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Zola et la littérature naturaliste en parodies (review)

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sections include somewhat peripheral close readings of child imagery in *Aurélia* and dissidence in *Les Faux-Saulniers*. Indeed, the impact of such digressive sections troubles the thematic primacy of mourning in the book. Wieser's insistence on Nerval's unresolved attitude towards loss, meanwhile, might leave the reader wondering why she features mourning rather than melancholia in her title.

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Zola et la littérature naturaliste en parodies. By CATHERINE DOUSTEYSSIER-KHOZE. Paris, Eurédit, 2004. 307 pp. Pb €70.00.

Catherine Dousteysier-Khoze begins her book with the claim that parody is a tool 'permettant d'enrichir notre connaissance du naturalisme ou de l'éclairer d'une lumière nouvelle' (p. 10), and the second and third parts of this extensively researched and well-written study exemplify this approach. In the second part, 'Parodies de réception, parodies parasites?', Dousteysier-Khoze presents a detailed and revealing analysis of contemporary parodies of both specific Naturalist texts (such as *L'Assommoir* and *Nana*) and Naturalism more generally. Her readings not only introduce a number of little-known yet significant texts, many of which are not easily available (some are usefully reproduced in the extensive appendix), but also examine precisely what this hitherto neglected literary genre — and she convincingly argues that it is a genre in its own right — reveals about how Naturalism was perceived and received in the 1870s and 1880s. In her third section, 'La Cinquième Colonne naturaliste', Dousteysier-Khoze extends her exploration by examining how Naturalist texts, especially those produced in the later decades of the century when Zolian Naturalism was in decline, can be read as self-parodies of the movement with which they are most closely associated. A close and persuasive examination of works by writers including Céard, Hennique, Desprez, Huysmans and Mirbeau reveals that naturalist texts frequently contain within themselves a parodic *mise en abyme*, which can be read either as evidence of the end of Naturalism or as an attempt to either resuscitate or redefine the dying movement. Naturalism's (auto)parodies are an integral, even fundamental part of the movement, rather than an often neglected reaction to it.

By describing parody merely as a tool employed in her investigations of Naturalism, Dousteysier-Khoze underestimates her own theoretical contribution to the study of parody itself. In the first part, 'Naturalisme et Parodie', Dousteysier-Khoze presents an extensive appraisal of theories of parody, which students and scholars of parody will find invaluable. Drawing on a range of theorists of parody from both the French and Anglo-American traditions, Dousteysier-Khoze goes on to elaborate her own notion of *parodicité*, which she then employs in the subsequent chapters of the book. According to Dousteysier-Khoze, the *parodicité* of a text depends on the author's intention to produce a parody and on the reader's reception of the text as a parody. This emphasis on intentionality, which is central to Dousteysier-Khoze's argument, may appear outmoded; however, Dousteysier-Khoze

convincingly argues that it is in the very nature of parody, particularly the parodies of Naturalism with which she is concerned, to rely not only on the intentions of the author but also on the reader's reactions to these intentions and the complex relationship between the two that results: parody is one (perhaps the one?) area of literary production in which authorial intention must be taken into account.

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Mallarmé and Debussy: Unheard Music, Unseen Text. By ELIZABETH MCCOMBIE. (Oxford Modern Languages and Literature Monographs). Oxford University Press, 2003. xx + 219 pp. Hb £55.00.

Elizabeth McCombie's approach to the comparative study of music and literature might be called an interdisciplinary formalism, of a disarmingly subtle kind. She begins from the premiss that one can point to 'abstract, non-mimetic patterns that music and poetry have in common' (p. 97). The patterns she finds between Mallarmé and Debussy are described in the Glossary, which concludes the text, and which sums up the figures around which she builds many of her analytical chapters. Its headings are: *arabesque*, *éclat*, *enroulement*, *éventail*, *explosante fixe*, Möbius strip, *pli*, and *thyrsus*. However, it would be wrong to conclude from this that McCombie is simply proposing topographical structures that one can map onto either music or literature. Her forms, rather than being concretely present in the works analysed, appear as supplements to them, constructed, as we read or listen, in an intermediary space between words and music, asymmetrically related to each (McCombie is as sensitive to the differences between the arts as to their similarities). They are structures that represent, in various modes, an interplay between a tangible, fixed or ordered element, and a movement that discovers unpredictability, invisibility or absence. McCombie's commentaries on Mallarmé's writings (for example, *La Musique et les Lettres*, 'Billet à Whistler', or *Un Coup de Dés*) and on Debussy's music (including the *Préludes* and *Jeux*), coordinated in her study, at the end of the book, of Debussy's *Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé*, are always directed towards the points at which traditional musical or verbal logic is evaded, perturbed or perverted; she can see these points, not merely as moments of loss, but also as part of a positive pattern. I am not sure to what extent I am convinced by her occasional apparent claim that there is a 'precise modelling' (p. 199) at work here. Indeed, on the most concrete level, her presentation of Mallarmé's prose sometimes lacks a certain precision: there are too many errors in the quotations, which might sap the reader's confidence in the interpretations. (The worst instance is on pp. 36–37: there are five such errors in one paragraph, two of which are omitted commas; this makes one feel uncomfortable when McCombie goes on to say that 'the air provided by the commas gives a dynamic energy to the page'.) The merit of McCombie's figures seems to me that they provide, rather than anything precisely verifiable, a means to look towards the unverifiable; the *thyrsus*, for example, she says, 'is a keyhole through which the manifestations of hesitation, reflection, and linear improvisation, either in the poem and poem as music individually or between them, may be viewed' (p. 196). Perhaps one could