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Lisa Scholl’s excellent study *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman: Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau, George Eliot* (Ashgate, 2011) sets the work in translating various texts by three canonical English writers of the nineteenth century – Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau, George Eliot – against the backdrop of Imperial colonisation and the cultural aftershock subsequent to the arrival in Victorian England of new Continental philosophical works in French and German. Scholl offers fascinating insight into the writings of Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot both within and beyond the scope of translation and explores the cultural, historical and professional implications of their work both within and beyond the era of its production.

No longer simply an adjunct of the original author’s intellectual vision, the nineteenth-century translator’s voice and values take on greater significance in this era, not only as professional authorship in its own right, but as a significant intellectual window into the strange new world beyond the English cultural vision. By deliberately situating her subjects – Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot – as pupils to the tutelage of their linguistic masters, Scholl creates for herself an ingenious theoretical frame via which to examine the intellectual, epistemological, social and cultural implications of female writers as translators occupying the master’s role. Here, Scholl approaches the very genre of translational writing as various acts of *becoming*: textual and literal. The form offered opportunities for writing and travel that aided moving beyond the ideological imperatives then imposed on middle-class women in their *becoming* professional writers.

Scholl’s examination offers a comprehensive and insightful discussion of the ways and means of the genre of translation as writing, specifically by women professionals. As *ways*, Scholl explores the impact of translation as a rebellious act; the exploration of convictions via an alternative and perhaps even original language; the rebellion of student against master; the pupil’s exploitation of the junction between interpreting the master’s knowledge without necessarily replicating it. Scholl conceives the language of transgression in its multiplicity; the pupil’s mastery of foreign language/s; the linguistic dialogue that emerges between original and translated works; and the development of a ‘new’ language made possible by accessing foreign texts and cultures, and the implications of this writing in transgressing the boundaries of Victorian class and gender precepts. As *means*, Scholl argues that translating literary works in effect revolutionised accessing greater intellectual freedoms for women given the genre afforded them significant opportunities to travel: to directly experience foreign cultures, and to apply what Scholl terms ‘appropriating the master’s authority’; to ‘write back’ to nation while simultaneously challenging conventional ideologies of class, empire, gender and subjectivity in Victorian England.

The book is organised into three parts. Part one – ‘Learning the Language of Transgression’ – comprises two chapters considering the business of middle-class women writing beyond the domestic sphere, and how the practice itself can be characterised as an act of transgression; linguistically and socially. In the first chapter, Scholl explores the educational backgrounds of Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot (‘Masters at Home’) and offers close readings tracing pupil/master relationships in their fiction; in Eliot’s *Romola* (1862/3) and *Middlemarch* (1871/2), and in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847). In the second, Scholl accounts for the offshore pedagogic careers and activities of these women (‘Masters Abroad’) and...
similarly offers close readings tracking attitudes of pupil to master in their fiction and essays; in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Villette* (1853), and Brontë’s own ‘Belgian’ essays (1842/3), among others; Martineau’s translation of Comte’s *Positive Philosophy*; and Eliot’s literary relationship to David Strauss as evident in her letters (c. 1845/6), and to a lesser degree Feuerbach and Spinoza, among others. Part two – ‘Beyond Translation’ – comprises three chapters considering the movement of Scholl’s subjects from translators to commissioned authors; the intellectual and ideological realities of the nineteenth century facilitating public and professional literary opportunities for educated, middle-class women; and concludes with an overview of Martineau’s foreign travel and various writings. Part three – ‘Vacating the Hearth’ – comprises two chapters dedicated to examining the travel writing and cultural translations of Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot. Scholl explores Martineau’s American travel, her themes (e.g. slavery) and the reception of her writings (*Society in America* [1837] and *Retrospect of Western Travel* [1838] among others) as well as her travel and writing in Egypt (1847). Scholl then proceeds to examine Eliot’s Continental travels (and interest in philosophy) as represented in her journal writings and letters, and its resonance in her novels (*Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda* [1874/6], and *Romola*); and concludes with Brontë’s Belgian travels (her interest in education) and narrative reverberation (*Villette* and *The Professor*). Scholl’s conclusion, ‘Colonising the Text,’ examines the penetration of the translator within and between texts and interweaves into the discussion a kind of implied postcolonial consciousness. The translational role emerges as dissonance: rupturing and contravening audience sensibilities as much as preconceptions of authorial control and authority.

Scholl’s close reading of a number of literary and translational texts by her central subjects are fascinating, not just in terms of their elucidative qualities, but in the fine way in which Scholl situates this writing within history, and at times juxtaposes the impact of writing generally, and translation specifically, on the various familial/professional relationships of her subjects. Scholl takes this reading one step further, however, by also exploring selected fictional works by Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot as a way of considering a kind of historiography of interpretation in their corpus of writing generally, and their novels in particular. In this way, Scholl interweaves into her study various forms of writing – fiction (novels, short stories, etc.), and non-fiction (private letters, articles, essays, reviews, intellectual works, etc.). This intertextuality in many ways illustrates and exemplifies the subversive and transgressive qualities of the genre itself: translation is never simply one text, but rather a multiplicity of defiant acts as texts and becoming.

Scholl’s is a thoughtful and skillfully researched discussion that includes a rich and impressive bibliography. Her study encourages reading and rereading the novels of Brontë, Martineau, and Eliot, as well as reading beyond them, embracing the oft-overlooked translational works of these writers. *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman* is not just a companion to colonial and postcolonial, gender, and/or nineteenth-century literary studies, but a distinctive, original, and finely crafted work of scholarship in its own right.

Nicole Anae

This review is late. The paperback edition of Rabaté’s *The Ghosts of Modernity* came out in 2010, the hardcover more than ten years earlier, the original, French essays even before that. Certainly, there is no need at this point to recommend the book: it carries on its covers not just a blurb from Marjorie Perloff but excerpts from glowing reviews in *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Modern Language Quarterly*, the *South Atlantic Review*. But it’s worth returning to discussion of the book on the e-pages of *Transnational Literature* because its particular relevance to our fields of study has not yet been widely discussed.

Usefully, *Ghosts* challenges views of modernism that limited it to (or emphasised it as) a solely European and American movement and moment. Declarations and approaches by figures like Eliot and Pound that specified Modernism to a particular moment or continent are not rejected (in fact, embraced) but informed by a sort of “‘spectrographic’ analysis” (3) that opens up the way we view modernity and refuses to declare it dead. Rabaté, then, joins the recent and growing trend of theorists who re-imagine modernism in ways that allow for much more transnational and trans-historical participation.

Previous reviews have cited, praised, sometimes doubted the peculiar approach of the book. At moments it seems to be a series of essays circling a theme, or a new philosophy of tradition, or a work of literary psychoanalysis. It is all of these, and something else. The general idea is to unpack the hauntings that inspired modernism and to complicate claims of moving beyond modernism before addressing its spectres. Rabaté’s chapters read different figures and moments, assembling an interesting (while not wholly unfamiliar) modernist lineage – Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Joyce, Breton, Broch, Beckett, Barthes, Riding, Stein, Beckett some more. The apparent focuses of the chapters and the description of the Crosscurrents series that published *Ghosts* make the modest claim to address the modernisms of previously ‘separated and isolated Europes’ (vii), but what results is no less than a vast expansion of Eliot’s ‘revisionist agenda’ in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (xii). ‘The transformation of the writer into a specter’ becomes a defining characteristic of modernism (3), and this is a truly transnational possibility. Think Yoko Tawada. Think Kōbō Abe or José Saramago or Toni Morrison, any of whom could have a chapter in Rabaté’s next edition of this book.

Haunting is, of course, not a new subject of literary inquiry. I think, for example, of Flannery O’Connor’s wonderful ‘Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction,’¹ which defends Southern fiction from its unfair labels by claiming that the region is Christ-haunted in a peculiar way that influences all its writers, Christian or not. Rabaté’s book expands upon (or perhaps combines) the previous ways we have described literary haunting. The ‘ghostly writer … imagines himself posthumous so as to mediate between his past and future and to judge the present’ in, perhaps most noticeably, the chapter on Mallarmé’s poems about his deceased son


This means that modernism should not be reduced to the oft-quoted, Pound-ian effort to ‘make it new’. According to Rabaté, ‘the return of the past is too often overlooked because the declaration of the “new” is taken at face value’ (3).

Of course, the declaration of the ‘new’ is not always taken at face value. Houston Baker, for example, certainly complicates the relationship between modernism and the new in his *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, which implies that Pound’s brand of Anglo-American modernism was actually far less new in its relative tradition than what was happening in Harlem. But, to be sure, this was (and is) the case as a general rule. Rabaté will continuously push against that historical rule in *Ghosts* while also pushing against national boundaries.

*Ghosts* is at its most ‘transnational’ when, for example, expanding Mallarmé’s linguistic philosophy to all languages: a ‘secret interaction between life and death … regulates the evolution of every language’ (112), tying that evolution to a sort of resuscitation-by-cultural-appropriation-and-exchange. It is a push and pull between the ‘national’ and the ‘antinational’ that evolves language and inspires poets (119-120). The hero of *Ghosts*, though, is Samuel Beckett, the ‘Irish writer’ who gets two chapters to himself and sneaks into quite a few others (150). Beckett cannot, of course, be simply described as an Irish writer. He was a self-translator, member of the French resistance, director of his plays in German, filmmaker in the U.S., and so on. Rabaté’s selection of such a transnational figure does not feel accidental, and it aids him in his attempt to extend modernism beyond some of the narrower temporal and geographical parameters within which we tend to enclose it.

Modernism instead becomes a sort of ‘a “continuous present”’ (215), haunted by ‘ghosts’ who ‘designate blind spots of knowledge’ (220), and grounded in ‘a refutation of [those] specters’ (216). The theme, Rabaté acknowledges more than once, is at least as old as *Hamlet*. He finds in Beckett, though, ‘the wish […] to plunge the world into mourning, as if to darken its colors, so that a flash of light will be allowed to burst forth here and there’ from, importantly, anywhere (232). The haunting of modernity is ‘meta-historical’ and ‘endlessly generating ghosts ready to haunt an unwitting future’ (230) – there is a kinship here with a kind of haunting discussed by more than one postcolonial thinker. *The Ghosts of Modernity* shows the benefits to a literature that makes a focus – in form and content – of those various hauntings.

*Paul Ardoin*

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There are observers, particularly among American Indians themselves, who deny that the term ‘postcolonial’ can be applied to them, given that they are still colonised. There are others, however, for whom postcolonial analysis is eminently applicable to the Native American situation, including such central figures as Louis Owens (Choctaw-Irish), and clearly Punyashree Panda agrees. Her book accordingly applies postcolonial discourse analysis to four significant Native writers, persuasively situating their writing within interpretative practices widely associated with the work of postcolonial writers from other parts of the world.

Panda’s examination of her chosen writers is well supported by reference to critical currents within Native American studies as well as postcolonial studies, both areas represented by a selection of theorists and critics from each field. The confluence of interests in the two disciplines in critiquing the injuries of colonial oppression, which in the case of Indigenous nations are ongoing, is laid out in lucid fashion, with recourse to familiar observers as well as less familiar ones. With respect to the familiarity of the writers, three of the four texts chosen for analysis – each writer is represented by just one book – might be thought to be somewhat overfamiliar in this context. Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks* and Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*, in particular, have received extensive critical treatment, while Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water* is not much less well-known. Only Métis Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed* does not belong to the acknowledged canon of North American Indigenous writing, although it is well-known in Canada. From one angle, of course, dealing with such widely-taught texts makes the book’s syntheses of the debates surrounding them of relevance to courses where they are included.

Despite these useful characteristics, however, the book contains serious flaws at the level of writing and editing. To take the latter first, there are numerous typographical mistakes, punctuation errors and formatting inconsistencies, including within quotations, beginning on the table of contents where one text is in italics while the other three are not. Neither the author nor the publisher appear to know that the frequently-mentioned Frantz Fanon’s name has a ‘t’. More seriously, the constant use of words or grammatical constructions that are wrong is not acceptable in scholarly work. There is a certain irony in making this observation, given that the book refers to how ‘[u]sing the very language of the colonizer, postcolonial writers break the rules set forth by colonials in the act of their writing’ (11). In the very next line Panda proves her point by saying: ‘Postcolonial writing makes a conscious effort to demur the stereotypes and reestablish their identities’ (11). A charitable reader might find the use of ‘to demur’ here creative and bold, and perhaps I would too were it not for all the other non-standard uses that cannot, even charitably, be considered a postcolonial wresting of control of the language from hegemonic forces. When there are so many of them, they become an irritant, a barrier to the circulation of Panda’s thinking about the interesting material she is dealing with. Moreover, they frequently do her thinking a disservice by striking a jarring note: what does it mean to say that Donna Benet ‘gives a wholesome idea of what postcolonial is all about’ (9)? How ready are readers of English to accept structures such as: ‘Erdrich achieves to present the novel “the Indian way”’ (189) or neologisms such as ‘[t]he funkiesm of the community’ (156)?
In addition, the book contains too many distractingly naïve arguments, of the sort: ‘Erdrich being a woman herself, the women characters in her novels are almost always vivacious and interesting’ (64), or: ‘GGRW, having been written by King, a mixed-blood Cherokee, hence speaks from the Native point of view’ (116). The former needs no commentary, while the pitfalls in the latter are many, from the assumption that anyone from a particular group produces an authentic discourse simply by virtue of group affiliation to the corollary that anyone who is not from the group cannot appreciate or understand its point of view. By implication, Panda cannot believe this, or she would not have invested so much in a book that, as is usual in this area, is not just an analysis of Indigenous American perspectives but an intervention supporting greater attention to and respect for Native ways of perceiving realities and of constructing them in written narrative.

The espousal of Native epistemologies and values makes for an uneasy dichotomy to some extent given that Panda is also insistent that it is ‘advisable that one looks at these texts from a postcolonial, poststructural, postmodern perspective’ (205). I think she is right, for American Indian writers are certainly not only cognisant of but sensitive to the cultural implications of such perspectives, and whether they use them, make fun of them or attempt to reject them their work has come under pressure from these discourse areas. The writers she deals with are not only aware of these perspectives but have contributed to furthering and enriching the uses to which they may be put, and to them could be added many others, from Gerald Vizenor to Diane Glancy, Gordon Henry Jr or Richard Van Camp. Indeed, it is surprising that Panda only once refers to Vizenor, and even uses an anonymous website source as her principal source for the subject of history’s being written by the victor. Whether Panda’s work is considered bold and quirky, or awkward and uneven, is up to each reader, but my feeling is that this book should have been edited with much greater care so that its synthesis of the issues could emerge with more authority.

David Callahan
Integrity and Historical Research edited by Tony Gibbons and Emily Sutherland (Routledge, 2012)

Giving evidence to the Leveson Inquiry into press standards in the UK, Daily Express owner, Richard Desmond, was asked about his interest in the ethical standards of those writing in his newspapers. ‘Ethical, I don’t quite know what the word means’ he responded. He had previously commented, ‘We don’t talk about ethics or morals because it is a very fine line and everybody’s ethics are different’.

Integrity and Historical Research is a book which confronts the dilemma Desmond faced, though whether he would acknowledge its message is another matter. In assembling this collection of chapters Gibbons and Sutherland have drawn on a number of researchers from a variety of academic backgrounds and the messages they convey are as different as the authors, but with a linking focus on how they have dealt with what could be considered difficult situations.

The book begins with a discussion on the meanings of integrity and the difficulty of defining the term. Tony Gibbons reviews the way in which historians have presented the events of the past and the difficulties of achieving balance. He concludes that integrity ‘is a matter of negotiation between the virtues and in coming to a decision as to how best to balance the weight accorded to each applicable virtue in a given instance, it is a matter of practical reason – a matter of wisdom’.

From this introduction, and outline of the role and difficulty of establishing integrity within each author’s approach, the subsequent chapters offer a series of case studies into how historical events have been interpreted in various genres of literature. Jerome De Groot discusses the role of historical fiction and ethics, taking as his example the way writers of historical novels deal with perceived authenticity: do they need to be accurate about all events within the period in which they are writing, can they be ‘trusted’ to give an accurate account of what occurred, or is it necessary to soften or bend the ‘truth’ in order to make the fiction more palatable or acceptable? De Groot identifies a number of interesting examples where authors were criticised for their approach to aspects of language or race.

