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Jane Hodson. *Language and Revolution in Burke, Wollstonecraft, Paine, and Godwin*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007. 216p.

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Jane Hodson explores selected writings from the 1790s in relation to existing linguistic assumptions. She argues that those writers engaged in the revolution debate did not form clear-cut dichotomies but were rather struggling to gain public approval for their views by validating their language and distancing it from vulgar forms. By examining certain linguistic aspects of the texts, Hodson offers new insights into the period by concluding that the more radical the writer, the less radical the language of the text. Hodson performs a lexical analysis of four major writings within the debate, Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790), Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), and William Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793, 1796, 1798).

Burke's text represented the conservative outlook, condemning the French revolution and promoting the existing system, whether in France or England, while the other three texts differently represented the radical outlook, favoring change and reformation. Wollstonecraft and Paine also directly rejected and criticized Burke's views, but Godwin's text offered a generic treatise commenting on the existing political context. In each chapter, Hodson compares the most notable linguistic aspects between Burke's text and the other writers' texts. She also briefly refers to former writings by the selected writers and their contemporaries, capturing the context in which the writers of the 1790s wrote and the existing views to which they responded.

The book reveals the huge amount of background work the writer has performed as her extensive bibliography indicates. Her command over the linguistic and grammar material she discusses also appears in her detailed Appendix of the "Fifty Linguistic Texts." She efficiently integrates these texts in her study, especially upon demonstrating the ways in which the selected authors may have responded to such texts. Hodson engages with modern and contemporary scholarship on the selected language aspects, providing concise overviews of critics' reactions to each other's views and identifying points of agreement and disagreement. She also carefully defines key concepts, like "connectedness" in Burke's texts and Paine's "simple style," before offering her analysis. In each case, Hodson notes the ways in which such concepts have changed meanings and connotations with time.

The writer applies a very systematic method of analysis, which she continues to use throughout her study and conscientiously identifies the possible weaknesses

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of her method. My only reservation about the application of her method is that she frequently selects the initial part of the longer texts upon comparing them to shorter ones in order to ensure equal length. This strategy overlooks the writers' succeeding use or misuse of the elements under consideration. Although I realize the inability to objectively compare texts of unequal length, I would recommend analyzing the whole text and then comparing the percentage of use rather than the actual use of each element.

Despite the book's undeniable strengths, further minor questions appear as to the method of analysis. From the first pages, Hodson almost immediately starts with a purely theoretical background and reviews the existing linguistic literature, which may be confusing for some readers. She overlooks providing the beginner reader in the era with the essential historical and political background to appreciate the selected works and the value of her study; perhaps a brief note justifying her reasons for selecting the four texts on which she focuses would be useful. Despite the interesting points the second chapter raises while examining the formal language of the period, it is over-detailed for the reader of the following chapters.

Hodson might have ensured stronger coherence between the chapters if she had provided directions in a brief introduction, clarifying the goals of the each chapter especially the first two. Another suggestion would be to initially state the book's goals and to frequently remind the readers in each chapter. Although the providing of the linguistic and grammar background at the beginning of the study is a major strength, which enables readers to appreciate the method of analysis, perhaps a summary of that information in one chapter instead of two may further focus the scope and save space for an introduction and/or further analysis. The next four chapters work better in terms of clarity and cohesion by their introducing key concepts from later chapters and skillfully performing a dialogic study between the four writers and their texts.

I highly recommend this book to students and researchers in the Romantic period. The interesting language and style of *Language and Revolution* combined with its insightful conclusions would enable readers to better appreciate this influential period with its vibrant writers, who have, as the book relentlessly proves, re-shaped the existing and future mind-sets beyond those writers' expectations. ✱