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Robert Tally offers an examination of Kurt Vonnegut’s novels through a postmodern lens. Tally acknowledges that Vonnegut’s texts are, predominantly, more modernist than post-modernist, but that in his attempt to capture particular icons and concepts, or ‘to apprehend and depict the fragmented, unstable, and distressing bizarreness’ (158) of American life, his novels collectively entail a ‘postmodern iconography’ of American experience. His analysis works as a series of short essays, which use different philosophical theories to explore particular texts from shifting perspectives. Nietzsche, Sartre, Deleuze, Marx, Jameson and Foucault, among others, figure in Tally’s analysis, and their theoretical frameworks are explained clearly and succinctly in a manner that makes them accessible. Tally also speaks Vonnegut’s language, literally; the incorporation of Vonnegut’s terms into the analysis of his work – terms familiar to his fans, such as granfalloon, karass, and Tralfmadorian – shows the extent to which Tally infiltrates Vonnegut’s world and then uses Vonnegut’s own theoretical constructions to analyse the novels from within. He draws connections between the novels in order to elucidate the philosophical perspectives that he understands to be underpinning Vonnegut’s work. Tally refers to the jaded and disencharnted position that flows consistently throughout the oeuvre as the ‘paradoxical and parodic phrase’ (xv) ‘misanthropic humanism’. Tally states that Vonnegut creates a theoretical position to account for perpetual human weaknesses and our capacity to get in our own way, arguing ‘that the liberation of humanity is thwarted by humanity itself’ (xvi), evidenced by Vonnegut’s failed utopias that exist in his novels.

While Tally composes some seamless segues, each chapter works as a standalone essay, which may be useful for those interested in particular books or theoretical perspectives (however, it does mean that subsequent chapters can be repetitive at times). Chapter One, ‘A Postmodern Iconography’, addresses the language and worlds that Vonnegut creates and the concepts behind them, as well as the individual and social constructs and iconoclastic representations of Americanisms that underpin his novels. The philosophical perspective regarding the ways in which humanity fails over and over again – Vonnegut’s ‘Misanthropic Humanism’ – is extrapolated in Chapter Two, which focuses specifically on *Player Piano* and *The Sirens of Titan* as examples of his position. Chapter Three, ‘Anxiety and the Jargon of Authenticity’, presents existentialism as a context for understanding Vonnegut’s misanthropic humanism through an analysis of *Mother Night*, and addresses how the desire for authenticity is destructive and ultimately unfeasible. In his exploration of *Cat’s Cradle* and *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* in ‘The Dialectical of American Enlightenment’, Tally focuses on Vonnegut’s critiques of the ‘grand narratives’ of science and religion, and how he supplants the search for life’s meaning in favour of a more mechanical understanding of humanity. Chapter Five, ‘Eternal Returns, or Tralfmadorian Ethics’ examines Vonnegut’s confounding of space and time in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, reflecting Nietzsche’s theory of the eternal return. ‘Anti-Oedipus of the Heartland’ uses Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoanalysis to reflect on the fragmentary and open-ended novel that is *Breakfast of Champions*, and the ways in which schizophrenia manifests within the narrative both thematically and in form. Chapter Seven, ‘Imaginary Communities, or, the Ends of the Political’, describes Vonnegut’s analysis of community and obligatory

Rosslyn Almond
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relationships evident in *Slapstick* and *Jailbird*, as well political *granfallos* – an organised group with meaningless associations but a shared ‘purpose’. Chapter Eight, ‘Abstract Idealism’, focuses on Vonnegut’s aesthetics and the role of art, and artists, in American society in *Deadeye Dick* and *Bluebeard*. Tally, here, deviates briefly from his otherwise chronological analysis of the development of Vonnegut’s philosophical argument and endeavour with the inclusion of *Bluebeard* before *Galápagos*, in order for his logic to follow the development of Vonnegut’s theoretical perspective more succinctly. The eradication of humans in *Galápagos* in favour of smaller-brained creatures whose self-awareness is far less advanced and, consequently, less destructive completes the culmination of Vonnegut’s misanthropic humanism, examined in ‘Apocalypse in the Optative Mood’. Tally’s disdain for Vonnegut’s final novels – *Hocus Pocus*, which is ultimately a novel about death, and *Timequake*, the ‘non-novel’ (148) which combines fiction and biography with linguistic experimentation and the idea of resurrection – is clear in the final essay, ‘Twilight of the Icons’. The novels deviate from Tally’s arguments regarding Vonnegut’s quest for the American novel, but he suggests that they offer an encompassing coda to his unsuccessful project.