Patricia Duncker’s chapter on Fictions and Histories extends this theme noting that ‘some writers use historical fiction for a very serious purpose; to avoid the consequences of speaking openly on taboo subjects’. Thus she claims discussions of homosexuality in ancient times can be deemed more acceptable to some readers who might find this difficult if a novel was set in a more contemporary period. Further she argues that it is possible to write more persuasively about modern problems by giving them an historical context. The first half of this chapter draws on a range of examples from Tolstoy to Hasse, and was originally written as a separate paper. The second half, Tudor Afterword, is an analysis of how different authors have presented the events surrounding Henry VII, Thomas Cromwell and Anne Boleyn. The reader is left asking is there a truth, and if so which truth is it?

Defamation is linked with truth, and Sutherland’s chapter explores this concept. She also considers the truth of Thomas Cromwell as portrayed by Hilary Mantel in Wolf Hall, but uses Mantel’s portrayal of More to illustrate the point that no author should defame the
subject of their discussion. ‘To defame the dead is no less heinous than to defame the living’ (84).

It is clear that all the authors of historical fiction have to confront this dilemma. Hosking identifies Kate Grenville’s *The Secret River* as a recent novel which dealt with the impact of historical events on current political dilemmas. Hosking returns to the overarching theme of the book, integrity in presentation. He returns to Newland’s nineteenth-century work on interactions between indigenous and white settlers, again asking the question about the truth of the matters under discussion and questioning the effects of colonialism and suggests that such literature needs to be read more widely by those who wish to understand ‘such difficult history’.

Nicholas Brown uses three authors’ work to focus on the ethical issues which confront writers using life stories in their work. He writes clearly and concisely about each of these authors’ work (Reed, Somerville and Peel) explaining the reason for their selection and the way each approached the task of interpretation. This chapter is very readable for historian and non-historian alike. Brown approaches his topic with great clarity and thoughtfulness, and the result is a chapter which stimulates the reader, and certainly in this reviewer achieved the effect he hoped for in his final paragraph (you will have to read the book yourself to find out what it was!).

A discussion of the interpretation of oral histories follows directly after Brown’s analysis. Angela Franks to some extent builds on Brown, but in her case it is at a personal level as the two books she discusses are her own. The chapter outlines her methodology and approach to ensuring that the personal histories of the people of Nottinghamshire were recorded using information from those who had lived through a number of traumatic events, particularly the Second World War and closure of the local coalmines. Like Brown’s piece, this chapter is very readable. It is interesting that in itself it is a history of how a particular approach was adopted and worked for the author. On the downside it did not conform with the editors’ mandate. Where does integrity fit in? This should have been made more explicit rather than tacitly assumed by the reader.

Chapters 9, 10 and 11 look to other interpretations of people’s lives, moving from literature to stage and screen. Like the chapters which preceded them, these are interesting essays. The adoption of the Abelard-Eloise story to illustrate how nudity, castration and sexuality can be portrayed is vivid and leaves many questions in the reader’s mind. Juanita Feros Ruys returns to the notion of integrity in how these issues are dealt with and posits the protagonists within the medieval setting, contrasting the success of the various interpretations of the tale. María Reimóndez’s chapter goes further, exploring where the intersection between fact and fiction occurs. She asks, and successfully answers, a number of complex questions mostly based on her own work not just as author but translator, a task which involves even greater integrity than direct interpretation. Her conclusion challenges the reader to think further about this dilemma:

Paths and roads continue. Nobody knows yet what the image will finally suggest, but integrity is maybe more relevant to the process than the product. Integrity means we
try our best to show that there is a different way of telling stories, reading the past and therefore living. (185)

The final chapter of the book draws together the role of historians in fiction and film. David Mosler and Jessica Murrell consider how the discipline of history has evolved and how novelists have treated historians, particularly Kingsley Amis in *Lucky Jim*. But other ‘historians’ also have a role in novels, and the authors briefly identify many other fictional academics who have achieved a degree of fame, and one is left to ponder if these fictions were based on truth. Having dealt with the academic in text the authors then consider the academic historian in film, and there are a surprising number of films where historians play a variety of roles. This very readable chapter refocuses the reader on the importance of integrity in the cultural and social portrayal of such people.

Not all the chapters in this book fit the theme of interpretation of integrity set out in the first chapter. Cătălina Botez takes a single book approach to discuss the concept of Techné in Levi’s book *The Periodic Table*. The entire chapter is built around this analysis, and whilst it is interesting and well written, its placement as the third chapter of the book seems at odds with the chapters that abut it. It certainly concerns interpretation, but lacks the focus on integrity the book title suggests.

At a time when oral history, historical fiction and film are increasingly popular, the concept of integrity is increasing in importance. Modern technology has meant that all of life is recorded somewhere. The interpretation of an individual’s actions by another is constantly under scrutiny, as the Leveson Inquiry shows us. This volume presents a useful collection of essays which illustrate to the reader how others have used their research material. It is not just a book for historians or those studying historical subjects. It is not a ‘how to’ book, but more a book of examples. It leaves the reader with a whole series of suggestions that need to be explored, and a need to return to individual chapters and follow up many of the references cited.

*Cecile Cutler*

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Sir Walter Murdoch was a grand old man of Australian letters. Long before his nephew Keith and great-nephew Rupert made the name Murdoch synonymous with Australian journalism, Walter’s enormously popular weekly essays and columns in *The Argus, The West Australian* and other newspapers made Murdoch a household name.

His day job was as an academic, as foundation professor of English at the University of Western Australia. Murdoch University is named after one of WA’s most outstanding public intellectuals. But over his long life (1874–1970), it was Walter Murdoch’s journalistic writings, which began in 1899 and continued right into the early days of *The Australian* in the 1960s, which gave him national standing. Dozens of selections and collections of his essays were published between the World Wars and after, and his biography of Alfred Deakin re-released in 1999. This volume contains a selection from both, plus some ‘answers to readers’.

The professor’s tone is avuncular; his educated and Presbyterian opinions are the voice of an older Australia. I could imagine Sir Walter and my grandfather yarning over any number of issues. It’s illuminating to hear such voices again. In our world, awash with practitioners of creative writing, it comes as a wry pleasure to hear Walter Murdoch’s sober admission that has not ‘the slightest turn for narrative art, being, I fancy the only scribbler in Australia who has not a manuscript novel up his sleeve’. Maybe things haven’t changed that much.

There plenty of ‘op ed’ pieces kicking around these days; opinion is cheap, I was taught in journalism school. But a lot of it is quickly knocked up to chase the 24-hour news cycle. Sir Walter’s essays, as considered and careful writings, have a more enduring quality. They stand somewhere between sermons and blogs, and it seems there is still a healthy appetite for such well-turned short pieces. Black Inc Publishing has been publishing a popular yearbook of the best Australian essays for over a decade now.

This selection is notable for both the essays which speak so strongly of their own time, and for those which are still piquant and relevant. The essay ‘On Rabbits, Morality, etc’ from which the title is taken, is a caution against excessive pride in our ethics and educated decisions. Murdoch describes the battle to claim the dubious honour of having brought rabbits to Australia. Importing rabbits turned out to be an environmental calamity, but the action was made with the best intentions, indeed, lauded by contemporary society. Future generations, Murdoch points out, may well live to curse our best attempts and our most learned assumptions.

The essay on fear is an exhortation to people who are frightened of innovation, discovery and boldness. Its reproach to the ‘cowardice’ of those ‘who fear the world is going to the dogs’ is apt nearly a century after it was written. And then he ticks off ‘the elderly’ for being the chief carriers of such fear. It would be a brave commentator today who would dare label seniors like that today.

In another essay, Murdoch takes a stab at psychology and fashions in definitions of behaviour, sanity and mental illness. He might have almost written the same essay today on parts of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.
But much of the fascination is the essays which describe and advise that older, other Australia. When Murdoch recommends great poets and novelists, his taste in literature emerges as decidedly Victorian, certainly pre-Leavisite. He praises poets I have not even heard of, let alone the ones like Southey that I have heard of but never bothered to read.

In Murdoch’s world, tripe and onions are a delicacy; blokes are men and mostly pink at that, but it is not fair to criticise him for being brought up in another era. What is fascinating is how hard he worked at being the voice of reason, of fairness, of decency, in a society still conscious of making itself. In the 1920s and 30s, this was a burgeoning offshoot of the British Empire, and it was a different sort of globalism that Australia encountered. The theme he returns to most often is how to define Australia and Australian-ness.

If Americans are doomed to keep losing and re-discovering their innocence, and the English are endlessly breaking down their class system, perhaps Australians are doomed to keep rediscovering and redefining their national identity. I was surprised to be reminded that we had one in the early twentieth century. This is the Australia we had before multiculturalism, before the 1960s and various social revolutions, before, we are currently led to believe, anything interesting happened. Murdoch returns again and again to what we think of ourselves, what we might be, and almost more importantly, what the rest of the world thinks of us. What’s a typical Australian? What can this country contribute to the world?

There is one disappointment with this edition. It has been lightly edited, in that Sir Walter’s original spelling and punctuation has been preserved. That’s good. But the editing has been a little too light in other ways.

One essay makes reference to ‘pale pills for pink people’ and I thought I remembered an echo of a popular advertisement. Google, of course, came up with the slogan ‘pink pills for pale people’, and apparently it was as ubiquitous then as McDonald’s golden arches are now, but on first reading, I missed the joke. There might have been others I missed that would have been worth a footnote.

More irritating, there is no date of original publication on any of the essays. It was frustrating to read references to things like ‘Signor Mussolini’, ‘the present financial muddle’ or the ‘end of the Great War’ without having a date to put it into context. When did Mussolini merit an honorific – or was that a snide tone? Was the economic ‘muddle’ the Great Depression, or just an ordinary recession? Was the Great War still large in memory because World War II was not clearly on the horizon?

There were no dates or sources printed in the original collection and selections, either, so the editor has taken them wholesale. But I found the dates for at least a dozen of the essays as originally published, in the National Library’s newspaper archive, www.trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper. It took me just under half an hour. A researcher might have spent a day to give a little more context, which would have made the whole edition more valuable.

1 For example, in Walter Murdoch, Collected Essays of Walter Murdoch (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1938); Walter Murdoch, The Spur of the Moment (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1939); Walter Murdoch, Speaking Personally (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1946); Walter Murdoch, Lucid Intervals (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1936).

Overall, it’s wonderful to be re-introduced to the voice of popular and educated Australia in the early twentieth century. In the introduction, Murdoch is likened to Clive James in his breadth and erudition, and the comparison is a good one. Australians really do subscribe to a tradition of popular essays. Most importantly, it’s worth reading how we grappled to define (European) Australian culture, and find that, surprise, it’s been there all the time.

Robyn Douglass

*Literature of the Indian Diaspora* constitutes a major study of the literature and other cultural texts of the Indian diaspora. It is also an important contribution to diaspora theory in general. Applying a theoretical framework based on trauma, mourning/impossible mourning, spectres, identity, travel, translation, and recognition, this anthology uses the term ‘migrant identity’ to refer to any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously or unconsciously, as a group in displacement. The present anthology examines the works of key writers, many now based across the globe in Canada, Denmark, America and the UK – V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Balachandra Rajan, M.G. Vassanji, Jhumpa Lahiri, Gautam Malkani, Shiva Naipaul, Tabish Khair and Shauna Singh Baldwin, among them – to show how they exemplify both the diasporic imaginary and the respective traumas of Indian diasporas.

Corelating the concept of diaspora – literally dispersal or the scattering of a people – with the historical and contemporary presence of people of Indian sub-continental origin in other areas of the world, this anthology uses this paradigm to analyse Indian expatriate writing. In *Reworlding*, O.P. Dwivedi has commissioned ten critical essays by as many scholars to examine major areas of the diaspora. Collectively, the essays demonstrate that the various literary traditions within the Indian diaspora share certain common resonances engendered by historical connections, spiritual affinities, and racial memories. Individually, they provide challenging insights into the particular experiences and writers. At the core of the diasporic writing is the haunting presence of India and the shared anguish of personal loss that generate the aesthetics of ‘reworlding’ underlying and unifying this body of literature. This collection will be of value to scholars and students of Indian writing in English, postcolonial writing in general, and the literature of exile and immigration.

This collection of essays also retraces the postcolonial narratives of Indian diaspora etched by diasporic Indian writers. What mainly comes under its scrutiny is the complex experience of migrancy, encompassing both cultural hybridisation and assimilation on the one hand and lingering nostalgia and cultural alienation on the other. Its critique of the recent and not so recent diasporic texts, at once probing and insightful, foregrounds the deterritorialised, expatriate sensibility of their authors. Noticeably, the study contends that this sensibility blends seamlessly with various prominent features of this variety of diasporic writing, for instance, of individuation and self-definition in Rushdie, of conquest of rootlessness in Jhumpa Lahiri, of cultural inbetweenness in B. Rajan, and of the special charms of diasporic sensibility itself in Naipaul.

This anthology, consisting of ten essays, encompasses an overarching view of the writing of the Indian diaspora. Of these, the first paper, by Silvia Albertazzi, titled ‘Translation, Migration and Diaspora in Salman Rushdie’s fiction’, brilliantly argues how migrant narration becomes a fiction of individuation and self-definition, a kind of travel literature where departure is often forced, transit is endless and one very rarely reaches a point of arrival where present is lived by renaming the past. Migration always implies change: and change involves the risk of losing one’s identity. Whilst the migrant does not recognize him/herself in his/her new image, the people around him/her do not accept his/her otherness. Therefore, s/he is compelled to face everyday life through a continuous oscillation...
between reality and dream. The migrant writer opposes imagination and the fantastic to western realistic mimesis. Albertazzi stresses, 'The migrant is compelled to experience the world through imagination' (34). The second paper, ‘Reconfigured Identities: “Points of Departure” and Alienation of Arrival in Balachandra Rajan’s The Dark Dancer’, by Anna Clarke examines at length the postcolonial predicament of Rajan’s protagonist, Krishnan, in the novel to ‘belong’ to his society and its cultural paradigms because of his long stay in the West. Krishnan is a victim, according to Clarke, of the cultural quandary of ‘inbetweenness’. Clarke notices that Rajan’s essays warn against reconfiguration of power structures within a postcolonial world. Binarisms of empire and colony, the colonised and the coloniser, implying a sense of locus, boundary, perceptible structure, conceived of in terms of centre and an outside, dissolve in the late twentieth and twenty-first century. The third paper, ‘“Mahabharta is yet to happen”: Communal Violence and Diasporic Time in M.G. Vassanji’s The Assassin’s Song and A Place Within’ by Nancy E. Batty discusses the divisive forces working so outrageously in the author’s ancestral homeland and leaving an indelible impression on the human mind. It upholds that the novel walks a fine line between espousing scepticism and religious faith. It also explores the complexities of contemporary Indian politics and the deceptions practised by the present-day politicians (who do not hesitate to provoke violence and killing to advance their selfish ends). The fourth paper, ‘The Imaginative Promptings of My Many-sided Background’: V.S. Naipaul’s Diasporic Sensibility’ by Gillian Dooley, ascertains the truth that Naipaul’s sensibility is primarily diasporic, as he is a prolific writer who is twice removed from the motherland (India). And to be diasporic – constantly on the move – is one of the special charms of his writing. Dooley also exposes Naipaul’s feeling of being uprooted and deracinated, which may have started with his first move from the security of all he knew to the new, exciting world of Port of Spain at the age of six, and which became, paradoxically, his means of making a place for himself in the world. The fifth paper, ‘Home Abroad: Shauna Singh Baldwin’s Feminine Journey’ by Geetanjali Singh Chanda, takes up the metaphor of journey and applies it to the author’s moving abroad (as represented by her protagonist). It shows at some length how Baldwin’s novels and short stories interweave themes of gender, religion, and geography and gender inhibitions. Chanda divides the paper into three parts. The first part presents a brief background of Indian English writing which continues to be marked by a double burden. In the second part, the paper explores how the entry and prominence of diaspora writers has further muddied the waters of Indian English writing. The third part offers Shauna Singh Baldwin as a case study of intersectionality in diaspora. The sixth paper, ‘Home and Journey as Postcolonial Paradigms in Tabish Khair’s The Bus Stopped’ by Esterino Adami, advocates that ‘home’ and ‘journey’ are two powerful metaphors in Khair’s The Bus Stopped – the home standing for identity and memory, while ‘journey’ for diasporic dynamism and movement. Adami suggests that in Khair’s texts the notion of travelling could be expanded and interpreted as a metaphor of psychological change. The seventh essay by Martin Kich endorses the value of Shiva Naipaul’s writings and pleads for the serious reading. Kich asserts that there is a value in considering the differences, as well as the similarities, between the two brothers’ work. The eighth paper, ‘Negotiating Memory and Cinemaspace amongst the Indian Diaspora in Guyana’ by Atticus Narain, traces the development of cinema in Guyana (the West Indies) and the introduction of Indian movies there. The author laments the
loss of cinema and movies in the present day. The ninth paper, ‘The One and Many Borders of a Sari: Paratactics of Place and the Remapping of Rootlessness in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*’ by Jorge Diego Sanchez, dwells on the overwhelming sense of loss and despair to be felt in the fictional writings of Lahiri, showing how the author seems to be engrossed in her diasporic location/dislocation. The tenth and last paper, ‘The Limits of Hybridity in Gautam Malkani’s *Londonstani*’ by Lopamudra Basu, examines this novel as embodying the hybrid aesthetic of the postcolonial diasporic South Asian novel, while simultaneously expressing deep anxieties about racial and religious inter-mixing.

