Complete Book Reviews: History, Theory and Criticism

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The title of this book is enigmatic and enticing. What is the space that is ‘beyond white guilt’? What could be the ‘real’ challenge for black-white relations? I was intrigued to know what Sarah Maddison has to say about this.

As I see it, the argument that Maddison puts forward is that the failure of non-Indigenous Australians to acknowledge our collective guilt over the appalling treatment Aboriginal people have endured since first colonisation by Europeans leaves us caught in a deadlock that stifles any attempts at reconciliation, let alone allows us to redress the lack of basic human rights Indigenous people still struggle against (cf. the Northern Territory Intervention).

Her argument is a very good one; however some of her premises, in my opinion, are flawed. For Maddison, our refusal to either acknowledge past abuses, whether deliberate or caused through ignorance, or our denial that they happened (just as for Holocaust deniers), leaves us in limbo, without a way forward. This she sees as the reason why so many past government policies on Indigenous issues have failed. However, this premise is based on the assumption that the general population has a full understanding of what the past abuses were, which I think, for the majority, is not the case. Despite the achievements of the reconciliation movement and Sorry Day bridge walks around the country, many Australians go about their daily lives never having met an Aboriginal person and, in large part due to past government policies of segregation, assimilation and silence, do not give Indigenous issues a second thought. The majority of my own Australian history students are shocked to learn of the history of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations in this country.

Indeed, most Australians rely on historians to inform them about our past, but how are they to do this when historians don’t even agree? Maddison is diplomatically non-committal when discussing what we know as ‘The History Wars’, but she nevertheless neglects to recognise that the general electorate must be confused when some historians (Reynolds, Manne, Boyce, Ryan *et al*) demonstrate that there was an orchestrated war by early settlers against Tasmanian Aboriginal people that is denied by other prominent historians (Windschuttle, Blainey, Brunton *et al*). Presumably Maddison would consider these latter historians deniers of the true facts and hence of the collective guilt, but this is not spelled out, perhaps again diplomatically, in the hope of achieving some sort of mediation. Even so, if historians who have the skills and resources to access the raw materials needed to shed light on ‘the truth’ can’t agree on what that is, then how can the public?

All historians know that the past is highly interpretive. There are many valid versions of the past, so shouldn’t Windschuttle be entitled to his view? This is not to say that I agree with Windschuttle; quite the contrary. From the more than twenty years I have worked in the field of Indigenous studies, I am convinced we are guilty of nothing short of genocide, as defined by the United Nations, and as espoused by Maddison. I also believe the Holocaust took place, because there is too much oral historical evidence supporting it, however well the archival record was hidden, just as there is with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whose strong oral tradition is well documented. My point is that Maddison’s argument cannot be sustained through the premise that there is one historical truth that we must all agree on.


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Perhaps Maddison would argue that the level of the violence inflicted is not the point and that we should all acknowledge harm. However, I don’t know how we can all accept our collective guilt if some of us believe, like Windschuttle, that Aboriginal people had no cultural sanctions against killing people outside their immediate clans and brought conflict on themselves (an extraordinary, generalised and racist assertion), while others believe (some of) our forebears engaged in wholesale slaughter.

Maddison also attributes the emergence of a strident nationalism that she calls 'somewhat defensive' and ‘downright hostile’ (30) to feelings of collective guilt. I agree that Australian patriotism has become aggressive (as demonstrated by the 2005 Cronulla riots), as opposed to celebratory, which is the American fashion. Likewise I agree that it is considered ‘un-Australian’ to be critical of our history (43). However, this rationale is somewhat tenuous if one considers the history of cultural cringe Australian society has had over the last 200 years, arising from our settlement as a penal colony, bearing the ‘convict stain’ and our perception (both here and there) as poor cousins of Britain. Australians are well aware of this heritage, as opposed to the legacy of Aboriginal history.

While I have issues with the basis of the argument for this book, what is most frustrating about it is that there is no attempt to offer any discussion of how we ‘acknowledge our collective responsibility, change at a deep level, and develop a revitalised view of our national self’ (back cover).

Like the Hon. Michael Kirby in the Foreword (xiii), I have not agreed with everything I have read in this text, and I agree with him that few Australians will, for a panoply of reasons. However, I admire Maddison for tackling what is in every respect a very thorny topic and for bringing it back into the discourse. After all, it was raised forty-six years ago, when Dr Martin Luther King Jr said that, ‘The white man needs the Negro to free him from his fears. The white man needs the Negro to free him from his guilt.’ Like Maddison, I don’t have answers, but also like her, I believe that ‘repressing the facts of our history will never set us free’ (154) and acknowledging collective guilt is the only way forward. Acceptance and restitution are in our best interests (145). We can’t change the past, but perhaps we can reconcile it through exchanging pride for humility and adopting a generosity of spirit to free us from our fears and to free us from our guilt.

Sue Anderson

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It is tempting to approach this volume as a companion piece to earlier works that bear Bill Ashcroft’s name. The Empire Writes Back, for example, is mentioned in the opening line of Ashcroft’s Introduction. At 665 pages, Literature for Our Times has the heft of The Postcolonial Studies Reader. Yet the present volume seeks less to define a field or the innovations within it than to chronicle the various directions in which the terms ‘postcolonial’ and ‘Commonwealth’ are interpreted and deployed.

Perhaps the diversity of the selections can be attributed to their origins: all were essays given at the 2007 conference of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. The editors selected thirty-five revised and updated essays and loosely organised them based on themes of concern to postcolonial studies. Some sections of the book, such as ‘Gendered Bodies’, would be very familiar to those within the field. Others – like ‘Dalit Literature and Its Criticism’ – touch upon newly emerging disciplines.

The first section, ‘The Idea of (Postcolonial) Literature: Conceptual and Methodological Issues’, is the standout portion of the entire book. It is here that some of the more pressing issues of how the field itself has been theorised and re-theorised are put into conversation. Particularly important for the authors featured in this section are questions of national space and literary articulations of modernity that come from a postcolonial world. Frank Schulze-Engler and Debjani Ganguly both take issue with Pascale Casanova’s The World Republic of Letters for its insistence on the nation-state and European history as benchmarks for her model of internationalism. Both essays are notable for the ways that they use this criticism to ask questions about how literature functions outside of the global marketplace; both also move to put forth ideas of transnationalism that can account for and emphasise cultural complexity.

There are several such intriguing entries throughout Literature for Our Times. John Clement Ball’s reading of Jamaica Kincaid’s Mr Potter negotiates a Caribbean space that accommodates both national and international affiliations in ways that can help to rethink some of the critical boundaries in Caribbean literary studies. Cheryl Stobie’s gender-driven analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus reveals some of the complexities of a text that is often read simply as a Bildungsroman. Susan Spearey puts forth an informed and thought-provoking study of post-conflict memoirs by Antjie Krog and Philip Gourevitch, staking a claim for an ethical reading that can accurately understand the density of witnessing and testifying to atrocity.

The sheer amount of material in the collection is enough to ensure a variety of perspectives, texts, and issues at play here, but this volume almost insists upon including more of everything. Ashcroft’s excellent introduction to the volume gives an idea of how varied the field postcolonial studies is today by also providing a succinct history of the discipline itself. In terms of Literature for Our Times, then, Ashcroft notes that one of the reasons for its broad range of essays is that, in the twenty-first century, postcolonialism ‘represents a rhizomic interplay of pursuits all directed in some way towards analysing the varied and continuing effects of imperial power. It is not a Grand Theory of everything but a range of interests and approaches living together in what Amartya Sen might call an argumentative democracy’ (xvii). As an approach to an entire field, Ashcroft’s contention
certainly makes sense. As an organizing principle for a collection of essays, ‘a rhizomic interplay of pursuits’ at times comes across as simply too much.

In the quest for democratic representation, the editors include a number of essays, even entire sections, that lack the critical power of the volume’s more nuanced and innovative entries. The section on Dalit literature is a good example: although the experiences and writings of Dalits can potentially say a lot about postcoloniality and the state of the field today, these individual essays feel caught in earlier debates. The same could be said for some of the essays on ‘Translations and Transformations’ or ‘Indigenous Literatures, Literatures of the Land.’ Clearly, no individual essay can redefine an entire field of study. But for a book representing the current state of an academic field that is ‘at the centre of contemporary developments in knowledge-production,’ the selections often seem to miss this goal (xviii).

In short, Literature for Our Times is a great reference for current scholarship in the field, often on peoples and literatures that are underrepresented. Indeed, there are few other places to find critical analyses of Peter Bacho’s novel Cebu or the relationship between Ovid and Zadie Smith. Those interested in Dalit literature will surely want to read ‘riddles’ about Tamil Dalit Literature from P. Sivakami – a Dalit novelist herself. The book also includes innovative theoretical takes on the ways that postcolonial criticism overlaps and contradicts related interests, like world literature, cosmopolitanism, or multiculturalism. There is almost certainly something to satisfy anyone with an interest in postcolonial studies as a whole, and this is the volume’s most valuable contribution. When read in spots or used as a reference, Literature for Our Times can be enormously useful. When read in its entirety, as a collection of current postcolonial scholarship, it just seems, well, enormous.

David Borman

This book revisits György Lukács’s *The Historical Novel* (1937) by considering the historical novel of nineteenth-century Britain, France, and Italy, emphasising key authors such as Walter Scott, Honoré de Balzac, and Alessandro Manzoni, and by discussing development of the historical novel in relation to drama early in the century and realism later. It also extends Lukács’s seminal work by discussing the historical novel of nineteenth-century Spain, Germany, and Russia, and the historical novel as it continued and changed into the Modernist period and throughout the twentieth century. The stated aims of the work are to set ‘historical fiction in relation to the development of historiography in general’ (1); ‘to restate the case for historical fiction as a major branch of literary fiction’ (2); and to challenge ‘the disciplinary compartmentalizing of literature and history, and the containment of both disciplines into particular national straight-jackets’ (2). The subject of this wide-ranging work is genre specific and comparatist, interdisciplinary and transnational, with potentially significant theoretical and practical implications for pedagogy and research of the novel, historiography, and history.

Part one, ‘The historical novel as genre and problem,’ begins with an exploration of the categories ‘history,’ ‘narrative,’ ‘the novel,’ and ‘romance.’ Such categorisation could provide the basis to better understand the genesis and development of the nineteenth-century historical novel. However, the terms remain vague, along with others such as ‘Romanticism.’ More particularly, in a work that aims to examine the relationship between historical fiction and historiography, with initial emphasis on the Romantic period in Britain, the inclusion of histories (e.g. Hume’s *History of England* [1754-61]), antiquarianism (e.g. by Percy, Ritson), narrative poetry (e.g. by Scott), national tales (e.g. by Edgeworth, Owenson), dramatisation (i.e. historical and otherwise), and other forms, upmarket and downmarket, would add to the discussion. In the following two chapters, important issues and topics common to criticism of the historical novel are addressed: chapter two, ‘History and fiction: the trials of separation and reunion,’ reconsiders the ‘how much history and how much fiction?’ question; chapter three, ‘The German *Sturm und Drang*, historical drama, and early romantic fiction,’ builds upon Lukács.1 In chapter four, ‘Scottish flowering: turbulence or Enlightenment?,’ Hamnett justly locates Scott as a central figure in the development of the historical novel, but given the transnational connections pursued in later chapters it would be useful to more thoroughly relate the immediate and extended impact of the Waverley novels on the novel, publishing, criticism, and reading beyond Britain.2 Of more concern, to describe *Waverley* (1814) as a novel of ‘self-doubt’ (80) and ‘indignation’ (80) or ‘political intrigue and disguised identities’ (81) as ‘the life-blood of Scott’s fiction’ (81) seems a return to early-twentieth-century notions of Scott as a pure romancer or a genius with costumes and scenery. Similar issues occur in chapter five, ‘Romanticism and the historical novel.’ For example, Hamnett states, ‘The historical novel, with its emphasis on wild scenery and rebels, was ripe for further development by the Romantics’ (103). While Hamnett focuses primarily on the nineteenth

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century, describing the early history of the historical novel in this way disregards the complex historical, political, and sociological portrayals of society in novels during the fifty (or more) years before Scott (e.g. by Reeve, Lee, Porter). Further, the suggestion that the historical novel was developed by the ‘Romantics,’ a term that does not adequately describe Scott and other historical novelists of the period, may be questioned. The result of chapters four and five, then, seems at odds with contemporary criticism describing the Waverley novels (and the historical novel) as contributing to literary analysis of social transformation and modernisation from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. In chapter six, ‘The historians’ response to the historical novel,’ Hamnett directly addresses historiography. Short discussions of Augustin Thierry, Leopold von Ranke, Thomas Babington Macauley, Jules Michelet, and Thomas Carlyle consider the interplay of history and fiction. The final chapter of part one, ‘History and invention in the Italian question,’ continues with similarities, differences, and tensions between historiography and historical fiction by way of Manzoni.

