



9-2010

Book Review: "Hocus bogus," Gary, Romain.

Sylvie Vanbaelen

Butler University, svanbael@butler.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/facsch_papers



Part of the [French and Francophone Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gary, Romain. Hocus bogus, by Romain Gary writing as Emile Ajar, tr. By David Bellos. Yale, 2010. CHOICE, Current Reviews for Academic Libraries September 2010.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scholarship and Professional Work - LAS by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact omacisaa@butler.edu.



★★ Lower- and upper-division undergraduates.—*B. Wallenstein, emeritus, CUNY City College*

48-0138 PR2976 2009-44556 CIP
Tanner, Tony. **Prefaces to Shakespeare.** Belknap, Harvard, 2010. 827p afp ISBN 9780674051379, \$39.95

During the last ten years of his life, Tanner (formerly, Univ. of Cambridge, UK) wrote prefaces to all of Shakespeare's plays. This book presents those prefaces along with Tanner's overviews of the genres. The author delivers his insights with a clarity that only a scholar well versed in the plays and their literary sources can offer. He builds each preface around a lucid synopsis of the play and interweaves cultural influences and important literary sources into the discussion. Treatment of ideas that emerge from a play's literary sources is particularly enjoyable and insightful. Tanner was well aware of both traditional and contemporary scholarship, and he peppers the discussion with judicious references to that work, in support of or in contrast to his own view of the plays. The book contains much to savor, whether one approaches it as a casual reader, a student, or a scholar. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. ★★★ All readers.—*P. D. Gabriel-Tucci, Anne Arundel Community College*

48-0139 PR438 2009-46462 CIP
Theis, Jeffrey S. **Writing the forest in early modern England: a sylvan pastoral nation.** Duquesne, 2010 (c2009). 368p bibl index afp ISBN 9780820704234, \$60.00

Theis (Salem State College) identifies and examines sylvan pastoral, a highly adaptable literary mode in which English writers from the 1590s to the 1670s resituated pastoral from open land to forest. This change in setting permitted imaginative engagement with contemporary issues such as fears of deforestation, increased rates of migration to woodlands, and the status of the royal forest as a symbol of monarchical power. Three chapters on Shakespearean comedy trace affinities between the performative space of the stage and multivalent "green worlds." In the hands of mid-17th-century authors such as Gerrard Winstanley, Andrew Marvell, James Howell, and John Evelyn, sylvan pastoral became polemical, as both royalists and republicans equated the forest with the state of the nation during the civil war period. In Milton's *Mask and Paradise Lost*, Theis detects a return to Shakespearean openness along with decidedly new emphases—an environmental ethic and a concern with spiritual enrichment. This historically informed study builds on such recent work in early modern ecocriticism as Terry Gifford's *Pastoral* (CH, Apr'00, 37-4308) and Robert Watson's *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (CH, Sep'06, 44-0194). **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Upper-division undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty.—*A. L. Ellis, Western Michigan University*

Germanic

48-0140 PT9816 2009-11368 CIP
The Cambridge companion to August Strindberg, ed. by Michael Robinson. Cambridge, 2009. 187p bibl index ISBN 9780521846042, \$90.00; ISBN 9780521608527 pbk, \$29.99

Comprising 13 well-written essays by a group of acclaimed international scholars, this companion explores various aspects of Strindberg's extensive corpus, which includes fiction, autobiographical musings, poems, correspondence, paintings, monographs in history

and science, tracts in the political and social sciences, and, of course, plays. Except for two chapters that treat the novels and self-studies, the collection focuses its critical and contextualizing perspectives on Strindberg's lasting impact on the theater. The volume includes pieces devoted to the modernism characteristic of the dramatist's most often performed works: the naturalist dramas—*The Father*, *Miss Julie*, and *The Dance of Death*; the experimental dramas—*To Damascus* and *A Dream Play*; the chamber plays—for example, *The Ghost Sonata*; and the history plays—*Master Olof*, *Gustav Vasa*, and *Erik XIV* (to name just three). The contributors consider other themes as well—among them Strindberg's animus toward women and his enduring interest in science, the occult, the visual arts, sexual politics, and the dynamics of the human psyche—but only to the extent that they cast light on the playwright's innovative stagecraft. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. ★★★ Upper-division undergraduates and above.—*H. I. Einsohn, Middlesex Community College*

