Philip Schwyzer *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp xi, 194.

This book is a historical and theoretical study of the ways in which English and Welsh writers of the Tudor era came to 'recognize that those who lived in "other days", and whose customs, politics, and even language ... at first glance appear[ed] dauntingly alien, were all along members of the same community' (2). Of course, such recognition was more difficult for English than for Welsh writers since the ancient Britons with whom the English began to identify in the Tudor era were not their own ancestors, nor were they English. In its focus on the production of a British national consciousness, this book differs from recent critical work on the English nation state and English national identity. Whereas Richard Helgerson, Andrew Hadfield, Claire McEachern, David Baker, Jodi Mikalachki, and Willy Maley, according to Schwyzer, posit England as the nation being constructed, invented, or written by the English in the sixteenth century, Schwyzer argues that 'national consciousness in Tudor England was largely "British" rather than narrowly "English" in its content and character' (3). (Baker's, Hadfield's, and Maley's recent work, it should be noted, is more engaged with Britain and Britishness than Schwyzer allows). The case for Britain and Britishness lies, Schwyzer argues, in the fact that the three virtues celebrated and nostalgically desired by Tudor writers were all peculiarly British: insularity, antiquity, and imperiality. Not until the seventeenth century, Schwyzer suggests, would an English nationalism celebratory of the English language, racial descent from the Anglo-Saxons, and parliamentary and legal traditions and privileges emerge.

The first chapter – indeed the entire book – is impressive in its historical and literary scope. The centrepiece is 'British nationalism' in the wake of Harri Tudur's/Henry Tudor's accession to the English throne, a form of nationalism that, paradoxically, served to advance English interests at the expense of a sense of Englishness. Calling attention to a moment that is often viewed as a (perhaps the) signal moment in the history of the English nation-state, Schwyzer argues that Henry VIII's break with Rome was underpinned by 'a restoration of ancient (British) rights and privileges' (31). This, to be sure, raised a series of problems, including problems of blood and identity, for the English, unlike the Welsh and the Bretons, had little or no linguistic or biological connection to the Britons. English writers nonetheless made imaginative leaps, and, for Schwyzer, Spenser is a prime example, or, more accurately, Spenser in *The*

Faerie Queene Book III, canto iii, with its attention to 'the history of the dispossessed Britons' (41). While Schwyzer offers an intelligent analysis of Merlin's prophecy, his recuperation of a British Spenser would have been more convincing had he provided more textual evidence: the author limits himself to the 1590 installment of *The Faerie Queene*, and only bits of that text. The same could be said of Schwyzer's brief analysis (one paragraph) of the *View*. 'The Irish', the author asserts after a few quotations from the *View*, 'are not an alien and inferior race, as some of Spenser's contemporaries would argue, but British kin' (45). Much recent criticism, especially work informed by postcolonial theory, has argued the exact opposite: that Spenser's *View* is committed to a strict demarcation of English (Protestant, civil) and Irish (Catholic, savage) nations. The value of such criticism is its exposure of any gesture to an inclusive identity as an attempt to erase native identities. Schwyzer's reading marks a welcome complication of the simple and straightforward binaries that often dominate critical discussion of the *View*. In the colonial war zone of early modern Ireland, however, a gesture to 'British kin' should be viewed with suspicion.

Opening with the observation that what 'really binds the nation together' is 'a mode of collective introspection, a way of seeing,' chapter two focusses on the ideological and cultural work performed by beauty in nationalist imaginings (49). This chapter attends to the conflicts concerning the dissolution of the monasteries, especially in relation to questions of aesthetics and nationalist thought and feeling. The central concern is the distinct national visions of Robert Aske, leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace, and the protestant polemicist John Bale. For Aske, England's abbeys constitute 'the beauties of this realm'. For Bale, the 'beauty of our nation' lies in the books ransacked from monastic libraries. Schwyzer's account of Aske's peculiarly English vision of timeless feudal harmony and Bale's strikingly British idea of national beauty, 'born out of shared experiences of disruption, loss, and nostalgia', offers an informative study of the ideological struggles at work in competing narratives of the nation (50). As a literary historian and as a historian of nationalism, Schwyzer is at his best in this chapter.