Part two, ‘Internal contradictions and unstable form,’ begins with chapter eight, ‘Was the historical novel at mid-century in crisis?’ which returns to Lukács’s emphasis on the European crises of 1848 and his contention that the historical novel fades away thereafter. Discussion of the ‘serious’ historical novel opposed to historical romance – the former defined as morally and intellectually improving, the latter as merely entertaining – simplifies the changing socio-economic context of publishing, criticism, and reading, and obscures the fact that Scott, for example, wrote historical romances considered to be serious by some (i.e. critics, elites, reformers, etc.) and entertaining by many more (esp. downmarket audiences). According to Hamnett, the historical novel becomes compromised because of the incorporation of entertainment, which somehow comes as a result of Romantic emphasis on the imagination. Analysis of the many ways historical fiction balanced or deployed fact and fiction before, during, and after the Waverley novels (1814-31) for different audiences would be more valuable. Accordingly, book history would help better explain chronotopic literary production and adaptation in terms of material interests, diversified print markets, and the expansion of readerships throughout the century. In chapter nine, ‘Is there a way out? Two experiments in myth and history,’ readings of George Eliot’s Romola (1863) and Gustave Flaubert’s Salammbo (1862) outline problems central to the historical novel. Like chapter ten, ‘Benito Pérez Galdós and the novel of Spanish national identity,’ the following two chapters, ‘The struggle for identity and purpose in the Russian historical novel: from Pushkin to Tolstoy’ and ‘The German historical novel,’ are valuable, dealing with the historical novel in countries less often considered and fostering understanding of transnational literary connections. That being said, uneven emphasis throughout the book on the primary aim noted in the introduction – to set historical fiction in relation to the development of historiography – is evident. This is magnified in chapter thirteen, ‘Modernism and beyond,’ which attempts to cover the historical novel in the twentieth century (seemingly beyond the scope of this work).

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3 See, for example, Anne H. Stevens, British Historical Fiction before Scott (New York: Palgrave Macillan, 2010).
with short sub-sections such as ‘The Historical Novel in the Wider World: Responses to Colonialism, Revolution, and the Problem of Independence.’

Hamnett re-emphasises the prevalence of the historical novel in nineteenth-century Europe and addresses key issues of the historical novel. However, the potentially more significant contributions to understanding of the historical novel, in relation to historiography and as a transnational form, through more focused attention to specific works in less often considered countries or by closer investigation of the period from 1848 to WWI, remain open for further development. Also, although (or because) a text-based study of genre and form, more extensive use of book history would help avoid unclear categories such as the ‘general reading public’ (5) or the ‘serious historical novel’ (5, 11), ground the challenge to disciplinary compartmentalisation and national emphasis by tracing the material production, dissemination, and reception of historical novels (and histories) across borders, and enable the inclusion of downmarket forms, lesser-known novels, and non-canonical authors – where the problems and contradictions at the heart of the historical novel may be different, or further complicated. In short, this book covers much ground and usefully points the way to additional avenues of investigation, of the historical novel and historiography, in the nineteenth century as well as before and after, in Europe and elsewhere, by men and women, for a variety of audiences.

David Buchanan

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Intercultural Crossings: Conflict, Memory and Identity edited by Lénia Marques, Maria Sofia Pimentel Biscaia and Glória Bastos (Peter Lang, 2012)

The collective volume Intercultural Crossings: Conflict, Memory and Identity aims to address issues that relate directly to intercultural encounters. However, encounters initiate advantages as well as disadvantages: on the one hand they can endorse mutual understanding, permit sharing of knowledge, amplify people’s horizons and expectations, and encourage liberalism in the face of difference, what is described as lato sensu cosmopolitanism; on the other hand, encounters of/in difference engender cultural locations where conflicting life-styles and temperaments can transform into a space of skirmishes. More often than not, these encounters render an opportunity to scrutinise matters of identity which have been largely covered up by socially induced notions of political correctness, such as tolerance and multiculturalism. In Western society the former has been used as a contrivance to accommodate notions of difference which are at odds with a given identity, providing a means to appease discomforts which the humanist principles saw reinforced by the values of liberty, equality and fraternity and homogenising Enlightenment universalism.

These essays assume that some peculiarities must be recognised; one can speak of cultural diversity which, although it has always characterised our histories, has reached extraordinary range due to diasporic and/or exilic movements, primarily connected to globalisation. However, multiculturalism should not be construed as a synonymic term. Though most Western societies are considered culturally diverse, they are not unanimously viewed as multicultural. Often cultural diversity is linked to post-coloniality as the former imperial centres are these days peopled by migrants from their old colonies who, nevertheless, come to occupy liminal physical and cultural spaces. France and England, for example, are indisputably culturally diverse but the idea of a multicultural identity is not unanimously accepted, for it presupposes the equation of the ‘new’ cultures with the home culture, thus putting at risk its supremacy. The defense of a multicultural society entails the rejection of minorities, or rather, of their status as ‘other’ identities and the promotion of a full-scale civic participation. Moreover, it questions the existence of a single national identity whose purpose has historically reinforced boundaries and difference from neighbouring nations. It thus demands the rejection of the identity defense mechanism which endorses a country with a very sense of nationhood.

The first essay firmly pronounces that cultural landscapes are not static and constitute not a pre-existing reality, but a process under constant (re)construction and (re)negotiation. It sets out to establish that current social, cultural and technological circumstances have changed people’s relationships with spaces and the consequent integration of the individual in the world.

Joana Miranda’s essay in the volume appraises three fundamental dimensions of the life of immigrant women in Portugal. The first of these dimensions is the memories of the country of origin, the second deals with the difficulties of integration in Portugal, and the third with the women’s life projects.

The analyses of language and thematic issues Glória Bastos presents in her essay show the importance of the choices made by authors, particularly in children’s literature. These choices show their vision of society and the role played by children and, particularly in children’s literature, the language they use is viewed as a process of indoctrination.


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The study by Joana Passos discusses a set of writers whose nomadic biography has given them a plural cultural heritage. These are committed writers, using literature a form of public intervention and as a pedagogic and effective means to spark awareness and political literacy among their readers.

Maria Sofia Pimentel Bicaia’s essay aims to provide a strategy to accomplish two goals in the process of deconstructing monolithic cultural configurations: one, to question Western agency solely in relation to imperial white masculinity so that in the process many alterities within the imperialistic phenomenon can surface; and the other, to initiate a debate beyond the discursive trap of Self and Other.

Lénia Marques in her discussion of Nicholas Bouvier’s stories foregrounds the fact that memory is as much an exercise as an act of identity. It is through memory that the subject will relate to others and will be able to permanently reposition her/himself in the world. Memory is part of the subject: either there are happiness and pleasant encounters, or striking and painful misencounters.

This volume tenders the possibility, or rather possibilities, of crossing between the debates and the cultures underlying them. Crossing induces notions of action, and therefore agency, dislocating subjectivities that are often unquestioned and thus forcing others to continuous displacements. Crossing also brings into play imaginary places as much as actual locations where several cultural paths intersect one another, one could say, establishing intercultural encounters. Another interpretative possibility is that of constructing a means to connect disjuncted subjectivities or cultural locations; the crossing is in this sense the place at which an obstacle can be crossed.

The essays in this volume seek to observe and interrogate the complex crossings introduced with its title: in an intercultural framework between identity, memory and conflict. In fact, these topoi have individual substance but they acquire added meanings when positioned in an intercultural context as well as when interconnected. This is then a collective work that interrogates several aspects of this complex network.

Some essays examine the cultural constructs of space and reflect on the way people associate to new spaces and cultures, particularly in the context of the diaspora. The volume begins with an overview of the concept of ‘cultural landscapes’ through an analysis of some of its materialisations. João Luís Fernandes shows how migration movements, emerging from distinctive cultural backgrounds, model the territory they are going to move onto with their own cultural markers. These forms institute (re)formed ‘geographies’ and (re)formulated identities. Christian Hummelsund Voie’s ‘Preamble Borderlines’ shares his experience in the field of ecocriticism, revealing its productive relationships with architectural projects. In this case, an intercultural dialogue takes place between different disciplines and discourses – architecture and literary ideas – while taking into consideration the cultural and social responsibilities of both fields. The idea of identity and of its reconstruction is also at the centre of the study developed by Joana Miranda. Focussing on the integration of immigrant women in Portugal, the author investigates the psychological dimension of that process in what is for them a new society. The personal stories told by these women emphasise the vivid tension between the memories about their home country and the new individual experiences, contributing to what we can call an reform of identity.

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Such inquiries also find manifestation in literary works, as literature can be a viable place for the depiction of tensions between identity and memory. These essays expatiate on literary analysis, sometimes also through the methodologies of sociology of literature, to underline the ways fiction constructs national history and approaches closely related matters such as colonialism and diaspora. In the process, they highlight the role of memory in the construction of identity as well as the power of language to preserve experiences from present and past times. The referred authors and books are instances of literatures or literary related discourses written in Portuguese, French, Danish and English coming out from countries such as Brazil, Portugal, Canada, South Africa and Denmark. Through them, conflicts between past and present, memory and cultural identity, images of the Self and the Other are revealed.

The last two essays consider the topic of travelling, not only across space but also travelling inside ourselves. Dwelling on notions of multiplicity, travelling is also an act within the subject’s own identity, which can be reflected in several ways. Lénia Marques’s essay explores the idea of traveling as an intercultural crossing, illustrated by the work by Nicolas Bouvier. His writings and photographs display and unveil images of people and spaces which forge a voyage not only through memories of otherness but also through personal identities. Taking off from the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and his concept of dialogism and the dialogic nature of discourse, in ‘Bakhtinian Dialogism and the Adding of Meaning’ Dionísio Vila Maior develops the notion of dialogic movement, where the idea of identity plays a crucial role. The works of well-known Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa and his heteronyms demonstrate the balance and the same time the tensions between Self and Other, sometimes an internal Other.

The approach of this volume is not restricted to national expression, but rather seeks to cover a range of texts and cultures that maybe considered comprehensively significant and whose joint reading offers still unexplored interpretative approaches. This work is the first step in an extremely relevant and complex approach which highlights the pressing issues in the globalised world we live in, in the process suggesting new possibilities of research and lines of action in the field that needs further research.

Vivek Kumar Dwivedi

In her 2011 monograph, Michaela Moura-Koçoğlu argues that a transcultural reading of contemporary Māori narratives reveals a more accurate understanding of Māori indigenous identity than ‘the picture Pākehā [white New Zealand settler] politics has drawn’ (xvii). Moreover, she claims, the narratives reveal that Māori identity is situated ‘increasingly in a context that is perceived as multilateral, modern, and global’ (xviii). To substantiate her claims, Moura-Koçoğlu provides readings of a number of contemporary English language texts by Māori authors, which she categorises in three loosely chronological phases: roughly matching Peter Beatson’s two phases in *The Healing Tongue* (1989), she calls her first two phases ‘Narratives of (Be)Longing’ and ‘Narratives of (Un)Belonging,’ and she posits the contemporary third phase as ‘transcultural’ works that illustrate ‘attempts – both failed and successful – to explore and come to terms with the hybrid nature of indigenous identities at the intersection of multiple modernities and altered socio-cultural conditions’ (149).

In her first chapter, Moura-Koçoğlu gives a historical overview of Pākehā–Māori relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand in order to conclude that contemporary Māori identity does not originate from a single coherent cultural stream of tradition but that it is articulated with aspects of that derive from many sources, including, of course, the Pākehā people they have been living alongside for over 200 years. Moura-Koçoğlu draws largely from histories by Michael King and Ranginui Walker, showing that Māori identities have ‘been subject to manifold disruptions and influences’ and that they ‘constitute novel forms generated in the process of formulating indigeneity’ (47). This chapter may be helpful for readers approaching Māori literature who are less familiar with the cultural context of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Chapter 2, ‘Fragmentation Reconsidered,’ sets up the framework Moura-Koçoğlu employs in her transcultural readings, defining her method as one that leads to ‘a modern sense of indigeneity, one the Māori maintain not despite but in reference to Pākehā elements they have appropriated to indigenous cultural forms’ (52). While she is clearly not a purveyor of ‘biased dualities of colonizer/colonized and Self/Other’ (57), one dichotomy that Moura-Koçoğlu sets up and engages with throughout her book is that of successful versus failed transculturality. For example, she describes one character who spurns her own Pākehā blood as ‘an instance of failed transculturality’ because ‘the character subscribes to a distinct Māori identity’ (57). While she does consider types of both instances under her transcultural analysis, it becomes clear through repetition that Moura-Koçoğlu valourises those characters that ‘acknowledge hybrid realities’ (144).

Chapter 3 treats the first main phase in Māori literary output, which Moura-Koçoğlu chooses to represent by Hone Tuwhare’s *No Ordinary Sun* (1964) and Witi Ihimaera’s *Tangi* (1973). The texts of this era, she claims, were engaged in ‘staging an indigenous viewpoint’ (73) and typically expressed ‘characters’ need to remember traditional values, re-imagining communal ways of life with *whānau* and *iwi* which they conjured up as intact worlds’ (77). Ultimately, Moura-Koçoğlu’s transcultural analysis finds only subtle examples of ‘cultural blending’ in either Tuwhare’s or Ihimaera’s early texts, but identifies both as texts that ‘paraded indigenous “otherness”’ (78), reveal ‘a mid-twentieth-century society which harbours two different cultural worlds, divided and seemingly incommensurate’ (86), and ‘foreground nostalgic grief at *Gemeinschaft* lost’ (93).

