

***The Longman Anthology of World Literature, Volume F "The Twentieth Century."* Edited by Djelal Kadir and Ursula K. Heise. General editor: David Damrosch. Longman: New York, 2004 (pp 1158). ISBN 0-321-05536-5.**

The Longman Anthology of World Literature is one of at least four major newer anthologies on world literature, which seems to be a growing field within literary studies. The interest is propelled both by the discursive and cultural impacts of globalization and by the exhaustion of paradigms such as comparative literature and postcolonialism that has only been highlighted by the renewed interest in world literature and the challenge of working with a world-oriented, postnational concept of literature. The Longman anthology presents some very interesting and intelligent ways of coping with this challenge.

An anthology of world literature must of course engage in endless selection and navigate between the idealism of reaching all corners of the world and the realism of presenting texts that have actually made a difference to readers outside the culture they were written in and about. There is a good balance of this in the Longman anthology, not least because it has made a very important decision that distinguishes it from other anthologies of world literature. Instead of allowing geography to be the primary structuring principle as in Norton's otherwise fine anthology, the Longman anthology contains a variety of authors that stand alone, as well as a number of thematic perspectives that groups up to ten authors under headings like "The Art of the Manifesto," "Echoes of War," and "Postcolonial Conditions." This is a very functional and well-thought out change of structure from what could be called a mode of antiquarian registration to an engagement with textual constellations. It means that the highly canonical works are not put on a pedestal but given significance by the presence of lesser known authors and literatures, which in turn can thrive on the status of canonical works and make the readers ask, at least in a number of cases, why they are not as well known as any other work. Moreover, the thematic perspectives have enabled the editors to include texts that otherwise would be considered rare choices, as in the previously mentioned section on manifestos. Finally, it is also an advantage that not all canonical works are pressed into a thematic context, thereby allowing for more extensive representations of major works such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

Even though one has to make allowances for the editors' choices, one should still be critical about how inclusive and representative the anthology

is. There are, for example, no Scandinavian authors in this volume and only one, Henrik Ibsen, in the preceding volume, excluding for example Hans Christian Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard. This indicates a slight bias towards leaving the minor literatures of Europe out by privileging the major literatures in the West and literatures from Asia, Africa and South America. In its effort to restore balance and allow for an image of the whole, the new map of world literature thus risks being a distorted one. Minor literatures are not the only ones to be overlooked: for some reason, important French writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, and Georges Perec have not found their way into the anthology, even though English translations are available. Not having even one of these included may be considered unrepresentative, even though the French avant-garde and Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* are both included. And of course, Samuel Beckett became a French writer, who translated *Endgame* into English himself.

Another question of representation is what texts should be selected from an individual author's work. Generally, a good selection has been made, but the choice of short stories from James Joyce's *Dubliners*, rather than of excerpts from *Ulysses* does not seem particularly ambitious, since it was not the short stories that made Joyce seminal in twentieth-century literature. However, there is an ample introduction to Joyce, which compensates for a part of the original omission.

A third bias in the selections concerns the non Western writers that are included, who generally seem to have a strong orientation towards the West and Western literature compared to that of their compatriots and fellow authors. There is nothing wrong with that *per se*, since they are often those who have been internationally canonized, but one should be aware that it signifies a shift from an anthropological view on world literature, where each nation had a tradition of its own, to the idea of a world literature system, where inspiration and tendencies float between nations.

A final problem of selection that every anthology faces is how to end in the present, which inevitably can be seen as a reflection of the editors' opinion on the current state of the art of writing. This is cleverly avoided with a thematic section on media and literature that allows Murakami Haruki and William Gibson to have the last words, which is good since there is no need to try to pinpoint the greatest contemporary writer, especially when they would probably have had to be left out due to copyright issues.

Apart from these critical remarks, it should be made clear that *The Longman Anthology of World Literature* is a very good anthology and an

important contribution to a transnational view on literature, including both minor and major streams and works. The price of this is to give up the idea of a definitive selection, but almost everybody has probably already given up on that anyway. The introductions to the perspectives and to the individual authors are concise without being too short and are presented in crisp, lively prose. The texts themselves make very enjoyable reading and they live up to another criterion of the editors, namely that a text cannot be included just because it is thematically significant, but on the strength of its artistic quality as well.

*Mads Rosendahl Thomsen
University of Aarhus
Denmark*