'What bound the Welsh together and defined them as a people in this era was not blood', Schwyzer notes in the first chapter, 'but rather language' (19). In its attention to national identity and cultural memory, the third chapter pursues this line of thought. Two books are of central concern here, both lost, irrecoverable: the Bible in the British vernacular and the *vetustissimus liber* – the text which Geoffrey of Monmouth claimed to have translated into Latin as his *Historia Regum Britanniae*. This chapter does a wonderful job of tracing

the desire for these two texts, and the sense of nostalgia and national longing that the 'loss' of these two texts occasioned. In the writings of Humphrey Llwyd, Sir John Prise, and Richard Davies, Schwyzer finds a 'community of desire' given over to preserving and passing on Welsh history in forms other than solely textual records. The 1567 publication of the Welsh New Testament (*Testament Newydd*) serves as the prime example of the ways in which Welsh national consciousness was at once grounded in oral tradition and collective memory and rescued from the past and kept safe from English appropriation. What makes this book valuable is not only its attention to Britain and Britishness in the period but also its close and careful readings of Welsh texts and traditions.

Turning in the fourth chapter to the various editions of the *Mirror for Magistrates* and other 'Complaints' literature (including Spenser's *Ruines of Time*), Schwyzer sets his sights on ghosts of the nation. The Reformation caused the exclusion of ghosts from traditional social life; however, England and Wales would come to be haunted by ghosts of the 'long-vanished nation of Britain' (99). In the wake of the Chantries Act, ghost stories would take on a psychosocial function in addressing a national readership: 'ghosts return in poetry to demand remembrance from members of the national community – a community which constitutes itself in and through precisely such acts of patriotic commemoration' (111). That the ghosts included fifteenth-century monarchs and sixteenth-century nobility raises the question of what nation. John Higgins, author of *The First Part of the Mirror for Magistrates* (1577; reprinted with expansions in the 1587 *Mirror*), went about compiling a history of ancient Britain, beginning with Brutus' conquest and concluding with the Roman era. Thomas Blenerhasset's *The Second Part of the Mirror for Magistrates* (1578) picks up were Higgins left off, pushing the story up to the Norman Conquest. Thus, Nennius can appear to Elizabethan readers and ask of '"Britaynes good" to spend "some tyme on mee"' (116). But if the ghost serves in the various editions of the *Mirror* as 'a figure of collective historical identity' (116), then where are the signs that such an identity is taking hold in the period? In other words, who saw themselves as 'Britaynes good'? Schwyzer's response to this question would probably be that early modern texts present us not necessarily with 'the nation *per se* so much as the nation *in potentia*' (9). The terms 'Tudor nationalism' and 'British nationalism', therefore, are used in this book to signify a nascent national consciousness in the period, though, as we shall see, one that would fail to emerge in the seventeenth century.

The focus on ghosts continues in the next chapter, which examines Shakespeare's *Henry V*, a play that contains more references to 'England' and

