

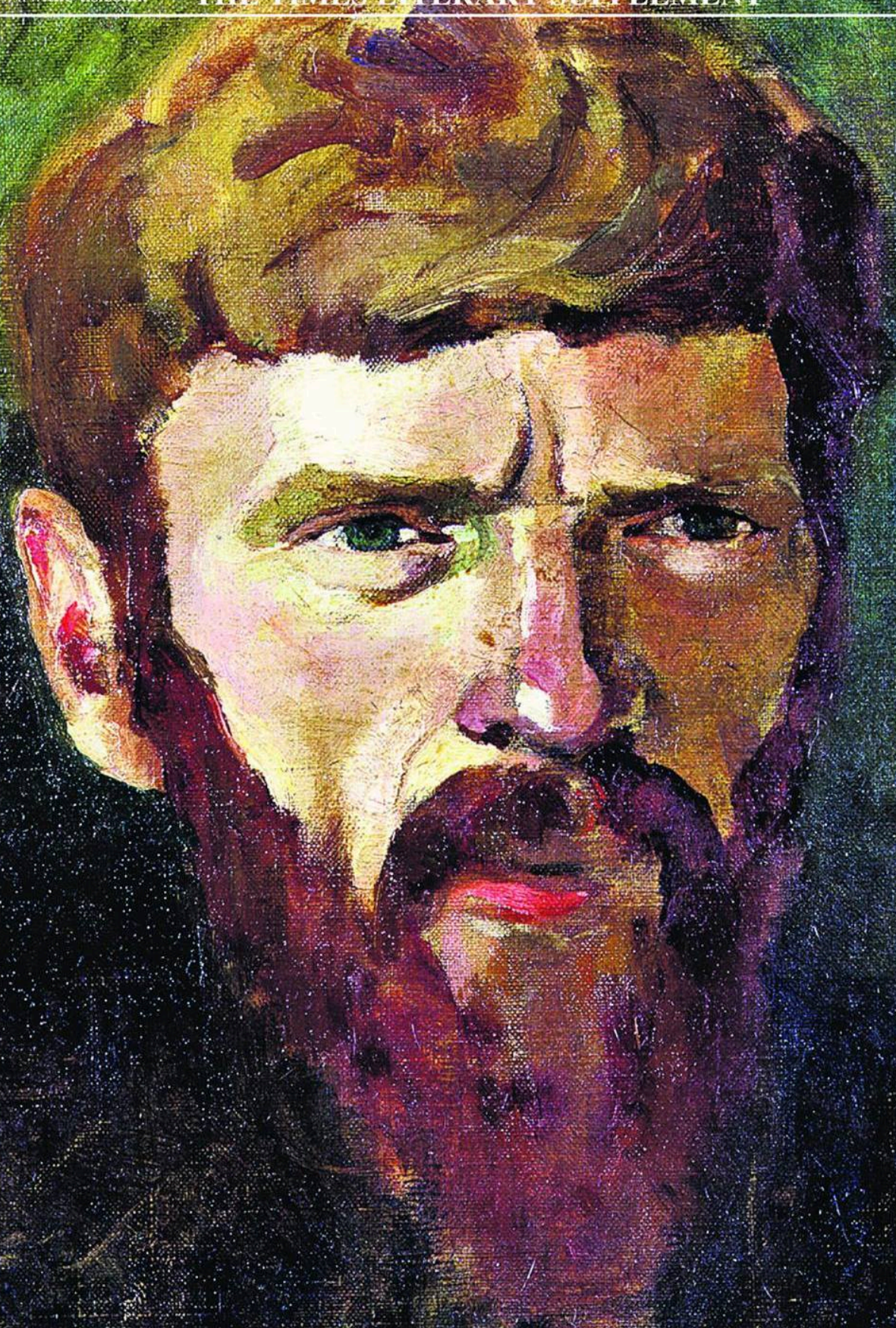
# TLS

Graeme Richardson Poetry and the believer  
Damian Walford Davies Swedenborg in Swansea  
Kate McLoughlin Whose First World War?  
Paul Reitter The middle way of Erich Fromm

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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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D. H. Lawrence possessed  
Seamus Perry



