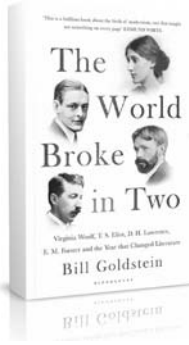


REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
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**The World Broke in Two:
Virginia Woolf, T S Eliot,
D H Lawrence, E M Forster,
and the Year that Changed
Literature**

Bill Goldstein

Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 31 Bedford Avenue, London, WC1B 3AT, UK. Website: <https://www.bloomsbury.com>. 2017. 368 pp. £22.50. HB. ISBN 9781408894583.

If one has not read A S Byatt's *Possessions* and Jeffrey Archer's 'Old Love' in his collection of short stories, *A Quiver Full of Arrows*, then one knows nothing of the joys of studying literature. We are speaking of the kind of life spent literary sleuthing chronicled by Noel Annan in his *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics, and Geniuses*. Few understand the joy the anonymous grammarian felt in his daily grind mentioned by Robert Browning in *A Grammarian's Funeral*. Archivists like Patricia Waugh, for instance, have schooled generations of students that it suffices like her to compile pastiches pretending that such hack-jobs are original contributions to the academic study of literature. Bill Goldstein mercifully, unlike Patricia Waugh and her acolytes, resists this culture of exhibitionism in the humanities and restores literary sleuthing to its proper place as an object of independent inquiry. Goldstein will be remembered for restoring literary studies to its pristine joy when Waugh and her type will be relegated to the dustbins of intellectual history.

The World Broke in Two is a tour de force in synoptic readings, in the lives and works, of Virginia Woolf, T S Eliot, D H Lawrence, and EM Forster during 1922. Goldstein has wisely chosen this hitherto overlooked year because:

'It is after all a grrrrreat littttterary [sic] period',
Ezra Pound wrote to T. S. Eliot in January 1922.

This was a prophetic sentiment Eliot, or Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, or D. H. Lawrence, was unlikely to have shared at that moment. ... For these four authors, all among the major writers of the twentieth century, the year 1922 began, frighteningly, with a blank page even more starkly empty than usual because of personal travails and the open questions of form, style, and subject that haunted them all. Their shared questions were based in a shared fear: that a great (in plain English) literary period Pound foretold might be approaching, but it would pass them by (3).

Pound's sense of urgency cannot be understood today. Literature scholars have forgotten the need to teach their students 'form' and 'style'; instead, they valorise Lacanian arcana while teaching these authors to sophomores. Reading Goldstein's meticulously researched anecdotal book one understands the damage done to literary studies by poseurs who strut as litterateurs. Goldstein's works like Edward Mendelson's works exposes these poseurs for what they are. The Modernist Movement in British literature primarily arose out of an engagement with beauty and through the cultivation of personal relationships rather than from biased manifestos, which are taught with gusto all over the world. The Modernists wrote not because they wanted to be pseudo-philosophers but because they wanted to exorcise their inner demons.

Behind these four writers' creative struggles and triumphs and private dramas—nervous breakdowns, chronic illness, intense loneliness, isolation, and depression ... the difficulties of love and marriage and legal and financial troubles—lay a common spectral ghost: the cataclysm of World War I (6).

It is mistakenly believed that Sigmund Freud shaped the Modernist temper, but Goldstein in his care for details debunks that myth and shows how Freud affected the Modernist Movement. While

D H Lawrence reworked Freud's thesis on the unconscious; T S Eliot was unimpressed by Freud. Eliot preferred the more approachable Roger Vittoz. It was only Scofield Thayer, who in his prolonged therapy with Sigmund Freud can be said to have brought anything Freudian in the classically psychoanalytic sense to Modernism. Thayer, as Goldstein points out, was pivotal in T S Eliot's career. This fact continues to be unknown by most Eliot scholars. Through Wikipedia, they know of Pound's role in editing Eliot but are unaware of Thayer's role in shaping a whole generation of poets bringing Freud to these poets' lives by proxy.

Hermione Lee's monumental biography of Virginia Woolf is a queering of Woolf's life and works. Goldstein's appraisal of Woolf, on the other hand, is more reasonable:

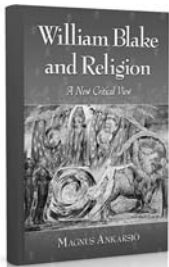
In February 1922, Virginia Woolf looked over her shoulder at her friends and rivals and remarked in her diary with a mix of admiration and awful surprise, 'How these writers live in their works—How ambition consumes them!' How right she was (2–3).

Goldstein proves that it was ambition and not any erotic horripilation, which informed the Modernists. They were more bothered with mundanities like sales of books and lecture tours than with say, Dadaism. It is only one lesser than them, Ezra Pound, who bothered, like all mediocre intellects, with manifestos and obscure treatises since Pound himself could not write anything worthwhile. Goldstein's book is an entertaining book, which is scholarly. In short, Goldstein's book is one of a kind and is essential reading for anyone in love with literature and literary studies.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

Psychoanalyst

Assistant Professor of English
Narasinha Dutt College, Howrah.



**William Blake and Religion:
A New Critical View**
Magnus Ankarsjö

McFarland and Company, McFarland,
960 NC Hwy 88 W, Jefferson NC
28640, USA. Website: <https://mcfarlandbooks.com>. 2009. viii + 163
pp. \$39.95. PB. ISBN 9780786445592.

Magnus Ankarsjö is merely novel in his approach to Blake studies and does not effect a paradigm change in Blake scholarship. The book under review is more of a polemical hotchpotch with irrelevant details thrown in. Ankarsjö, in his hurry to write, has not bothered to read the correspondence between Kathleen Raine and K D Sethna. His scholarship is limited to the old theme of Raine's reading of Blake as a Swedenborgian. This rebellious streak in Blake was not an accommodation of Blake's mother's Protestantism, but rather a rejection of all forms of hierarchical institutions for a more radical communion with YHWH, 'Yahweh'. This reviewer finds no merit in Ankarsjö's obsession with Blake's mother's involvement with Christianity. Instead, as Blake's corpus proves, he was a Kabbalist more than anything else. Blake is so original in his poetry and prose that Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence cannot be applied to Blake's works. Therefore, what Ankarsjö believes to be important in Blake's oeuvre is only misguided scholarly architectonics. Ankarsjö's approach works rather well with William Wordsworth and Wordsworth's connection to his motherly sister, Dorothy. Blake is one of those rare poets who defy Freudian and Christian analyses.

Further, Blake was never involved in utopias as is understood today and by Ankarsjö. Ankarsjö's stress on the utopic Blake could be better applied to P B Shelley's projects of skewed utopias. Just because someone ferrets out some obscure details about a poet does not make that poet's poems a testimony to these discoveries. Literature is not archaeology or one of the social sciences that one has to perforce read poems from particular biases. Blake scholarship has only a sense of an ending but certainly not the ending envisaged by Ankarsjö.

This is a book not worth its publisher's good name. Neither is it a sourcebook for students. This book will be relegated to the morass of history. Ankarsjö does not have the critical faculty for understanding that Blake's oceanic experiences are more akin to *nirvikalpa* samadhi than to utopic ecstasies.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay