

Literary discourses on postcolonial literature in recent years have located the meaning and significance of postcolonial texts within the spatial sites of "nation," whose culture is viewed as instrumental in forging identities. Kortenaar's scholarship goes beyond these sites in an argument that is both informed and refreshing, by suggesting how categories and distinctions (including formulations of "nationalism" and "cosmopolitanism") are capable of being reformulated to suggest new ways of reading a postcolonial text. Indeed, illustrated sparingly but splendidly with political cartoons and reproductions, Kortenaar's text displays not only a thorough understanding of Rushdie scholarship, particularly on *Midnight's Children*, but also his own impressive absorption of Indian political, social, and cultural history, evidence of which is obvious both in his text and in the meticulous glossary on the novel, which runs to forty pages.

Kortenaar's study has admirable sweep and vigor, is rich in detail, and suggestive in its larger conclusions. As a full-length study of *Midnight's Children*, Kortenaar's work surely belongs to the scholar's shelf.

Terry Eagleton

The English Novel: An Introduction

Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2005. Pp. 365. \$24.95

Reviewed by Sabah A. Salih

In 1983, Terry Eagleton gave us *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. The book quickly became the standard guide to the subject and helped bring about fundamental changes in the way English is taught and organized as a field of study. With some twenty other equally profound books behind him since that book, today Eagleton is recognized the world over as postmodernism's greatest living theorist and one of the keenest public intellectuals of our time.

Eagleton's study shows again his enormous powers of analysis, rigorous style, sharp wit, and deep learning. The book is as intellectually challenging as it is rewarding. Refusing to take anything for granted, Eagleton begins with devoting a substantial chapter to the seemingly mundane question "What is a novel?" Eagleton's point is that the novel is "an anarchic genre" (2); it not only "eludes definitions" but also "actively undermines them" (1). What is more, because "the novel's authority is ungrounded in anything outside itself" (7), readers need to always be aware of its fictionality and not to confuse it with reality. Being something like "a mighty melting pot" (1), the novel is also a site in which "values are at their most diverse and conflicting" (5)

Nowhere is this more evident than in the style commonly known as realism. Eagleton defines realism as "a matter of representation" (10) or an effort to model novels on life, and refuses, rightly, to accept any absolute distinctions

between the classical and the non-classical. Yet, he does place modernism in a special category, arguing, by way of Joyce and Woolf and drawing on Brecht and Marx, that only in modernism does language become acutely aware of itself. That is why modernism emerges as “a challenge to Enlightenment rationality” but not as “a version of it” (314). For Eagleton, there is also something tragic about modernism. Unlike postmodernism, which gleefully contends itself with the fragmentary and the local, modernism cannot stop looking for the absolute even though it knows it to be unobtainable. As for the term that postmodernism dreads the most, objectivity, Eagleton argues that it ought not to be confused with hearing “the sausages sizzling in Fagin’s den,” but rather should be seen as a way of “bestowing form and value” upon the world (10).

This intellectual framework within which Eagleton discusses Defoe, Swift, Stern, Austen, and James, Conrad, Lawrence, Joyce, and Woolf, as well as several others, gives the book the kind of depth and rigor that makes rereading it a must. But the effort is worth it; mental exhilaration and textual pleasure make up for that.

Ignacio López-Calvo

God and Trujillo: Literal and Cultural Representations of the Dominican Dictator

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005. Pp 197. \$59.95

Reviewed by Alfonso González

Through an exhaustive and detailed research in historical, social, and literary texts and articles, Ignacio López-Calvo offers the reader a round figure of one of the most repressive and theatrically grotesque dictators of twentieth-century Spanish America: Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic. This is a worthwhile contribution to our knowledge and understanding of how and why such a horrific figure rose to power and stayed there with the help, blessing, or indifference of governments such as the United States and Spain.

Focusing on the public and private life of the dictator, on his known and probable psychological traits, the book traces the history of Spanish-American dictators in general and Trujillo in particular. The reader sees Trujillo through the eyes of national and foreign historians, biographers, novelists, and a Dominican popular ballad. We witness the pompous and egotistic actions of a sexual predator as well his mandated tortures, kidnappings, and murders in grotesque detail.

God and Trujillo is divided into six main parts, as well as an introduction and conclusion. Chapter one, “Latin American Caudillos and Dictators,” gives an overview of the history of Latin American dictators in general, including Trujillo. It gives us excerpts from the main sources of information the author will use in his analyses, whetting our appetite to know more and better comprehend how