'English' than any other Shakespeare play yet is 'drenched in the now-familiar language of British nationalism': that is, the nation in the play 'must be summoned out of the distant past through the power of bloodlines, the manipulation of nostalgic memory, and, above all, the invocation of ghosts' (128, 128–9). One ghost that cannot be overlooked is the ghost of Falstaff; in fact, this leads Schwyzer to comment at length on Mistress Quickly's reference to 'Arthur's bosom', treating this 'malapropism' as a sign that 'theme of British Empire had come to fill the space evacuated by Purgatory' (134), which, in turn, serves to place Britain in between the present in the past. Throughout this chapter, as the 'Arthur's bosom' example suggests, Schwyzer's attention to nation in *Henry V* relies less on allusion and more on analogy, and one gets the feeling that the analogies are very much the product of the critic. Discussing Talbot's 'I am but a shadow of myself' speech to the Countess of Auvergne in *1 Henry VI*, for instance, Schwyzer labels the ability to incorporate many bodies into one as 'peculiarly "English"' (144). But he then makes a leap from Englishness to Britishness, a leap that the play does not clearly articulate: 'This is yet another case in which Englishness takes on a British hue; for what was the longed-for unification of Great Britain but the incorporation of many national bodies within one?' (144). Exactly how *Henry V* longs for the unification of Great Britain is unclear. Given the play's many anxious references to cultural hybridity – King Henry being addressed, in the First Folio, as 'brother Ireland'; his wooing of the French Princess, Katherine, in broken French – it is difficult not to view the play's nascent English nationalism as opposing the dynastic interests of the emergent multi-national British state.

The final chapter opens with the accession of King James VI and I, which, in 1603, seemed to herald the age of British nationalism, for James reigned over the entire island of Britain. But this was not to be the case: in a few years, Schwyzer argues, 'that distinctively Tudor form of nationalism rooted in the desire to recapture British antiquity would have been almost completely expelled from English politics and literature' (151). For Schwyzer, Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1605–6) provides an early sign of the decline of British nationalism. The immediate context for this chapter is the question of Anglo-Scottish Union as well as literary responses to James's accession and the proposed Union. *King Lear*, which was performed at court in December 1606, has often been read as a contribution to pro-Union literature, and, as Schwyzer points out, 'the convergence of theme ['British antiquity'], occasion ['unionist campaign'], and artist ['nationalist playwright'] would have seemed to promise a masterpiece of British nationalism' (159). Instead of a masterpiece, Schwyzer finds a play 'deeply troubled [in] relation to British nationalism' (158). Perhaps

the author finds *King Lear* troubling because his representation of the context or 'occasion' in which the play was produced and performed affords no other reading. 'The occasion', Schwyzer writes, 'was a court performance in the midst of the unionist campaign, when writers of all stripes and talents, from bishops to hacks, were bubbling over with prince-pleasing effusions in favour of a reunited Britain' (158). The problem with such a description of the 'occasion' of *King Lear*'s performance is its limited and limiting representation of Union literature as the work of prince pleasers who have no intention of thinking through questions of Union. Schwyzer offers Samuel Daniel's *Panegyrike Congratvlatorie to His Kings Maiestie* (1603) as an example of such prince-pleasing; however, he elides not only the moments in Daniel's poem in which the poet admonishes the monarch not to meddle with things English but also Daniel's intriguing reference to the 'Republicke', which seems out of place for royal panegyric. Jacobean texts, such as Daniel's *Panegyrike*, highlight the need for a critical vocabulary that goes beyond a pro-and anti-Union binarism. Schwyzer's description of *King Lear* as 'so cagey and ambiguous on the union question that it admits of flatly contradictory readings' (160) forecloses fruitful investigation into ideological contradictions. Ironically, this book ends a narrative (on Britishness) at a point in time when British subjects were responding – imaginatively, ambivalently, critically – to the emergence of a multi-national British state.

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Jacqueline Vanhoutte. *Strange Communion: Motherland and Masculinity in Tudor Plays, Pamphlets, and Politics*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003. Pp 236.

How does a geographical space become a community – a nation 'for whom we die', to quote Rupert Brooke's World War I poem? The answer, according to Jacqueline Vanhoutte's articulate and insightful study of early modern English nationalism, lies in the metaphors that shape that space and transform it into a concept. Brooke calls his country a mother, and Vanhoutte frames the question that informs her book in terms of this specifically maternal metaphor: 'Why is England ... imagined as "the undying / Mother of men"', and how do the metaphors that define a particular form of nationalism in turn define the