In Chapter 4, Moura-Koçoğlu moves on to the second phase of Māori literature, in which, she claims, Māori writers began to express political resistance to Pākehā dominance. Examining two well-known texts, Patricia Grace’s *Potiki* (1986) and Alan Duff’s *Once Were Warriors* (1990), Moura-Koçoğlu argues that the second phase is when Māori writers began ‘steering a course towards a renewed indigeneity that is capable of adapting to change while translating cultural tradition into an altered environment’ (122). This chapter is particularly insightful in its contextualisation of these texts alongside Māori activism such as the Great Māori Land March and the persistent Māori warrior tradition, as emphasised in the Māori Battalions sent to WW1 and WW2.

In her fifth chapter, Moura-Koçoğlu completes the trajectory of her progression of Māori literature in her examination of twenty-first century texts that exhibit most completely the transcultural elements of which she had thus far only found traces. Here she examines five texts: Ihimaera’s *The Uncle’s Story* (2000), Kelly Ana Morey’s *Bloom* (2003), Paula Morris’s *Queen of Beauty* (2002), Renée’s *Kissing Shadows* (2005), and Lisa Cherrington’s *The People Faces* (2004). Moura-Koçoğlu’s choice of texts here is interesting in its currency; other than Ihimaera’s, none of these texts are yet part of the Pacific literary canon.

In the book’s final chapter, ‘Navigating Transcultural Currents’, Moura-Koçoğlu considers the possibilities for reading and writing in Aotearoa New Zealand with a transcultural approach. She argues that her readings have revealed

>a paradigm shift in literary constructions of Māoriness that requires paying critical attention to the way in which Māori culture and traditions are remembered, retold, recombined, and revalorized in the context of a modern global world order. (248)

‘Paradigm shift’ seems a bit strong, considering that Moura-Koçoğlu herself shows that Māori people have long been engaged in struggles to represent themselves to the world.

The book’s contribution to the study of Māori literature is in its close readings of so many under-studied texts and placing those texts in conversation with one another. However, the basic premise of the author’s argument requires some further development in order to be fully convincing. Some of the author’s claims seem a bit dated. For example, she asserts that ‘precisely what the transcultural approach unravels’ is the argument that ‘contemporary indigeneity is a mere reflex to processes governed by a dominant “West”’ (255), which seems like a variation on the fatal impact theory which has long been refuted by writers across the Pacific. Moreover, parts of Moura-Koçoğlu’s analyses read like two-column tables, labelling characters as transcultural or not – by which she means having ‘essentialized notions of Self/Other, colonized/colonizer’ (173). While Moura-Koçoğlu is justified in troubling these binaries, her valorisation of hybridity is celebratory in a way that sometimes overlooks a long history of colonial violence that persists today.

While not the fault of the author, the book’s copy-editing could have been more attentive to certain details. Many of the book’s early chapters are so burdened by footnotes that the reading experience drags considerably. Typographical errors occur frequently – in the Māori language text especially, which suggests that Dutch publisher Rodopi did not hire a copy editor with Māori language experience. Finally, the imprecise term ‘Polynesian minority,’ which stands in for ‘Māori’ and the Anglo-centric pejorative term ‘Antipodean’ should be avoided.

Steven Gin


Mythologist Marina Warner’s prodigious study investigates the ‘perplexing passion of the Enlightenment for a collection of medieval fairy tales from another part of the world’ (431). Despite the strict separation of magic and reason / natural and supernatural in the Age of Reason, and of warnings from dour figures like Dr Johnson to eschew the ‘whispers of fancy’, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fad for the *Nights* in Europe drove many authors to write their own equally fanciful versions of ‘Arabian’ tales; it enchanted artists to incorporate harems, Oriental rugs, and sultans into their artwork; and it coaxed some to don turbans and travel to Egypt to learn Arabic. ‘How do such flights of fancy speak to reason?’ Warner wonders (22), and wisely suspects that ‘escapism’ does not tell the whole story.

For Warner, Europe’s enchantment with the *Nights* was not solely about a need to imagine and control the Orient, as proposed by Edward Said, nor to escape Enlightenment constraints on fantasy; instead, she focuses on similarities between the medieval Middle East that produced the *Nights* and the European society that devoured it. Warner uses the term ‘reasoned imagination’ (which she borrows from Jorge Luis Borges) to explain this phenomenon, offering the claim that it propelled both Europe’s fascination with human flight in the mid-1600s and its enthrallment with Shahrazad’s flying carpets. Similarly, Voltaire’s brand of intertwining reason and humour lines each of Shahrazad’s tales. A parallel is also drawn between medieval Baghdad as an important centre of trade and the age of travel and discovery in Europe – the former explaining the prominence of objects in the stories of the *Nights* as sources of enchantment (a horse made of ebony, a jewel as large as a turkey’s egg), and subsequently the rise of antiquarianism in Europe that marvelled at and gave value to objects. These are just a few of the hundreds of examples Warner provides to help us rethink our cultural picture of Europe and its relationship to the *Nights* not just as a curiosity for the exotic other, but as a recognition of sameness.

Warner thus hypothesises that through the *Nights* the West could examine itself more clearly, that ‘magical thinking ... is “stranger” not because it is unfamiliar but because it is latent and denied’ (27). Warner offers the story of the Danish-born painter Melchior Lorck (born 1526/7) as fitting proof: Lorck lived as a spy in the Ottoman Empire but during his time there created an immensely rich corpus of scenes of life. His drawings contain a ‘hallucinatory quality’ in the words of art historian Peter Ward-Jackson, who also comments on Lorck’s ‘predilection for the weird and sinister’ and ‘the morbid trend of his imagination’ (170). One of Lorck’s drawings depicts a panorama of the Venetian lagoon and includes a large, fanciful tortoise soaring atop it. Upon his return to Europe he found no one willing to publish his work, and so began to edit his prints, adding Christian elements like churches and trumpeting angels – symbols that were more acceptable to Europe because they portrayed a magic less strange.

That the *Nights* contained flying carpets, talismans, jinns, sorcerers, magicians, and any number of strange things did not present a problem for later Europeans, in Warner’s view, because they could safely relegate magic to the realm of the foreign. Thus the *Nights* became a catalyst for the imagination and in all the European forms it infiltrated (theatrical productions, gothic tales, costumes, interior décor, films) acted to legitimise fantasy and
magic under the guise of imitating a foreign other, rather than as a demonstration of one’s own predilection for foolish fancies.

While at times the sheer size and scope of Warner’s book (over five hundred pages in length and spanning a time period from the Ancient Greeks to the twenty-first century) makes it difficult to hold and recall the narrative thread, Warner wisely chose to limit her analysis of the Nights to just fifteen stories which she retells and inserts between chapters to provide a scaffolding for her research. The story of Camar al-Zaman and Princess Badoura who travel by flight, for example, creates a useful backdrop for her discussion of the dream of flying in the imagination of Europeans from a seventeenth-century memoir by Francis Godwin to the stories of Peter Pan and Harry Potter.

The book is divided into five sections, each covering a different element of enchantment. Part 1 discusses jinns and the figure of Solomon the Wise King who, in Islamic tradition, is the ruler of jinn, and compares this to the tradition of wizards like Merlin, Gandalf and Prospero in Western literature. Part 2 focuses on darkness: magicians and sorcerers, but also a shared fear of dark others (here Shahrazad’s stories of ‘The Prince of the Black Islands’ and ‘Hasan of Basra’ provide a backdrop for a discussion Othello and Titus Andronicus and a sixteenth-century painting of a dark-skinned inhabitant of Virginia as a devil). Part 3 is devoted to magical thinking and the ‘thing world’ of the Arabian Nights in which common objects are endowed with special powers of their own. Warner uses the project of Napoleon and his team of engineers to record and publish a Description de l’Égypte, which contained detailed drawings of machinery like sugar mills, as a Western example of an obsession with things. In Parts 4 and 5, both illustrating the liberty of the imagination, Warner hits her stride and her narrative explodes with examples of how the Nights influenced the fabulist tradition of the West. She offers new views of Voltaire’s ‘Zadig’ and Beckford’s gothic Arabia tale Vathek, as well as on Goethe’s flirtation with the East in his lyric cycle The West-Eastern Divan, the frontispiece of which is written in Arabic calligraphy and embellished with arabesques.

A review of this size cannot begin to summarise all of the stories Warner tells, the multitude of examples that support her argument, and cannot do proper justice to the over twenty years of research that stand behind this immense project (the glossary, notes and biography comprise a full one hundred pages, or one fifth of the book). Adorned with over fifty illustrations and twenty-five colour plates, one of the true pleasures of reading Warner’s book is that it, too, creates wonder and marvel. One of my favourite stories is that of Bolossy Kiralfy, a Hungarian emigrant and creator of musical spectacles in Victorian London, who took over the Olympia exhibition centre in 1893 for a show he called Constantinople, or The Revels of the East. It included waxworks, a fairground ride, an aquatic pageant with a boat trip for audience members, a slave market where actresses paraded for their new masters, a harem, a mosque, perfumed fountains, camels, dancing negroes, miniaturised sights of Istanbul, ‘An Arabian Nights Museum’, and a staging of a selection of stories from The Arabian Nights. ‘Without a doubt the most marvellous spectacle ever before the public’, the advertisement reads. Like Shahrazad, Warner enchants her readers with tales of wonder, but Stranger Magic does not just entertain; it serves to underline the human need for magic, dreams and fantasy and in doing so permits us to look more closely at ourselves.

Jena Habegger-Conti

Ann Marie Fallon’s *Global Crusoe* offers valuable insight into Daniel Defoe’s canonical text *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and its twentieth-century revisions. Fallon uses feminist and postcolonial theories to read these texts in the context of transnationalism; the resulting study is an original and valuable addition both to Crusoe scholarship and to postcolonial criticism in general. *Global Crusoe* brings the discussion of Defoe’s novel into the present day, proposing that ‘we see Crusoe today ... as a cosmopolitan figure of connection and a representation of our own moment of anxiety around a rapidly globalizing world’ (2). The figure of Crusoe continues to be relevant in contemporary times: updating the scholarship on this topic, as Fallon has done, is thus of paramount importance.

Literary text and geographical/imagined space are closely intertwined throughout the study, with Fallon stating that she will ‘demonstrate the ways that revising and unsettling these texts are intimately connected to revising and unsettling space’ (17). This process creates, in Fallon’s words, ‘a transnational map of literary influence and revision’ (17). *Global Crusoe* argues that these revisions present us with ‘a new kind of transnational aesthetic’ wherein ‘the colonial Crusoe becomes the postcolonial Robbie Crusoe’ and ‘the uncharted island becomes the overly inscribed postmodern, postcolonial nation’ (29). ‘Home’ is a key concept within this aesthetic: Fallon repeatedly returns to the term and seeks to display how her chosen texts engage with it and how it forms links between texts. ‘What does it mean to be at home in the world?’ is, Fallon explains, ‘a basic question for *Global Crusoe*’ (3). The book explores how characters and authors negotiate this question and how, in turn, our own attitudes and anxieties are embedded within these negotiations.

*Global Crusoe* has seven chapters. The first of these extends on the theoretical groundwork covered in the text’s introduction, with Fallon very diligently providing the reader with a range of definitions for key terms as well as clarifying her own intended use of these terms. The second chapter offers an analysis of Fallon’s foundational text – Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* – in relation to ‘revision’ and ‘dislocation’ within the text itself. The next four chapters discuss twentieth-century revisions of this urtext and are structured around specific titles: Derek Walcott’s play *Pantomime* (1978) and Sam Selvon’s novel *Moses Ascending* (1975); J.M. Coetzee’s novel *Foe* (1986), Nadine Gordimer’s short story ‘Friday’s Footprint’ (1960), and Bessie Head’s short story ‘The Wind and a Boy’ (1977); Marianne Wiggins’ novel *John Dollar* (1989); and Victoria Slavuski’s novel *Música para olvidar una isla* (1993). A range of other narratives are also discussed throughout these chapters, most notably Defoe’s *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* (1920), Elizabeth Bishop’s poem ‘Crusoe in England’ (1979), and the film *Cast Away* (2000).

The final chapter works as a conclusion to the book. Fallon summarises her work and posits

that the Crusoean ur-Island is in fact an expression of an ‘American’ experience anticipated by Defoe, and postcolonial pan-American writers are transforming the meaning of the term *America* and revising this ur-Island as a uniquely transnational, and idealized, humanistic space. (134)

Fallon continues by concluding that the story of Crusoe has changed from a myth to a metaphor, and that ‘this movement ... represents a way of expressing the dislocations and unease inherent to inhabiting this new territory of American globalization’ (136). Defoe’s novel has often been described as a ‘myth’ within Crusoe scholarship, and Fallon’s argument, therefore, provides a fresh and original point of view. It is a pity, however, that the argument is not expanded upon; instead, Fallon ends her book by offering an examination of the life and works of Julieta Campos. This feels somewhat jarring, particularly as this new content, unlike all that has come before it, is not made directly relevant to the legacy of Crusoe.