# TLS

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## THIS WEEK

In his preface to an American edition of his poems, D. H. Lawrence contrasted the “measured gem-like lyrics” of Shelley and Keats with the kind of poetry he himself wrote and admired: a poetry of “living plasm” with “nothing crystal, permanent”. Seamus Perry reads a new edition of Lawrence’s collected *Poems* and finds that, though some might wish for less, taking Lawrence the poet all in all is important to seeing “the very odd sort of writer of verse he was”: one whose poetry claims for itself “the unanswerable quality of merely being possessed by the life-forms it celebrates”. Lawrence was briefly associated with Imagism, and it is to that vastly influential movement and its offshoots that we owe what Graeme Richardson identifies as the three “sacred tenets” of modern poetry. And these allow little room for the sacred, or for religious faith – faith such as that professed by Christian Wiman, a poet and until recently the Editor of *Poetry* (Chicago), who at the age of thirty-nine was found to have a rare and incurable cancer. But according to Richardson “the



profound truth” in Wiman’s latest book, a memoir, has less to do with illness or belief than with his “mistrust of writing, his meditative, circling suspicion of his vocation as a poet”. Paul Griffiths, reviewing the new book by the Hungarian László Krasznahorkai (pictured), finds that it is about, precisely, “the presence of the infinite, the sacred in human affairs – or its absence”; and that in it Krasznahorkai tells “the same story as always: that we live in a disgraced world”.

From a position which sought to marry psychoanalysis, Martin Buber and sociology, Erich Fromm achieved immense popularity and success with books such as *Escape from Freedom* and *The Art of Loving*. He never, though, “achieved his primary political goal of lasting international peace sealed by love”. According to our reviewer Paul Reitter, the wait for a major biography, at least, “is over”. The wait is over, too, for Morrissey’s autobiography – “ornate, windswept, elusive yet never tricky”, and sometimes delivering vitriol “via a hose”, it will not, says Gwendoline Riley, disappoint his loyal following.

AJ

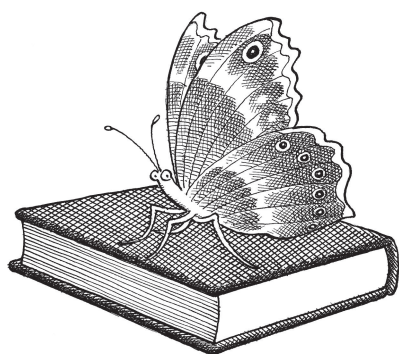
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## Arabic Literature

**Fabio Caiani and Catherine Cobham**  
**THE IRAQI NOVEL**  
 Key writers, key texts  
 280pp. Edinburgh University Press. £65.  
 978 0 7489 4141 3

The English-speaking world has largely ignored Iraq's contribution to modern Arabic literature. *The Iraqi Novel: Key writers, key texts* seeks to address a gap in research by focusing on four male writers at the centre of the mid-twentieth century literary revival in Iraq. 'Abd al-Malik Nuri, Gha'ib Tu'ma Farman, Mahdi 'Isa al-Saqr and Fu'ad al-Takarli were all born in the 1920s and their lives and work were marked by foreign occupation, dictatorship, war and exile. Part of a series on modern Arabic literature aimed at a wider readership, Fabio Caiani and Catherine Cobham's monograph provides detailed textual analyses of selected works. It concludes with an edited version of Cobham's article from 2002 on one of the few works by the writers under discussion to have been published in English translation: al-Takarli's novel *The Long Way Back* (1980, *al-Raj' al-ba'id*).

The book takes as its historical starting point the end of Ottoman rule in 1918 and the birth of Iraq as a unified country. Until the 1940s, when it began to play an influential role on the Arab literary scene, "Iraq was considered to be a peripheral province within an Arab cultural community that had its vibrant centres in Beirut, Damascus and especially Cairo". A generation of young intellectuals adopted the Baghdad café as their headquarters and "workshop". They turned away from the romanticism and realism of earlier writers, and, as Fu'ad al-Takarli put it, "their disgraceful ignorance of the principles of the art of fiction"; they aspired to the sophistication and depth of European modernists, as much as the Russian masters.

War and violence in modern Iraq were inevitable subjects, but writers were wary of the influence of Arab nationalism on literature. They also resisted calls in 1953 by the founder of an influential journal for "a literature of commitment" that engaged explicitly with the socio-political reality of its time: the literary critic Nihad al-Takarli (Fu'ad's brother), responded contemptuously: "as far as the art of fiction is concerned, technique and artistic value are what creates the subject matter". The authors of *The Iraqi Novel* argue that al-Takarli's generation "laid the groundwork for a distinctive Iraqi fiction" of later writers, including Aliya Mamduh and Sinan Antun, whose names might be more familiar to readers of Arabic fiction in translation.