The focus of this book is not historical, though some historical elements are covered. Instead the book sets out to focus on texts written by visible writers who are seen to belong to Indian Diaspora. This anthology of papers by scholars from different countries is distinguished by their attempt to look at the writing of the Indian Diaspora from different perspectives. Hence it prevents the notion of diaspora from slipping into a sweeping catchphrase and employs it contextually and with analytical sharpness. It is this that makes it a significant and necessary contribution in the fields of postcolonialism as well as and the study of Indian English literature.

One of the accomplishments of this volume is that it exhibits the range of critical engagement in Literature of the Indian Diaspora. The discussions are useful because they provide a crisp account of certain dilemmas in Indian diasporic writing and provide a valuable resource for thinking about the multilayered nature of Indian diasporic literary production.

Vivek Kumar Dwivedi
The inhabitants of the New Hebrides were rendered stateless by the condominium imposed on them by the British and French: citizenship was only achieved when the condominium ended. The peculiarities of New Hebridean citizenship, which illustrates some of the oddities of official citizenship, do not figure in this interesting and at times illuminating collection but they might have. The authors and editors are a mix of doctoral candidates and established scholars. They are mainly Canadian and the issues raised by the Canadian multiculturalist approach to citizenship as well as those posed by the various treaties with the Indigenous peoples of Canada and the Canadian state provide most of the examples.

The broad division, as the sub-title states, is between studies of the original inhabitants of a territory and immigrant peoples. The first set deals with the Indigenous people of Canada and of Hawaii, the second set with different immigrant groups. Two really fall outside both categories: one a study of the effects of Newfoundland joining the Canadian Federation and another of youth gangs in Nigeria. The editors’ introduction and some of the essays make various theoretical gestures: Giorgio Agamben figures largely but not even those who cite him respectfully are totally convinced. A few essays suffer from theoretical overload (understandable in young scholars forced to show mastery of secondary material and fashionable theories) but even these concentrate on closely examining the works of individual artists or situations to tease out the ambiguities obscured by the concept of citizenship. What unites the essays is a recognition that citizenship involves both legal definitions and emotional responses.

The complexities of Newfoundland identity are the theme of Jennifer Bowering Delisle’s study of Wayne Johnston’s memoir. Joining the Canadian Federation in 1949 was highly controversial. Usually seen as Canadians by outsiders, the inhabitants of Newfoundland had, and tenaciously maintain, a distinctive identity. They often had to migrate but, despite, or perhaps due to, this mobility, remained attached to Newfoundland and the decision to join the Federation divided families, as Johnston’s memoir shows. Emotional response plainly was to the fore here. The complexities of being Nigerian in the case of the youth gangs examined by Paul Ugor may well have had an emotional component but more clearly had to do with a state that failed to provide law and order, allowing militarised youth to step in and ultimately be used and abused by those they defended in their own way. Unhonoured, they were at least remembered in a film. Neither of these essays deals with Indigenous or diasporic people in the sense used by other contributors. What they do show is either end of the spectrum as the Newfoundlanders lie at the emotional, the Nigerians at the legal/political end.

Lying at the legal, political and constitutional end of the spectrum are the essays on Canadian and Hawaiian indigenous people. Daniel Coleman’s essay on the consequences of the treaty between the Six Nations and the Canadian government and Carmen Robertson’s on the Canadian 1969 White Paper on the status of Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples both deal with contemporary legal issues affecting land (Coleman) or attempts at constitutional change. Both deal with issues of different interpretations (readings if you will) of documents and history. Sydney L. Laukea treats the same sort of issues through examining how photographs
are used to recreate the history of Hawaiians in the interest of the US official version of their relations with Hawaii and its history. David Chariandy examines the status of Black Canadians. Black Canadians might of course be inhabitants of many generations standing or immigrants more recently arrived, especially after the end in 1966 of a White Canadian immigration preference. Here legality figures largely but so too does the emotional response to neglect and rejection in the experiences of different sorts of Black Canadians. Nineteenth-century missionary – and wider – attitudes to women of mixed Aboriginal Canadian and European ancestry in British Columbia are treated by Aloys N.M. Fleischmann: a familiarly depressing tale of the cruelties of intentions as often good as bad.

The other essays lie towards the emotional side of the spectrum. Lindy Ledohowski’s discussion of a Ukrainian-Canadian’s travel memoir provides a link between essays that focus on either emotional responses or legal issues. The discussion reveals much about Ukrainian-Canadians’ attitudes towards Canada and the Ukraine and their significant role in formulating Canadian multi-cultural policies. Two novels by and about Asia-Canadians are analysed by Robert Zacharias, one about the Second World War internment of Japanese-Canadians, the other moving between the past and an imagined future. Dorothy Woodman analyses a 1936 Italian novel about a terminally ill Bedouin-Italian woman living in Sicily. The novel provides a critique of Mussolini’s policies towards women and North Africa. Lily Cho uses a short story about the clash of generations in a Chinese family in Canada to explore the melancholia of immigrants. Laura Schechter deals with a Korean-American experimental novel about the Japanese occupation of Korea. Like one of the novelists discussed by Zacharias, that novelist found that history by itself provides no liberation, hence the use of experimental techniques. Marco Katz examines the way in which attempts to settle in Japan, after the Japanese government began to invite the children, grand-children, and great-grand-children of Japanese emigrants to settle in Japan, worked successfully for a Peruvian-Japanese musician and not at all for a writer of similar origins. In this group of essays the nation-state is hardly ever unsettled by the stories’ protagonists: indeed they seem to be the unsettled ones. The writers’ success is to demonstrate the inadequacy of the state’s official narratives; the differing fates of the two Japanese-Peruvian artists might show the mixed success of government policies as well as the differences between music and musicians on the one hand and literature and writers on the other. They may well have reacted the same way had they both gone to England.

It is clear that some of the states here are sovereign rather than nation-states, ones where a number of different nationalities co-exist rather than the ideal of each nation having its own state. The Austro-Marxists had tried to solve the problem of the multi-national (in more modern dress the multi-cultural) state, by positing a portable nationality: citizens would have had various cultural rights (education in their own language for example) wherever they were within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The political difficulties of implementing such a policy inspired much criticism and scorn but it was a bold attempt to solve a problem which has persisted in the successor states (consider the dissolution of Czechoslovakia). The Austro-Marxists recognised more clearly and earlier than their critics that the movement towards uniformity in the modern world was neither an unstoppable nor an unambiguous process. Nationalisms would unsettle the nation-state as well as the old multi-national dynastic states. The end result would not, except in a few cases, be nation-states but sovereign states that claimed to be nation-states, often at great cost to the people who lived in them. The Austro-Marxists’ attempt to deal with these issues deserves attention and respect.

This collection reminds us how complex citizenship is, but citizenship at an individual level always is or was. Artists remind us that individuals are not chips off a block; what we can lose sight of when responding to their work is how similar the chips often are. It is not clear that any of the examples here ‘unsettle’ the nation-state in any profound or even playful sense. Successful, i.e. strong, nation-states can tolerate or suppress or simply ignore differences fairly easily. At moments of crisis when they are weakened they can do none of those things as successfully. Perhaps this is the difference in perspective between disciplines which look at the individual and those which look at the collective. The anguish that historians have caused literary critics by their use of literature surely far exceeds that caused historians by the excursions of literary critics into history. (Despite the editors claiming a wider disciplinary focus than literature, the contributors do seem to belong to literary studies almost exclusively.) Both disciplines are united, however, by a bias towards the particular rather than the general. What remains true is that this collection has encouraged at least this reader (a historian) to seek out novels, look at photographs or listen to music that he was ignorant of, and has reminded him that broad generalisations obscure many individual differences. If only for that reason, with luck not merely an individual response, it deserves to be read and reflected upon. Artists and events may sometimes unsettle the nation-state but examined closely they almost always unsettle theories.

Peter D. Fraser

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The title of this welcome collection of essays edited by Zabus and Nagy-Zekmi, *Perennial Empires*, is a salutary reminder that imperialism, far from having ended some time in the last century, is still with us. But what forms does this continuing imperialism take? The book’s subtitle suggests that imperial power operates in relation to several overlapping spheres: the postcolonial (and so, implicitly, the national), the transnational, and the aesthetic. Taking their cue from Hardt and Negri’s influential and provocative *Empire*, Zabus and Nagy-Zekmi have gathered essays that successfully aim to ‘trace the continuum of empire building in the twentieth and even the twenty-first century’ (3).

This collection is thus part of a number of recent critiques of the assumptions that have grounded postcolonial studies since its inception, assumptions that include or are governed by a suspicion of the nation-state and a corresponding celebration of transnational crossings and hybridities. Homi K. Bhabha’s early championing of migrancy as an almost metaphysical perspective begins to sound less convincing in the wake of less abstract, more materially (often spatially) grounded concerns. These later concerns, found in the work of scholars as varied as Ranajit Guha and Inderpal Grewal, Parama Roy and Dipesh Chakrabarty, demonstrate that the span of postcolonial studies has widened far beyond Edward Said’s groundbreaking identification, in 1978, of Europe’s ‘oriental’ imaginary.

At the same time (and perhaps in reaction), revisionist histories of European imperialism, such as those by Niall Ferguson, tell us that old assumptions – Europe as benefactor, humanism as normative, colonialism as historically necessary – refuse to die. Ironically, postcolonial scholars and neocolonialists alike frequently take as given western capitalism’s triumph (asserted most visibly by Francis Fukuyama and Thomas Friedman in geopolitical and economic terms), cultural universalism (enabled by social media), and individual agency (Foucault’s and Spivak’s cautions notwithstanding).

Zabus and Nagy-Zekmi rightly observe, for example, that postcolonial critics, anti-imperial activists, and conservative commentators have all relied in one way or another on the nation-state as a point of reference. Even Fukuyama’s precipitate celebration of a post-Soviet, unipolar world bases its logic on the nation-state as a discrete entity. On the other hand, in order to oppose such views, provocateurs like Hardt and Negri fall into the trap of viewing the masses, or ‘multitude’, through what Zahi Zalloua, in his fine reading of their book (Chapter 7 in the collection), terms an ‘overly romantic and misguided’ lens that overlooks the ethical realities on the ground (127-8). Zalloua instead propounds ‘an ethics of difference’ favoured by Edouard Glissant and Jacques Derrida (146). Like Zalloua’s, the essays in this volume therefore attempt to re-conceptualise and complicate the still-common tendency to conceive of empire and nation in one-dimensional ways. The argument, as this volume makes clear, is not about choosing between a “‘smooth’ space of empire’ and the singular nation-state (135), but instead about the messy middle in which we recognise the strategic, dialogical need for both rootedness and migrancy.

The book has fourteen essays, designated as chapters, arranged into four parts: Post-War Representations of Empire, Experimental Nations Globalized, Half of Empire: The ‘Other’ America, and Queering Europe. As the section titles indicate, the fourteen contributors consider the many ways in which forms of power manifest themselves globally,
beginning with the post-World War I period, when Virginia Woolf famously identified 1910 as marking a shift in ‘human character’. But authors like Woolf and her contemporaries (with a few exceptions, notably George Orwell) could not have imagined that imperial ambitions would be alive and well a century later. Although modern sensibilities changed in the wake of Freud and Einstein, Goldman and Eisenstein, the undercurrents of hegemonic forces, these essays show, did not diminish. Paradoxically, the ‘clones of former Leviathans’, as the editors put it, coexist along with street-level movements. Wall Street may be occupied, but its walls remain an emblem of what Mike Davis has called ‘the new sprawl of power’.

Following Zabus and Nagy-Zekmi’s succinct and useful introduction, Part I begins with Lucienne Loh’s exposition of what she calls W. G. Sebald’s ‘ironic nostalgia’ in The Rings of Saturn with regard to the demise of Britain’s empire. Jennifer Nesbitt similarly excises the legacy of imperialism in her reading of Barry Unsworth’s novel Sugar and Rum as a postmodern meditation on the politics of poetic license in a world still haunted by colonial injustice. Anca Vlasopolos’s analysis of recent novels by Peter Rushforth (e.g. Kindergarten) and Shirley Geok-Lin Lim (Joss and Gold) shows how their conscious engagement with nineteenth-century precursors, such as Puccini’s Madame Butterfly, are further refracted through their characters’ experiences of the Holocaust and terrorism.

Rounding out the section is Andrea L. Yates’s surprising but thought-provoking juxtaposition of Virginia Woolf’s Three Guineas with Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of the modern individual, both of whose works point to the need for a ‘dialogic’ view of the relationship between self and other. Implicitly echoing similar arguments by, among others, Emmanuel Lévinas and Martin Buber, Yates persuasively argues that these writers illuminate the ‘relationship to empire upon which identity is built’.

Part II moves us into the sphere of globalisation, beginning with Valérie K. Orlando’s focus on Maghrebian francophone writers who ‘challenge’ congenial notions of the postcolonial nation-state, imagining instead, as she terms it, a space of ‘experimental nations’. Martine Fernandes widens the francophone lens by spotlighting lesser-known works of Portuguese writers in France, such as Carlos Batista, who expose the country’s continuing ‘rhetoric of imperialism’ through their descriptions of immigrants’ convoluted experiences with assimilation. Zahi Zalloua’s reading of Hardt and Negri’s Empire faults the book’s romanticised conception of migrancy and, in consequence, its inadequate attention to ‘the ethical dimension of difference’. Zalloua prefers Edouard Glissant’s more nuanced notion of ‘counterpoetics’ whereby the peripheries of empire (e.g. Creole literatures) are always in process, never fixed (much as in Yates’s discussion of the dialogic self). As such, Glissant avoids Hardt and Negri’s ‘essentializing’ of difference and, more importantly, the rhetoric of global commonality that ‘celebrates difference only in order to contain it’. Finally, Jean-François Vernay takes to task Australian writer Christopher Koch, once famous for novels set in Asia (e.g. The Year of Living Dangerously), for cleaving to ‘fantasies’ about Asia as a backdrop for European actors.