Romance

48-0141 PA8201 2009-6223 CIP
Abelard, Peter. **The letters of Heloise and Abelard: a translation of their collected correspondence and related writings,** by Heloise and Peter Abelard; ed. and tr. by Mary Martin McLaughlin with Bonnie Wheeler. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 366p bibl ISBN 9780312229351, \$85.00

This new translation of the letters of Abelard and Heloise is the fullest to date. It includes not only the passionate personal letters the two exchanged but also letters to other acquaintances and a series of theological questions posed by Heloise and answered by Abelard. The intense personal quality of these 12th-century letters has kept the lovers' names alive through the ages. Most scholars now accept the authenticity of the letters, although some have speculated that Jean de Meung, who translated them into French in the 13th century, was in fact the author. The passionate eloquence of the letters is captivating, recounting their physical love affair but also portraying their intense intellectual union. Abelard's first letter is autobiographical, telling of his castration in punishment for seducing Heloise and of constant attacks by other envious theologians. Heloise's letters express her pain at their separation and engage Abelard in plans for the convent, even requesting a new rule for nuns, which he provides. This collection allows the reader to relive the tragic love affair between these two legendary figures and to better understand the theological questions that dominated the 12th century. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Upper-division undergraduates, faculty.—*L. W. Yoder, emeritus, Davidson College*

48-0142 PQ2661 2009-24897 CIP
Gary, Romain. **Hocus bogus,** by Romain Gary writing as Émile Ajar; tr. by David Bellos. Yale, 2010. 197p bibl afp ISBN 9780300149760, \$25.00

An award-winning biographer and translator, Bellos (Princeton Univ.) provides the first English translation of *Pseudo* (1976), a novel by Emile Ajar (the pseudonymous Romain Gary). A short introduction to the novel by Bellos and a posthumously published essay by Gary titled "The Life and Death of Emile Ajar," translated by Barbara Wright, accompany the translation. These additional materials shed light on the nature of the novel by providing a context necessary to understanding it. In the novel, Gary mystifies his readers and critics: he writes as Emile Ajar, confessing



that his true identity is Paul Pavlowitch, a mentally ill man and the “real” author of the novel (and other works by “Ajar”). Constructed as a first-person narrative, the novel raises questions of authenticity, authorship, paternity, and identity. It also contends with issues of political oppression, religion, hypocrisy, and mental suffering. Bellos’s translation matches the original French in its off-putting, ironic, subversive style and its irreverent, self-mocking tone. Bellos admits having taken “many liberties” with the text. Witty and full of double entendres, this is an excellent translation of book that is not an easy read—in either French or English. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Graduate students, researchers, faculty.—*S. Vanbaelen, Butler University*

48-0143 PQ8098 2009-41158 CIP
McClennen, Sophia A. **Ariel Dorfman: an aesthetics of hope.** Duke University, 2010. 385p bibl index afp ISBN 9780822345862, \$89.95; ISBN 9780822346043 pbk, \$24.95

A Brazilian American writer who has taught literature and Latin American studies at Duke since the mid-1980s, Dorfman is a legend in his own lifetime. He consistently encourages one to question modern life in a permanent reiteration of reflection, critique, and engagement. McClennen (Penn State Univ.) first explicates how Dorfman’s personal inter-American history has fine-tuned his continuous and continuing confrontation with history. Born in Argentina in 1942, he moved early from Spanish to English in exile in the US; back to Spanish when he returned to Latin America (this time Chile); and finally to bilingualism in exile (Europe and the US) from Pinochet’s dictatorship. McClennen creates a composite image of Dorfman as the postmodern storyteller. From his personal relationship with literature came revolutionary involvement in art and human rights activism that led, through a Bakhtinian collaborative-dialogic process, to his signature derailment of writerly authority, overdetermination of the text, and language divorced from context. Controversial, relentless, provocative, and astoundingly creative, Dorfman has been the most single-minded culture critic of the latter part of the 20th century. McClennen’s critique is, in turn, an exemplary analysis of Dorfman’s remarkable practice of thinking through crisis. An invaluable addition to the literature on literary and cultural studies. **Summing Up:** Essential. ★★★★★ Lower-division undergraduates through faculty.—*K. M. Sibbald, McGill University*