Cobham and Caiani offer the reader – particularly the non-Arabic speaker – a rare insight into the cultural life of Iraq, drawing on a large body of work by Arab critics, as well as mem-



By Bob Mazzer; from *The Gentle Author's London Album: London seen from an easterly direction* (152pp. Spitalfields Life Books. £25. 978 0 9576569 1 8)

oirs and private correspondence. The book deftly places the texts in their historical and political contexts, while capturing the defiant non-conformity of a literary generation that insisted that in fiction "truth is not enough".

ELEANOR KILROY

**Sue Tiley, Senior editor**  
**THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE**  
**REVIEW, 10**  
 282pp. MIR. Paperback, £7.99.  
 978 0 9575833 0 6

In his introduction to the most recent anthology from the Mechanics' Institute Review, Russell Celyn Jones, the head of Birkbeck, University of London's Creative Writing programme, claims that the short story, with its exacting attention to the details of daily existence, may be "the form for best encapsulating the accelerated, atomized world we now live in". The most successful stories in this uneven yet often compelling collection demonstrate this commitment to describing reality. The less convincing substitute melodramatic premises and broad characterizations for original glimpses of the ways people live now.

A handful of these works reward multiple readings. In "The Upstairs Room", Amy Bird carefully evokes the semi-conscious loneliness and hardening perceptions of early, affluent middle age. In "The Mainland", Joel Pearcey meticulously details a young man's coming into maturity on an island whose isolation provides the clarity and freedom he finds lacking in the suburbs of mainland Australia. In "The Twins of Whiting Bay", Jackie Kay sketches a fundamentalist society on the edge of wilderness, so close to the primal that animal and human desires blend. In "Rock Paper Scissors", Maddy Reid captures the tentative expectancy and startling dissonances between teenagers with strong affinities but different scripts for approaching life.

Other stories tend towards the conventional and overdrawn. A veteran Second World War aviator says a final farewell to his deceased wife by flying her ashes up into the stratosphere and scattering them, allowing him the opportunity to reflect, largely in generalizations, on his generation's achievements. An ageing rocker looking for redemption confronts a resentful but forgiving daughter and pursues a budding love interest, in a piece that reads like an update of O. Henry but lacks that writer's gentle irony. A gay sperm donor recalls his long-lost child on the eve of his birthday, and the two end up serendipitously reconnecting via YouTube that night. In an otherwise affecting story meant to demonstrate the gap between human rights abuses and Western perceptions of them, Home Office barristers are made to sneer and hector a young refugee from the Congo, turning a promising study of British insularity into a gallery of caricatures. Celyn Jones draws a sharp distinction in his introduction between what he sees as the banal archetypes of commercial cinema and the originality of literature, but in fact the guiding mentality behind some of these stories appears to be Hollywood's.

MATTHEW WOLFSON

## Social History

**Diana Howansky Reilly**  
**SCATTERED**

The forced relocation of Poland's Ukrainians after World War II  
 192pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £22.50 (US \$24.95).  
 978 0 299 29340 6

The story of the Lemkos, mountain villagers originally from what is today Poland's most south-eastern corner, testifies to the violence with which politically constructed identities were imposed on diverse societies in the middle of the last century. The Lemkos often followed

the Greek Catholic religion, a hybrid of Western and Eastern traditions, and spoke a language that was distinct from Ukrainian, and even more so from Polish. They did not easily fit any national category.

Ultimately, it was the Polish Communist state that decided that the Lemkos were Ukrainian, thereby introducing a potential source of instability: in contrast to its pre-war incarnation, the new Poland was to be mono-ethnic. The Second World War had brought bloody conflict between Poles and Ukrainians, claiming thousands of victims on each side and reaching its height with the massacres, led by Ukrainian nationalist groups, of tens of thousands of Poles in 1943 and 44. Though only tangentially connected to this conflict, the Lemkos were, in the eyes of the state, tainted by their cultural affinity with Ukraine, and were thus to be "scattered" and "with the passing of time... assimilated" into the Polish nation. At first cajoled into relocating to Soviet Ukraine, they were later deported, under "Operation Vistula", to Poland's new western territories and dispersed so as to destroy their sense of community. As Diana Howansky Reilly's account of her own family's story shows, relocation, whether to the steppes of eastern Ukraine or to the abandoned German villages of Poland's new west, was heartbreaking for a people so emotionally bound to the Carpathians.