In opening Part III of the volume, Kristian Van Haesendonck underscores the reality that both race and empire continue to undergird Caribbean self-perceptions by riffing on Fanon’s vision of his island nation, Martinique, as emerging from colonialism’s ‘night’ into the ‘light’ of freedom. Van Haesendonck shows through his reading of the novel Texaco, by Fanon’s compatriot Patrick Chamoiseau, that precisely because the Caribbean today endures a ‘less repressive form of colonialism’ he calls ‘light colonialism’, the region and its writers are able to use their ‘ambiguous’ position to contest empire’s powerfully insistent
categorising. Asima F.X. Saad Maura, in her essay on Puerto Rican writers, similarly views the U.S. territory as existing between the two historical ‘crossroads’ of Spanish and American imperialism. Saad Maura sees novels by Luis López and René Marqués as expressing Puerto Ricans’ tangled, colonially-defined identities (what Salman Rushdie has called ‘partial selves’), particularly insofar as these writers re-imagine the island’s received history. Turning to Central America, Ana Patricia Rodriguez demonstrates that the great variety of recent works from the region together attest to the continued violent collusion of ‘local and global forces’, despite apparent ‘healing’ inaugurated by peace agreements in the 1990s. Given the ‘impunity’ (what Rukmini Nair in another context has called ‘indifference’) enjoyed by the perpetrators of violence, who profit from a ‘selective’ outlay of neoliberal capital, the region’s writers experiment with narrative ways of exposing this injustice.

The three essays in the volume’s final section consider how empires variously stigmatise and repress homosexual desire in order to safeguard their normative heterosexual self-perception, one that, as Patrick Robert Mullen reminds us in his opening essay, has been integral to the political ideology of the state. Mullen argues that the intimate relationship between Conrad’s repressed characters Nostromo and Decoud reveals imperialism’s ‘regulation of desire’, a regulation that Conrad’s novel (Nostromo) at once reflects and exposes. John C. Hawley presents readings of two recent novels set in Asia, Shyam Selvadurai’s Funny Boy (Sri Lanka) and Timothy Mo’s The Redundancy of Courage (East Timor), as evidence of a nascent corrective to the dominant trope of nationhood. The protagonists in both novels grapple with the challenge of weaving their queer selves into narratives that continue to service homophobia. Paul Allatson’s scrutiny of a Saddam Hussein bobblehead sold in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Iraq reveals the ‘United States of Empire’s’ linkage of war, sexualised violence, and commodification. Thus, even the ‘purportedly homophilic’ television show Queer Eye is co-opted by the machinations of the imperial war machine. Together, the essays in Part IV, like those in the previous sections, underscore the editors’ point that ‘Leviathan has outlived the Hobbesian notion that tied its existence to the now obsolete nation-state.’

This last point, in fact, raises a possible oversight of this otherwise excellent volume. The authors here all agree that the eighteenth-century view of the modern nation-state, like the one envisioned earlier by Hobbes, is now entangled in a web of global trade and transnational capital that makes the older concept obsolete. This sustained, historically grounded attention to the continuing expansion of particular kinds of imperial power is a refreshing riposte to popular celebrations of globalisation. But I occasionally detected a semantic slippage of the terms ‘empire,’ ‘Leviathan,’ and ‘state’ that leads to an anachronistic reading of Hobbes and, more consequentially, threatens to expand the usage of ‘empire’ to almost unusable proportions. This stems in part from Hardt and Negri’s own (perhaps necessary) Deleuzian levels of abstraction. If forms of empire in fact permeate our world, can there then be a U.S.-dominated centre of gravity that is, as Allatson claims, impervious to activity beyond its planetary needs? This Foucauldian view posits an Orwellian leviathan – we are all ‘inside the whale’ – against what I see to be a less nihilistic concept, which is Rushdie’s reply that we are ‘outside the whale.’ The whale is still there, but some, at least, can find their way out – including the writers examined here. Other quibbles: How can stark ‘changes’ – Woolf’s 1910 change in ‘human character’ or the fall of the Berlin Wall – be continuous, as the editors avow? Such a formulation, echoed in many of the essays, attempts, unsustainably in my view, to account for both historical continuity and historical break; it

simultaneously celebrates revolutionary change and laments reactionary stasis. I also was surprised not to see the term neocolonialism, which has earned a fair amount of scholarly attention on a slightly different register. These minor questions aside, *Perennial Empires* represents an important entry into the discussion surrounding our continuing engagement with the powerful ‘earthly empires’ that shape our world.

Alan Johnson
Exhuming Passions: The Pressure of the Past in Ireland and Australia edited by Katie Holmes and Stuart Ward (UWA Publishing, 2011)

Exhuming Passions is a collection of essays about memory and remembrance in Australia and Ireland as seen comparatively and in a global environment. The collection is based on a series of workshops held in Canberra and Dublin six months apart. Associate Professor Katie Holmes from La Trobe University, Melbourne, and Professor Stuart Ward from the University of Copenhagen were tasked with bringing these workshop papers into essay form to represent chapters in a book. Their introduction to the book offers a rationale for the comparative approach to memory and remembrance in citing Yale University Professor of History Jay Winter’s concern for ‘the distorting effects of a narrowly national approach’ (8). Transnational rather than national studies are more appropriate in a global world.

Comparative studies of any subject matter offer a broader perspective than a single focus and can make for very satisfying reading when they work. One problem with adapting workshop papers to essay form instead of commissioning book chapters from the outset is the variation in the degree of comparison and the need to honour the originating source: the seminar or workshop series, or the conference. The editors of Exhuming Passions have worked hard to mitigate this, from inserting frequent comparative references such as ‘elsewhere in this volume’ to formatting the chapters into two parts with equal numbers of chapters in each. The first part is titled ‘Legacies of Loss’ and the second ‘Legacies of Empire’. The rationale for this division is discussed in Holmes and Ward’s introduction when they discuss Winter’s theory of the ‘memory boom’, one of which occurred from the 1880s to the end of the First World War and another from the 1970s. During these times, memories of the Holocaust and the Second World War were related with a new emphasis on trauma, the collective memory, and morality.

First time readers of Exhuming Passions are more likely to look for the promised comparative approach and may feel restless if the comparison is not immediately apparent or is spurious or strained. Chapter one’s ‘It is not possible for history to be truthful...’ by Anne Dolan sets out to challenge our judgement about victims of violence with a story about Doris Hunt who seemed to have been traumatised by witnessing her father’s murder by IRA ‘lads’. He was an officer in the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary known colloquially as the Black and Tans. This revisionist approach to who is entitled to be called a victim of violence is challenging and stimulating, but the Australian comparison is hardly there other than as a brief mention of the ‘history wars’. Chapter four, ‘Apologizing to the Stolen Generations’, is another one that strains to make a comparison between the apology to the stolen generations in Australia and the Irish Taoiseach’s apology for child neglect and abuse in Ireland’s industrial schools. The majority of this chapter is about Australia, and the comparative approach is at times tentative, almost an afterthought: ‘There is perhaps a parallel here with Ireland’ (83). In another setting (and certainly in the original workshop setting) Judith Brett’s account of the apology to the stolen generations would be well-received.

More successful is Christina Twomey’s ‘Wounded Minds: Testifying to Traumatic Events in Ireland and Australia’. Twomey compares Australian survivor testimonies from Japanese prison camps in World War Two and eyewitnesses from Ireland’s ‘Bloody Sunday’ in Derry in 1992. This unlikely comparison is made feasible in the authors’ early comment...
that in ‘both cases the British Army had not fulfilled its mandate to protect’ (36). Australians became prisoners of war because Britain allowed Singapore to fall into enemy hands. Citizens of Derry became victims of the British Army that had been charged with protecting the people of both sides. Although the events are more than fifty years apart, the ‘language of trauma’ had changed in the latter half of the twentieth century to recognise war survivors as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

The first chapter of part two (Legacies of Empire) is Roisín Higgins’ comparative study of Anzac Day and the Easter Rising celebrations, ‘The Changing Fortunes of National Myths’. Higgins points out that both events were military failures but yet defined the respective nations as having developed out of a blood sacrifice. The renewed interest in Anzac Day since the 1980s is compared with the struggle to extricate the Easter Rising celebrations since 1966 from the modern day ‘Troubles’. Both events have central male figures with Christian resonances: Simpson and his donkey and Patrick Pearse in after life have become ‘emblems for societies that want to promote religion and family life as their bedrock’ (151).

Dominic Bryan and Stuart Ward’s ‘The “Deficit of Remembrance”: The Great War Revival in Australia and Ireland’ is another comparative study that works well. How World War One celebrations are providing a new and less controversial outlet for Unionist parades in Northern Ireland is nicely compared with Anzac Day celebrations that allow Australians to ‘kiss the ground at Gallipoli without watching their backs for signs of indigenous protest’ (182). The final chapter of Exhuming Passions, John Coakley and Mark McKenna’s ‘Whatever happened to Republicanism?’ Changing Images of the Monarchy in Ireland and Australia’, is bookended with anecdotes of statues of Queen Victoria in Ireland and Australia. The authors acknowledge the difficulty in comparing the two countries’ colonial experiences which somewhat mitigates contestable claims such as ‘Whereas Irish republicans fought to throw off what they defined as British occupations, a great majority of Australians preferred to see themselves as British subjects’ (275).

Exhuming Passions has found many points of comparison between Australia and Ireland in how both countries remember past events in the light of existing social and political agendas. It asks such questions as: Whose story is worth remembering? What is the role of the historian? To what extent were the people complicit in state abuse of children? How can art speak for us? How do capital cities tell the national story? It draws on art, literature and the cinema as well as politics, history, and current affairs to make these connections. This comparative approach, although not always successful, is justified by the rich transnational pickings in this volume.

Dymphna Lonergan
Selected Prose of Dorothy Hewett edited and introduced by Fiona Morrison (University of Western Australia Press, 2011)

Editor Fiona Morrison points to a certain tradition of collecting the prose of poets (4); this collection brings together the literary criticism, political essays and writing on theatre of Dorothy Hewett, never only a poet. While Hewett’s manifold achievements across diverse genres, especially poetry, have been well surveyed, her voice as a critic has remained historical, muffled by its scattered presence in small, even forgotten journals and magazines, and unavailable as a discrete body of work.

Great affection remains for Hewett as a writer and figure, among her readers but also her witnesses, and this collection will find interest from many. Her trajectory, from young modernist to committed communist, to melodramatic apostate and then contrarian grande dame, can be traced in these pieces, and they are rich biographical resources for a commanding figure in Australian literature. But not only such – Hewett deserves to be read for her reach into Australian and international culture as a critic and commentator in her own right, and in her own changing times.

Morrison has collected 32 pieces of Hewett’s non-fiction prose, of differing size, weight and amplitude, grouped into three nominated sections, organised chronologically. The first of these presents literary critical pieces, and begins with two from 1945, when Hewett’s poem ‘Testament’ had just won the ABC Poetry Competition and she was writing for Black Swan, the student magazine of the University of Western Australia. Two pieces of greater contrast are hard to find: one on the British modernist poet, eccentric and wit Edith Sitwell; the other on the recently published first volume of the goldfields trilogy completed by communist and West Australian Katharine Susannah Prichard. Written when she was not quite twenty-two, Hewett’s piece on Sitwell is notably accomplished and striking now for its immediate address, as if Sitwell, her contemporaries, outlandish performative modernism, desiccated aristocratic family and committed readers were all directly present for the Black Swan, refusing volubly any imaging of Perth as a lonely outpost on the far edge of a mere former colony. The emphasis is on Sitwell’s mythic self-fashioning, from the tawdry remnants of blasted Georgian England – ‘Enfant terrible of the twentieth century, with her patched ladies with parasols, walking in gold and tinsel landscapes, full of waterfalls, jewels and bear-dark woods … her own childhood appears again and again’ (31). Hewett’s assessment of Sitwell that ‘to know her early work is to know her childhood’ resonates of course with Hewett’s own work, especially her poetry and 1990 autobiography Wild Card, and draws comparisons with Sitwell’s own assessments of herself as both writer and figure. As a woman poet, she told Stephen Spender in 1946, ‘there was no-one to point the way. I had to learn everything – learn, among other things, not to be timid.’ Despite the tenderness and vulnerability often exhibited in Hewett’s work, she was never accused of timidity.

Her piece on Prichard contrasts in style, emphasis, weight and approach, as well as its topic. In a short, summative essay, Hewett delivers punchy characterisations in a declamatory style. Single sentence paragraphs dominate: ‘There is always a sense of teeming vivid history in her characters and the events that shape their lives’ (42). The Roaring Nineties carries Prichard’s broadest attempt to cast Australian versions of egalitarianism as the building blocks for a socialist nationalism, sourced in a goldfields community democracy forged against ‘the big money-grubbing operators who with backing from the Perth Parliament were
squeezing out the original small digger’ (42). This piece from Hewett finishes with lengthy quotations from Prichard herself, and the source of its immediacy is place rather than address. Prichard’s intellectual Marxism is evident and Hewett’s interest in this clear, while her passion is invested in art’s capacity to change worlds and lives, to model justice. In the difference between these two pieces, we witness Hewett surveying the divided cultural terrain of the postwar English-speaking world, as it appeared from Perth, and staking out the polarities of the literary cold war.

The first section moves from this opening pair to a 1960 essay blasting Kylie Tennant’s later work as sensationalist and sentimental, charging her with mere ‘naturalism’, that Zhdanovian sin, in the most full-blown exhibition of a Stalinist reading model: ‘Is she up another dead-end with a bug about style à la Patrick White?’ (51). It then contrasts in its turn with an ecstatic review of Randolph Stow’s The Merry-go-round in the Sea, published in 1965, when Hewett had returned from a disillusioning visit to the Eastern bloc. I thought of her among her women contemporaries, thanks to this juxtaposition – on the one hand, Judith Wright, publishing highly wrought poetry criticism in mainstream forums, attracting respect and accruing stature, and on the other, Mona Brand, a communist poet and playwright, publishing strongly opinionated yet carefully rigorous literary commentary in small, left wing journals, ironically defending White from his socialist critics. Women remained effectively amateur critics throughout those mid-decades of the century, without institutional support or permanent gigs, as shown by the absence of their work, with the exception of Wright’s, from Authority and Influence, the 2001 edited collection of ‘Australian Literary Criticism 1950-2000’, and from other histories – Sue Sheridan’s recent Nine Lives: Postwar Women Writers Making their Mark illuminates this tellingly. Hewett’s literary criticism encompasses essays on Michael Dransfield, Robert Adamson, Peter Cowan, poetry and gender, and finishes with a 1994 review of Miles Franklin’s collected letters – another woman writer with a notable yet half-forgotten life as a critic.

The second and third groupings in this collection are ‘Politics’ and ‘Theatre’, and in these sections we see Hewett’s expansive interests as well as her sheer longevity as an observer and opinion maker. But writing and literature are at the heart of these two sections too – the political pieces almost all address literature’s political and social responsibilities, apart from a series of articles from the Worker’s Star about equal pay for women and a forward to Max Brown’s The Black Eureka (1976), about the 1946 Pilbara strike, from which came Hewett’s protest ballad ‘Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod’. Two unpublished essays sit at the centre of the ‘Politics’ section: ‘Eat Bread and Salt and Speak the Truth’ and ‘The Times they are A’Changin’ were both written in the mid-1960s and remained unpublished until collected by Ian Syson in Hecate in 1995. Both announce Hewett’s disillusion with the prescriptive model of progressive aesthetics that had informed her work for two decades, and see her using the words of dissident Eastern bloc friends like Stefan Heim, that realism should, above all, ‘speak the truth’. Her critical obituary after Prichard’s death in 1969, ‘An Excess of Love’, now appears less an abrupt betrayal than a long held position, only confirmed by Hewett’s resignation from the CPA in August 1968. The complex internationalism of Hewett’s (and Communism’s) investments in the literary are evident not only in these connections but in a substantial, previously unpublished lecture on ‘The Russian Writer’, delivered it seems in 1968 for an adult education class, which dovetails with her 1967 disaffected poem ‘The Hidden Journey’, testifying to both her long attachment and her grasp of its limits.

