Trauma studies have been highly productive for thinking about social flows since the work of Cathy Caruth in the 1990s appeared to join up the dots between narrative theory, memory studies and revisionary historicising. Given the reading of colonial histories and their repercussions as centrally traumatic for individuals and indeed for whole cultures, it is not surprising that trauma studies should seem useful to scholars working in the general area of postcolonial studies as well. Yet while the area arose from its Freudian beginnings as a way to deal with the damage sustained by individuals, it has expanded into a discourse area that might now explain and reframe groups, even the large groups that comprise nations or cultures. In the process of this expansion, the area has undergone stresses and strains, given that a clinical tool thought out for individuals may not necessarily be seamlessly applied to the more heterogeneous groupings that we imagine into being, groupings such as communities, cultures, or even whole peoples. One way to deal with the mismatch has been through the textualisation of trauma theory in the symbolic arena of fiction, whether more or less consciously applied by writers, or, more frequently, perceived as operating within fictional texts by scholars conversant with the theory.

The reading of fiction through the terms of trauma theories has the advantage that all fiction brings to the analysis of large polities: that the individuation of cultures via the characters who populate novels, short stories, and even non-fictional autobiographies allows these individuals to serve a partly representative function. That is, instead of presuming to analyse a whole culture or social grouping, the text can depict the general issues through their being lived out by specific individuals, whom we may then extrapolate to the larger groups they belong to. This book accordingly presents a series of studies in which ex-colonies are read in terms of the traumas experienced and processed by characters in fictional texts by several major writers from a mixture of postcolonial discourse environments.

As can be expected, the variety of approaches of such a volume ensures that a programmatic conformity is avoided, allowing for the usefulness of trauma theories to be tested from a variety of angles. It even licenses someone like Marc Delrez to question sharply some of the ‘ambivalence’ that emerges in the application of trauma studies in Australia to the experience of the settler-invader population in an unconscious rearrangement through which both sides of colonial history contend for the victim position. Delrez’s thoughtful article could well have opened the volume, given its extension of its focus to some of the pressure points in contemporary trauma theory in general, particularly as Aitor Ibarrola Armendáriz’s otherwise stimulating lead-off article on Edwidge Danticat, while dealing with the less ambiguously traumatic victim position of Haiti, contains certain linguistic errors that detract from its authority.

One of the most absorbing promises in the area of trauma studies is its undertaking to furnish a suturing methodology to reorganise the past, even, paradoxically, as it speaks of incommensurable rupture and breakdown. Given the pivotal interest of postcolonial fiction in recalibrating the past, the intersections between the two discursive areas are easy to imagine. Accordingly, several articles deal with historical fiction, albeit generally twentieth-century history: the article by Aitor Ibarrola Armendáriz already mentioned, but also articles by Donna Coates on Patricia Grace, Maite Escudero on Sani Mootoo, Marc Delrez on Andrew

Book reviews: The Splintered Glass: Facets of Trauma in the Post-Colony and Beyond edited by Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo Allué. David Callahan.

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McGahan, and Heinz Antor on Richard Flanagan. Other articles handle more contemporary material, such as Isabel Fraile in her spirited unpacking of time and space in Janette Turner Hospital’s *Oyster*, Bábara Arizti’s measured reading of the land in Tim Winton’s *Dirt Music*, or Susana Onega’s wide-ranging reading of narrative ethics not just in *In the Heart of the Country* but Coetzee’s work in general. Three of the contributions depart from these close readings with more general deliberations such as Chantal Zabus’s ‘Genital Alterations, Autobiography, and Trauma’, Meena Alexander’s reflection on her own poetic practice, and Merlinda Bobis’s interweaving of speculation, analysis and engaged intervention with respect to her work in progress.

As a part of the archive of specific readings of texts from around the world that employ postcolonial hermeneutic practices and which can be read through trauma theory, *The Splintered Glass* offers in one volume a useful place to consider a range of ways in which the theory may be applied in focused fashion. General works on trauma theory tend to be either broad and theoretical, or deal with events such as the Holocaust, or intra-family abuse, which may provide exemplifications of interest for postcolonial studies but which do not illuminate postcolonial texts directly. The grouping of direct readings supplied by this book is thus a good place to observe different strategies or explanatory manoeuvres for the examination of postcolonial novels via notions of trauma and its processing.

In her recent book, *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant posits that ‘crisis is not exceptional to history or consciousness but a process embedded in the ordinary’,¹ challenging trauma theory’s logic of the atypical. Arguably, traumatically disordering events punctuate all lives, as they certainly punctuate the lives of all nations or cultural groupings. Human beings are more used to negotiating such events than might be thought, leading Berlant to name a ‘crisis ordinariness’ as the actual or potential state we all live in. The response to this returns us to the contentious hierarchising of trauma in which Holocaust studies have been so implicated: that is, when does an event stop being an example of shattering misfortune or natural variation in the proclivity of human beings to hurt each other, and become an example of really radical rupture or an event of such magnitude that it cancels any suggestion of its simply being one more naturally occurring illustration of human nastiness? One of the latter events is commonly held to have been colonisation, so that literary trauma studies appear well-placed to participate in this debate, given literature’s restless enquiry into the bewildering multifariousness of the injuries of colonial and post-colonial disruptions. It is to this debate that *The Splintered Glass* speaks.

David Callahan

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