The context for *Scattered* is complex and remains controversial in both Poland and Ukraine. Yet Reilly's narrative, written in short vignettes, is clear and balanced, and she successfully weaves the wider history into a rich fabric containing details of everyday life, stories of individual characters, and the rhythms and texture of Lemko speech. The result is a short, but skilfully crafted synthesis of family memoir and micro-history that is as interesting for its uncovering of a neglected tragedy as for its portrait of a little-known culture.

UILLEAM BLACKER

## Film

**Luke McKernan**  
**CHARLES URBAN**

Pioneering the non-fiction film in Britain and America, 1897–1925  
 256pp. University of Exeter Press. £60.  
 978 0 85989 882 9

When Charles Urban died in a Brighton nursing home in 1942, he was a hundred pages into a memoir of his experiences in the early days of motion pictures. By this point the American expat had been far removed from anything close to the centre of that industry for nearly twenty years, and was largely a forgotten figure despite his significant contributions to colour and non-fiction filmmaking. Like Georges Méliès, another film pioneer who was active during the same period, much of Urban's cinematic output would become lost amid the shuffle of history, and his reputation would need to be rescued by later academics and aficionados.

Unlike Méliès, however, who was ultimately fêted in his own lifetime (and lovingly cinematicized in Martin Scorsese's *Hugo*) and whose films have since become iconic examples of early cinema, it has taken Urban's champion the better part of a century to arrive. The wait would seem to have been worth it. In his study of Urban, Luke McKernan, Lead Curator of News



and Moving Image at the British Library, shows himself to be a diligent and impartial scholar of a man whose “far-reaching ambitions for the medium fell foul of the limitations of technology, exhibition structures and opposing interests from bodies he too readily assumed had to be on his side”. McKernan bears this statement out by taking us through his subject’s early foray into motion pictures as a Kinetoscope operator in Michigan in 1895; his subsequent move to Britain, in 1897, to work in an executive role for the Warwick Trading Company, which would quickly become a leader in British cinema as well as non-fiction film; his introduction and popularization, from 1908, of Kinemacolor, the world’s first natural colour motion picture system; his subsequent role in helping Britain realize the power of cinema in wartime propaganda during the First World War; and finally his ill-fated quest to commercialize the edifying power of film back in his native country.

The temptation is to call the sum of this research and analysis a biography, and indeed the publisher’s blurb has no reservations in doing so, but the author is more cautious: “[T]his book is not a biography”, he writes, “and covers Urban’s life only where it impinges on the professional”. Yet the personal life of the “frantically industrious” Urban was so intertwined with and dominated by the professional – his soon-to-be second wife, Ada, helped finance the creation of his Natural Color Kinematograph Company, for instance – that any biographical omissions seem slight. It’s a shame Urban left his memoirs unfinished, but his accomplishments and his philosophy have found an excellent channel in McKernan.

ERIC J. IANNELLI

## German Literature

**Tom Cheesman, editor**

GERMAN TEXT CRIMES

Writers accused, from the 1950s to the 2000s  
242pp. Rodopi. €52 (US \$73).  
978 90 420 3690 1

Bernard Schlink’s *Der Vorleser* (*The Reader*, 1995) tells the story of a young man who is seduced by an older woman, who subsequently turns out to have been a member of the SS and a camp guard at Auschwitz. A few years later she is indicted for her role in a massacre. She stands accused of authoring a contemporaneous report of an atrocity – a report she could not have written as she was illiterate. Opting not to reveal her illiteracy, she is wrongly convicted as the principal perpetrator and receives a life sentence.

A phenomenal commercial success, *The Reader* elicited outrage in some quarters for painting a war criminal in a sympathetic light. Critics also lambasted Schlink’s work for its “tendentious moralising” and “implausible, trite eroticism”. Despite its literary pretensions, the book read “like a slightly superior Mills and Boon”; a later film adaptation was dismissed by the *Guardian*’s Tanya Gold as “Nazi porn”. Others pointed out fundamental flaws in the plot line, such as the near-impossibility of an illiterate person completing the SS’s lengthy application forms.

