

ment that the absence of husbands reflected changing marital practices lacks adequate evidence. In a sense these absent husbands are similar to the kings in traditional tragedies—significant not so much for being reflective of social reality but for what they tell us about changing belief structures and how drama depicts them.

Christensen's penultimate chapter is fascinating, on Walter Mountfort's *Launching of the Mary* (1632). Her integration of didactic works, history, and the play itself produces a fine study of how the play's halves negotiate between the two spheres, husband's business and wife's home—and of the use of domesticity to critique early modern economic practices. Overall, *Separation Scenes* is strong, and necessary, in the way that it “notices” and analyzes aspects of these plays that tend to be ignored in our focus on their erring female protagonists, but which are crucial to understanding those same characters.

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*The Other Exchange: Women, Servants, and the Urban Underclass in Early Modern English Literature.* Denys van Renen.

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*The Other Exchange* offers an ambitious investigation of socioeconomic tensions and conflicts as they played out in drama and fiction from the early seventeenth century to the early eighteenth. In this span of time, England's capitalist economy was codified in ways that, as Van Renen reminds his readers, enmeshed the nation in networks of global commerce, reoriented its built environment in relation to the natural world, and generated new literary forms. The book explores the convergence of these wide-ranging phenomena with new class and gender stratifications. The book's premise is that “the middle class appropriates the economic and social life of women and the lower orders while simultaneously disowning the connection” (2), and Van Renen wants to emphasize that the new bourgeois' “ideational basis” (1) lay in marginalized counterpublics, fostering a dependency that this class vigorously sought to disavow and suppress. One of the book's subtexts is that England's capitalist growth increasingly disenfranchised those very sectors of the population who drove it.

*The Other Exchange's* methods vary a good deal. Each chapter focuses on what Van Renen refers to as an object that constellates class and gender struggle over emerging capitalist paradigms, but these analytical objects differ in kind as well as in degree from chapter to chapter. In chapter 1, the object is the printed news, as represented in plays by Ben Jonson and Richard Brome. The chapter's conclusion is that the circulatory properties of news conjure global networks of commerce and travel that provoke crises of English identity. Chapter 2 homes in on Brome's depiction of the English town,

which figures as a site for rapid economic and infrastructural development, and as a consequence, for the kind of internal colonialism that Mark Netzloff has defined as essential to early modern class relations. The theater itself becomes the object in chapter 3's discussion of Aphra Behn's drama. The author contends that in Behn's plays, "the dialogue on stage—'more true' than intersubjective exchanges outside the theater—can rekindle public life if the audience reconceptualizes these two spheres as co-constitutive" (89). In order for the theater to fully embrace new identities for women and other marginalized subjects, it must shore up its status as a locus for the "real." In chapter 4, the object is warfare and its transformative effects on rural life, as depicted in George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*. Here, Van Renen makes the case that by the early eighteenth century, war is becoming entrenched as a permanent capitalist institution. Chapter 5 revisits circulation as a trope for social and economic mobility through Defoe's treatment of the plague, while chapter 6 takes the burgeoning form of the novel as its object. One of the main points in this final chapter, which treats novels by Eliza Haywood, is that the novelistic form operates analogously to paper currency in that it simulates value but does not, in fact, provide access to real value, only the desire for continued accumulation and consumption. An epilogue on Swift follows through on the book's questioning of the ethos of progress upon which the middle classes were proverbially built.

Each chapter yields a wealth of rewarding insights into the featured texts; what is lacking in some cases is an adequate sense of how these points connect to the book's central thesis about the unsettled constitution of the middle classes. Those chapters that make the link self-evident are the most successful, as in chapter 5 on Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*. The chapters that focus on literary form have a more obscure relation to issues raised in the introduction, stressing instead what Van Renen asserts is the growing dominance of the virtual over the real. Reality functions as a metonym of sorts for the underclasses and of women, virtuality for the consolidating middle classes. But it is unclear what warrant the study has for granting the poor, for example, the status of the real or an identification with "collective energies and transactions with the natural world" (189). Somewhat more justification is given for the merging of elite women with subaltern populations that appears throughout, but at times this set of associations, too, risks oversimplification. Despite this looseness in some of its key terms, there are many valuable points for scholars to take from Van Renen's study. What *The Other Exchange's* internal complexity does help to instantiate is the tightly knit web of relations between literary, social, environmental, and economic change in early modern England.

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