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Caroline Hamilton, *One Man Zeitgeist: Dave Eggers, Publishing and Publicity* (New York and London: Continuum, 2010, £60.00). Pp. 144. ISBN 978 1 4411 6696 8.

*One Man Zeitgeist* is the first academic monograph to be published on Dave Eggers, the American author, editor and founder of McSweeney's publishing responsible for charitable projects that range from campaigning to increased literacy, through writing workshops and homework clubs, to helping rebuild infrastructure in disaster areas from New Orleans to Sudan. The title of Hamilton's book encapsulates the often hyperbolic popular and critical reception of Eggers's career, both within and beyond the literary establishment. Since his first publication, of the memoir *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000), Eggers has remained a famous, if not infamously divisive, literary figure – a character as much as an author for those in the literary and mainstream press who review and profile him.

*One Man Zeitgeist* is structured as five chapters that roughly trace the timeline of Eggers's public, publishing career. These begin by discussing the first issues of the *McSweeney's* journal and end with Eggers's more recent writing, the "authoring" of voices of witness in the novels *What Is the What* (2006) and *Zeitoun* (2009), and the work of the charitable foundations that the proceeds of these books support. Throughout, Hamilton combines close reading of Eggers's published writing with careful interpretative reading of his commercial and charitable enterprises.

In *One Man Zeitgeist*, Hamilton describes a subject whose public persona is inextricable from the various enterprises he undertakes. In the introduction, Hamilton describes her source material as a mix of "authorized (such as editorial comments in the early editions of *McSweeney's*) and unauthorized (emails leaked to the internet, messages that the author has posted on websites, and so on)" (9). In some respects this is a misleading distinction as Hamilton's great achievement in *One Man Zeitgeist* is persistently to read these two kinds of voice (the "official" and the "personal") as inherently, and purposefully, intertwined, traversing the "porous space between the public and private life of an author" (6).

Hamilton performs this work through an integrated reading of Eggers's creative and commercial practices. This frame is used well by Hamilton to consider how an author is both a media presence and a presence constructed through his writing, and what happens when an author reflexively engages with both these personae. Hamilton asserts that this kind of reflexive authorial presence is one valorized in contemporary culture:

We have arrived at a point when relationships between the presentation of the self and products of our culture ... have become considerably more complex and semiotically sophisticated. Eggers's presentation of authorship ... illustrates a conflict between his *representation* as an author ... and his own *presentation* of self in his texts. (8)

Hamilton's assertion here is relevant – particularly in reading Eggers alongside the authorial-public personae of (near) contemporaries Jonathan Franzen and David Foster Wallace – if perhaps quiet on the subject of historical figures who may also have played with these modes of self-(re-)presentation.

The fourth chapter, "A Publisher's Progress," in which Hamilton discusses the ways in which Eggers used the publication of his second book and the founding of the

McSweeney's publishing imprint to sideline his public presence, is particularly strong. Hamilton engages with literary and critical readings that place Eggers's creative and commercial acts within the historical context of Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (first published in English in 1954) and Lewis Hyde's later remediation (1983). Here Eggers's business model for McSweeney's – with its emphasis on the object at hand, and the sustainability of the book as a (charitably) profitable commodity – is brought into the context of a gift economy. Although McSweeney's productions do cost money, their inherent value operates beyond a pure monetary economy; they are collector's items and desirable objects and, as such, gifts – a demonstration of Eggers's "commitment to the belief that books are not only commodities but gifts: items that move, passed from hand to hand from author to reader" (73). For anyone who has handled the thoughtfully crafted objects that form the McSweeney's back catalogue, Hamilton's theoretical interpretation of the gift that is held, and that moves between hands, is both poetic and pertinent.

*One Man Zeitgeist* is a valuable first full-length study of the author Dave Eggers; it is also a discursively broad assessment of the cultural values associated with literature and publishing as they are reshaped for the contemporary moment. Much of the secondary source material for this book is formed from the numerous literary and mainstream press publications that have profiled Eggers, and much of this material is pointedly personal, in part a response to an author whose first publication, at the age of thirty, was his own memoir. As Hamilton makes clear, Eggers advocates the personal. For academic writing this is perhaps more problematic than we often admit; we are not used to dealing with personality as unavoidable – Eggers's work is not meant to be divorced from Eggers's public persona and this complicates any idea of objective critical reading (a fallacy by all accounts, but one we tend to persist with). Hamilton's study manages to curate the various vocal registers that haunt research about this overtly public author into an academic framework that puts these alternative approaches to work, thereby producing an insightful interdisciplinary and intermedial reading of its subject.

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