Questions of literary merit aside, the central charge against Schlink was that of moral obfuscation, of using the narrative technique of *Betäubung* (numbness, anaesthetization) to skew – or, at any rate, marginalize – the horrible truth of the historical context. But hasn’t

that “numbness” of the authorial voice represented the very essence of the modern novel ever since Flaubert? Perhaps only a subject as morally unambiguous as the Holocaust could permit of such brazen philistinism.

Schlink’s is one of nine alleged “text crimes” – or, in normal speak, literary or artistic scandals – examined in this collection of essays, edited by Tom Cheesman. The cultural politics of the Cold War feature prominently, as in David Robb’s chapter on “Text Crimes against the GDR’s Revolutionary Heritage”. The East German state’s policy was steeped in contradictions: many of its heroes were idealists who had struggled against tyranny in the past; that utopian legacy, inherently anti-authoritarian, was hard to reconcile with the injustices and privations of Real Existing Socialism. Theatrical events thus provided a space for dissent within the limits of a heavily state-controlled culture. Politically engaged performers like the Karls Enkels dance group resurrected national icons like Erich M and Bertolt Brecht to articulate their grievances: using defamiliarizing performance techniques to blend past and present, the group managed to fashion officially approved celebration into pointed critique.

Notwithstanding its rather clunky frame of reference – and the somewhat inappropriate punning of the title – *German Text Crimes* is a thought-provoking study of the relationship between politics and the arts, as well as a valuable contribution to the ever-growing scholarship on historical memory.

HOUMAN BAREKAT

## Ecology

**Stephen Henighan**

A GREEN REEF

The impact of climate change  
50pp. Linda Leith. Paperback, \$12.95.  
978 1 927535 27 1

Stephen Henighan’s exploration of the impact of climate change begins in northern Canada and Alaska, areas of wilderness which seem limitless and permanent but which, like everywhere else on the planet, are caught up in the network of effects that emerge in a changing climate. Part biography, part cultural criticism, part jeremiad, Henighan’s short volume ranges over the causes, prognoses and ethics of a warming world.

Throughout the book there is constant alarm at humanity’s lack of alarmism. Henighan laments how this manifests itself not only as a denial that climate change is happening but, perhaps more disconcertingly, as the belief that some sort of technological solution will emerge before things get too bad. For Henighan, this techno-optimism arises from a society raised on the Cold War space race and its science-fiction fantasies. But we are not “interstellar cowboys” who could leave our planet if things get too rough. Instead, “like survivors of a shipwreck, humanity clings to a small, fertile blue-green reef in the middle of a limitless, hostile ocean”.

There is a certain poignancy to Henighan’s central image of the “green reef” and his discussions of how our growing ecological awareness needs to change the way we consume, communicate and care. Where the book falters slightly is in its discussions of our future climate. Climate science involves complex networks of models, predictions, degrees of certainty and measuring systems that must account for a range of positive and negative feedbacks. While

scientists are what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) call “virtually certain” about some aspects of climate change, they are understandably less sure about the specific climate scenarios that might unfold in fifty years’ time. Henighan speaks with a degree of confidence about future climate patterns and the geopolitical scenarios they might engender (China will invade Siberia, the United States will co-opt Canadian fresh water). His interesting speculations are not, however, accompanied by the sorts of references and citations which are vital to establishing credibility in these debates. Those familiar with the data and analysis from the latest IPCC reports might feel that Henighan, however laudable his concerns, sometimes cherry-picks the most pessimistic predictions, sacrificing likelihood to rhetorical expediency. Nevertheless, they will also almost certainly agree with his urgent admonishment that if we cannot “live on the bounty of this reef, there is nowhere else to go. We will die gasping for breath”.

SAM SOLNICK

## Literature

**Peter Brooker et al, editors**

THE OXFORD CRITICAL AND  
CULTURAL HISTORY OF  
MODERNIST MAGAZINES

Volume Three: Europe 1880–1940 – Part I  
690pp. Oxford University Press. £145.  
978 0 19 968130 3

Volume Three of the *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* (Volume One: *Britain and Ireland 1880–1955*, was reviewed in the *TLS*, October 9, 2009; Volume Two: *North America 1894–1960*, on April 5, 2013) has so much ground to cover that it had to be divided into two parts: the first, under review here, includes France, the Low Countries, Spain and Portugal, Italy, and Scandinavia; the second, the German-speaking countries, Switzerland, East-Central Europe and Russia. Together, the two parts number more than 1,500 pages. Such length is hardly surprising given that the avant-garde magazines so central to Volume Three are, as Peter Brooker notes in his superb General Introduction, largely a European invention. As Brooker reminds us, “the avant-garde and modernism (remember Marinetti the Symbolist poet) are closer than we might think, and indeed coexist as a contradictory double impulse”.