The theatre essays begin in 1976, as if in mid-conversation, with a piece about the role of theatre in ‘Australian Literature’, which ‘is an old dame now, and needs a good shot in the arm’ (209). Her writing here appears as if from a third life; these are full throated, richly historical assessments of theatre’s role, preoccupations and repeated crises in Australia. A pugnacious defence of White as modernist playwright is prominent, published while Big Toys was in its first rehearsals for the Sydney Opera House in 1977. In this section too we have Hewett’s first extended commentary on her own work, in a piece about ‘Creating Heroines in Australian Plays’ and another about ‘music dramas’. The collection ends with two speeches, recording Hewett’s participation in public discussion about women in theatre, and by then we hear her as the laurelled figure she was – towards the end of her life she confessed: ‘my daughter tells me I’m famous’.

This is not all of Hewett’s non-fiction prose, as the title tells us, and Morrison’s selection shows a great deal of care and acumen – partisan pieces are set against contrasting passions; the calculated interests of the political woman are not separate from the appetites of the theatrical poet. Morrison’s rich introduction explains the connections between the essays by elaborating Hewett’s romanticism and Leavisite or Lawrencian interest in ‘life’, a word which recurs through the collection, but also elaborates the differing conceptual or philosophical positions, and the self-conceits and professed loyalties or betrayals. Hewett’s work is both rigorous and partisan, assertive, sometimes doctrinal, at other points intensely personal. More than this, as in her review of Jack Beasley’s Red Letter Days in 1979, she assumes the role of opinion maker and speaks, often despite her position, as if from the centre of a literary world. By the 1980s she was something of a grande dame, as she’d accused Australian literature of becoming – contrary, outspoken, even freewheeling, but still such. And we are indebted to UWA Press and Fiona Morrison for bringing that dame’s critical voice to pointed life again.

Nicole Moore

I was drawn to read Diane Austin-Broos’ *A Different Inequality* because of its promise to elucidate debates about remote Aboriginal communities. Austin-Broos is a professor emerita at the University of Sydney and her book is based on her lengthy experiences as an ethnographer and anthropologist with the Western Arrente people in Ntaria community in central Australia. I have never been to a remote community so everything I now comes from what I have read which has left me increasingly confused about the causes and solutions to the range of problems confronting such communities. Thus, a book that had found a way to both acknowledge cultural difference as well as address urgent questions of inequality promised to be an important contribution to current debates.

Austin-Broos mostly considers these debates through the lens of anthropology and for her the key tension is between equality and difference. According to Austin-Broos, there are two opposing views: on the one hand, there are those who believe Indigenous policy should be directed towards ‘closing the gap’, or addressing the very unequal status of remote Indigenous Australians in the Australian polity. On the other, are those who believe that Indigenous difference, in terms of both culture and knowledge, needs to be recognised, maintained and encouraged. As Austin-Broos outlines, these differences can produce quite different policy perspectives, and Austin-Broos is critical of them both. She refers to those who consider inequality the key priority as ‘anti-separatists’ (without adequately explaining what this term means) who tend to pathologise Indigenous people and culture and ignore the demands and reality of cultural difference. She critiques the ‘difference’ model for ignoring and naturalising disadvantage in the interests of maintaining and even reifying a romanticised difference.

Austin-Broos’s book is thus an attempt to strike a balance between these two positions and offer a new perspective on current critical and policy debates both within and outside the academy. It also provides an important history of ideas about culture, equality and indigenous Australia. The first five chapters of the book offer an account of how these debates emerged and outline the current state of the debate both inside and outside the academy. Such overviews are necessarily generalising and simplifying and this one is no exception. As an account, it is limited by its reduction, almost to the point of caricature, of the debates she is attempting to describe.

Chapter two considers the strengths and weaknesses of classical ethnography, and outlines the postcolonial critique from within anthropology. For all its faults and elisions, Austin-Broos asserts, ethnography confirms the reality and value of cultural difference and continuity. This chapter argues for the importance of viewing culture in the context of the historical legacies of colonisation and the reality of encapsulation of remote Indigenous Australians in the state and capital. This context, according to Austin-Broos, explains how difference has become inequality. Chapter three describes the postcolonial critique of anthropology from history and Indigenous studies, but she really only concerns herself with the work of Patrick Wolfe and Russell McGregor, and there is no reason to see them as representatives of their disciplines as a whole. In addressing the accusation that anthropology
is and has been a racist discipline, Austin-Broos’s answer seems to be, necessarily, both yes and no.

These historical chapters set the stage for the discussion of contemporary perspectives that follow. Chapter four describes the work of those who oppose separate development, the so-called ‘anti-separatists’, but I could not help feeling that a disservice was being done to the range of thinkers being lumped together here. There is considerable ideological diversity within this group, which includes Helen Hughes, Gary Johns, Noel Pearson, Marcia Langton and Peter Sutton, as well as varying degrees of intellectual perspicacity. This group includes influential leaders who have felt that academics have turned a blind eye to remote distress as well as those who see no problem with total assimilation. According to Austin-Broos, they all share a view that cultural difference, which is pathologised, can be dispensed with in the interests of equality.

Chapter five describes the position of anthropologists who defend cultural difference, the homeland movement and land rights and who have generally been highly critical of the Intervention. This chapter focuses on those associated with the Centre for Aboriginal and Economic Policy and Research. Again, the complexity of the CAEPR position is not acknowledged with many of its members being characterised as being unable to see beyond their own romanticised view of Indigenous culture and lacking compassion in the face of Indigenous despair. This chapter also has little to say about what Indigenous scholars, legal scholars, postcolonial theorists and human rights activists who have also entered the debate might have to say about the politics, economics and ethics of recognizing difference.

The final chapter, ‘The politics of difference and inequality’, is an attempt to move beyond this either/or debate, although the book seems to be contributing to and perpetuating the very dichotomies it claimed to be analysing and breaking down. Austin-Broos’s answer to the dilemma she has set out, which is not at all as new as she suggests, is the urgent provision of mainstream primary education in remote communities as a transition to employment. Yet this chapter, the most disappointing in the book, provides no explanation of how such education could be offered and accepted in a way that was able to take cultural difference into account. Yet surely the question of ‘how’ is the one that has dominated policy debates and perspectives, including from people like Noel Pearson and the scholars associated with CAEPR. That remote Indigenous Australians are both tied to the local and are participants in the Australian state with multifaceted and conflicted identities is obvious to all; what to do about it is the question, and Austin-Broos’s book does not provide the answers it promises.

Maggie Nolan

You can glean a lot about a book from its cover. The bold red and black typeface of Robert Hughes’ *Rome* gives equal prominence to the name of the author and to the title. We are promised Robert Hughes’ history of Rome, the views of ‘probably the best – and certainly the most accessible – art critic in the world.’

Hughes is a gifted Australian writer whose work ranges from history to memoir-writing; he is famous for his area of greatest expertise, his scholarly criticism of art. His books include *The Art of Australia* (1966), *The Shock of the New* (1980) and *The Culture of Complaint* (1993). Hughes has worked as a television commentator and broadcaster, and he was *Time* magazine’s art critic for more than thirty years. Asked to name a contemporary art critic, many people – and certainly most Australians – would cite Robert Hughes.

So Hughes’ *Rome* is a city of art and artists: Michelangelo, Raphael, Caravaggio, Bernini, Titian … it is a pleasure to gain access to the wonders of the city’s art and architecture through his experienced and knowledgeable eyes. Take, for example, his observations on the Sistine Chapel:

No art-interested person who was in Rome in the late 1970s and early 1980s is likely to forget the passions roused by the project of cleaning the Sistine. Lifelong friendships were broken; the field of discussion was swept by hails and cross-fires of moral disagreement … [The frescoes] can now be seen in their full plenitude of colour, and it is one of the world’s supreme sights. I was lucky enough to get extended access to the ponte or moving bridge between the Sistine walls on which the cleaners worked, and spent the better part of three days up there, with my nose a couple of feet from the fresco surface, seeing the way Michelangelo’s colour was coming alive once more … This was a privilege, probably the most vivid one I had in a fifty-year career as an art critic. (247-9)

Robert Hughes’ perspective is also that of an *Australian* writer. When I was in Italy last year, I was reminded of the difference in our early experience of Western art, compared with that of Italian children. In Rome, teachers propel noisy and enthusiastic groups of students through the corridors and rooms of art museums and palazzi; children sit on the edges of Baroque fountains to eat their lunches, they kick footballs across cobbled piazzas ringed by ancient buildings. My childhood experience of Italian art, growing up in Adelaide, echoed Hughes’:

For a time in my adolescence – not knowing Rome in any but the sketchiest way – I longed to be a Roman expatriate … [but] I was still in Australia, where, due to an education by Jesuits, I spoke a few sentences of Latin but no Italian whatever. The only semi-Romano I knew … would bring back postcards, sedulously and with obvious pleasure gleaned from their racks in various museums and churches at ten to twenty lire each: Caravaggios,

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1 From the *Sunday Times*, quoted on the back cover of *Rome*. 

Bellinis, Michelangelos. He would pin these up on one of the school noticeboards. (1)

Google Earth and detailed images of art works on the internet have helped to reduce the ‘tyranny of distance’, but, as Hughes says, there is nothing to compare with ‘the delight of one’s first immersion in Rome on a fine spring morning’ (3). And the internet cannot (yet?) deliver the delight of Rome’s art and architecture with its other pleasures: the creamy froth of a cappucino, the warmth of the sun on your back in the Piazza Navona, the crescendo of Italian voices at a table nearby.

Hughes’ passionate enthusiasm for Rome shines in every chapter of his book, as he traverses its history from Romulus and Remus to Berlusconi. There are chapters on the early Roman empire, medieval Rome, the Renaissance, the Baroque and the eighteenth century through to modernism. I suspect that every reader will have their preferred chapter, depending on personal responses to Rome and individual historical interests. I especially enjoyed the section on the Grand Tour, perhaps because it was good to be reminded that there were once worse ways of travelling to Italy than being trapped for 22 claustrophobic hours in an over-heated aeroplane. With his sharp eye for detail, Hughes conveys both the pleasures and pains of the Grand Tourist. We read about the Englishman who crossed a frozen section of the Alpine pass in a sledge (‘which though very trying to the nerves was not unpleasant’), the German tourist who saw an Italian shoemaker flattening his leather strips on the antique marble head of an emperor, the Scottish aristocrat who had his portrait painted ‘swathed in yards of his family tartan’ in the fashion of ‘a bizarre sort of Caledonian toga’ (342).

The chapters that are not pleasing some readers fall in the first part of the book; in fact, classicist Mary Beard advises us to ‘skip the first 200 pages and start this book at chapter six, The Renaissance.’ She and other classical scholars have complained of ‘errors and misunderstandings’ in Hughes’ knowledge of the classical period that will ‘mislead the innocent and infuriate the specialist.’ This is disappointing in a book that otherwise reads as a thoughtfully-written and well-researched text.

Robert Hughes is treading on ground that is revered by many different kinds of readers and writers: classicists, art lovers, historians, travellers, poets and novelists. He is in good company: think of Henry James’ Italian Hours, Elizabeth Bowen’s Time in Rome, Goethe’s Italienische Reise. Many other titles come to mind: lovers of Roman history, art and culture are easy to find. Robert Hughes has added his own unique perspective to a great and fascinating subject, one that still enthralls twenty-first century readers, as it has always done.

Jennifer Osborn

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2 Mary Beard, ‘Review: Rome by Robert Hughes,’ Guardian 2 July 2011, 6


Magical realism has for a long time attracted the attention of critics beyond the Latin American circle with which it has traditionally been associated, despite its inception going back to the German historian Franz Roh. For well over a decade now, roughly coinciding with the boom in Postcolonial Studies, the academy has also witnessed a fruitful critical development in the field of Trauma Studies as explorations seeped out beyond the medical circle into the cultural and literary terrains. The move reflects the evolution of the notion of trauma from bodily injury in its original Greek conception, firstly to psychological disorder following World War I, and later to the cultural phenomenon we witness today. It is noteworthy that Cathy Caruth’s influential *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* came out in the same year – 1995 – that Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris edited the volume *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, which included the key essays on the topic (Faris actually wrote the foreword to Arva’s book). In his book, Eugene L. Arva sets out to make explorations of his own on the themes of trauma and magical realism as the latter is deemed the literary mode best suited to work through traumatic memory and act out narrative memory.

Arva does not simply glue together the two critical objects, though. Over the Introduction and Chapters 1, 2 and 3, the author proffers a rather long but careful theoretical context which includes presentations of previous and related work done on the fields as well as what he defines as his own interdisciplinary conceptual tool: traumatic imagination. Traumatic imagination, says Arva denoting the Freudian influence, is intended to describe an empathy-driven consciousness that enables authors and readers to act out/work through trauma by means of magical realist images. I posit that traumatic imagination is responsible for the production of many literary texts that struggle to re-present the unpresentable and, ultimately, to reconstruct events whose forgetting has proven just as unbearable as their remembering. The traumatic imagination is also the essential consciousness of survival to which the psyche resorts when confronted with the impossibility of remembering limit events and with the resulting compulsive repetition of images of violence and loss. (5)

The concept is interdependent with another which Arva also formulates, the shock chronotope. In Bakhtinian terminology, a chronotope is a time-space unit (in this case a historical moment of tremendous violence) and ‘shock’ is borrowed from the medical discourse which in the post-World War I period emerged from the diagnostication of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When rationalisation of an event is prevented due to its extreme violence, ‘the traumatic time-space (the shock chronotope) is so shaky that making it artistically visible (turning it into an artistic chronotope) requires an act of imagination, which I call traumatic’ (5). Traumatic imagination ‘thus translates an unspeakable state (pain) into a readable image: it is the process by which shock chronotopes become artistic chronotopes’ through magical realist writing (283).

The following four chapters correspond to four violent events – or shock chronotopes – Arva sees as determining to the contemporary world. The shock chronotopes are slavery, colonialism, the Holocaust, and war. Immediately the reader feels the affinity between the former two and the latter two, which is confirmed as s/he reads on.

The slavery chronotope is represented by transcultural and transgenerational trauma in Caribbean fiction (121, 139): Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of This World* (1949), and Maryse Condé *I, Tituba, A Black Witch of Salem* (1986). In the first case the argument is made that imagination becomes a means to work through trauma when both motherland and adoptive country are out of reach as a consequence of the shock chronotope of slavery. Carpentier’s *The Kingdom* is read as simulacrum of the real chronotope of slavery where, unlike Baudrillard’s hyperreality, magic realism operates so as to bring down the barriers between the real and the imagination and, in the process, reveal the continuum between the two. Condé’s novel draws on the specific theme of rape and how it can be seen as a traumatic metonymy of the rape of a whole people and not just women.

Colonialism is approached by looking into Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981). In Arva’s view, these authors manifest respectively the vicarious traumatisation of Spanish and British colonialism (in the first case, la violencia period in Colombia is appropriately read as a subsidiary chronotope). Their protagonists fight through (work through) operations of historic agency and linguistic authority by engaging in processes of historical rewriting. Magic, imagination and nationalistic mythification are the tools used by García Márquez and Rushdie to tackle (post-)colonial traumata.

Arva chose Joseph Skibell’s *A Blessing on the Moon* (1997) and Bernard Malamud’s *The Fixer* (1966) to make his argument regarding the Holocaust chronotope. This remains an especially sensitive chronotope where factors like representation, authority, forgetting and silence still play decisive roles. The debate has been intense as Holocaust literature grows beyond testimonial narratives (memoirist literature) and immerses itself in the muddy waters of postmodernist fiction (219-22). In the selected novels, the authors emphasise goriness realistically while magnifying the horror, according to Arva, through the intrusion of magic elements, frequently of a dream-like nature. The dominant elements do belong to the realm of fantasy, like, for instance, the zombification of Chaim Skibelski (238) which picks up the motif (the traumatic symptom) identified by Arva in relation to Condé (159).

Finally the war chronotope’s focus falls on Günter Grass’s *The Tin Drum* (1959) and Tim O’Brien’s *Going after Cacciato* (1978). Here the realistic imagery is equally dramatic but these writers work through the chronotope quite differently. Whereas Skibell and Malamud disclose the forms and emotional transactions of transgenerational trauma, Grass and O’Brien speak from the place of witnesses but also, more importantly, from the place of individual guilt. In *The Tin Drum*, Grass acts out (re-covers) and works through the ghost of complicity with the Nazi regime in his youth while O’Brien does the same with regards to Viet Nam/Vietnam (269-70).