The clarity and value of the book are, moreover, severely lessened by consistent problems at the level of editing. This begins with many spaces missing between words in the abstract, continues within the text itself, and ends with the incorrect formatting of the cover illustration citation on the back cover. Recurring errors within the text include missing articles and prepositions (e.g. ‘Transnational aesthetics is way of seeing’ [15]), incorrect plural constructions (e.g. ‘preconceptions of the self is’ [51]), and incorrectly placed or absent commas (e.g. ‘Noland only escapes his island when a piece of garbage, the tin wall from a port-a-potty allows him to build a sail for an escape raft’ [23]). Sentences are, at times, poorly constructed and as a result become convoluted or nonsensical: ‘The feminist Bildungsroman, the desire for fiction cannot, therefore, be disconnected from colonialism in John Dollar (104) and ‘Leaving home, early in the novel is the recognizable trope of escape from the drudgeries of domesticity’ (106). The first of these two examples also has a spelling error, as ‘Bildüngsroman’ should read ‘Bildungsroman.’ Perhaps most problematic of all is the repetition of content: the chapter following ‘South African Revisions: J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, and Bessie Head,’ for instance, re-introduces the texts and their contexts from the previous chapter as though they are new material (100-101), thus hampering the flow and continuity of the text.

Fallon’s reading of Defoe’s novel and its aftermath in the context of transnationalism provides new ways of understanding and engaging with these texts. The constant typographical and syntactical errors, however, are a serious problem as they prevent Fallon’s arguments from achieving their full potential. It is a great shame that this text has not been better edited. Global Crusoe offers valuable criticism of Robinson Crusoe and its aftermath provided, of course, that one is able to read past the errors.

Britta Hartmann


In ‘Reflections on Exile’ Edward Said characterises ‘our age … [as] the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass migration’ (174). While Said’s depiction is quite apt and while many books, collections, and articles continue to describe the complex lives of displaced persons, too few of those works explore the ways in which these populations constructively respond to and reshape their realities. Countering Displacements: The Creativity and Resilience of Indigenous and Refugee-ed Peoples intervenes in these conversations with eight essays that examine specific instances of displacement and the creative countering response offered. The challenge for this collection is in effectively bringing together the seemingly unrelated groups of indigenous populations and refugees into one, focused collection. Given the somewhat broad scope, it should not be a surprise that the impetus for this collection comes from a 2008 conference on displacement and like many other works that emerge from conferences, the editors of the volume, Daniel Coleman, Erin Goheen Glanville, Waffa Hasan, and Agnes Kramer-Hamstra, weave somewhat disparate essays together into relatively cohesive edited volume through a thoughtful introduction.

The introduction succeeds when it ceases to justify the somewhat tenuous connection between indigenous and refugee-ed populations and instead provides a more in-depth examination of the theoretical concerns surrounding displacement. Specifically, the sections of the introduction that address the tension between the nation-state structure and displaced populations coupled with the importance of agency and narrative allow the work to reply to systemic issues through creative endeavors. As a result the introduction does much of the theoretical work of the volume and thus permits the essays to work together in constructively addressing these larger concerns. In fact, the opening pages offer one of the few spaces in the collection that gesture toward macro level issues regarding displacement for these groups. Additionally, the rationale for the organisational strategy provided by the editors is helpful in guiding readers through the narrative of the essays.

The first essay, Jon Gordon’s ‘Displacing Oil: Towards “Lyric” Re-presentsations of the Alberta Oil Sands,’ maps the concept of displacement onto the land through a rhetorical analysis of official government and industry narratives juxtaposing those positions with Jan Zwicky’s idea of ‘lyric’. Gordon locates this theoretical manoeuvre in a short story and play by Rudy Wiebe, but the importance of this essay lies in its ability to challenge readers to reconsider dislocation in nonhuman terms. By documenting the dis-integration of the Alberta Oil Sands, Gordon chronicles the continued detachment of humans from the natural world. The regional focus of the essay should not overshadow the contribution this essay makes to larger conversations on ecocriticism. It would not be difficult to imagine Gordon’s analysis being incorporated in discussions of dam projects in South America or the extraction of precious metals in Congo.

Jean McDonald’s article ‘Citizenship Studies and Migrant Illegality’ surveys the landscape of current conversations on citizenship studies and intervenes through the position of illegality. Unfortunately throughout most of the essay the author’s argument is overshadowed by the extensive review of contemporary work in the field of citizenship studies. McDonald’s work on illegality seems to build on Arendt’s premise in The Origins of
Totalitarianism that to be without citizenship leaves one outside legal frameworks and subsequently outside humanity, but ultimately, the essay offers little of the creative countering that the volume sets out to provide. The strength of this essay is that it provides a robust resource guide to the work being done on migrant illegality and citizenship for readers.

The third and fourth essays, Mazen Masri’s ‘Israel’s Wall, Displacement, and Palestinian Resistance in the West Bank’ and Catherine Graham’s ‘Theatricality and the Exposure of Exclusion,’ address Palestinian displacement. Masri examines direct and indirect Palestinian dislocation resulting from the construction of the Israeli dividing wall and the responses to this segregation through legal action and popular organising. The informative nature of the essay is helpful for readers who might not be familiar with the details of this particular situation; however, the argument would benefit from further exploration of the complexities of Palestinian identity in regards to legal legibility in Israel and in the international community. This move would keep the essay in line with discussions of citizenship, indignity and legal rights. Graham’s contribution frames the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through an examination of a theatrical performance staged for a European audience. Theatre has long served as a space of resistance and social commentary and Graham draws on this legacy, suggesting that theatre should be a site of public intervention in order to revitalise something akin to Habermas’ public sphere. Together Masri and Graham’s essays work to describe the issues of displacement many Palestinians face and the creative response that allows for multiple, often contesting, narratives to emerge.

Pavithra Narayanan situates her study of displacement in the Indian state of Manipur. ‘Mapping Manipur’ traces the normative narrative of Indian national identity and juxtaposes it with an alternative narrative that incorporates subaltern voices, particularly those of women in Manipur, as a way of addressing the disjuncture between the way individuals define themselves and the way they are defined by the nation. Narayanar sees Manipu youth as the victims in this struggle between local and national identities. ‘Mapping Manipur’ continues the work of postcolonial theorists like Gayatri Spivak and Partha Chatterjee through the continued focus on the legacy of colonialism in postcolonial nations and the struggle for individuals and groups to narrate their own lives and histories. Chapter Six maintains the regional focus on South Asia with Subhasri Ghosh’s study of the practical and political response to dislocation by refugees in post-partition West Bengal. The essay describes the failure of the Indian central government to provide policy and plans for the influx of refugees from East Bengal and the consequent solutions enacted by refugee communities. Ghosh’s research on the squatters’ colonies of West Bengal demonstrates how displaced populations can impact public policy and alter the perception of problems from refugee issues to human rights issues.

In the penultimate chapter, Agnes Kramer-Hamstra explores how Shelley Niro’s work, film and photography, seeks to destabilise fixed images of First Nation populations in Canada. Jan Zwicky’s theory of ‘lyric’ makes another appearance in the collection with Kramer-Hamstra employing ‘lyric’ as a frame from which to read Niro’s films It Starts with a Whisper and Suite: INDIAN as sites of contestation over the representation of First Nation populations. Ultimately, Kramer-Hamstra argues that Niro’s films restore the everyday realities and contexts to the characters which in turn break the fixed pasts that have imprisoned these populations. The essay would have benefited from a more explicit examination of the poststructuralist approach to identity formation that underscores Kramer-
Hamstra’s reading of the films.

The final essay in the collection, Maroussia Hajdukowski-Ahmed’s ‘Creativity as a Form of Resilience in Forced Migration’, places the discourse of medical trauma that establishes refugees in the role of victim with a psychological approach that treats refugees as survivors in a Bakhtinian dialogical interface in order to understand the plurality of experiences that have shaped these individuals. The article suggests that creativity provides a space that can reshape trauma, pain, and degradation into expressions of hope and agency. Interestingly, Hajdukowski-Ahmed finds a correlation between resiliency through creativity and political participation. This essay is a bit of an outlier in the collection as it draws on specific case studies and employs a more scientific methodology to the study of displacement. The essay is useful in understanding current approaches to refugee resiliency.

The localised and specific nature of many of the essays makes it difficult for the collection to maintain its unity of message at times. Some of the essays might be better suited as standalone work, allowing them more scope and breadth. The choice of putting indigenous and refugee-ed populations does not completely work as there are too many detailed issues relating to each group respectively that remain underdeveloped. That being said, Countering Displacements does fill a void in the field of refugee and indigenous studies. What is particularly important is that the essays do not naively suggest the positive potential for displaced persons and transnational identities like many of the celebratory theoretical approaches of the 1990s. This collection provides a thoughtful response to a rising global issue. Throughout the collection there is an underlying presence of human rights rhetoric and although not explicitly stated, it is worth noting that the trend toward moving human rights out of juridical and legal frameworks to humanities based research is helpful in developing creative solutions to problems of displacement.

Alexander Hartwiger


In the preface to this book Donald Pease states that Johannessen’s approach is one that recognises the Transnational turn in American Studies. He goes on to say ‘Re-Mapping the Transnational was founded on the premise that non-U.S. Americanists use models for thinking and writing about American Studies that are different from those deployed by United States scholars’ (viii). This turn in approach, is indeed, one of the strengths of this book. It is interesting to read these different understandings of ‘America’. Johannessen is a Norwegian academic and begins the book with a story about leaving America and returning to Norway. She notes that one of her American neighbours told her that everyone must go where they can gain advancement. This is the starting point on which Johannessen builds her argument.

The theoretical underpinnings of the book are drawn from Charles Taylor and Cornelius Castoriadis. Johannessen points out that while Jacques Lacan may be the better known theorist in relation to the imaginary in the United States, in Western Europe Taylor and Castoriadis are also well known. She draws on Castoriadis’s ‘master imaginary’ to explore whether multiple social imaginaries merely reflect on the master one or whether it is possible for ‘imaginaries’ to remain malleable and endlessly accommodating. Charles Taylor’s investigation into the ‘social imaginary’ and its relationship with individualism is also used. She attempts to move away from conventional notions of Manifest Destiny and the chosen people to explore wider concepts of Americanism. Each chapter addresses questions such as ‘cultural provenance’, ‘places of imaginary’, individualism for social good, and ideas of enchantment. The chapters are self-contained and are organised around a number of key concerns: progress, individualism, loss, and imagination.

The Imaginary becomes the methodological lens through which all of the concerns within the chapters are explored because as Johannessen reminds her readers ‘America named an idea that long preceded an actual coming into being as the nation we know today’ (28). The textual choices made for analysis and discussion in each of these chapters may, at first, appear quite odd as the usual ‘big’ American writers are missing. The book raises many examples that one may not expect to read when reaching for a book on the American imaginary. Chapter One starts with an analysis of Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden’s baseball 2008 film *Sugar*. Johannessen says this film represents the joining of the sacred and the secular. The narrative may follow the conventional American Dream plot but she finds it goes further as it explores whether imagination is a mirror on society or a place to construct new dreams or places of enchantment. Chapter Two looks at Drude Krog Janson’s 1887 novel *A Saloonkeeper’s Daughter*. This Chapter investigates why this novel can be seen as an American novel (even though it is written in Norwegian and written for a Norwegian readership). Chapter Three is a comparative analysis between Walt Whitman’s ‘Songs of Myself’ and Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales’ ‘I am Joaquin’. She finds that Gonzales’ poem does not arrange itself according to the master imaginary but creates a space for a different history. Chapter Four uses Richard Ford’s *The Sportswriter* to explore ideas around suburbia, the
secular and the sacred and the seamless convergence between the individual and society. Cuba becomes the site for the discussion of the American Imaginary in Chapter Five. This chapter deals with those not given access to the master imaginary or what happens when those who have their imagination framed through the dominant imaginings are taken out of their safety zone and placed into a new ‘unknown’ imaginary.

The strength of this book is in its approach. It does not ignore traditional American Studies or past reflections but rather side-steps them and comes to them via a different path. Johannessen says her readings ‘attempt to calibrate how the imaginary’s contours materialize’ (19) and, overall, she does this well. This strength can, in some ways, also be seen as a difficulty when reading a book such as this. It is often difficult to ‘grasp’ the examples and there are moments when the chosen texts struggle to emerge from underneath heavy theoretical concerns. However, this book still remains a valuable addition to transnational studies as it opens up a space for future dialogue on America.

Lesley Hawkes

Perhaps the sign of a great filmmaker rests in his or her ability to foster a strong division between loyal viewers and perpetual detractors; at the very least, it would at least suggest consistency in the final product. Few contemporary filmmakers have successfully managed to cultivate a distinctive style as well as the creative team behind Merchant-Ivory Productions – so much so that James Ivory once lamented being credited with films he did not direct (and sometimes did not much care for). In his volume, Merchant-Ivory: Interviews, the latest in the Conversations with Filmmakers Series from the University of Mississippi Press, Laurence Raw ably distills this style as ‘period dramas with languid camerawork, long takes, and deep staging, long and medium shots rather than close-ups or rapid cross-cutting’ (ix). And the effect proves as intoxicating for some as it proves tiresome for others. Raw admits, ‘nothing much happens in many of their films, but we learn a lot about the characters and how they cope (or fail to cope) with cross-cultural encounters, including class-conflicts’ (xv). At a time when contemporary Hollywood cinema was growing increasingly insular and rudimentary in its narrative content, the Merchant-Ivory triumvirate – comprised of Indian producer Ismail Merchant, American director James Ivory, and their frequent collaborator, Polish-German novelist and screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (who lived in England and India before becoming a naturalised American citizen) – produced films that maintained a strict sense of meticulous detail, literariness, and cosmopolitanism.

