

From *Piers Plowman* to A.L. Kennedy: A History of British Satire

Review of *British Literary Satire in Historical Perspective*
by Ema Jelínková (Olomouc: Palacký University, 2010)

The book *British Literary Satire in Historical Perspective* is a short survey outlining the development of satire in British literature from the Middle Ages to the present. The first chapter, *Introducing the Concept*, presents the general characteristics of the genre, and the following eleven chapters introduce chronologically and classify the most important authors and discuss their principal works. The *Appendix* then defines some general terms, tools and forms of satire in greater detail. The *Bibliography* includes both a list of the satires discussed and a long list of useful secondary sources concerning literary history, literary theory and individual writers. The publication is concluded with a final concise *Summary*. Unfortunately, there is no index which could also serve as the list of the writers and works under study.

In eleven sharply delineated sections, mostly following the generally accepted periodization of the development of literature, Jelínková, a member of the Department of English and American Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University in Olomouc, introduces the most distinguished and some lesser known writers of this genre in poetry, prose and drama. She goes on to characterize major and minor works in period contexts, sometimes including short extracts from the texts discussed. The structure of the survey and the selection of the individual writers along with the proportions of the text devoted to each of them and their works are clearly justified. To give an idea of the scope of this volume, *Piers Plowman*, generally attributed to William Langland in the 14th century, is the first work mentioned, with the last texts discussed being novels by Irvine Welsh and A.L. Kennedy published in the 1990s.

The author has demonstrated both a solid knowledge and sensitive understanding of the satires as well as the pertinent secondary literature she makes use of in her commentaries. This publication does not seek to be an exhaustive or detailed study of the topic but a high-quality general survey which may be very useful as a university course book and/or serve as an introduction to further research of the history or theory of the genre at the undergraduate or postgraduate levels. It is written in a clear and vivid style which makes the book in addition accessible to non-academics and general readers who have an interest or are searching for information in the field.

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