The chapters on the chronotopes of slavery and colonialism read well and are cohesively presented when considering Arva’s core concepts. However the following chapters struggle with the magical realist argument (though not obviously with trauma).
instance, the chapter on the Holocaust chronotope discusses it in terms of fantasy rather than magical realism, and even then only briefly (231-3). Quoting Christopher Warnes, Arva himself admits that though magical realism can manifest itself in any trauma novel, it is in postcolonial ones that its creative and critical potential is realised most successfully (216). Also, the chapters on the Holocaust and war chronotopes develop similarly, but Arva is careful to remind us of their fundamental difference: vicarious witnessing versus direct testimony, the latter conveying the trauma of the perpetrator. This is an aspect which strikes me as critically necessary not only to recognise the existence of the trauma of responsibility (which is never to be equated with that of the victims) but also not to confine trauma victims to the discourse of martyrdom or heroism, that is, to act out their (re-)victimisation by creating spaces of silence and therefore restricting emotional areas of working out their traumas.

Arva’s knowledge is extensive and comprehensive, though it would have been productive to see some discussion regarding the work of David Danow in The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque (1995) for the relevance to the topics at hand. (Danow’s book is also directly informed by Bakhtin but in this case by the concept of grotesque realism which Danow uses as his conceptual tool to approach Holocaust literature.)

*The Traumatic Imagination* might provide an analysis of familiar fictional material and in some cases texts have indeed been studied in analogous contexts and even comparatively (e.g. Rushdie and Grass on violence). However, Arva introduces innovative concepts of his own while remaining faithful to their original literary, cultural and critical sources.

Maria Sofia Pimentel Biscaia
The hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore in 2011 has witnessed a proliferation of critical commentaries, performances, and readings based on the life and works of the grand minstrel of the twentieth-century Bengal Renaissance. The aura of mystical distance that surrounds Tagore and his thoughts has given rise to two polarities of scholarship over the past century: (a) Those who celebrate Tagore as primarily a ‘Bengali’ philosopher-poet, and (b) Those who view Tagore as removed from the realities of everyday life – an eclectic philosopher-poet who has little or no say in the nationalist struggles of South-Asia or the global awakenings (‘realities’ if crudely put) of the twentieth century. The necessity of creatively understanding these two critical-theoretical positions has been the core of the commentaries that have been emerging over the past few years. Tagore researchers in the present times are concerned with the need to observe him as a visionary theoretician who could perceive the demands and crisis of a globalised world in his poetry, plays, and letters.

*The Poet and His World: Critical Essays on Rabindranath Tagore*, edited by Professor Mohammad A. Quayum, makes an attempt to present Tagore through a deep philosophical humanism, as a ‘thinker and poet’ whose appeal goes beyond being an elitist ‘Bengali’ bard and whose cosmopolitanism is inherently woven into his regional sentiments. This volume is a high point in the efforts that are being put into generating a dialogic platform on Rabindranath’s life and works.

Having read Tagore through different phases of academic life from school to the universities, we get immune to understanding him only through the close-reading of his select plays and texts. However, this volume of essays opens up perspectives that situate Tagore in historical-philosophical contexts, while exploring the boundaries of interdisciplinary studies. *The Poet and His World* hosts thirteen fine commentaries on the writings and life of Tagore. The contributors to this volume, like Mohammad Quayum, Uma Dasgupta, Sukanta Chaudhury, William Radice, Abhijit Sen, Bharti Ray, Ananda Lal, Narsingha Sil, Martin Kampchen, and Lalita Pandit Hogan are established experts in Tagore studies. This volume is significant because of its earnest attempt to rethink Tagore along the lines of the present century – through the kaleidoscope of not only Bengal’s or India’s cultural-historical contexts, but also through the issues that are pertinent to the entire South-Asia. In the ‘Introduction’ to the volume, Professor Quayum highlights the significance of each contribution and gives an insight into the content of the thirteen articles, discussing new trajectories emerging in the field of Tagore studies. His statement at the inception of the book that ‘creativity and criticism are symbiotic; they ought to develop synchronically and reciprocally, to find their mutual fullness and balance’ (1) sets the rhythm of the entire book and promises to create a discourse that goes beyond ‘criticism’.

The two essays by Quayum in the volume, ‘A Herald of Religious Unity: Rabindranath Tagore’s Literary Representation of Muslims’ and ‘Empire and Nation: Political Ideas in Rabindranath Tagore’s Travel Writings’, hit the sensitive bulls-eye of communal integrity, the East-West Bengal divide, and the political grammar involved in nation building. It would be ideal to read both essays as supplements to each other rather than exclusive of one another. Through his exhaustive study of Tagore’s *Home and the World* and

**Book reviews:** *The Poet and His World: Critical Essays on Rabindranath Tagore* edited by Mohammad A. Quayum. Arnapurna Rath. 
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the short stories like ‘Kabuliwala’ and ‘The Story of a Mussalmani’, Quayum posits the philosophical question of the ‘otherness’ of the self.

These essays open the context for an enquiry into the various binaries existing in South East Asia in the form of Hindu/Muslim, East Bengal/West Bengal, Individual/Nation, and at an abstract level, the home/world. Quayum’s study of Tagore is from the position of a humanist; Tagore as a sensitive philosopher–poet whose political interest was not limited to nation-building through mass freedom movements, but in nation-building through the freedom of the individual intellect. In Quayum’s essays we witness a constant dialogue between the private-personal life of Tagore and Tagore household, leading to the shaping of the global-public-political sentiments of the poet-writer. For instance, in ‘A Herald of Religious Unity’ he writes: ‘Tagore’s closest contact with the Muslim culture of course came from his interaction with tenants of his family estates in East-Bengal (now Bangladesh), who were mostly Muslims’ (87). In ‘Empire and Nation’, the contemporariness of Tagore is explored through the position of postcolonial and postmodernist theories. Quayum underscores Tagore’s thoughts through a prismatic reflection into the thoughts of Edward Said, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Noam Chomsky, and argues for a strong philosophico-literary position for Tagore. His analysis is based on the idea that Tagore is not an isolated, poet or a wandering minstrel – he is the clarion call of a time that was to come in the form of globalisation and mass migration in the late twentieth century.

Quayum’s reading of Tagore in these essays is a constant attempt to contextualise Tagore as an agent of change – a key to the problems of the South Asia of the twenty-first century. He interprets Tagore’s ‘neo-universalism’ through readings of couplets from the Mundaka Upanishads (156) regarding the oneness of the universe. It is important to note here that his interpretation of Tagore is not presented as ‘effective solutions’ for conflict-resolution: the focus is rather on approaching the conflicts through a dialogic reasoning of the hegemonic moulds and the ‘barbaric ferocity’ between the individual and the nation (150-1). Tagore’s worldview of the Mahajati or the ‘Religion of Man’ (92) holds a key to the global issues and to the diabolical ongoing wars based on religion and nationalism in South Asia. His studies highlight the fact that Tagore’s importance for the present times lies in his refusal to be a ‘dogmatic’ or ‘exclusivist’.

Narsingh P. Sil’s essay in the volume, ‘Rabindranath Tagore’s Nationalist Thought’, presents the ‘other’ side of the dialogue between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Sil’s essay presents Tagore as a firm native voice embedded in a cosmopolitan spirit. He studies Tagore as the ‘troubadour’ (183), the homo viator (pilgrim man) of Bengal whose ambit of search for the self expanded beyond borders of political and regional ambitions. Related discussions that emerge in The Poet and His World are ‘Who did Tagore write for? Who is the muse of Tagore?’ The answer is explored in Sukanta Chaudhuri’s highly nuanced essay: ‘Rabindranath Tagore: The Poet and the People’. Chaudhuri reads the Tagorean universe as densely populated with people who come from all walks of society, not just the bhadralok, and who are bound by the same creative force. He states that the reality of the class structure cannot be negated in Tagore, considering the trends of the historical moment in which Tagore was writing and composing. However, the poet is special because he was able to reach out beyond the structures of a close-node caste and class system in his writings and poetry. He discusses the counter-influence that Tagore had on the Baul community that actually saw a meteoric rise in their popularity following Tagore’s verses. His reading of Tagore in this essay is embedded in the quest for identity – identity of the self.

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slowly, constantly bonding with the identity of the ‘other’. Chaudhuri’s analysis of Tagore seems to focus on the Renaissance spirit of the human as the microcosm of the spirit of the universe: ‘The most solitary, intimate constructions of Rabindranath’s poetic imagination link up with his absorption of the social and the universal’ (66). His stature as the Bishwakabi (World-Poet) is reiterated by Chaudhuri’s intricate weaving of Tagore’s poetry and prose with the Tagorean metaphysics in the collection.

To understand the Tagore’s world-view, there is a need for retrospection into Tagore’s era inclusive of his role as an educator, builder of an academic community, and the global cultural-political influence on his works. In this context, the essays by William Radice, Kathleen M. O’Connell, Martin Kämpchen, and Uma Dasgupta focus on the role of Rabindranath as an eternal teacher through his poetry and his socio-cultural activism. The early years of Bishwabharti (Shantiniketan) and Tagore’s ardent ambition of creating a global institution, as well as the future of Shantiniketan, is discussed in these papers. These papers focus on Tagore’s creative visualisation of the ‘global village’ (109). William Radice contextualises Tagore’s creative dreams for Shantiniketan in the fundamental ‘problems’ that this dream project faces at the turn of the twenty-first century. The Poet and His World is an important contribution to Tagore research. The book is a must have for the nouveau researchers on Tagorean studies. There are several layers of approach in this collection: Tagore as the poet-teacher, as the cosmopolitan voice for peace in turbulent times, as the writer-novelist, and the performer.¹ The collection is a treasure-trove for South-Asian studies also because of its rich analysis of historical-cultural, literary, and philosophical paradigms of South-Asia through the glass of shreds of Tagorean writings and philosophy.

Arnapurna Rath

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¹ See Ananda Lal and Abhijit Sen’s essays in the same volume.

Maria Sofia Pimentel Biscaia took her doctoral degree in English Studies at the University of Aveiro, Portugal, in 2005. Her areas of expertise are Postcolonial Literatures and Contemporary Fiction in English. Here she presents a comparative analysis of two interrelated literary fields – postcolonial and feminist theory – through the prism of the grotesque. The author is interested in the deconstruction of postcolonial and gender politics. *Postcolonial and Feminist Grotesque: Texts of Contemporary Excess* is a comprehensive study, drawing in a complex weave of theories and contemporary fictions.

*Postcolonial and Feminist Grotesque* divides into two sections: the first third of the text is devoted to cultural and literary criticism and the location of the Grotesque; the remaining section is given over to dialogical readings and practices of the postcolonial and feminist grotesque. Pimentel Biscaia systematically accounts for the canon, a pantheon of names whose usefulness as references might be enhanced with a handy index. She presents an historical overview, discusses dialogism as methodology and links the research to the poetics of the carnivalesque-grotesque. She also introduces various theorists – René Girard, Mary Russo, Julia Kristeva, Marthe Reineke and others – who provide the wall for a series of dialogical readings; these gender-informed perspectives are used to critique the iconic images of female grotesqueness, the abject and versions of a sacrificial economy. The author then focuses upon the contemporary novel as an extension of the hyperbolic carnival tradition. She envisages the carnivalesque-grotesque as a resurgent mode in postmodern literature and engages with a selection of ‘texts of contemporary excess’ by Githa Hariharan, Salman Rushdie, Gabriel García Márquez, Ben Okri and Robert Coover.

The grotesque implies a curio – strange, fantastic, ugly or bizarre. The cover illustration of *Postcolonial and Feminist Grotesque* shows a half-human half-plant figure, sculpted in stone as one of the supports to the balustrade of the convent of San Martin Pinario in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, photographed by the author. Pimentel Biscaia suggests that the grotesque axiom came into critical being in the early sixteenth century with the excavation of a hidden cave in Nero’s *Domus Aurea* (Golden Villa), revealing ‘ornamented grottoes of intertwining plants, flowers topped with figures and animalised humans’ (12). The astonishing discovery caught the imaginations of the artists of the time who were lowered into the cave to gawk. The hybrid forms strained the limits of credibility and imagination, engendering feelings of both fascination and revulsion because of their deviation from classical standards of beauty, restraint and order. Pimentel Biscaia quotes Rushdie: ‘If I seem a little bizarre, remember the wild profusion of my inheritance … perhaps, if one wishes to remain an individual in the midst of the teeming multitude, one must make oneself grotesque.’

Imagine! In Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* (1988), an Indian man experiences metamorphosis into a goat after he treads on English ground. What a metaphor! In a sanatorium this man encounters a great many other hybrid freaks, every one unique in appearance but in the same existential condition as himself. Pimentel Biscaia suggests that their strange stigmata and sense of estrangement from the world is the mark of their foreign

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status, particularly in the case of immigrants. Difference is recognised and may be interpreted in two ways, as a virulent disease – plague – or as ‘an external mapping of bodies’ (10). Pimentel Biscaia juxtaposes the theories of Wolfgang Kayser and Mikhail Bakhtin in order to examine the political potential of the grotesque.

Wolfgang Kayser evokes an ‘alienating grotesque’ in response to the sinister pall which descends on the estranged individual, casting doubt on naturalisation and identity, rendering the world unreliable and absurd, constituting life as a frightening and hazardous enterprise. Kayser argues that art has the power to exorcise the evil forces through the chimerical displacements of physical distortion, animal illusions, masks, props and the practice of mockery; in effect the evocation of the grotesque is used to ‘draw fire’ away from the body and imaginatively deflect and subdue the threat. However, Pimentel Biscaia suggests that Kayser is concerned only with the Romantic aspects of darkness and monstrosity – noir – and relegates the redeeming possibilities of comic laughter, to the very edge of consciousness, in his fear of ‘existential obliteration’. Pimentel Biscaia confesses that she prefers an extension of Mikhail Bakhtin’s less violent options for bringing about the recalibration of an inclusive and benevolent society.

Bakhtin’s theories are often criticised for optimistic but idealised mythologies of the carnival body, grotesque realism, and the dialogical imagination, with roots in the folk traditions of the Saturnalia and the medieval Festival of Fools which ‘allowed everyone to evade rules, conventions and established truths’ (11). He envisioned a sacred space with the potential to transcend the elitist separations and oppressions of a class system, through consciousness-raising and also revived interest in the visceral and scatological excesses of a Rabelaisian world of grotesque realism: ritualised effrontery, supposedly of the underclass; the insulting banter of the market; vulgar gestures; mockery; mésaillances. Pimentel Biscaia suggests that although there was a link between popular forms of carnival and anti-authoritarian drives, the one-sided rhetorical dogmatism which separated people one from the other could be transformed to pluralistic relativism by Bakhtin’s rule which dictated free and familiar contact among all people at the level of bodily experience. Redemption for human misery was to be found in camaraderie and laughter – liberating tension from the belly or cracked with ironic self-reflection. Pimentel Biscaia quotes John Morreall: ‘the person with a sense of humor can never be fully dominated.’

Pimentel Biscaia defends her methodology. She is aware that Bakhtin paid scant attention to women writers; however, she argues that dialogism is an incomplete process which women can enter at any time in the interests of intercommunication: ‘a dialogical perspective enables us to read relationships and writing as part of consciousness in dialogue with themselves (gender, class and race as inter-dependent factors) and with other consciousness’ (407). The dialogical method was supposed to produce a reasoned construction of subjecthood and historical experience. Pimentel Biscaia also refers to Fyodor Dostoevsky’s model of the polyphonic novel, as a privileged extension of Bakhtin’s ideas. She writes that ‘polyphony has become a central trait of the twentieth and twenty-first century novel’ (33). Multiple spheres of reality are realised in the distinctive ontological worlds of each character and this exchange of reality is what constitutes ‘reality’.

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Pimentel Biscaia follows through in the second section of Postcolonial and Feminist Grotesque with an exceptional series of comparative readings, which focuses on the contextual practices of the postcolonial and the feminist grotesque in a selection of contemporary novels.

