own narrative devices opens the way for a critique of literature as pure textuality. However, in this collection as well as in others, the question remains to elucidate what kind of intellectual and ethical agency these "new historicist" novels can ultimately articulate. Perhaps a study of the parallel interests of history and fiction will someday give us a hint.

Ricardo Miguel Alfonso

**José Manuel González Fernández de Sevilla. *El teatro de William Shakespeare hoy*. Montesinos, 1993.**

This short and eloquent book contains a well-illustrated life of Shakespeare from his birthplace to his tomb, a chronology of his life, works and contemporaries, and an excellent bibliography. But the most significant word in the title is the last. What does Shakespeare mean to us today? Jan Kott, to whom Dr. González refers, knew very well that Shakespeare was the contemporary of Queen Elizabeth and James I, of Sidney and Donne, of Bacon and Hooker, of the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot. By saying that Shakespeare was our contemporary, he was merely stressing the fact that each new generation, each audience indeed, believes that the plays speak directly to them. What was true of Polish audiences after years of Soviet domination is equally true of British ones today.

An actor, Leslie Sands, described in his autobiography of his experience of playing the title-role in *Coriolanus* during the Second World War, and how he found that text-book interpretations of the play were turned upside down. The hero and his aristocratic supporters seemed to be fascists, only the warhating wife of the hero aroused the sympathy of the audience. The citizens, usually regarded as irrational and cowardly, spoke good sense in educated accents. Even the Tribunes, regarded by Conservatives as detestable villains, emerged as serious trade union leaders defending the interests of their class against the threat of dictatorship. Dr. González makes a similar point: "La rebelión parece ser más que justificada ante unas circunstancias de supervivencia insostenibles."