Though many imagine Merchant-Ivory films as outsiders and independents (an image cultivated, in part, by Merchant himself), they were nevertheless connected with the Hollywood industry they seemed to dismiss. In fact their 1995 film, Jefferson in Paris, starred major Hollywood actor Nick Nolte and was co-produced by the Disney-owned Touchstone Pictures. Merchant-Ivory provides an illuminating look at the increasing dependence of independent filmmakers on the corporate Hollywood machine in the 1980s and 1990s, as major Hollywood studios initiated independent divisions and deals at festivals like Sundance launched the careers of independent filmmakers Paul Thomas Anderson, Steven Soderbergh, and Quentin Tarantino. Before all of this success, though, Merchant-Ivory cut its teeth on Satyajit Ray-inspired films that offered a Western perspective on the East, primarily India, where Merchant was born and Jhabvala had lived. These films – The Householder (1963), Shakespeare Wallah (1965), The Guru (1968), and Bombay Talkie (1970) – benefited from the mentorship (and even the musical scores) of Ray, while offering a more critical perspective on the Western ‘mysticization’ of India in the 1960s by Allen Ginsberg and the Beatles, who reduced Eastern religion to a potential remedy for the post-industrial ‘malaise’ of middle class Europeans and Americans. As Ivory acutely describes his characters, ‘Things cannot work out for these people. They don’t belong in India. They shouldn’t be. India wants them out’ (23). This ongoing examination of cultures in contact (and quite often conflict) warrants a critical reappraisal of Merchant-Ivory, especially these early films, which remains long overdue.

Merchant-Ivory films, unfortunately, have received limited critical attention – mostly in adaptation and postcolonial studies – and those areas of study will benefit greatly from this volume. To date, no scholarly study exists, though out-of-print glossy chronicles by Robert Emmet Long and John Pym can be purchased, used, from online booksellers. No doubt this work makes gestures towards a reconsideration of the team’s work, especially with the

blossoming interest in transnationalism and the advent of quality journals around the world, this one included, to house such vibrant discussions. But adaptation, postcolonial, and transnational studies will not be the only ones to reap the rewards of Merchant-Ivory Interviews. Scholars who employ an auteurist approach will take interest in ‘Hollywood versus Hollywood’, about the disastrous studio editing of James Ivory’s The Wild Party (1975), Merchant-Ivory’s period piece set in 1920s Hollywood and featuring James Coco and Raquel Welch. ‘The Trouble with Olive: Divine Madness in Massachusetts’, a fascinating profile of Vanessa Redgrave’s troublesome time making The Bostonians (1984), illuminates issues regarding movie stars’ public life and politics, film productions, and institutional and governmental resistance. The historical debates in film criticism over authorship have led to influential accounts favouring the director (Andrew Sarris), screenwriter (Richard Corliss), and the studio system itself (Thomas Schatz); now they will have to contend with the role of the producer as well in cinematic storytelling. Raw includes informative interviews with Ismail Merchant that reveal the uncompromising creative vision of Merchant and his collaborators, despite the concerns of mainstream Hollywood, their financial backers, and even the authors being adapted.

The strength of Raw’s collection lies in the balanced spread of interviews across their career, spanning their creative partnership from the first collaboration of all three with the 1963 adaptation of Jhabvala’s novel The Householder through Ivory and Jhabvala’s work together on The City of Your Final Destination in 2009, four years after the death of Merchant. Readers less familiar with their work may be surprised to learn that James Ivory had been directing for nearly thirty years when the critical and commercial success of A Room with a View in 1986. Indeed we are halfway through the book before the first mention of that milestone film for Merchant-Ivory Productions, thereby providing readers with a strong introduction to their early career leading up to that defining moment. Though I would have welcomed more interviews from the peak of Merchant-Ivory’s critical and commercial popularity, which seems to me to have taken place between A Room with a View (1986) and The Remains of the Day (1993), Raw succeed in providing a thorough survey of Merchant-Ivory’s collaborations as well as independent projects, such as Ismail Merchant’s fourth directorial effort, The Mystic Masseur (2001). At 174 pages, Raw offers scholars and critics with a timely (and needed) retrospective of Merchant-Ivory’s career and an implicit call for greater attention to their oeuvre, spanning more than fifty years. Hopefully, researchers heed his call.

Peter C. Kunze

William Stephenson, in his new study of Hunter S. Thompson the man and the writer, seeks, perhaps above all else, to give his subject the benefit of the doubt. This should not surprise readers. After all, Stephenson, a senior lecturer in modernist and postmodernist literature, finds as his subject an American writer who, as very few others before or after, not only grew in fame as a writer but established singlehandedly a new genre, a new way of expressing oneself in a rapidly changing world. Readers are left to judge whether he deserves Stephenson’s sympathetic scrutiny.

The word ‘gonzo’ or ‘gonzo journalism’ and the expression ‘fear and loathing’ will always be associated with Thompson, a writer who today may not be read, but continues to be remembered and revered. Stephenson does his best to explain the origins of each. Typical of Stephenson, the writer’s contribution to his age is placed in historical context, a context that begins in the near past, but which often stretches far beyond. Stephenson sees Thompson’s role in modern literature multi-generationally, from the early Modernists such as T.S. Eliot to his contemporaries such as Norman Mailer, Tom Wolfe and Williams Burroughs. However, he locates the man and his work in the context of his times and in reaction to current events. This, it would seem, is the essence of ‘gonzo’:

Writing on 22 November 1963, the day of Kennedy’s assassination, Thompson used the phrase ‘fear and loathing’ for the first time, as a description of his gut reaction to the murder. He perhaps borrowed it unconsciously from Søren Kierkegaard’s nineteenth-century existentialist interpretation of the story of Abraham and Isaac, *Fear and Trembling*. Thompson later denied the connection with Kierkegaard: the phrase ‘came straight out of what I felt … I just remember thinking about Kennedy, that this is so bad I needed new words for it.’ Douglas Brinkley states that Thompson’s source for the phrase ‘fear and loathing’ was Thomas Wolfe’s novel *The Web and the Rock*, published posthumously in 1939. *The Web and the Rock*’s protagonist, George Webber, is appalled by the squalor of his own background: ‘Drowning! Drowning! Not to be endured! The abominable memory shrivels, shrinks and withers up his heart in the cold constrictions of its fear and loathing.’ (101)

Kennedy and, we will find out, Richard M. Nixon played important roles in the forming of Hunter S. Thompson’s world view. It is to some extent a way of seeing things that men and women of his generation shared. There was Kennedy and his Camelot, a moment of hope, one might say, that intelligence, charm and justice might win out in the end. Nixon, the author points out, came to be seen by Thompson and his contemporaries as the incarnation of evil or, at the very least, the end of American innocence.

I said earlier that Stephenson takes Thompson seriously. It should perhaps be pointed out that Stephenson seems to take everything about Thompson seriously, including his adolescent view of history, his romanticism and his shameless naïveté. All the same, the author persuades this reader that that these were precisely the necessary ingredients for Thompson’s unique style of writing. The haphazard has a way of emerging from the ill-considered. Stephenson explains how Thompson’s stylistic inventiveness was born from his having sent unedited pages of his notebook for publication. He had expected to be rejected,

but instead readers were impressed. ‘It was like falling down and elevator shaft and landing in a pool full of mermaids,’ Thompson boasted gleefully.

*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail ’72* are the titles of works most commonly associated with the Thompson brand. Like the Beats, he succeeded in turning his writing into a lifestyle and is as well known for that as he is for his special brand of journalism. It is a career that had very little staying power, having gone out of style along with the politicians who took America to war in Southeast Asia. This seems difficult for Stephenson to understand or accept, although he certainly acknowledges Thompson’s inability to move on:

One commonly held view of Thompson is that he peaked in the early seventies with the two Fear and Loathing books and was in personal and literary decline ever since; a slow slide induced not only by the limitations of his Gonzo style and persona, but also by the staleness of repetition and the cumulative effects of his Olympian booze and drug intake. Although Thompson contributed more material to Rolling Stone in the early 1990s than he had since 1976, ‘most of it was seen as lower-level self-imitation. (15).

Thompson thrived on what many of his admirers seem to need: a belief that everything was better in the 60s. Stephenson makes note of the fact that Thompson’s idea of utopia excluded gays and women. His was a man’s world:

This is the central form of sexism in Thompson’s work: outright misogyny, though present in his writing, is rarer than the consistent exclusion of females from the frontier and the edge, and therefore from Thompson’s project of self-realization. (121)

He was an outright homophobe and was involved in activities as described by Stephenson that today would land him in jail.

Thompson, it would seem, saw politics as a kind of John Belushi toga-party or panty-raid for drugged or intoxicated adolescent boys. No doubt he had a lot of fun, but the fact remains that not only women but a lot of men are simply sick of this form of protest, whatever its merits might be. Women are tired of being excluded and gays are tired of being bashed over the head.

It would seem that Thompson grew tired, too. He committed suicide at his home on 20th February 2005.

Stephenson’s work may not have persuaded me to admire Hunter S. Thompson, but it is doubtful that this was his goal. Instead, he asks that Thompson be seen as a phenomenon of the modern age. Thompson’s project is to be understood as a form of exhibitionism, as much a part of our time as the dastardly and heroic deeds that animated his inflamed imagination. Stephenson writes with clarity and depth. His project makes reading about Thompson a pleasure.

**David T. Lohrey**

Michael K. Walonen’s Writing Tangier in the Postcolonial Transition takes as its subject the cultural dynamic of expatriate Tangier as identified through the writings of Paul Bowles, his wife Jane Bowles, William Burroughs, and the less well-known figures of Brion Gysin and Alfred Chester. Through their writings, Walonen seeks to situate the theoretical explorations of space and place once associated with Walter Benjamin and now identified with various areas of literary and cultural studies in the unique setting of post-war Tangier, which Walonen claims deserves the sort of attention given Los Angeles by Mike Davis in his acclaimed City of Quartz. Taking his argument beyond the confines of these celebrity expatriates, Walonen astutely extends his study beyond the obvious to include the works of Tahar Ben Jelloun and Anouar Majid. These perspectives on the community add a compelling dimension to this work.

Walonen’s study focuses on Tangier at what he argues was a unique moment in its history just prior to the end of colonial rule. Tangier, especially after World War II, the author argues, drew a wide range of travellers whose motivations for staying on as expatriates may have grown out of the trauma of the War, and as a reaction to the uniquely oppressive atmosphere of the Cold War. This in part explains the prevailing psychological state of those who were drawn to the city’s unique offerings, which included sexual freedoms unknown to most Americans of that time, including the Bowleses and Williams Burroughs. Ironically, the author points out, visitors seeking to escape conformist America often found Tangier, despite its active sex trade, a space where one ‘fell prey to the weight of indolence’ (23). This to some degree can be attributed to the idle lifestyle of the expat community, as many were independently wealthy, or at least had the means to support themselves without having to work.

Rightly, Walonen concentrates on the major works of Paul Bowles, offering a close and largely persuasive reading of The Sheltering Sky, Let It Come Down, and The Spider’s House, not to mention his early and later shorter works. As insightful as his analysis is, I was struck by the juxtaposition of Bowles’ perspective, as shown by Walonen, with that of his Moroccan contemporaries. To take but one critical difference in perspective, the author points out how the expatriates, including Bowles, tended to avoid making the sort of class distinctions in their work that were central to writers such as Ben Jelloum, who ‘puts in evidence the manner in whichMoroccans experience urban space differently according to their class position’ (141). This, it seems to me, goes a long way toward explaining the underpinnings of Bowles’ existentialism and the tendency among expatriate writers to seek ‘out a place to achieve greater freedom in a location where such freedom only exists due to the oppression of the native population’ (93).

Through his analysis of representative expatriate works, which include Burroughs’ Naked Lunch, ‘Glory Hole’ by Alfred Chester, Brion Gysin’s neglected novel The Process, and a selection of short works by Jane Bowles, Walonen shows the ways expatriates experienced Tangier as a city undergoing profound transition. He makes clear that he is less interested in the observations of tourists such as Gore Vidal and Tennessee Williams, however gifted they might be, than he is the ways those who chose to make Tangier their home learned to cope with the social dynamics of independence, particularly as this transition...

affected the way expatriates themselves were treated. This study is especially insightful on how the independence movement affected sexual politics, especially as it pertained to the availability of sex workers and their relations with foreigners. The author is equally keen to show how expatriate writers bent on escaping Western decadence handled those modernising processes under way in Tangier that we have come to think of as Westernisation.

Although he restricts himself to just one city, the author shows how Tangier existed as does Los Angeles perhaps as a collection of interconnected but occasionally separate zones of influence. Depending on the political atmosphere, one was wise to keep to one’s sphere. The entire issue of restriction and movement was informed by a complex of social, racial and gender politics that was constantly being revised. Orchestrating the complexity of issues is, according to Walonen, the subject of the fictions produced by the writers he considers. One senses that Paul Bowles was the only one who succeeded finally in navigating through the often treacherous registers of urban place that expats had to face. His wife was unable to do so. Jane, described here as having had to live ‘not just as a female expatriate, but as a lesbian and a Jew as well,’ seems to have intuited the limits of adjustment (73), while Burroughs, depicted here as an unattractive figure, who ‘frankly was not interested in the indigenous culture or people’ but only in the ‘easy access to drugs and sex,’ moved on as soon as the going got tough (83).