Tally’s understanding of Vonnegut’s work comprises ‘a sustained though fractured narrative of characters and themes that underlie that older project’ (2), writing the great American novel. These narratives and themes are what make up Tally’s notion of a postmodern iconography evident in Vonnegut’s collective work. Tally states that Vonnegut creates ‘a scattered and critical portrait of American life at the very moment of its seeming transcendence, the postwar period which began America’s reign as a leading world power, with all the absurdity and horror that accompanies such a position’ (3). The iconography, then, is the collection of particular themes and archetypes and Americana, and Americanisms that create a collage and pastiche of American experience. While Tally ultimately argues that Vonnegut fails in his attempt to capture this in the Great American Novel, he considers Vonnegut’s attempt at creating an exemplary American iconography to be valuable and necessary:

the American novel functions as a means of making sense of this thing, this life in the United States at a given time and in a given position within an ever more unrepresentable world system of which all American experience was ever a part, no matter what the dreams or nightmares of an ideology of American exceptionalism averred. (156)

Tally asserts that, ‘The great American novel is always a dream deferred; it cannot really exist, for that very reality would probably undermine any novel’s greatness’ (1). The ‘Great American Novel’ is, for both Tally and Vonnegut, a kind of white whale, and its value lies in its unattainability, its elusiveness; its Americaness, specifically, is presented as a particular ideal, specific to the country. Each argument and each theoretical and philosophical perspective in Tally’s book, can, however, be read more globally, as the concerns addressed in Vonnegut’s novels seem to me more universal than Tally asserts. While there is obviously particularly American imagery and localised concerns, as is Vonnegut’s penchant, the arguments regarding his philosophies are generalisable to a wider context. ‘The American Novel’ seems to stand for something unique in Tally’s eyes, but Vonnegut is arguably more interested in creating utopic/dystopic worlds in order to comprehend humanity.

*Kurt Vonnegut and the American Novel* offers a comprehensive and considered take on Vonnegut’s novels in the light of influential philosophers and cultural theorists. Where this may

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be of particular interest to Vonnegut fans and American literature scholars, the application of the particular theoretical positions are generalizable and useful to a far wider readership. The book succeeds in capturing the particular genius of Vonnegut’s work, and certainly encourages or reignites quietly dormant fandom.

Rosslyn Almond

Although it will be of interest to academic readers – particularly those interested in Gérard Genette’s work on *transtextuality* – this centrifugal book will take a broad variety of readers to many different horizons: it led this (Irish) reader back into Irish stories then forward into the literature and history of another continent. It gave me a taste for further reading in Australian literature, an awareness of what has become known as Australia’s ‘history wars’, astonishing me with Australian sensitivity to cultural struggle and dispossession, past and present (and the strict ownership of Booandik stories – Appendix C). Referred to throughout as an ‘exegesis’, it contextualises Lynch’s Irish-settler novel ‘Unsettled’, situated in South South-east Australia (my only regret is that ‘Unsettled’ wasn’t included!). It will also be of considerable interest to creative writers of any genre, and a useful resource for postgraduate creative writing researchers.

‘The magistrate of Galway’ (Chapter 1) examines the religious and economic manipulation of the fifteenth-century story of Galway magistrate who – rather than compromise a jury – had his son executed for murdering a Spanish rival in love. Dr Lynch examines the story’s apocryphal resistance to historical verification, the archetypal aspect of the tension between fathers and sons, and its similarity to the tale of Cuchulainn killing his son in the stories of the Ulster mythological cycle. She speculates that Galway Lynches may have carried enduring elements of the story when they arrived in Australia mid-nineteenth century. Through a plethora of literary transformations, including cantos by William Carleton Jr and the *Warden of Galway* by Revd Edward Groves, the author arrives at her own employment of the story in her novel ‘Unsettled’, currently in preparation for publication.

Chapter Two takes a closer look at the apocryphal figure of playwright Edward Geoghegan, convicted in Dublin in 1839 (for the theft of two reams of paper) and transported to Australia. His play *The Hibernian Father* carried the Galway magistrate’s story to Australia with some considerable success before Geoghegan disappeared from the records. Lynch solved the mystery of his disappearance, in 2008, with the help of archivist Janette Pelosi. The research increased her sympathy for his circumstances and his efforts as a creative writer who, as a convict, was obliged to write under assumed names. Lynch looks closely at the links between ‘writing against the canon’, which typifies apocryphal stories and (Gothic) melodrama. All of this, together with her observation of Irish family pride, provides parallels and a logic for transformation in Lynch’s own novel, where theatre will also have an important role.

