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Ritual, Myth, and Mysticism in the Work of Mary Butts:
Between Feminism and Modernism (review)

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senting God's intervention in human affairs. Indeed, in the specific case of *Paradise Lost* it could be argued—though Eriksen does not—that Milton's decision to begin the poem not with Christ's birth and exaltation, but instead with Satan in hell can be traced to an architectural metaphors of Satan that was current in his time. Joseph Ben Israel, for example—writing in 1653—asserts in his *The Converted Jew: or the Substance of the Declaration and Confession which was made in the Publique Meeting House at Hexham* (Printed at Gateside [by S(tephens) B(ulkley)] for William London, book-seller in Newcastle, 1653, sig. br), "There is not a design in the world, but either Satan hath a main hand in the laying of the foundation and chief corner-stone of it." Whatever the actual chronological sequence of the poem may be, the first image of *Paradise Lost*'s worldly design, that of Satan lying in the fires of hell, would seem to be a literalization of Israel's architectural notion of Satan. In short, Milton's Satan is literally the bottom or foundation of *Paradise Lost*, while God, who begins the poem's chronological sequence by initiating the exaltation of his son, is the "great architect" (8:72).

The Building in the Text, by bringing together material from a number of sources and applying it to an analysis of how evolving rhetorical conventions shaped the compositional, structural, and visual form of early modern literary production, offers the reader an important interdisciplinary study of how architecture and rhetoric converged over time and emerged in the Renaissance in the form of writing and poetry that was recognizably architectonic and visual in nature.

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Roslyn Reso Foy, *Ritual, Myth, and Mysticism in the Work of Mary Butts: Between Feminism and Modernism*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000. xi + 163 pp. \$34.00 (cloth).

Mary Butts, contemporary and friend of Ezra Pound, H.D., T. S. Eliot, and Roger Fry, to name a few, was a relatively popular British author whose first success came through the little magazines. Her work—which consisted of poetry, fiction, essays, and literary criticism—slipped unfortunately into obscurity after her death in 1937. Only recently have her major works been republished: *Imaginary Letters* (1979), *The Crystal Cabinet: My Childhood at Salterns* (1988), *With and Without Buttons and Other Stories* (1991), *From Altar to Chimney-piece: Selected Stories* (1992), *The Taverner Novels: Armed With Madness, and Death of Felicity Taverner* (1992), *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings* (1998), and *The Classical Novels: The Macedonian/ Scenes From the Life of Cleopatra* (1998). With the publication of Nathalie Blondel's biography of Butts, and the recent publication of the journals, modernist scholars are once again compelled to study Mary Butts. Roslyn Foy is one who has helped

to retrieve Butts's work in order to place the author within the literary context of modernism. Foy's first study of Butts provides a solid exploration of the ways in which Butts evinced her belief in myth and mysticism and how she manifested these beliefs in her complex and oftentimes astonishingly beautiful works. Including chapters on Butts's major works, Foy's study, while not exhaustive, provides an insight into the ways in which Butts translated her intense spirituality and her deep knowledge of classical literature and myth into works that explore the dilemma of living in a post-war world.

Beginning with a chapter on Butts's autobiography "'I Strove to Seize the Inmost Form': *The Crystal Cabinet*," Foy begins to trace the "influences on Butts's intellectual development" (15) that included William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the mystical sanctity of the natural. *The Crystal Cabinet* was Butts's last work, and Foy asserts that in writing this self-study, Butts "realized that without the magic of her Dorset childhood she would not have found the connection between her art and her spirituality, between the visible and invisible worlds, the natural order and the supernatural that . . . set her apart as an artist" (29). The disruption of the chronology of Butts's works is necessary here as this chapter introduces not only literary influences important to the understanding of Butts's work, but also explores the deep connection with the land that Butts was to depend on for personal validation. Only two major works (*Ashe of Rings* and *Armed With Madness*) have a chapter devoted to each. Chapter 2 provides an analysis of Butts's first novel, *Ashe of Rings*, a "merger of war and the fairy tale" (31). Chapter 3 is concerned with Butts's revision of Eliot's *The Wasteland* in her novel *Armed With Madness*. Within these novels, Foy notes, Butts introduces characters and themes that will reemerge in later works. Foy excels in her discussion of the complexities of Butts's mythmaking, making connections between Butts's own works and the works of other contemporary mythmakers: Eliot, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and H.D. Her discussions within these chapters illuminate the major theme contained in all of Butts's works: the condition of the sacred within the modern world. In chapter 4, "'Visible Pan': *Imaginary Letters* (1928), *Death of Felicity Taverner* (1932), *Warning to Hikers* (1932)," Foy explores two novels and a pamphlet that reveal the "tensions between human beings and nature, ancient ritual and modern civilization, . . . and the sexual complexities of contemporary society and the loss of a sustaining past" (73). The next chapter "'Brightness Falls': Three Collections of Short Stories" is comprised of a brief analysis of selected stories from each of the collections. A fuller appreciation of an author whose "genius lies in the short form" (95) seems necessary in this chapter that encompasses so much of her work. Butts's historical novels "mark a . . . shift in Butts' thinking" (14), which, Foy asserts, precludes their inclusion in the main body of the study, and so they are relegated to appendices. The brief discussions of *The Macedonian* and *Scenes From the Life of Cleopatra* are in great part dependent on the scholarship of Ruth Hoberman and her chapter on Butts in *Gendering Classicism: The Ancient World in Twentieth Century*

Women's Historical Fiction (1997). Foy consistently intertwines discussion of Butts's works with discussion of her major influences, allowing for greater understanding of those forces that helped to create Mary Butts's vision of the world in which she lived. One cannot fault the first study that explores its subject with such enthusiasm and grace. If the study seems incomplete, it is because Foy's premise is narrow and provides an introduction to Butts's work within a precise domain. As such, this highly accessible exploration of the works of Mary Butts does what it sets out to do: to reintroduce an author who has been lost to the literary world and to make the work of this author important to the field of modernist studies.

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Darlis A. Miller, *Mary Hallock Foote: Author-Illustrator of the American West*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002. xvii + 297 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

Darlis Miller's biography of Mary Hallock Foote is one of those works of excavation and restoration that are so important as we seek to construct a more accurate sense of literary history. Foote was quite well known during the latter decades of the nineteenth century both as a writer and as an illustrator. Her work, both literary and pictorial, frequently appeared in the influential *Century* magazine, and her novels were published by Houghton Mifflin. She was, Miller notes, "the best-known woman writer and illustrator of the American West" (93). Harper's staff artist W. A. Rogers recalled in 1922 that she had been, during her years of residence and work in the West, "one of the most accomplished illustrators in America" (Robert Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1850–1900* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982], 172). Yet only a few scholars would today recognize her name. Miller undertakes a correction of this lapse into obscurity that is solidly executed and potentially quite valuable.

Of course, there are many forgotten figures. With the best will in the world we cannot remember them all, let alone read and study them with any thoroughness. Why, then, renew our attention to Mary Hallock Foote?

The primary answer to that question is a compelling one indeed: because Foote is a pivotal figure in the current scholarly reconceptualizing of the ways in which the American West has been understood (or misunderstood) and represented. Scarcely a disruptor of accepted social norms—Miller calls her "a conventional woman at heart" (175)—Foote nevertheless demonstrated both in her own life and in her created images a set of alternative roles for women and alternative visions of the West. Her version of the West—somewhat like Mary Austin's later, though always more genteel and less multiculturally inclusive than Austin's—was a place for domestic habitation. Thus, as Miller observes, it "differed sharply" from the dominant versions forwarded by male