Writing Tangier in the Postcolonial Transition serves as a fine example of the sort of work the author’s subject deserves. It is well-written, contains two very useful maps, and a helpful bibliography. My only complaint is that there is not more to consider. As thorough a piece as it is, I think it could easily be expanded to include among other things a more fully considered study of Moroccan writers, along with a possible exploration of some of the visiting writers mentioned but not analysed in depth. I found Walonen’s brief comments on Tennessee Williams utterly fascinating and would very much like to read more of what he has to say about the impact Tangier had on the playwright.

David T. Lohrey
Thomas Pynchon is a hard writer to pin down. Over the last sixty years, his writing has arguably generated as much critical attention as any contemporary author to emerge in the second half of the twentieth century. There are currently two active scholarly journals and approximately one hundred critical texts and essay collections devoted entirely to deciphering Pynchon’s challenging ‘encyclopaedic’ narratives. The author’s inherently reclusive nature has also resulted in critics using his deeply influential fictions as a means to expose the man lurking behind the page; despite a constant refusal to assume a public persona, Pynchon has been widely heralded as a perceptive social commentator, mathematical whiz, philosopher, music aficionado, and postmodern satirist, among others. Pynchon’s longest opus, Against the Day (2006), has only intensified such scholarship and debate, which has culminated in illustrious (albeit notoriously fickle) literary critic Harold Bloom’s bold proclamation that ‘certainly he is still the most important writer alive’. Recognising the novel’s daunting scope, Pynchon’s Against the Day: A Corrupted Pilgrim’s Guide features a collection of essays by both established and emerging Pynchon scholars that serve as a ‘collective investigation’ (6), striving to promote a richer understanding of Pynchon’s socio-politically charged novel.

In the introductory chapter contextualising Against the Day’s pervading sense of interconnectedness, editor Christopher Leise cleverly asserts that ‘the treasury of genres, discourses, ideas, and facts cannot be fully accounted for by any one mind … save that of the septuagenarian Pynchon’ (5). Against the Day begins with the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair and follows hundreds of characters across nearly three decades, disorientating the reader with schizophrenic juxtapositions between First World War historical digressions and scatological fantasies. With this in mind, Severs and Leise have produced this text as a ‘guide’ that focuses (on what they consider) the three predominant dimensions of the book’s pursuits: narrative strategies, scientific belief and faith, and politics and economics.

The first set of essays brilliantly elucidate Pynchon’s complex narrative constructions in Against the Day, unravelling its mind-bending textual labyrinth to expose how Pynchon revels in manipulating generic devices and postmodern ideological variables in order to critically evaluate historical cultural eras and social mores. Brian McHale’s essay, ‘Genre as History: Pynchon’s Genre-Poaching’, is particularly persuasive and insightful, asserting that ‘Against the Day is a library of entertainment fiction … passed through the looking glass, rendered differently, altered; parodied, revised and demystified, queered’ (24). McHale specifically argues how the Tom Swift-inspired adventure, enduring Western, and spy thriller genres are represented in Pynchon’s novel through the practice of ‘mediated historiography’, which he defines as ‘the writing of an era’s history through the medium of its popular genres’ (25). Amy J. Elias builds on McHale’s fantastic opening critique by logically analysing how Pynchon’s defiance of generic expectations accommodates his anarchic politics. Arguably the most unique examination of the novel’s unusual narrative structure, however, is contained in

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the fourth and final essay of this section by Justin St. Clair, who charts the construction and trajectory of major characters in the relation to the novel’s panoramic paradigm.

The subsequent sections, which focus on the intersection of scientific belief with faith, and politics and economics, feature essays that many critics feel delve closer to the ‘heart’ of Pynchon’s oeuvre. What I’m referring to here is textual analysis on Pynchon’s depictions of geopolitical systems, religion, and the wonderfully enigmatic concept of entropy (which has been inextricably linked with the author ever since he named his 1960 short story after the thermodynamic quantity). Against the Day has no shortage of meaningful scientific and spiritual allusions, ranging from characters exploiting the dangerous possibilities of time travel to evocative scenes with talking ball lighting. Inger H. Dalsgaard and Terry Reilly’s respective chapters on time travel and Nikola Tesla in Against the Day are the most compelling and thought-provoking in these sections, with both authors lucidly tracing complex scientific allusions and theory within Pynchon’s novel. For example, Dalsgaard considers that the text itself functions as a figurative time machine, where readers become ‘textual time travelers or ghosts h(a)unting narrative meaning, either within the framework of this novel or through alternative texts – including Pynchon’s other novels’ (117).

In contrast, Christopher K. Coffman’s overly ambitious attempt to scrutinise ‘popular’ religions with spatial dimensions in order to reveal the importance of planetary ecology in the novel fails to resonant not as a result of writerly enthusiasm, but due to the author reaching too far for a healthy connection. While Kathryn Hume does a better job at disentangling Pynchon’s religious and political positions in Against the Day, she notes that it is ‘his least paranoid novel’ (169). This assertion isn’t without merit. However, it does reveal a key oversight in this edited collection: the lack of attention devoted to Pynchon’s constant fascination and gaudy play with the dark forces of conspiracy and paranoia. For Pynchon, politics and economics typically result in the sinister blooming of grand conspiracies, featuring secret power structures and corrupt governing bodies. In this sense, Against the Day is no different, which is why it is disappointing that only Graham Benton’s essay, which provides an extensive textual-historical investigation of anarchism, broadly illustrates the narrative and thematic importance of conspiracy.

Leise concludes the opening chapter to Pynchon’s Against the Day: A Corrupted Pilgrim’s Guide with the claim that ‘every Pynchon novel … calls for worthy guides, lamps to light the way home. But this novel may need more lamps than most to illuminate its unsuspected importance’ (11). This is the kind of guide that will provide loyal readers and experts with welcome supplementary lighting, and I suspect newcomers and budding scholars will wisely use many of the essays in this collection as safety beacons. While some of the ‘lamps’ are shining more brightly than others, Pynchon’s Against the Day: A Corrupted Pilgrim’s Guide represents the current benchmark for future Against the Day scholarship and is another worthy addition to the ‘Pynchon Industry’.

Scott Macleod


Joseph Brooker’s study *Literature of the 1980s After the Watershed* comes as the ninth volume in the Edinburgh History of Twentieth-Century Literature in Great Britain series, which in its essential disposition apparently follows what Ian Jack characterised as ‘our entire contemporary tendency to slice time in ten-year cycles’ (209) that are so neatly ordered on the historical trajectory of literature in Britain, perceived as linear.

In the Introduction to his survey of the decade whose long-lasting influences were being examined while the decade itself still lasted and whose contemporaries allegedly shared the uncanny yet poignant feeling that it may never be truly over, Brooker states his intention not only to offer an account of different literary texts and their authors that defined the 1980s, but also to bring forth ‘the historical and social contexts that shaped writing in this period’ (1). In response to these influences, of which, as Brooker will demonstrate, there was an abundance, the authors of the decade reacted with prolific production of various modes of writing. Although in his analysis Brooker, in a detailed and reader-friendly approach, deftly separates these various forms, focusing first on the novels and subsequently on poetry, drama and screenwriting, he by no means omits the unifying factors that serve to emphasise unity and coherence of any given literary period, even one this short – that is, the themes around which all these literary expressions are gathered. These dominant themes are organised under separate headings (titled Generations, Disaffections, Modes, Belongings and Commitments) in which the author follows dominant trends, philosophies and poetics of the period.

However, despite all the said diversity and literary richness, the most ‘pervasive, almost inescapable’ theme Brooker recognises is that of the profound and all-encompassing ‘influence of the Conservative governments that administered Britain for the entire decade’ (2), which he tackles and dissects in the Introduction. Thatcherism is thus deconstructed in terms of the historical perspective and its associations with enterprise, market, and freedom-related issues, but also in terms of the ostensible and undisputed contradictions pertaining to the cultural change, deterioration in Britain’s moral standards and repressive measures that affected the everyday life of the nation.

Parallel to the intended change these political forces envisaged for the historical trajectory of the British society, changes were taking place in terms of the literary trajectory as well. In Chapter One, Brooker discusses the issues of succession on the literary scene as he strives to pinpoint the watershed and distinguish between post-war generations and the contemporary one, subscribing in this demarcation to Philip Tew’s view. This context-specific cohabitation of the generations admittedly writing from different perspectives revealingly signals the alterations that both British literature and British society were facing at the time, the changes evident even on opening any respectable and bar-setting literary magazine of the period. Investigation of generational identity is followed by the analysis of class identity, which together with the account of working-class and regional writing comprises Chapter Two of the study. As the cultural label of the late twentieth-century Anglophone world, postmodernism and its poetics are analysed in Chapter Three, both in their theoretical and practical expressions. Dubbing the decade ‘postmodernism’s temporal heartland’ (100), Brooker offers the overview and functional analysis of the novels of Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie, Jeanette Winterson, Julian Barnes, Graham Swift and Alasdair Gray, but also focuses on tracing the legacy of modernism, especially in poetry. Another legacy is
examined in Chapter Four – that of British imperialism, which in the literary discourse gave birth to the exploration of the issues of nation and ethnicity, or, as Brooker says, ‘the matter of Britain’ (141). The increasing interest in the concept of Britishness drew attention to the writers that are typically associated with multiculturalism and multivoicedness in contemporary British literature. It is precisely in this light that the oeuvre of Kazuo Ishiguro, Hanif Kureishi and Fred D’Aguiar, for example, is presented. Brooker makes feminism, that ‘emphasized gender as a significant category of analysis, a modality of experience shaping social life, let alone art’ (173), a focus of Chapter Five.

What perhaps comes as a surprise is that this study of the penultimate decade of the twentieth century, organised around the central concepts presented from socio-historical and cultural perspectives, features not only illustrative literary texts of the decade that support its claims, but also texts created in the subsequent decades that are read as the significant fictional retrospectives on the 1980s (for example, the novels of Jonathan Coe and Alan Hollinghurst). On a similar note, in Conclusion Brooker explores the legacies of the 1980s in terms of literary and cultural production, as well as the whole subset of contemporary retro-culture inspired by the textual, visual and aural cues of the 1980s as exhibited in ‘replays’ and ‘remakes’, ‘two kinds of revivalism’ (211) appearing across various media in the present-day world.

In Literature of the 1980s: After the Watershed Joseph Brooker analyses not only British literature, but more importantly and more astutely British life, with all its social, historical, political and economic complexities that served as the ‘triggers of the decade’ and that set the scene not only for the literary production of the period but, according to the author, for literature in Britain as we know it today, in the second decade of the ‘new millennium’, itself heralded, hailed, scorned and disparaged by many of the works created in the 1980s. Recognising the overall cultural and ideological climate as crucial for any artistic output, Brooker sets forth Thatcherism as the central fact about Britain in the 1980s that inflected all other aspects separately discussed in the five chapters of the study. He aims to unmask inherent connections between the discordance of the revolutionary and reactionary rhetorics utilised by the period and the richness of literary texts originating in response, and in that endeavour he was refreshinglly successful. The decade that started off with the unease surrounding the proclaimed death of the novel as a form and the English novel as its subspecies, and the decade that managed to revitalise and transform it, giving birth to the new literary establishment, in Joseph Brooker’s work gains its full context and shines with all its (acrimonious) colours.

Nina Muždeka

Angela Carter appears to the reader in different guises: feminist, fabulist, postmodernist, surrealist. An exceptionally talented late-twentieth-century author, she wrote in many forms: essays as well as film scripts, novels as well as short stories. She is best known for her strikingly original fiction with its baroque prose and bizarre characters: novels such as *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977).

Maggie Tonkin focuses her scholarly study of Angela Carter’s work on ‘her project of revealing the insidious effects that patriarchal myths of femininity continue to exert in our culture’ (24). She argues, as Carter herself did, that the fiction is ‘a kind of elaborate form of literary criticism’, where the use of intertextuality and irony draw the reader’s attention to the flaws of the myths that she is examining. With Carter, we are reading more than a story; we are reading critical fictions/fictional critiques.

Woman-as-doll, woman as muse and woman as *femme fatale* are the primary ‘disabling images of femininity’ (27) that Carter attacks. Maggie Tonkin traces the development of this argument from the early work, *The Magic Toyshop*, through to *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, ‘The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe’, ‘Black Venus’, *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Passion of New Eve*. She pays particular attention to the intertextuality in the fiction, covering a range of influences such as Hoffmann’s ‘The Sandman’, Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the Marquis de Sade’s *Justine* and the tales of Edgar Allan Poe.

It is this breadth of reference that makes Maggie Tonkin’s study of Carter’s work such a pleasure to read. Angela Carter’s fictional arguments are much richer than some critics have contended – Tonkin particularly cites feminists who have objected to the fetishistic detail and ‘pornographic objectification of women’ that Carter’s lush prose embodies. Beneath this elaborate surface is the real argument that Carter is making: her ‘citation of this misogynistic cultural mode opens up a space in which it can be critiqued’ (5). It is the intertextuality that enriches the critique, and Maggie Tonkin’s wide-ranging scholarly knowledge of these *other* texts is vital to her study.

