

REVIEWS

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The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms

Edited by Roland Greene and Stephen Cushman

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. Website: <https://press.princeton.edu>. 2016. 456 pp. \$35. PB. ISBN 9780691170435.

One has only to read carefully the entry on the epic (100–12) in the book under review to understand the importance of this book and *The Princeton Handbook of World Poetries* edited by the same editors, reviewed in the last issue of this journal by this reviewer. For decades both scholars and students have been quoting Clive Staples Lewis's distinction of epics from Lewis's *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942) without bothering to go beyond that pioneering work on John Milton. The more ingenious ones iteratively add a reference or two to Cecil Maurice Bowra's *From Virgil to Milton* (1945) and others, whenever they can, in the spirit of name-dropping so familiar in literary academia today, mention Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's 'Epic and the Novel' from his *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). This, when the study of the epic has meaningfully expanded to demand separate sections on the 'history' and the 'theory' of this genre.

The women-pericope in the epic (105–6) and the scrupulous scholarship which informs it, yields an interesting fact: the *infelix* life of Dido, queen of Carthage, was mourned by none other than St Augustine of Hippo (105). It is to be noted that all mystics have a literary turn of mind and interiorise myth qua fiction, albeit poetry. In a very different context, we can and should, draw a parallel with Abhinavagupta, who not only continues to inspire Kashmiri Shaivite praxes, but his corpus on aesthetics will quicken the arts for all times to come.

Self-proclaimed savants miss the connection of the epic to the numinous continuing to contaminate literary studies in a manner that Sheldon Pollock, for instance, continues to denude Sanskrit texts of their *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. Georg Lukács's and Bakhtin's contestations about the epic notwithstanding, the classical epic 'was [not] effaced by modernity or the birth of the novel. On the contrary, literary modernism ... which was deeply influenced by the unprecedented violence of World War I, brought with it an interest in reviving and reincorporating the ... [traditional epic] ... [James Joyce's] *Ulysses* translates the vast scope of the Homeric epic' (111). Moreover, works like Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) being 'explicitly political' like Virgilian epics brings 'to light the effects of colonialism and slavery' on Caribbean subjects 'imbuing' them with 'epic importance and dignity' (111). This close reading of the entry on the epic performed here shows why this book is indispensable for transcending obscurantism in literary studies. Often, literary scholars forget that Aristotle, and even Plato before Aristotle, explicitly and implicitly, respectively, prioritised the arts and especially (epic) poetry over history and philosophy. It is less important to know about the philosophy of cognition, so to say, than of the reasons why the young St Augustine cried over Dido's shame.

The 'Pros and Cons of Scansion' is essential reading for those who consider the ability to scan poetry as a necessary evil to clear literature examinations. 'Might it be wiser ... to direct attention to phrasal and clausal arrangements in verse lines rather than focusing on little two- and three-syllable units?' (318); this is not a question anyone seriously engages in since 'Scansion and metrical analysis have served literary scholarship and education in the past and can [redundantly] continue to do so in the future' (319). The entries on 'Scansion' (314–9) and 'Simile' (322–4) are examples of what literary studies is all about.

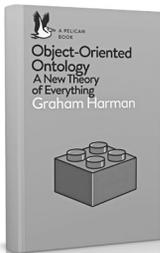
Literary scholarship is about meticulous open-ended literary sleuthing and non-jargon-laden stylistics. While Virgilian, Dantean, and Spenserian similes are discussed (323), the focus on P B Shelley's 'habitual' (323) use of simile is refreshing and a testimony to the research that had gone into writing this entry. The fact that similes like sonnets have radical differences, which go beyond explicit comparison is often missed by many. The book under review is a necessary corrective to half-baked learning. How many of us knew that the Abbot of Tivoli was instrumental in establishing the octave-sestet sonnet form (328), which finally led to the Miltonic sonnet (329)?

Before concluding this review, one must mention the entry on 'Synecdoche' (360–2) which is a tour de force in contemporary semiotics and pertinently refers to Tzvetan Todorov's and Group μ 's contribution (361) to the construction of synecdoche as a postmodernist trope. It is generally not noticed that synecdoche, within anthropology, 'mediates between the social structure and the species and genera found in nature ... [analogically] ... Synecdoche has become a crucial trope in arguments between environmentalists and commercial interests' (361). Once again we find that the structuralist connections between anthropology and literary studies, which started with literature scholars reading Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) in the last century reaffirmed as a more nuanced understanding of synecdoche as an ironical ecocritical or anthropological qualia.

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**Object-Oriented Ontology:
A New Theory of Everything**
Graham Harman

Pelican, Penguin Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road London, SW1V 2SA, UK. Website: <https://www.penguin.co.uk/>. 2018. 304 pp. £8.99. PB. ISBN 9780241269152.

If Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) is correct, only then would David Peter Lawrence's chapter 'The Linguistics and Cosmology of Agency in

Nondual Kashmiri Śaiva Thought' in *Free Will, Agency and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy*, be a foundational exegetical error within the Pratyabhijna school of Somananda, Utpaladeva, and Abhinavagupta (See *Free Will, Agency, and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy*, eds Matthew R Dasti and Edwin F Bryant (New Delhi: Oxford University, 2018), 210–31). Lawrence agrees with David Gordon White's and Sudhir Kakar's libidinal understanding of the Pratyabhijna school's grammatical persons' participation in morally wrong praxes that stand rejected by Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Saradananda, and a contemporary living practitioner of the Shakta rhizome of the Anutara Trika. If Graham Harman is foundationally right, only then is Simone Weil's *Is There a Marxist Doctrine?* (1943) right. Analysing the whatness of history, it is easy to see that David Peter Lawrence is wrong since David Gordon White in his corpus is wrong. Both White and Lawrence have applied to the Trika what are thought-objects within Western qualia in contrast to what makes for Abhinavagupta's grammatical persons. Further, twentieth-century history is a testament to the dystopias of Marxist regimes that makes Simone Weil prescient in her incomplete essay mentioned here.

Harman's humility in acknowledging the debt of OOO to past philosophers is undercut by his neglect of Eastern philosophies as valid disciplines. Harman wants all sorts of validation other than Asian or Indian validation of OOO. Such is his faith in American and European philosophers.

At the beginning of the book, Harman obsequiously mentions that Benedict Cumberbatch, the famous actor, listened to Harman in a private audience. As if, Cumberbatch's taking time off to indulge Harman is proof of the verity of OOO. Harman announces that OOO has all kinds of practical implications of which to him, the most important is its appropriation by architects and OOO's purported ability to annihilate deconstructionist modes of Francophone philosophising, beginning with Michel Foucault right down to Jacques Derrida. Harman appreciates only Bruno Latour since Latour has become a votary of OOO. This pride in the superiority of OOO is déjà vu for this reviewer. Martin Seligman, the propounder of positive psychology in freely available videos