The evolution of the French little magazines from the *fin-de-siècle* *Le Chat noir* and *Le Gil Blas* to Apollinaire’s *Soirées de Paris* (founded in 1912), to the Dada and Surrealist little magazines at the heart of the avant-garde, is largely familiar, but by the 1930s, as Jed Rasula’s essay makes clear, Surrealism and Constructivism, theoretically opposites, came together “in the service of revolution” in such journals as *Cercle et Carré* (1930) and *Minotaure* (1933–9). Indeed, in the second issue of the former, Piet Mondrian tried to make the case for neoplasticism as “superréaliste”. In this vein, the complexities of the Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg’s De Stijl movement (1917–32), are explored in a richly documented essay by Sascha Bru: in Holland, as in Belgium, writing on abstraction excelled as did the brilliant artwork and typography we associate with van Doesburg, Mondrian and such guest contributors as El Lissitzky. The Italian section, on the other hand, surprises by its emphasis on tradi-

tion: such journals as the nationalist *La Voce* (1908–14) get as much space as its famous Futurist successor *Lacerba* (1913–15) and, in their turn, the Fascist literary magazines of the 1920s.

Throughout this encyclopedic volume, essays are generally sober, even-handed, and informative rather than critical, much less speculative. As a reference book, it could hardly be improved. One reservation remains: the bibliography and index come at the end of Part II, so that, if you acquire Part I separately, you will be without either. Fortunately, footnotes are very thorough and easy to read. And the illustrations (innovative cover and page design is a central feature of these magazines), though small in size, are extremely well reproduced.

MARJORIE PERLOFF

## Music

**Donald Fagen**

EMINENT HIPSTERS

176pp. Cape. £16.99.  
978 0 224 09962 2

For over forty years, the estimable songwriter and keyboard player Donald Fagen has provided a jazz-tinged and deftly satirical view of the American Dream both through his solo albums and those of the band Steely Dan, which he co-founded with the guitarist Walter Becker. *Eminent Hipsters* comprises a series of memoirs, beginning with Fagen’s childhood in New Jersey in the 1950s. Like his early collaborations with Becker, it is “never less than fun”, and often highly informative. Among early influences he introduces the wonderful Boswell Sisters, an upper-crust New Orleans vocal trio who made recordings with Benny Goodman and Bunny Berigan, and he makes a surprisingly convincing case for Henry Mancini as proto-hipster. A chapter on science fiction acquaints us with Count Korzybski’s theory of General Semantics, a persistent influence on a generation of writers including Arthur C. Clarke, L. Ron Hubbard and William Burroughs.

While Fagen comes across as a private man, prone to depression – there are references to a breakdown which lasted throughout the 1980s, and to the suicide of his stepson in 2009 – he shows a welcome talent for self-deprecation. An embattled Jewish liberal, the author recounts with relish his brushes with authority figures and “sexually twisted Hobbesian geezers” across the United States, subscribing to the view that right-wingers are the victims of “an epidemic illness” resulting in “an inordinately large amygdala”. Fagen is excellent on the downsides of touring, speculating on why hotel sheets and pillowcases invariably “smell like soy sauce”, and on what actually constitutes the water in the pool. Attractive women invariably fête other band members, while he, as the “musicians’ musician”, has to settle for “some poor dude yelling, ‘DONNNNNALD’ in a crazy, tortured voice”. An appendix provides a checklist of the symptoms of Acute Tour Disorder (including mania and “bizarre ideations”) which gives way to Post Tour Disorder (symptoms as above). Now aged sixty-five, Fagen rues the effects of time on both the band and the fans, noting that a Canadian audience once included “people in mummy cases”. An acerbic and economical style, together with an unusual absence of self-regard, should commend *Eminent Hipsters* to a wider audience than connoisseurs of rock biographies.

LOU GLANDFIELD