An example of this is the ‘woman-as-muse’ trope, the subject of the middle chapters of *Angela Carter and Decadence*. Tonkin discusses the history of the muse from Classical times to the nineteenth century, emphasising the social context as well as the literary one. Her knowledge of French writers such as Proust and Baudelaire is significant here, as is her work on Edgar Allan Poe and the development of the ‘muse-as-beloved’ to the ‘muse-as-dead-beloved’ paradigm. (Think of Poe’s famous claim that ‘the death, then, of a beautiful woman, is unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world’, ¹ as well as some of the vampiric female figures in his *Tales of the Arabesque and Grotesque.*)

Similarly, Maggie Tonkin’s chapters on the *femme fatale* characters in Carter’s work are enriched by her thoughtful consideration of different aspects of this ‘iconic representation of femininity in Decadent art’ and literature: Keats’ Belle Dame Sans Merci, Baudelaire’s

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black Venus, Pre-Raphaelite paintings of Lilith. Tonkin also briefly introduces ideas about film noir, that hotbed of femmes fatales from Cora to Gilda, Lana Turner to Rita Hayworth. Again, her work on the multiple points of reference in Carter’s fiction gives the reader plenty of material to think about.

I wouldn’t usually comment on the cover of a book in a review, but in this particular case I am willingly making an exception. It shows an automaton by Paul Spooner from the Cabaret Mechanical Theatre: 2 ‘Manet’s Olympia’, a mechanical, wooden doll lying prone on a bench, with the figure of Anubis hovering over her. This sinister image of Woman-as-doll immediately conjures up Tonkin’s Magic Toyshop chapter (‘Olympia’s Revenge’), with its references to Hoffmann’s ‘living doll’ in ‘The Sandman.’ Then there are the links to Swanhilda, the puppet-doll in the ballet Coppelia and to Villiers’ ‘sublime android’ Hadaly (32). Manet’s Olympia is itself referencing classical mythology and earlier art on the same subject – it’s like a series of wheels within wheels. The multiple allusions inside the book are played out clearly on the cover.

Angela Carter and Decadence had its genesis in a doctoral thesis from the University of Adelaide, and in a scholarly essay published in the edited collection Revisiting Angela Carter (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend Maggie Tonkin’s work to readers interested in gaining a deeper understanding of Angela Carter’s key texts from a feminist perspective, or to those seeking further insight into the work of Proust, Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe. Students intrigued by the concept of intertextuality would also benefit from this study. Angela Carter and Decadence is complex and challenging literary criticism; it rewards the reader with valuable perspectives on Carter’s fiction, canonical nineteenth-century authors and the current state of feminist literary criticism.

Jennifer Osborn

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2 http://www.cabaret.co.uk/

Emerging in the public sphere as early as the 1970s, the jargon of globalisation has now taken on the ubiquity of a ‘categorical imperative’ (2). Yet, as Sarika Chandra quite rightly points out ‘globalization can be made as theoretically precise and diverse in meaning as the context demands’ (4). For Chandra, explanations/justification/critiques of globalisation circulate around an idiom that has come to refer ‘to a radically new social, economic, and cultural reality in which all pre-existing, locally constituted practices and ideas have ceased to be viable’ (1). As a result, the doctrine of globalisation has become indivisibly fused with the ‘rhetoric of obsolescence’ (1). By representing all present conditions of cultural and economic production as outdated, such language confers obsolescence upon all that survives. Therefore, it becomes crucial for a wide range of social practices ‘to jettison – or appear to jettison – existing local, regional or even national models and methodologies and embrace purportedly more global paradigms’ (2). With *Dislocalism*, Sarika Chandra’s stated intent is to offer a critique of globalisation, a concept which she articulates as a process of discourse, as well as a real historical phenomenon. Acknowledging the extensive theoretical-critical contribution of radical thinkers such as: Harvey, Wallerstein, Jameson and Zizek, amongst others, Chandra positions her work within this existing reappraisal of ‘globalisation’s brave new world’ and its accompanying ‘metanarrative of free-market, high-tech driven universalisms’ (2). Having enabled her analysis on the basis of common terms, Chandra then brings her own specific meaning and connotation to the globalisation concept by inventing the neologism of ‘dislocalism’. Representing a ‘conceptual synthesis’, dislocalism acts as the shorthand which condenses what Chandra identifies as the deeply ambiguous strategies of globalisation whereby global and transnational practices are promoted whilst at the same time pre-existing local cultural and intellectual strategies are consolidated (4). In mediating her study, Chandra focuses on ‘America and Americanism’ which she deems as ‘globalisation’s unmistakeable national-ideological centre of gravity’ (4). To further advance her argument and expose globalisation’s oppositional, real world imperatives Chandra devises two different stresses for her neologism. On the one hand, to dislocalise – with the stress placed on the prefix – represents the drive to ‘displace the local in order to engage with the global’ (6). On the other hand, to dislocalise – with the stress placed on the noun – represents the investment that the local has in remaining localised and undissipated by the forces of globalisation.

Chandra summarises the dual effects of dislocalism as ‘a move to supersede the local that is at the same time a form of stasis, a movement whose aim is also to remain in place’ (6).

Having already referenced ‘America and Americanism’ as the ‘centre of gravity’ for her study, Chandra then proceeds to illustrate her concept in four discrete, yet interrelated chapters (4). The focus of the last three chapters: current American immigrant/ethnic literary studies, contemporary American travel writing and narratives of the culinary exotic in popular media, clearly position Chandra’s work within the disciplines of cultural and literary studies. On the other hand, her first chapter ‘Management Fictions’, with its focus on American management theory from the late 1980s to the mid 2000s initially appears to be at odds with the rest of the material. Foreclosing on any objections, Chandra links the increased mobility of capital to the current repositioning of the humanities and its various disciplines. Here, she identifies that many scholars and critics in the humanities anxiously perceive that

the literary and cultural objects of their study may in themselves be obsolete in the wake of globalisation. As well, Chandra identifies an implicit belief that the humanities can only escape obsolescence within the ‘corporatised globalising university’ if its many and varied disciplines ‘globalise’ themselves in advance (13). As many cultural and literary critics turn to address questions of ‘business, finance and corporate culture’ a simultaneous counter move is made by management and organisational theorists. Increasingly since the 1980s, management theorists have turned to ‘culture, literary fiction’ and literary/cultural theory to make sense of globalisation, leading to what Chandra perceives as an ironic and partially, blind alliance between the humanities and its corporate disciplinary ‘other’ (13). In her ‘Management Fictions’ chapter, Chandra exposes how corporate incantation of the nation through literature and culture works to narrate America and thus consolidate and promote Americanism throughout a supposedly globalised world. Strong argument and a forceful critique of Americanism positioned under section headings such as: ‘Management Narrates the Nation’, ‘The Turn to Literature and Fiction’ and ‘A Manager’s Guide to Postmodern Cultural Theory’, convincingly links the first chapter to the rest of Chandra’s study.

From this point Chandra turns her attention to recent American immigrant/ethnic literary studies in a chapter titled ‘(Im)migration and the New Nationalist Literatures. Focussing on How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents by Julia Alvares and Diana Abu-Jaber’s Crescent, Chandra demonstrates literary dislocalism as a strategy used by critics to partially displace American literature within a transnational context so as to ‘solidify the nationalist category’ (81). Whilst acknowledging that not all attempts to validate ‘literary studies in a global world can be reduced dislocalism’, Chandra shows that despite the pressure to move beyond existing paradigms in ethnic/immigrant literary studies, there is an equal and ‘countervailing pressure within the field’ to find ‘a new way of consolidating the nation’ (92). In the process, Chandra dissects the implications to the conceptual categories of: multiculturalism, Arab-American literature and immigrant/ethnic identity. The final two chapters, the first of which addresses travel writing and the last which focuses on the culinary exotic represent the more familiar, accessible and acceptable face of globalism. Here, through studies of: Paul Theroux’s Hotel Honolulu, Robert Kaplan’s The Ends of the Earth and Mary Moriss’s Nothing to Declare, Chandra finds that the meaning of travel has changed to become ‘a newly privileged means of situating an American national identity’ (18). As travel writers contend with globalisation, the ‘end of travel’ rhetoric works ‘dislocally … to preserve and consolidate the genre of travel writing, and reinscribe its nonidentity with tourism’ (171). In a world where there is nowhere left to travel, travel writing provides the narrative which can still impart unreachable knowledge about culture, people and place. Chandra’s final chapter ‘The Global Palate’, concentrates on food tourism and demonstrates how its narratives play an understated but significant role in ‘reproducing a dominant American identity-formation and adapting the latter to globalised conditions’ (172). Rich in persuasive and theoretical ideas, Dislocalism’s most compelling proposal is – capital as fiction and fiction as capital – an idea which Chandra extrapolates from the Marxian critical political-economy. Returning to this idea time and time again, Chandra revisits it in her conclusion:

as increasing masses of fictional capital remain unrealized, as more and more ‘good’ money is thrown after ‘bad,’ a ‘tipping point’ will be reached
beyond which capital itself must come to function more as a ‘fiction,’ a financial *fictio juris*, than as anything with a *real* basis in production. If, however, for ideological reasons ‘theory’ is prevented from entertaining the thought that such ‘hyper-fictionalization’ calls into question the continued viability of global capitalism itself, … it is hard to see what alternative remains but to complete the ideological inversion and conclude that the whole business is a fiction anyway, and the sooner one realizes this, and sets about the task of selecting the fictions best-suited, to getting the job done, the better. (216)

Coming in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, Chandra’s conclusions appear all the more significant. Supported by an extensive bibliography, *Dislocalism* is engrossing and thoroughly recommended to all scholars with interests in literary studies, cultural studies, globalisation studies and American studies.

Eleni Pavlides

*After the Celebration: Australian Fiction 1989-2007* is an account of Australian fiction from 1989 to 2007, the year after Australia’s bicentenary to the end of the Howard government. It is a sequel to *The New Diversity: Australian Fiction 1970-1988* by the same authors, published in 1989. As with their earlier work, *After the Celebration* is in the nature of a survey with chapters being written by the authors individually. The work brings into purview almost all major novelists writing during the period, and a wide variety of genres too, with the fiction of 125 Australian novelists critically examined.

The Introduction outlines some of the important topics for Australian literary criticism, the changes in the Australian literary publishing scene and the role of writers in public life. It also brings in the notions of transnationality and the local. The first chapter, ‘Belonging’ by Ken Gelder, explores the various conceptions of home in Australian fiction, combining attention to genre with an analysis of the social and political implications of the fiction under discussion. The work of novelists Arnold Zable and Steven Carroll, the diasporic Australian novel, and notions of authenticity, place and the indigenous are discussed. Aboriginal novels, like those of Tara June Winch and Kim Scott, and the idea of representing indigenous genealogies are also examined in this chapter.

‘Recolonising: Historical Fiction and the History Wars,’ the second chapter, by Paul Salzman, examines the way the history wars in the new millennium are reflected in fiction that deals with Australia’s colonial history and its after effects. Beginning with David Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon* (1993), it goes on to discuss postmodern novels about Tasmania, colonial histories and historical sagas, fictional representations and versions of the Kelly legend and other accounts of Australia’s racial history as seen in Kim Scott’s *Benang* (1999) and Alexis Wright’s *Carpentaria* (2006).

Chapter 3, ‘Literary Fiction’ by Salzman, discusses what is at stake in various kinds of literary fiction in Australia. It also examines the short story and two of the best exponents of Australian fiction, Peter Carey and Brian Castro, and brings into contention the legacies of modernism in some contemporary Australian literature. Postmodern Australian fiction and moral realist fiction are also surveyed in the chapter. Some of the authors discussed in the chapter include David Malouf, Peter Carey, Brian Castro, Frank Moorhouse, Shirley Hazzard, Steven Carroll, J.M. Coetzee, and Jessica Anderson. Since popular fiction is also taken into account in this survey, Salzman specifies what he refers to by literary fiction

‘Literary Fiction’ is in some respects more an explanatory descriptor than a fixed generic label: covering modernist, postmodernist and realist novels (whether ‘hysterical’ or moral), works that are fundamentally experimental as well as those that are formally conventionally. (141)

Chapter 4, ‘Genre Fiction,’ by Gelder, looks at the key genres of Australian popular fiction – crime, fantasy, science fiction, romance and blockbusters. The chapter examines the relationships they construct to place and time – the city, the bush, and other locations, the past and the future. ‘Is There a Woman’s Chapter?’, the fifth chapter, by Salzman, considers the irony of such a category but uses it to analyse issues that intersect with the recent history

Nishi Pulugurtha.
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of literary feminism and genres specifically associated with women writers and their readers. The last chapter, ‘Literary Politics,’ by Gelder, looks at the role some Australian fiction in the period under survey has played in the wider social, cultural and political debates. It begins with two literary controversies that were built around charges of anti-Semitism, the Demidenko affair and the reactions to Christos Tsiolkas’s *Dead Europe* (2005) and ends with two terrorist novels, Richard Flanagan’s *The Unknown Terrorist* (2006) and Andrew McGahan’s *Underground* (2006).

