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genetic criticism, a body of scholarship defined by its interest in the kinds of dynamic writing processes that are the focus of much of the analysis here. However, his wide-ranging approach succeeds in demonstrating the worth of sustained and reflexive attention to the abundant fragments of creative endeavour: the book itself is proof that the apparent dead ends of this kind of 'debris' can be surprisingly generative.

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*The Contemporary Dramatic Monologue in Britain and Ireland.* By ANNIKA MERK. (Anglistik Amerikanistik Anglophonie, 23) Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier. 2018. vii+197 pp. €25. ISBN 978-3-86821-77-4.

The dramatic monologue is a genre notoriously difficult to pin down, and much has been written about exactly what constitutes one. It is therefore not surprising that Annika Merk dedicates the opening section of her book to a discussion of the constitutive features of the genre, beginning with the question of whether 'genre' is even the right word.

Perhaps because the volume has its roots in a Ph.D. thesis, the opening chapter on taxonomy and origins is meticulously thorough and well researched. Merk provides a valuable overview of critical work, deftly negotiating previous scholarship to arrive at a set of sensible and clear-sighted working definitions. She sees generic hybridity as a defining feature: the idea that the dramatic monologue lurks between the three classical or 'natural' genres of poetry, drama, and narrative (p. 13). Merk identifies a reasonably minimal set of necessary features. These include 'a persona which cannot easily be conflated with the poet and the presence of a listener to which the speaker's monologue is addressed' (p. 172). The latter is sensibly qualified with the caveat that it is not important whether the listener is actually present or only imagined by the speaker. Drawing on the work of Alan Sinfield and Isobel Armstrong, Merk also sees the 'double-voiced' nature of the utterance as important (p. 19), believing that 'the audience must be able to gain a double perspective on the speaker by simultaneously perceiving the situation he finds himself in through his own eyes and by turning him into an object of critique' (p. 172).

Merk highlights a research lacuna in the study of dramatic monologues written after 1945, which this volume seeks to redress. More specifically, her aim is 'to provide a structural assessment of the thematic and formal transformations the genre has undergone from the 1960s onwards' (p. 172). There follow three chapters which seek to examine this with reference to specific groupings of texts, starting with Neo-Victorian literature.

Anthony Thwaite's *Victorian Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) seems an obvious and fruitful choice here. Merk produces some illuminating close analysis, arguing that Thwaite's work engages with Browning's monologues and the medium itself in a way that 'reaches far beyond mere generic imitation' (p. 91). The other texts examined are the dramatic monologues contained within A. S. Byatt's novel *Possession* (London: Vintage, 1990), written by one of the novel's

characters—a Victorian poet and scholar. While there is much original and compelling discussion here, it is worth considering whether the unusual literary context rather complicates the ultimate meaning of the work in relation to contemporary poetry, and whether this section would have been more profitably given over to the analysis of a handful of stand-alone dramatic monologues by contemporary poets.

The subsequent two chapters, which focus on ‘Revisionist Mythmaking’ and postcolonial British identity, provide further well-informed and insightful analyses, both formal and thematic. In tracing the formal and effective features of the genre, Merk astutely observes the diminishing use of ‘setting’ and ‘occasion’, as well as the corresponding feature of ‘dramatic action’ in contemporary examples of the genre.

Using Alistair Fowler’s work on literary genres, the final chapter addresses the question of whether the dramatic monologue has passed through the three stages required (formation, development, transformation) to become a ‘modal form’ (p. 155). Challenging the temporal dimension of Fowler’s argument, Merk asserts that the dramatic monologue has developed and transformed, without ‘the proper genre having exhausted itself first’ (p. 168). She concludes that the dramatic monologue can be seen as a ‘mode’ partly because it has characteristics which are ‘permanently valuable’ (p. 168) and that its energies and features manifest themselves in a range of prose works.

As this volume demonstrates, the dramatic monologue’s liminal existence is integral to its value. Its ambiguity and slipperiness are the source of its creative power and it continues to influence contemporary writers of prose and poetry alike. There seems a lot more to be said about the contemporary dramatic monologue, and this is a much-needed and valuable contribution to the field.

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*Otherwise, Revolution! Leslie Marmon Silko’s ‘Almanac of the Dead’.* By REBECCA TILLET. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. 2018. vi+199 pp. £96. ISBN 978-1-623-56841-2.

Rebecca Tillett has been one of the most important and persistent advocates for the study of contemporary Native American and Indigenous literatures (see particularly her essential *Contemporary Native American Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007)). Throughout Tillett’s work, there is no text that she has returned to with greater frequency than Leslie Marmon Silko’s notoriously difficult *Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Penguin, 1991). Following closely on the heels of an edited collection, *Howling for Justice: Critical Perspectives on Leslie Marmon Silko’s ‘Almanac of the Dead’*, ed. by Tillett (Tucson: Arizona University Press, 2014), *Otherwise, Revolution!* represents Tillett’s first monograph devoted solely to Silko’s ‘problematic and contentious’ second novel (p. 10)—and it is a fitting culmination of her thinking to date on the text.

Situating her reading within the history of *Almanac*’s mixed reception, Tillett builds most explicitly on the previous scholarship of David L. Moore, on witnessing and ethics (‘Silko’s Blood Sacrifice: The Circulating Witness in *Almanac of*