

soil: “Protestant” as an umbrella term does not accurately describe the theological landscape of Britain in any part of the seventeenth century, and this is not a sufficient historical analysis to be drawing the conclusions that he does. However, the very questions that are raised by these gaps can be useful to scholars. While Stoll might have better chosen either to do more or less under this title, the book nevertheless is a fine start to further study.

Thomas Keymer, ed. *Prose Fiction in English from the Origins of Print to 1750*. Vol. 1 of *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, general editor Patrick Parrinder. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xxxi + 637 pp. \$125.00. Review by MARGARET J. OAKES, FURMAN UNIVERSITY.

While not the first of the series to be published, the first volume of *The Oxford History of the Novel in English* is an exhilarating and potentially seminal work. The series, now completely in print, consists of twelve volumes that extend through contemporary writing and covers Anglophone writings from Europe, Asia and the South Pacific, the Caribbean, Canada, and Africa. This volume has the challenging job of laying the groundwork for those that follow, and the contributors rethink the ways that literature that is not poetry or drama conveys the “full and authentic report of human experience” (xx) that Ian Watt did not include in his own foundational, if contested, work. The volume is divided into three sections. Part I: “Fiction in the Marketplace” includes six chapters, two on authorship, publication, and reception, and four that examine in detail snapshots of five-year periods of literary production. Part II: “Early Modern Fiction—Sources and Modes” expands both backwards and forwards in time to address, in twelve chapters, the collection of historical antecedents that comprise prose fiction in some guise. Characterizing prose fiction as “modes” is a helpful critical tool because it allows the elements that we might see as “novelistic” in writers such as Lyly, Sidney, and Bunyan to be highlighted within the genre in which they are traditionally placed. Part III: “Restoration Fiction and the Rise of the Novel” has sixteen chapters, each addressing some quite different area of prose output. The first three chapters are on narrative form and theory, and eight

following chapters cover different geographic locations or topical areas of prose production, ranging from the epistolary form and “Oriental” subject matter that might be expected, to pornography, the Irish novel, and the relationship between print fiction and theatrical production during the Restoration. The final five chapters scrutinize the “traditional” subjects of early novel study: Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, contextualized within the previous chapters to show what was innovative and what was adapted or connected to other subject matter, genres, and formats.

Every critical work that includes the word “novel” has to respond in some fashion to (or against) Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel*. The very existence of Watt’s work speaks to the problematic but alluring nature of prose fiction in this period: the rich and sprawling variety that operated outside of a notion of “fiction” as we think of it in the last three centuries. Keymer and the contributors wisely do not take the contrary path of castigating Watt, but acknowledge his purpose and necessary function and the context in which Watt was writing and they do not attempt to impose a different but equally unsatisfactory systematic approach that maintains a different but potentially equally Whiggish rigidity. The contributions in this volume acknowledge that the form recognized as the “novel” is both something more than and different from the category eighteenth-century English literature of narrative realism.

The critical strategy of the essays is to circle around the idea of “novel” to create a more expansive and accurate picture. What it replaces in Watt—and those who oversimplify him—is the notion of a mid-eighteenth century “rupture” in favor of “confluence,” with the connecting thread being the fact of print production and the book trade as a necessary factor for the proliferation of vernacular stories of all kinds. Paul Salzman, the foremost editor of early modern prose fiction, sets the tone by declaring that he will consider fictions from 1470–1660 not as precursors to the novel but as works significant in their own moment and distribution mechanisms. The ongoing popularity of the romance and the picaresque novel are traced through the seventeenth century, the latter ironically creating an unlikely appropriation of literature from England’s political archenemy. Robert Hume goes on to attempt a catalogue of the bewildering range of true

crime, pirate stories, chapbooks, pamphlets, and supposed autobiographies of the period up to 1750, focusing on the economic aspects of printing and author compensation, the establishment of readership by assessing pricing, and the rise of lending libraries. Hume concludes expansively that “the novel’ did not exist in 1750 as twentieth-century critics constructed the novel” (44), setting the stage for the remainder of the volume to explore the intersections of textual production, historical accident, and influx of non-English subjects and genres.

The four “Cross-Sections” that follow are an inspired way to make the sheer variety of material more comprehensible, taking advantage of the extraordinary bursts of literary output in certain decades throughout the period. While the final decade of the sixteenth century is an obvious choice, the other three five-year segments of 1516–1520, 1666–1670, and 1716–1720 explore aspects other than quantity of production. The last period picks up the definitional problem asserted by Hume: Pat Rogers marks this period as the time in which novels “purport to represent the everyday experience of relatively ordinary individuals” (91), hence moving toward gathering the elements of novelistic form together. Several factors, including international wars, the English slave trade, and an increasing market for all kinds of print publications, provide the environment for elements such as psychological realism, tales of ordinary people, and the consequences of real political and social events as seen in Rogers’ examples of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Love in Excess*.