Part 1 is called ‘Sacrificing the Animal-Woman’ and examines the trope of Woman as spectacle and martyr. Pimentel Biscaia defends David Danow’s theories which firstly link feminine abjection and sublime terror to the suffering caused by totalitarian regimes. She argues that the grotesque can even transcend death in visions of the apocalypse. Secondly Danow associates the carnivalesque-grotesque with the despotic, excessive and soul-destroying rule of the patriarch of a nation and the indiscriminate fathering of countless helpless children. The Mother figure is the site of resistance. The focal point of this section is the scapegoating of animal-woman, and the figuration of freaks, maternal objects, witches, sacrificial victims and the inverse icons of resistance to the violence of imperial and patriarchal hegemonies.

Both When Dreams Travel (Hariharan) and Shame (Rushdie) include animal women as characters. However, women are shown to cooperate in their own martyrdom because they have been sadistically corrupted to value the honour of self-sacrifice. Pimentel Biscaia argues that Bakhtin believed that the carnivalesque-grotesque had lost its popular/folk roots, but it is critics like Danow who suggest that the yearning for rebirth survives in the magical realism of Latin America and that the darker Romantic grotesque is revived in the realist grotesque literature of European origin which pertains to the Holocaust. Pimentel Biscaia writes that Shame exhibits both types of grotesque; however, she also chooses to discuss Del amor y otros demonios (García Márquez) in order to prove that the carnivalesque-grotesque defined in Bakhtin’s theory still exists.

García Márquez’s novel tells the story of Sierva Maria – a child of neglect and ill-treatment – who is both attributed with animal traits and negated by the Church. Pimentel Biscaia argues that in historical records the young girl with a poor education, impoverished indigenous culture and whose behaviour is ‘unguarded’ is marked by gender and social position as primary scapegoat and victim for control and silencing. Sierva Maria is stigmatised as a witch by her singing and then chastised for her ‘lack of cultural and social differentiation’. The girl is perceived by the Church to be tainted by familiar association with the black Other and therefore brutally contained for having possession of an inappropriate freedom for a woman. But she is only a child of twelve. Her vulnerability and innocence are made sinful in order that the corrupt white ‘superiors’ in the Church can reinforce the mores of economic and cultural dominance. Sierva Maria is opportune incarcerated as a carrier of the plague; isolated and rejected she dies in abject conditions. However, García Márquez has marked the girl’s difference as an iconic expression of indigenous resistance to colonial rule and endows her existence with an aura of sanctity. Pimentel Biscaia writes that the beginning of the tale, which is also its narrative’s ending, focuses on the image of the girl’s corpse as it is exhumed; it reveals a miraculous growth of bright hair – an element taken from folk legend – and a strange childlike appearance, rather than a body in the process of decomposition. The miracle symbolises the continuation of an innocent’s life-form and testifies to an immaculate spirit which even the corruption of death could not destroy.

In Part 2, The Famished Road (Okri) pits existential despair against the ward-spell of African magical realism. Mythologies of nationhood and postcolonial rebirth are exploded. Let there be no illusions. Grotesque checkmates grotesque. The poor and down-trodden

starve. The well-off Madame Koto’s body becomes gross with an excess of prosperity, while the teeming multiplicity of the spirits and beggars overwhelm the reader with horror, rather than generate sympathy. Pimentel Biscaia argues that both sides of the equation could represent the abject state of the Nigerian people under an ineffectual and corrupt political system. Such dissolution perpetuates a chain reaction and even the spirit child, Azaro, is subsumed by the apathy of his compound and his inability to retaliate against the powers of darkness. Pimentel Biscaia writes that Okri employs Kayser’s ‘alienating grotesque’, rather than the Bakhtinian celebration of the people’s vitality and the earth’s fecundity which defies genocide: here the people cannot rise to the seasonal and cyclical renewal which is the essence of the carnival. Okri places Nigeria on the rim of the void and holds out no hope of salvation in the exorcism of the country’s psycho-socio-political demons. The power of the ex-patriot pen to carry the scream abroad – to evoke phallic intervention from the outside rather than from within – is the only gesture of resistance and consciousness-raising left when social and political systems fail and the bastion of the spirit is ineffectual to resist oppression.

Pimentel Biscaia concludes her work with a reading of Robert Coover’s *Pinocchio in Venice*. She feels that this novel is an extraordinary compendium of both the cultural and literal found in the historical festival traditions and the spirit of the carnivalesque. The last chapter is called ‘In the Heart of Darkness’ and follows a descent narrative through a nightmarish puppet land. Pimentel Biscaia suggests that this novel has roots in Europe’s *Carnivale* but leans towards dark fairy-tale rather than political agenda. Coover does not align himself with any ideology but plays with the movement between the ordered academy and the chaotic world of carnival inversions. Pimentel Biscaia writes that this novel incorporates three forms of folk culture: comic verbal compositions, abusive language, and ritual spectacle performed ironically for the intellectual. Maternal tenderness is deconstructed in a humorous and blasphemous representation of the Virgin, Pinocchio incarnates the role of Christ and the crucifixion is invested with sexuality. In a culmination of excess the grotesque Madonna of the Organs subverts the mythologised icon of womanhood in a double-gendered body. Coover’s text is postmodern: identity is a shifting construction; ambivalence is a catalyst to the imagination; the work is parodic intervention in the sacred metatexts.

Pimentel Biscaia argues the transition from modernism to postmodernism – a change in aesthetics from the epistemological to the ontological dominant – through Brian McHale’s metaphor of the urban crossroads of great cities: the writer can play it safe or dare to cross the street into new territory. She suggests that this line in critical thought brings the literatures of Latin America, North America and Europe into congress through the polyphonic structure of the contemporary novel; magical realist discourse and grotesque imagery *meet in the crossing*. In theoretical terms, postcolonial texts of magical realism and European literary discourses in the fantastic come closer together through a postmodern umbrella. She postulates that the native voice is used to question authority but in answering back the relationship between the European academic centre and the margins is problematised. Our historical era is one where identities are in flux, contextualised by cultures of class, gender, race, sex, education, social role and so forth, but perforce hybrid, heterogenous, fractured and of necessity anti-totalising. When everyone is supposed to matter equally, which pole has greater ‘authority’? ‘The questioning beast’ raises issues of power nodes, transgression, policing and official censorship.

*Postcolonial and Feminist Grotesque* squarely argues – within a sound academic frame – an anti-realist poetic as legitimate rhetoric. The manifestation of the grotesque has a
particular aesthetic function in the life of the polis – control and correction. Pimentel Biscaia cites Alton Kim Robertson’s theory: the grotesque is at the locus of conflict between two principles, the subjective perception of order and its own negation. The grotesque appears at the gateway of ‘the gaping chasm of categorical separation’, in extremis where there is only order and anarchy as absolutes and ‘their only border is the grotesque.’ Pimentel Biscaia also suggests that the grotesque is tied to phallic anamorphosis. In Lacanian terms the pre-existence of the Word (Symbolic) or the Law-of-the-Father decrees the status quo in a two tiered hierarchical system. The Semiotic and Woman are both negatively theorized and controlled in order to repress any threat to the masculine power base. Therefore the deconstruction of both language and abjection of the weak are integral to any feminist project. Pimentel Biscaia also argues that an examination of the feminine grotesque has produced a thetic crisis as a result of boundary failure between the Symbolic self and non-authorised elements of the maternal body. She wants to know if women’s language of non-violence and feminist projects can win out against the violence of silencing by the word-of-the-father.

Pimentel Biscaia is of the opinion that grotesque icons, as a communal expression of ‘the people’, have not faded from rhetoric; however, she also suggests that a concept of ‘people’ as opposed to aristocratic elite or the institutional hierarchies of the Church has disappeared in capitalist Europe where materialism and a capitalist market is the driving force, although in certain parts of Africa and South America popular culture, local customs and religious beliefs are very much alive. Bakhtin’s carnival is interpreted as a celebration for all people of an antic disposition and Pimentel Biscaia believes that contemporary writers enjoy the feast. Coover creates a carnival event which plays with the sacred and the profane. Márquez represents the mythologies of a localised oral culture. Rushdie uses thousands of years old traditions of storytelling in a post-modernist novel, showing the influence of the oral on writing. Harirahan re-interprets the classics (The Thousand and One Nights) ‘because it is also about the transition to the written word’ (431) and the failure of women to sustain a position of power in a masculine world: ‘the floating dismembered body of Shrahzad is unquestionably an image of her defeat and the heartless violence exerted on women’ (412).

Never say die! Pimentel Biscaia concludes that the grotesque is an open-ended figure, tied to historical context but more a movement than a reified object: ‘expanding lines of cultural resistance, openness and reappropriation’ (30). She finishes with the observation that the grotesque has ‘comfortably settled and grown’ into ‘postmodern literature by reason of its preoccupation with Otherness and its audacity in investigating the human condition, particularly through the novel which presents the best tools to develop the dialogical potential of the grotesque’ (413).

I have one caveat. A handy reference book which so comprehensively outlines both the background and maps the contemporary guise of the postcolonial and feminist grotesque deserves an index.

Christine Runnel

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The Joseph Conrad who was described by Bernard C Meyer as ‘a creature of sharp contradictions and inconsistencies’, a lonely, pathetic, and ill-tempered man and a grudging father, appears with a new aura in Conrad in the Public Eye. This edited volume offers a broad spectrum of opinions about the famous mariner and writer, carefully crossing the well-trodden threshold of Conrad’s biographical details. It is not a critical analysis of the life of Conrad, but a focus on how he was viewed and evaluated by his contemporaries. Under the division of four broad sections – Biography, Appreciations, Early Criticism and Publicity – the subsections include news and views about Conrad’s life and writings from America, England, Ireland, Wales, France, South Africa, but regrettably nothing from Poland, Conrad’s native land. Had Poland been included, the reader would have experienced a sense of completeness together with fascination.

The most vibrant section of the book concerns Conrad’s meeting with the reporters in New York, written by Christopher Morley, titled Conrad and the Reporters. From these accounts many facts about Conrad, the man, can be gathered. In place of a burlier, dour, austere, and remote personality, the American reporters got ‘the long-thoughtful Ulysses’ (8) with a tender, affectionate, gentle and friendly disposition who was not even irritated at the persistent requests by the photographers to take different poses. Though Conrad realised the disadvantages of being famous – he looked perplexed and became tired due to his sickness and the interview process, he preserved his characteristic reserve during the interview. Moreover, when he was requested to say something about American writers, he regretfully admitted that he did not have a critical mind, nor did he have much time to read. Writing came to him spontaneously in the strange and unstable events of his sea-life. This information, together with a poem about his reluctance to deliver a public lecture and epigrammatic sentences about ‘the journalistic profession’ (8) such as ‘Interviewing is a dangerously ticklish art’ (11) or ‘Interview is really one of the most rarefied and sentimental arts; there is no formula but intuition’ (20), makes this part of the book enjoyable.

Florence Doubleday’s memoir of Conrad’s days at her home, Effendi Hill, during his visit to New York is kaleidoscopic in nature. This lady, the second wife of Conrad’s American publisher, F.N. Doubleday, in her Episodes in the Life of a Publisher’s Wife remembers many fragmentary events, both funny and grave, with compassion. For example, when Conrad disembarked from the Tuscania, she met a lovely lady, a fan of Conrad, who touching the writer’s hand, was crying silently. Conrad asked her one day to call him Joseph, and later on he sent a letter to his wife containing a false excuse that angered Florence very much. As she promised that she would not tell anyone, he informed her when he had stopped and then had resumed writing The Rescue.

In this section the comment on Conrad by Sir Hugh Clifford touches the heart. It gives an impression of Conrad’s theme, styles, and expertise in using the English language as well as his mariner-like physical beauty and mental disposition. Clifford writes, ‘he was most distinctively and unmistakably a seaman. None could ever have mistaken him for a member

of any other profession. … There was something in the whole character of him … which remained with him until his death, and was so stamped in as to mark him to the end as a “son of the sea”’ (33), and ‘there was a certain exotic flavor about his English. … It was as intangible as the timbre of a voice’ (29).

Two memories about Conrad – one is Roditi’s meeting with Conrad at Elstree School and the other is James Whitaker’s account of his life in Essex – are also interesting. The first one is Roditi’s vague effort to remember his meeting with ‘a live representative of English literature’ (59) in his school. It reminds us that many great events can take place in our lives unknowingly! The other one is a period of intense tension when Conrad was attempting to be a professional author in Stanford-le-Hope, where he wrote his magnum opus The Nigger of the Narcissus, with the help of his beloved helpmate Jessie, in ‘a damned jerry-built rabbit hutch’ (70). This essay presents the viewpoint of Jessie Conrad who, in spite of her husband’s temperamental behavior at home, does all she can to nurture his genius. I salute this lady for her dedication to a great writer.

The next two sections are scholarly in approach. These can benefit teachers, students and researchers of Conrad. Liam O’Flaherty appreciates Conrad’s novels as a sort of ‘fairy tale’, wrought out of ordinary incidents, that transports adults to ‘a magical place’ of ‘ships and golden, silent sunlight or magnificent storms’ (88), and their success in engaging the reader. Comparing Conrad’s love for the God of the Empire with the sinner-like fearful revolt of Shelley, he warns the reader of the danger of drinking from the fountain of Conrad, although it is sweet. Like a person on a heavy march who drinks too deeply, the reader may be confronted by the steep road of a horrible death.

The Welsh writer John Cowper draws upon a common analysis of Conradian psychology from an unusual point of view. Setting Freudian philosophy of the human consciousness aside, he highlights the fact that Conrad works with the margin of the mind. He defines this region as ‘mid-way between known and unknown’, ‘where memories gather’ and ‘emotions float by and waver and hover and alight’ (91) and which exists in all human beings. Suddenly at any ordinary moment of gazing at natural objects ‘the strange and subtlest feelings’ (93) can appear in this subconscious borderland of the mind. Yet the most attractive discussion concerns the issue of women’s psychology. He identifies women in Conrad’s novels as unique, because of their withdrawn and reserved silence. He suggests that in the volubility of women everything is expressed but actually nothing is expressed. Conrad hence uses reserve as a device to portray women characters and assigns to them ‘a look, a gesture, a sigh, a whisper’ that discloses ‘the ocean-deep mysteries of the soul’ (94-6). For this reason his women are womanly, not like ‘vicious boys’. ‘They love like women and they hate like women’ (99). This essay also speculates on Conrad’s language and style and his deep thoughts like those of a true European philosopher, and like Cowper expresses uneasiness at the violence in The Nigger of the Narcissus.

While Richard Curle deals with the ‘History of the Nigger of Narcissus’ from a ‘Human, Literary, Bibliographical’ viewpoint, V. Walpole treats the formal aspects of the format of Conrad’s novels. Whereas Curle offers an arresting commentary on the book that ‘held the first place in Conrad’s affection’ (140) and of which Conrad declared, ‘by these pages I stand or fall’ (127), Walpole attempts to clarify Conrad’s narrative method for confused and lost readers. As a defender of Conrad the writer, Curle asserts that he was not merely a portrayer of seamen but a writer about human life and its mysterious allure and terrible pathos. To draw that picture of human life Conrad used as his basis the real human

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beings found in his sea-life and on that ‘inspired reminiscence’ (135) he constructed his own fictional world. He compares Conrad with Herman Melville as the writer of the sea and with Gustave Flaubert for his writing style. John Herman Randall’s excellent description of Conrad’s outlook on life is of great interest. His evaluation of him from his origin as a simple Pole with no knowledge of the English language, to the analysis of his consideration of sea as a symbol of life and of life as tragic, very different to Hardy, is thought-provoking. We come to know Conrad’s philosophy of life in which human beings are struggling against pessimism through the tragic irony of illusion leading to despair. But that despair is not a hopeless force that denies a humanistic approach to life. Conrad was ‘the loving, pitying, tender-hearted pessimist who persists in “cherishing an undying hope”’ (122). Thus he became ‘an aesthetic moralist, or a moral aesthete’ who believed in ‘neither “Art for Art’s sake”, nor “Art for Life’s sake”, but ‘Life for Art’s sake’” (123).

