

# TIMES ONLINE

From Times Online

May 7, 2008

## This week

### A note from the Editor

Five years after his death, and despite heavy critical trouncings in the TLS and elsewhere, the spirit of Edward Said still haunts the subject of how the West sees the East. The subtexts of English novels have always been part of the argument. In 1995 the issue here was Jane Austen's attitude to the slave trade – with Said saying that the author of *Mansfield Park* quietly accepted slavery as a source of wealth, and a TLS critic roundly dismissing the charge. This week the novel in contention is *Daniel Deronda*, long ago criticized by Said for its inspiration to Zionists, but which, in the view of Kenneth M. Newton, also shows George Eliot's sense of the dispossessed.

Our Middle East editor, Robert Irwin, considers two new books which continue the same battles in broader fields. Felipe Fernández-Armesto reviews a biography of Cabeza de Vaca, a Spanish conquistador who, by his own bizarre South American record in the mid sixteenth century, muddies many a crude generalization about colonizers and colonized.

In a week for Irish themes, Jonathan Keates reviews a new novel by Sebastian Barry, set in the last years of a West of Ireland hospital “for the superior correction of wounded seats of thought”. Patricia Craig considers links between history and literature in the North since the 1950s – and George Brock has been reading a memoir of journalistic guilt at glamorizing violence.

The arrival at the TLS of a new poem by Paul Muldoon is always a big event. The publication here of his great elegy “*Incantata*” was a high point of the 1990s, and his shorter poems have appeared in the paper for a quarter of a century. This week, “*When the Pie Was Opened*” offers a taste of his latest collection of poems and translations from Latin, Welsh and Irish, to be published later this month in the enterprising “*Cahiers*” series from the American University in Paris, which includes works by Muriel Spark and our own Deputy Editor, Alan Jenkins.

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