The second section begins with Alexandra Gillespie tracking medieval book production to indicate reader interest: devotional texts, public and private, are joined by a surprising number of French translations in the late fifteenth century. But the Reformation created a demand for institutional religious books that was unprecedented, as well as vernacular texts and a steady stream of polemic pamphlets and books from all angles of the religious debates raging through Europe. Robert Carver shifts from process to content, taking on the onerous task of locating connections between ancient prose fictions and later French, English, and Spanish in their topoi of travel, romance, and realistic heroes, even what we might identify as anti-heroes. The other chapters in this section do not reveal any surprises in their topics, which range from romance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Helen

Moore, R. W. Maslen, and Steven N. Zwicker), to utopia, comedy, and the seemingly *sui generis* *Pilgrim's Progress*. The common thread in all of these chapters is a Bakhtinian heteroglossia that is the most productive way of approaching the early novel; definition gives way to describing unique features and noting where continuities exist and then stop. Occasionally the chapters engage in historical lists of texts, as with the many spin-offs from and reactions to *Don Quixote*, but this is necessary to reflect what Brean Hammond calls "the smorgasbord of novelistic possibility" (286) rather than tracing a sterile and unrealistic line of descent.

To benefit most from the third section of the volume, a reader will ideally have absorbed the background of the earlier sections. This is because Part III covers the period and the many texts that are the traditional fodder for studies of the early novel. Nicholas Hudson points out an understandable reason for thinking that eighteenth-century fiction was breaking new ground, specifically English: the authors proclaimed repeatedly that they were doing something new, with no rules tied to the past (299). Hudson, however, rejects the simplicity of realism replacing romance and notes that changing forms also required changes in aesthetic assessment and a different way of looking at genre. Tracking Part II, this section includes chapters that add pieces to the pie rather than creating a lineage: while the expected topics of the epistolary novel and satire are covered, Stuart Sherman explores the fascination with recording and presenting the interior self of Pepys, the *Spectator*, and Margaret Cavendish's selective and agenda-ridden autobiography, among others. Paul Baines addresses the obvious but sometimes elided topic of teeming realism in the form of sexuality, even pornography, in the early novel before legal action against John Cleland and others for the publication of his *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. Other chapters bring in concerns of "Englishness" as opposed to exploration and colonialism, the Oriental world, and the differentness of the Irish, both as subject matter and as author. Suggestions of intrigue, enormous opportunity for wealth or power, and xenophobia combine with poorly disguised curiosity about the outside world to provide new novelistic possibilities for setting, exploration of the self in contrast to foreigners, and a sense of the political problems that stem from negotiating relationships without the common ground of nationality or ethnicity.

The final chapters in this section are then poised to consider the usual authorial cast of characters with new depth, taking Watt's position for its value but freely incorporating prior influences and circumstances to flesh out the picture of the novel form. As J. Paul Hunter says in exploring Defoe's role as a journalist in his career as a fiction writer, he "remains elusive in many ways because he does not conform to formal narrative expectations before or since, going on his own unpredictable narrative journeys" (520). Disagreements about the fascination with *Pamela* are framed by Thomas Lockwood within a "crucial preoccupation with character" (551), giving rise to the narrative voice that directs, challenges, and sometimes perturbs readers through novels such as *Clarissa*, *Tom Jones*, and the host of stories of the life and adventures of a bewildering cast of characters published in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The bibliography of the volume is as exhaustive as should be expected from a critical offering in a series such as this. Tellingly, Keymer does not attempt to divide the sources topically in any way, maintaining the volume's emphasis on the novel as a polyglot rather than a form that can be broken down into a taxonomy.

The contributors to this volume all face the challenge of having to decide when to use the word "novel," in terms of form, content, and chronology. Each of them expresses this tension, sometimes with a bold statement of "novel-ness" or a more hesitant approach so as not to apply misleading labels prior to the mid-eighteenth century. Like Watt, they reveal the richness of prose fiction output on all levels: the awareness of generic specificity can cause either a desire to sort and label, or diffidence in applying just one (or any) label. This volume should inform any study of prose writing across several centuries and is easily accessible even to the advanced undergraduate student. It will be a source of reference as well as further research and formulation of all kinds of prose fiction and nonfiction.