48-0144 PQ283 2009-17772 CIP
Models of collaboration in nineteenth-century French literature: several authors, one pen, ed. by Seth Whidden. Ashgate, 2009. 187p bibl index afp ISBN 9780754666431, \$99.95

Coeditor in chief of *Parade sauvage*, the journal of Rimbaud studies, and author of *Leaving Parnassus* (CH, Dec’07, 45-1923), Whidden (Villanova Univ.) has assembled a weighty, stunningly good group of essays. The collection reminds one that though works of art rarely spring from a single mind, the process of artful collaboration—at least in its French and Francophone variants—is rarely straightforward. With contributions from (among others) Lawrence Schehr (on the Goncourt brothers), Jennifer Wolter (on the Médan writers), and Anthony Glinoyer (on Victor Hugo’s *cénacle de la rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs*, this volume showcases the creativity and the solidarity of a “long century of collaboration.” Such solidarity involves not just literary authors, but also artists, translators, journalists, and anonymous contributors. Framed, at the beginning, by Joan DeJean’s and John Iverson’s essays on pre-Revolutionary modes of writing and, at the end, by Daphné de Marneffe’s look at modernism, the collection is distinguished by both its intense

focus and its wide-ranging vision. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. ★★★★★ Upper-division undergraduates through faculty.—*W. Edwards, Longwood University*

48-0145 PQ7082 2010-8149 CIP
The Natural world in Latin American literatures: ecocritical essays on twentieth-century writings, ed. by Adrian Taylor Kane. McFarland, 2010. 244p bibl index afp ISBN 9780786442874 pbk, \$45.00

This welcome volume illustrates a recent development in Latin American literary study: ecocriticism, i.e., an Earth-centered approach to the interpretation of literary texts, both canonical and new. As such, it offers a critique of the urban, industrial, growth-oriented concept of modernity that many Latin American intellectuals and politicians have eagerly embraced since the civilization-versus-barbarism debates of the mid-19th century. Most of these stimulating, thought-provoking essays voice the critique while remaining faithful to the subtlety and complexity of the multiple representations of nature in the works analyzed. Inclusive in its reach, the volume takes up authors in locales from Argentina to the US Southwest, e.g., Euclides da Cunha, José Eustacio Rivera, Ricardo Güiraldes, Jorge Isaacs, João Guimarães Rosa, Rosario Castellanos, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Mayra Montero, Gioconda Belli, Rodrigo Fresán, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, and Helena María Viramontes. Entries are loosely grouped under three rubrics: “Nature, Modernity, and Technology in Twentieth-Century Latin American Fiction,” “Environmental Utopias and Dystopias,” and “Ecology and the Subaltern.” The contributors recognize that Latin American intellectuals are currently reconsidering modernity and putting forward a holistic view of literature and nature, while also creating a paradigm for living sustainably and equitably. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Upper-division undergraduates through faculty.—*D. L. Heyck, Loyola University Chicago*

48-0146 PQ8180 2009-25896 CIP
Stavans, Ilan. **Gabriel García Márquez: the early years.** Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 237p bibl index ISBN 0312240333, \$25.00; ISBN 9780312240332, \$25.00

Stavans (Amherst College) narrates García Márquez’s life from his birth to shortly after publication of his most popular novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, (Eng. tr., 1970). This volume provides interesting details presented in a breezy, appealing style. Those unfamiliar with the life of the Nobel Prize winner will learn of his first years at his grandparents’ home in Aracataca, Colombia; his precautionary exile after publishing muckraking documentary fiction serially in a newspaper; and his early travels in search of a voice and a livelihood. Those more familiar with the writer will particularly appreciate Stavans’s evaluations of other biographies of the Colombian, in both Spanish and English, and his discussion of certain current controversies, for example, García Márquez’s date of birth. (Stavans supports the date March 6, 1927.) The author writes in fluid prose, with a strong first-person voice; his knowledge of Mexico is compelling. The discussion of García Márquez’s years of living in Mexico City and his friendship with Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes is the most interesting aspect of this work. **Summing Up:** Recommended. ★★ Lower-division undergraduates through faculty and researchers; general readers.—*D. E. Marting, University of Mississippi*

48-0147 PQ8180 MARC
Williams, Raymond Leslie. **A companion to Gabriel García Márquez.** Tamesis, 2010. 183p bibl index afp (Colección Tamesis. Serie A: monografías, 276) ISBN 9781855661912, \$105.00