The last contribution to this book describes the commercial enterprise that Conrad’s publishers undertook, before and after his death. Without this, works of genius may have been lost in an abyss. The pamphlets the publishers used to promote Conrad’s works contain highlights of the life and works of Conrad and valuable comments on him. Those who have read Conrad, yet who know very little about the ins and outs of his writings, will benefit from this section if they are patient enough not to be deterred by the many numerical details.

I cannot resist the temptation to include a line or two about the frontispiece. It contains a portrayal of ‘the nigger of Narcissus’ and three photos of Conrad. Is this an indication that this shy, reserved, melancholic, thoughtful, sombre and moderate man of extraordinary talent stands or falls by this novel? Undoubtedly this suggestion enhances the appeal of the book.

Thus, with the amalgamation of various elements – from photographic and cinematic scenarios to thought-provoking arguments concerning Conrad’s theme, style and language, and the publicity through pamphlets – the book becomes a smorgasbord of knowledge about Joseph Conrad.

Umme Salma

New texts showcasing Australian literature within contemporary theoretical and contextual frameworks are long overdue, and new texts on the subject from an overseas academic are rare indeed! It was with much excitement, therefore, that I awaited my copy of *The Great Australian Novel*. At first glance Vernay’s survey of Australian literature, or as he puts it, ‘cinematic essay’, appears to fit neatly with an upper high-school or undergraduate audience. There are some excellent inclusions, such as a short discussion on the iconic themes in Australian literature, a historical breakdown of publishing movements, a literary chronology, a listing of writer’s birthdates, and a select bibliography of critical works.

Vernay skilfully divides historical periods of Australian literature into separate chapters for easy reference, and offers ‘Close-ups’ and ‘Panoramic Views’ of particular authors and works throughout the text. But a panoramic view cannot linger over details, and so it is with *The Great Australian Novel*; and while one does not expect deep analysis in a text with such an ambitious range, over-simplistic plot explanations take the place of critical analysis more often than is desirable in a book aimed at academia. While this may be an authorial choice – the book is easy to read and the information easy to digest – Vernay’s attempt to cover almost two centuries of literary history suffers from the scope of the undertaking.

Some of Vernay’s observations of Australian culture will not hold up to scrutiny. For example, ‘It would seem that, ever since the birth of the Australian novel, equality existed since the book published after *Quintus Servinton was Woman’s Love* (1832) by Mary Leman Grimstone’ (25). Implying women writers in Australia had, or have, little difficulty finding an outlet for their work because the second book that was published in the colony had a female author is simply naïve. Vernay’s appraisal of White’s reception in Australia is equally disturbing:

> When he [White] received the Nobel Prize in 1973, the year *The Eye of the Storm* was published, Patrick White became the living proof of the reputation Australian literature had established worldwide. But not man is a prophet in his own country and his case demonstrates how difficult it is to obtain recognition from one’s peers in a country that supports mediocrity. So Australian writers have to aspire for international recognition without which they are not given a place of honour at home. (98-101)

To insist that Australians ‘support mediocrity’ because White has, at times, suffered less attention than his oeuvre deserves, suggests Vernay has perhaps been unfairly influenced by White’s own attitude to the critical reception of his work within Australia.

A stronger editorial hand was required to make this book really shine. As it stands, it is peppered with the kind of mistakes that unfortunately render it problematic for students. His statement that Tim Winton’s themes arise as ‘a direct consequence of feeling marginalised, as with all those who live in Western Australia, his protagonists are uninformed individuals who grow up on the edge of society’, suggests (incorrectly I hope) that all Western Australians are uninformed. Furthermore including Randolph Stow’s *Merry go-round in the Sea* under the umbrella of POW fiction seems a rather sweeping inclusion;

Sonya Hartnett’s novel Of a Boy is the thirteenth she published not the first, and Christopher Koch’s novel The Year of Living Dangerously was published in 1978 not 1972. The last is a strange mistake indeed for a scholar who wrote his dissertation on the literature of Koch. One is left to wonder how many of these mistakes may in fact be translation errors? Whatever the case, it is incredibly disappointing that the opportunity The Great Australian Novel presented has been lost.

Kathleen Steele

Originally delivered as The Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory at the University of California, Irvine, in May 2010, the four essays collected in this volume ask us to read literature for its global interconnectedness, a method Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o terms ‘globalectics’. Combining theories of globalisation and Hegelian dialectics with the author’s personal experience as a novelist, student, and professor in Kenya, Uganda, England, and the United States, Ngũgĩ imagines a new global literary space and rethinks the politics of knowing as a way out of what he calls ‘the straightjackets of nationalism’ (8). Globalectic reading reaches for texts across time and space and asks that they respond to one’s own time and space, staging a meeting of ‘the local and the global, the here and there, the national and the world’ (60).

Ngũgĩ announces his method in the book’s introduction, an approach he calls ‘poor theory’: a practice that leverages the ‘possibilities inherent in the minimum’ to privilege a ‘density of thought’ over a ‘density of words’ (2). He prescribes poor theory – grounded in close reading, experimentation, and lived experience – as an antidote to theoretical thought that behaves like an unmoored ‘kite … floating in space with no possibility of returning to earth’ (2). Ngũgĩ deploys his poor theory in a restrained prose that deftly avoids the tortured phraseology of many theoretical texts and delivers complex thought with an economy of words. The first chapter, ‘The English Master and the Colonial Bondsman,’ revisits the 1968 publication of ‘On the Abolition of the English Department,’ an essay he co-authored with Henry Owuor-Anyumba and Taban Lo Liyong. Ngũgĩ reads that text as a critical moment in which the ideological, epistemological, and pedagogical questions that frame decolonisation come into focus. To situate ‘On the Abolition ...’, the author charts his own intellectual development through the estrangement and alienation of colonial schools in Kenya, his exposure to Matthew Arnold and F.R. Leavis at university, and his subsequent encounters with the writings of Marx, Fanon, Sartre, and the new African novelists. What emerges is an intellectual history of colonialism and the genesis of postcolonial thought in East Africa told in the form of memoir, critical theory, and close reading.

The second essay, ‘The Education of the Colonial Bondsman,’ presents the Hegelian dialectic – the master–bondsman relationship in particular – as a useful way to understand and think beyond colonial and postcolonial power relations. Ngũgĩ supplements Hegel with close readings of didacticism in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* to show how ordered knowledge and power relationships in literary teaching moments anticipate and express colonial animations of the master–bondsman dynamic. As a way out of the vertical binary, Ngũgĩ endorses a postcolonial reading method that rejects the master’s historical narrative and decolonises cognitive processes inherited from colonialism. The third chapter, ‘Globalectical Imagination: The World in the Postcolonial,’ calls for reforming schools and universities so as to reflect the network structures of the postcolonial, globalised age, which would produce departments ‘devoted to world literature’ (57). Left unaddressed is the question of how this redrawn disciplinary map would discourage a resurgence of canonicity. How will these new schools and departments of ‘Literature’ – untethered from their national and continental disciplinary homes – protect the hard-fought curricular gains that expanded English, French and Spanish departments to include postcolonial specialists and created departments of African, Asian, and Latin American literatures?
Ngũgĩ makes in this third essay his most full-throated appeal for a globalectic reading method that starts with what Erich Auerbach called a ‘point of departure’ or ‘handle’ from which the subject ‘can be seized and radiate outward’ to other texts from other places (58); it is a form of the local that, once grasped, necessitates conceptual flight beyond national boundaries. Defining globalectics as both transnational and grounded – features that Ngũgĩ calls the mutually contained ‘hereness and thereness’ of a text (58) – applies welcome pressure to the ethereal fluidity and errant meandering described in some ‘transnational’ and ‘postnational’ literary scholarship, but the argument here would benefit from an expanded discussion of how to protect the dedicated study of this ‘local’ in the new academy Ngũgĩ imagines.

The final essay, ‘The Oral Native and the Writing Master: Orature, Orality, and Cyborality,’ rejects lingering academic hierarchies that pit the written against the oral, suggesting in their place ‘orature … an alternative to the oxymoron [‘oral literature’] … a counter to the assumed inferiority of the oral to the literary arts’ (72). Ngũgĩ analyses forms of orature that cut across cultures (hip-hop music, proverbs, riddles, dance, and song) and sees in recent technological advances (e-books, texting, Twitter) a blurring of the written and the oral. He describes the Internet as ‘neither pure speech nor pure writing … it is orality mediated by writing … cyborality’ (84) and argues that its rhizomatic network architecture provides a promising counter-model to the verticality of the written–oral hierarchy.

Ngũgĩ’s study will interest scholars from multiple fields. Those working in postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy, continental philosophy, comparative literature, globalisation, new media, and translation studies will find many points of entry in this highly readable volume. ‘Cyborature,’ in the fourth chapter, needs to be developed and remains something of a dangling thread. Typographical errors, though infrequent, are at times distracting, as when Alain Robbe-Grillet is renamed ‘Robert Grille’ (19). The capstone text to a prolific career in letters, *Globalectics* is a compact and timely theory of transnational literature that attends to both its disciplinary genealogy and new technologies that are expanding our understanding of the literary imaginary.

Corbin Treacy

This is a big handsome book, written to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Bell Shakespeare Company, although it is mostly an overview of John Bell’s fifty years as an actor/director. It contains twenty-seven photographs of Bell Shakespeare productions, with a grand picture of John Bell as Richard III on the dust jacket, and with chapter headings that make clear where other matters break into the chronological and other sequences. However, were this work called *My life with/in Shakespeare* or *John Bell’s Shakespeare* it would more exactly represent what it is about, as it is not so much *On Shakespeare* as a theatrical autobiography of an actor/director who loves Shakespeare, who acted in the United Kingdom, set up the Bell Shakespeare Company after his return to Australia and who gives us his opinions of other actors and directors, of Shakespeare himself, his contemporaries and the times in which he lived, and on how directors and actors should approach playing Shakespeare, but who also has a distinctive idiosyncratic view of how the plays should be staged.

The main autobiographical flow takes John Bell from Sydney University to the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in 1964 with a scholarship from the British Council, and acting with the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon for five years, before returning home to Australia. It gives the reader an insight into Bell’s lifelong fascination with Shakespeare and his own very personal slant on staging the works.

Bell believes that when Shakespearean plays are performed in Australia they need to be translated into the Australian idiom, be in modern dress, in an Australian setting, to help Australians identify with the characters and understand the implications of the storyline. This is, in fact, his main theme. For example, in 1998 he set the two parts of *Henry IV* (conflated into one production) in a deprived housing estate with characters dressed in ‘second-hand cast-offs … [to] examine Australian attitudes to monarchy, war and family’ (137). Perhaps less introspective was his *Much Ado About Nothing* for Nimrod twenty-three years earlier when the whole play was performed in ‘“greengrocer” mock Italian accents’ (239). He says, ‘that deliberate cocking a snoot at tradition … became an important part of my work from then on.’

There are inconsistencies in Bell’s argument about how Shakespearean plays should be staged. At first he says that there should be an almost empty stage with no setting, as he believes would have been the case in Shakespeare’s day at the Globe, although he notes that more stage scenery and candles were used later at the indoor Blackfriars theatre, where performances took place after dark. Then he talks about how he Australianised plays, such as the two mentioned above, with all sorts of settings and costumes. As the chapters progress he changes his attitude somewhat. At first he says, ‘if you dress [the characters] as Fascists or French revolutionaries … you are telling the audience what to think’ (295). Yet the Australianisation seems to this reviewer to be similarly influencing the audience. Later, he tells how *Antony and Cleopatra* was set in a casino (289), and describes how he referenced ‘Japanese costume, dance and movement’ for his 2009 production of *Pericles* (363). Another influence that he notes is how the colour palette and tone of a production can be taken from a painter’s work. Fred Williams’ paintings, he says, provided ‘an Australian reference for *As You Like It*’ (282). Bell sets out his position as a director when he writes: ‘I try to start with a clean slate and wipe out memories of past productions: what does the play need now – at this
time, in this space, for this audience?’ (383). Perhaps he is here still being constant to his view of minimalist productions that emphasise an Australian outlook.

The bulk of the book is taken up with overviews of Shakespeare’s plays grouped into chapters entitled The Histories, The Tragedies, The Comedies, The Romans, and The Romances. Some plays, however, are not included within any group but get a chapter of their own. Romeo and Juliet is one of these, despite being described elsewhere as a tragedy, and Troilus and Cressida and Timon of Athens also have separate chapters. For every play Bell details his own and other directors’ productions, plus which roles he has played and where, and his opinion of other performances. Thus, all these chapters continue to be partly autobiographical.

Known historical information about Shakespeare and his contemporaries is presented in the form of imagined interviews (with Ben Jonson, Robert Greene, etc.) interspersed throughout the work. These are pleasantly readable, although sometimes intrusive, such as when a chapter on ‘Shakespeare’s Books’ – in the form of an interview with Shakespeare’s long-time friend, the printer and publisher, Richard Field – unexpectedly comes between The Comedies and The Romances.

There is a graceful chapter on the Sonnets, and, even if there are no new insights, it sets out the accepted theories on whether ‘the story they tell [is] a fiction or … autobiographical’ (314) and tells how the poet ‘breathed such life’ into the sonnet form (322). Surprisingly, there is no mention of the other long poems.

With it being fashionable nowadays to express doubt concerning the authorship of Shakespeare’s plays, this is a timely publication. Bell has no doubts about the authorship, offering confirming facts throughout the book and including an appendix that contains writings on Shakespeare by his contemporaries. Like Michael Wood, in his In Search of Shakespeare television series¹ (which Bell quotes as a chapter heading), Bell recognises Shakespeare’s use of Warwickshire words, and sees the scene in The Merry Wives of Windsor, where a young scholar called William mimics his Welsh tutor, as overturning any possibility of the Earl of Oxford having been the playwright. Only Shakespeare could have written this scene, he says, as ‘One of young William’s tutors [at the Stratford grammar school] was a Welshman, Thomas Jenkins’ (22).

This is ‘not a book for academics’, as Bell says; rather, he believes it could ‘encourage students and other interested readers to delve further’ (x) and thus it might make a suitable introduction, although the information contained therein is, of course, available elsewhere also. However, your reviewer is wary of this work being considered suitable for general readers, as Bell’s interpretation of the plays encompasses a particular viewpoint. For example, he sees The Tempest from a post-colonial perspective, with Caliban as the innocent native, whose attempt to rape Miranda is dismissed by Bell as Caliban’s ‘natural impulses assert[ing] themselves’ (374). Bell goes on to state that neither is his book for ‘theatre buffs’, whereas theatre buffs, and especially theatre historians interested in Australian theatre productions over the past forty or more years, would find much of the content of interest to them.

In fact, the whole of On Shakespeare is quite an entertaining read; the jumping about from a chapter on Stratford-upon-Avon to advice on Acting Shakespeare, via An Interview with Robert Greene, etc., without any logical sequence, can be negotiated fairly easily. And there are succinct descriptions, such as when Bell says that tragedy ‘is achieved when you,
the audience, can see a way out of a dilemma but the characters can’t’ (295). There are also some lovely moments. Such a one occurs when Bell compares Shakespeare’s work to Mozart’s, saying, ‘Like The Magic Flute, Shakespeare’s Dream is a perfect gem and you can’t cut a note or a line without damaging the fabric’ (229). Later, of Twelfth Night, he says, ‘it carries echoes of … the exquisite sadness of Mozart’s Marriage of Figaro and Cosi Fan Tutti’ (245).

The final chapter, which concerns the Bell Shakespeare Company, has just five pages, because, as the author explains, much of the history was included in his previous book, The Time of My Life. Here, in On Shakespeare, Bell emphasises the work that the Company does introducing school children to Shakespeare through the Actors at Work programs, which have become increasingly popular over recent years. It is here, at the end of the book, that he makes the remark quoted above about starting ‘with a clean slate’ when he directs a play, considering what the play needs ‘at this time, in this space, for this audience’ (383).

Evelyn Wallace-Carter