The book brings under its gamut all genres of fiction, from the rural apocalypse fiction to the terrorist novel, and also includes genres often left out in literary criticism, such as crime fiction, science fiction, romance and chick lit. Gelder and Salzman believe that fiction of all kinds needs to be given serious critical attention. Gelder raises the question, ‘Is popular/genre fiction really so different to literary fiction? The answer to this short question would have to be yes, without question – which explains why we have devoted a separate chapter to literary fiction’ (177). Unlike their earlier book where little attention was paid to popular fiction, *After the Celebration* takes a look at the major genres of popular Australian fiction.

It is, however, difficult to bring into consideration all fiction written during the period into one volume and there are bound to be lapses here and there. Antonio Jach’s *The Layers in the City* finds mention while Jach’s best work, *The Weekly Card Game* (1994) is omitted. Some other notable works omitted include Christopher Koch’s *Out of Ireland* (1999) and Nicholas Jose’s *The Custodians* (1997) among others. The Preface makes mention of the fact that the authors did not ‘intend to make complete coverage a priority’ (ix), which means that not all writers could be included. There are interesting accounts of the Australian literary scene along with stories of feuds in the literary arena. What is engaging about this survey is that the social and the political figure importantly in the literary experience.

**Nishi Pulugurtha**

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The Shadow of the Precursor edited by Diana Glenn, Md Rezaul Haque, Ben Kooymann and Nena Bierbaum (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012)

The Shadow of the Precursor is a collection of essays which began life as papers delivered at one of the legendary Kangaroo Island conferences, which were inaugurated by Syd Harrex when he was Reader in English and Director of the Centre for Research into New Literatures in English at Flinders University. Syd is the dedicatee of this volume, which was edited by four members of the Flinders School of Humanities. They have put together a generous selection of seventeen essays on the topic of influence and intertextuality.

Several of the essays allude to Harold Bloom’s book, The Anxiety of Influence (1973) and, while anxiety and ambivalence are recurrent themes, most of the essays refer to more recent thinking about intertextuality, drawing especially on Julia Kristeva’s use of that term in the context of the post-structuralist idea that every new text enters a network of pre-existing texts and meanings. The notion of the precursor’s shadow is creatively used in many of the contributions, including attention to the way a writer might want to ensure that their own work ‘casts a shadow’. The shadow idea proved to be a fruitful impetus to studies of post-colonial texts, employing the notion of ‘writing back’ to a whole imperial tradition – or varying that initial account of postcolonial writing with an emphasis on the heterogeneity to be found within that imperial tradition.

The essays cover a huge range of material, from the influence of Virgil on Christopher Marlowe (a contribution from Lucy Potter) to Truffaut’s cinematic adaptation of Ray Bradbury’s novel Fahrenheit 451(by Laura Carroll). They take on an equally large range of approaches to these questions of influence and intertextuality – some look at a writer’s relationship to a particular precursor author, like the young Charlotte Brontë’s devotion to Sir Walter Scott’s historical novels, a very fine contribution by Christine Alexander. Others look at the effect on a writer’s work of a whole tradition, such as Iris Murdoch’s admiration for nineteenth-century realist novels – which, Gillian Dooley argues, was detrimental to her own novel writing. Others again discover a patchwork of intertexts in a single work, like Russell McDougall’s attention to Xavier Herbert’s massive novel, Capricornia.

In their excellent Introduction the editors describe and justify their arrangement of the essays into three sections. The first section consists of works which accommodate and indeed acknowledge their predecessors – in this section we have Rick Hosking’s essay on Kipling and the possible influence on his work of the Australian writer John Lang, and editor Ben Kooymann’s account of the current state of Shakespeare films, both productions of the plays and adaptations of their plots and characters. Here, too, is Ralph Spaulding’s account of Syd Harrex’s poetry in relation to precursors like Dylan Thomas, and to some of his Australian contemporaries, like James McAuley, as well as John McLaren on the ‘Irish shadow’ on Vincent Buckley’s poetry.

The second section contains essays about forms of appropriation or adaptation of precursor texts. Here there is a strong representation of work in Italian studies, including editor Diana Glenn’s essay, written with Irene Belperio, about Dante’s ambivalent relationship with Ovid in his Commedia, and a fascinating essay on the playwright Dario Fo’s ‘invented quotations’ by Luciana D’Arcangeli. Barbara Pezzotti contributes a study of two Sicilian crime writers who claim to have been influenced by their countryman, Pirandello but whose work is, she argues, more like a ‘benevolent betrayal’. Here, too, are essays on film
adaptations – Giselle Bastin on ‘Precursor Texts in the Novel and Film of Atonement’ and Laura Carroll on ‘Fahrenheit 451 as Adaptation’.

In section 3 we find essays which look at more critical forms of adaptation, which amount to resistance to the precursor. Janet Wilson, in a discussion of ‘Antipodean Rewritings of Great Expectations’, finds that Peter Carey’s Jack Maggs and Lloyd Jones’ Mister Pip both reveal problems with the ‘counter discourse’ model of post-colonial writing. In her critical account of Richard Flanagan’s novel, Wanting, Gay Lynch finds a discordant relationship being dramatised between various historical texts. Editor Md Rezaul Haque’s essay on Amitav Ghosh’s first novel, The Circle of Reason, demonstrates the way in which the novelist’s appropriation of the magical realist style enables him to engage with and subvert the Enlightenment liberal tradition represented by his English-educated Indians. Linda Karell’s account of Louise Erdrich and Native American authorship shows that in this tradition of storytelling, precursors are an integral part of the novel, active presences. In this final essay of the collection, appropriately, the notion of the precursor as shadow is turned on its head by an oral narrative tradition where ‘individualism and mastery’ are alien concepts.

Susan Sheridan

Book reviews: The Shadow of the Precursor edited by Diana Glenn, Md Rezaul Haque, Ben Kooyman and Nena Bierbaum. Susan Sheridan.

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This book is that wonderful combination of impeccable scholarship and elegant and accessible text, which lends it to a far wider readership than the title would suggest. It goes without saying that it should be read by all those who have a special interest in Dante’s *Commedia*. Although the *Commedia* has been read and discussed over the centuries, Diana Glenn has found new insights and a fresh approach to this work, in assigning special significance to the figures of women, who may be thought of, on superficial reading, as marginal. Glenn points out that the *Commedia* was written in an ‘era when women, with few exceptions, did not generally occupy influential roles in the public sphere’ (xiii). Therefore, to start with the premise that Dante invested women within the *Commedia* with a ‘freight of salvific virtues, closely linked to his secular goals’ (xiv) is to create a new dimension to the interpretation of the *Commedia*, but also points to new ways to consider the role of women in previous centuries. This approach is reminiscent of the reassessment, by medieval historians, of the role and achievements of women of that period.

To put it in context, the *Commedia* is the description of Dante’s travel, as the pilgrim, through the three transmundane kingdoms: Hell (*Inferno*), Purgatory (*Purgatorio*) and Heaven (*Paradiso*). During this imaginary journey, Dante describes the situation of a number of human souls after their deaths. During his sojourn the pilgrim plumbs the depths that those in hell experience, until he eventually reaches the knowledge of the beatific vision. Glenn states that: ‘Dante’s universalizing goal is to provide a poetic blueprint for his age: an epoch in need of renewal and regeneration, openness and unity in diversity’ (147).

The analysis of the women who appear in the *Commedia* proceeds diachronically, rather than simply following the format of the three canticles. Thus in Chapter 1 she treats the women in Limbo, in Chapter 2, the women in Hell, in Chapter 3 the women in Purgatory, Chapter 4, the women in Paradise and in Chapter 5 the women of the Beatific Vision. A total of forty-two female characters are compared and analysed, concluding with the Virgin Mary and Beatrice, who appear in the Beatific Vision.

Who are these women? And why these particular women? They range from the famous women of ancient history or literature, such as Electra, Antigone and Ismene, Cleopatra and Helen, to those found in biblical sources, such as Eve, Rachel, Ruth, and Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary. Included in this biblical group is Lucy, associated with ancient Rome, suggesting ‘spiritual regeneration to be achieved through the conjoining of female and male symbols as part of God’s plan’ (119). In each case the women chosen by Dante represent a position in their society or situation, which illuminates the wider vision he is presenting. As Glenn explains in her conclusion: ‘Through an exploration of the historical, literary and social significance of the women in the *Comedy*, Dante is signaling unequivocally that women, contemporary and historical, play a fundamental role as active agents in his vision of spiritual revitalization in the living Christian community’ (147).

Even for those not closely concerned with the study of Dante’s *Commedia*, but who may have an interest in medieval history or literature in general, or in a sociological study of the position of women throughout history, this book would serve them well. Glenn places the women, who are met by the pilgrim in his journey, in a larger historical context. Their significance and characteristics are explained beyond their reference in the canticles. It is

only possible to discuss a few of these women. Beatrice is known as the women whom Dante loved all his life although he only loved her from a distance. Beatrice’s historical reality suggests that Dante’s representation of her must be regarded as symbolic, for she is the soul who prepares him for his experience of divine glory. His re-awakened love for Beatrice is a ‘profound and deeply-felt experience … and this moment signals an opening of the spirit to receive the lessons that Beatrice will impart’ (139).

Dante gives credence to women who did not live within the Christian community, yet who represent virtue or moral qualities, and who offer positive role models. Electra and Lavinia are ‘emblematic of courage in military combat and self-actualisation’(9). In Hell the pilgrim meets the Theban prophetess, Manto. While she showed filial devotion to her father, she is also condemned as a sorceress. ‘In this respect, Manto anticipates the figure of the occult-worshipping witch so savagely hunted down in the fifteenth century’ (58).

This is a book which deserves its place as a serious work in Italian studies and literature. It has, however, much to offer beyond those limits, because Glenn, in taking a new approach to the place of women in the Commedia, has examined their place in the canticles not only in depth but also with a breadth that brings them into wider focus and scope. In doing so she has opened up avenues of further scholarship and scrutiny.

Emily Sutherland
Andrew Ford, *Try Whistling This: Writings about Music* (Black Ink, 2012),

One would have to be tone deaf not to thoroughly enjoy this book. The author, Andrew Ford is a composer, writer, and broadcaster, who presents *The Music Show* on the ABC Radio National. The collection in this book consists of a few reviews, essays and scripts from his radio series *Music and Fashion*. He regards himself as primarily a composer, and that is his justification for writing about other people’s music.

It is with *Music and Fashion* that the book begins, and this first chapter raises many of the questions that are examined in the chapters that follow. What makes some music fashionable; what is the difference between art and entertainment, if there is a difference; or how much a listener may be influenced by publicity and the fame of a performer. Ford concludes that ‘great music can be fashionable and fashionable music can be great, but ultimately these concepts are unrelated’ (76).

‘Modernism’ is followed by a chapter on ‘Beethoven, the Moderniser’. This juxtaposition illustrates the skillful way in which Ford has placed the chapters so that there is a natural progression that allows the book, as a whole, to flow. The subsequent chapters are devoted to different composers, or performers and Ford highlights one aspect of the composer’s work so that for those are not steeped in, for example, the entire opus of Mahler, will not feel daunted by the chapter ‘Mahler’s Secret Operas’. The more likely effect is to send them to listen to Mahler’s music with a new, or fresh, ear.

Ford is not above the titillating details in some musician’s life. Toscanini for example, insisted on his lovers sending him ‘monthly tokens in the form of handkerchiefs dipped in menstrual blood. He called them diaphanous veils and holy shrouds’ (118). This is learned from a collection of Toscanini’s letters, which also reveal that ‘he was an idealist, a perfectionist, a martinet’ (118). Surely the latter is more relevant to assessing him as a conductor.

To what extent should we judge music through the circumstances of the lives of the composers? Shostakovich is rarely mentioned without reference to his relationship with Stalinist Russia, yet Ford claims that ‘if Shostakovich’s music is great enough for us to be listening to it a hundred years after his birth and thirty-one years after his death, it is not because it represents a sustained attack on a communist dictatorship’ (106). Music stands above the tragedies and trivia of a composer’s life.

Some of the most interesting chapters in this book were those on the less well-known composers, especially Australians. Having led a sheltered life I had no idea of the scandals around the life of Malcolm Williamson, nor of his amazing output. David Lumsdaine is not well known in the country of his birth, although he composed and recorded what could be called truly Australian music, combining soundscapes and birdcalls. ‘The sounds of Lumsdaine’s Australia is as rich and multilayered as the sounds of the rainforest or bush’ (232).

While much of the writing is about what is loosely termed ‘classical music’, musicians such as Bob, Dylan, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman and Hoagy Carmichael are given a place. Nor is there any sense that they do not belong.

Ford writes to teach and explain music. His style is light and full of humour, and I found myself laughing out loud as I read, but that does not disguise the depth of his knowledge that he wishes to share. While a critic should be able to make an objective judgement about any composition or performer the listener’s response to music is individual.
Subjectively a listener brings something to the music as well, so that it is the three way process between composer, performer and audience. Ford tells us that ‘true listening is collaborative. We bring not only our attention and our concentration, but also our imagination … In a way, what we listen for in music is where we fit in’ (318).

Emily Sutherland