‘Apocryphal stories generated by the 1859 wreck of the steamer *Admella*’ (Chapter 3) considers South-east Irish stories, Booandik Nation stories, poet Adam Lindsay Gordon’s
transformation of the story in his ‘From the wreck’ (often treated as ‘truth’), stories of the Lynch family (into which Dr Lynch has married), and finally her own use of such stories in ‘Unsettled’. Here one sees how stories and even events may shift and slide, be perceived differently, how people (Indigenous population, Irish settlers) may be marginalised, the stories re-arranged in function of the power and function of their teller or of the temporal and political context, never reaching any absolute truth, and how it may be precisely this aspect that allows for their continuous literary transformation, their very justification (as suggested by Barthes [71]), and their contribution to collective memory.

‘Apocryphal stories in historical fiction’ (Chapter 4) discusses in particular Kate Grenville’s international bestselling novel The Secret River (2005) and its companion Searching for The Secret River (2006), a memoir about the process of writing it. Originally instigated by an apocryphal family story, Grenville’s narrative, working ‘both with and against historical fiction genre’ (107), set off its own ripples into the history of the Hawkesbury River settlement, causing controversy and challenging views of Australian history.

‘Architextuality, genre, the Australian fiction tradition’ (Chapter 5), explores where ‘Unsettled’ may fit. Lynch thinks it too ‘works with and against’ previous models of literary, popular historical and historical fiction. Zooming in on these, the author considers: literary fiction’s use of metaphor but also its new tendency towards pared-down prose; popular historical fiction’s exploration of gender, in particular the treatment of sex and gender; language style and racial discourse in the work of Ann Clancy and John Fletcher; and finally, historical fiction’s theorists, noting that

The exclusion of women from male historical narratives has been a major impetus for feminist re-writing of history in postcolonial novels. Unsettled, a small family story set against a larger history of the South-east, was partly begun for this reason. (105)

Dr Lynch concludes that ‘Unsettled’ fits both political and escapist criteria.

Detailed headings tend to break up a first reading but the detailed table of contents (reiterated at the head of each chapter) makes revisiting the book a pleasure. An index, bibliography and notes are provided, plus seven appendices: on Geoghegan, his play, Booandik customs and language, Gaelic, plus detailed acknowledgements to helpful historians and archivists, and to the Lynch family. (One oral Lynch family story speaks volumes: to a policeman complaining about his sons’ behaviour, a Lynch father replies, ‘Get off your hoss and say that’. The policeman returns to town without pressing charges – Appendix F).

Reflecting on the ‘slippage [that] occurs between research and creative writing, one mode freeing the logical processes of the other’, Lynch concludes, ‘Apocryphal stories attract creative writers like me who want to dig up stories that already exist, like turf; then we watch them flare, creating new truths out of possible lies’ (115). This book is a visit to the writer’s echo chamber and I look forward to reading ‘Unsettled’, the result of its author’s ‘need to interrogate the past to understand the present and change the future’ (106).

Mary Byrne

Most of us are no doubt aware of the ancient understanding of the disease which came to be known as ‘melancholy’. Hippocrates (c. 460-370 BC), commonly seen as the father of western medicine, saw the occurrence of the malady in a person as due to an excess of black bile (hence the name), and thought ‘melancholy’ an appropriate label to use when a patient suffered from fears and despondencies which lasted a long time. But although for many centuries black bile was considered a component of the disease, people did think, from early on, further than Hippocrates. For example, Galen (AD 129-200, or later) believed that people belonged to one of four character types, corresponding with the four chief bodily fluids called ‘humours’: a melancholic had to be thought of as ‘analytic and literal’. Galen also thought of melancholy as ‘a most ignominious and miserable condition of mind’, but on the other hand according to a tradition initiated by Aristotle ‘it is a most enviable and admirable condition of mind’ (Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, 1951; quoted by Daniel on p. 23). We thus find in Elizabethan culture melancholics who suffered from a form of depression, but at the same time were happy, and indeed proud, to suffer.

Nor is this all. Another fascinating feature of the disease as people during the European Renaissance perceived it was that it was likely to strike you if you were a select member of society, particularly an intellectual. In Italy, the philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) articulated this position. Perhaps most interesting of all, it turned out that melancholics were often inclined not to finish tasks which in principle they set out to do. Leonardo da Vinci is famous for many positive achievements, but also for not completing or even starting works of art, and we all know that Hamlet, usually thought of as a portrait of an arch-melancholic, was among many things a procrastinator.

Drew Daniel is fully aware of the history of melancholy and the thinking around it, and has written a very fine book calling attention to the features of the malady, and notably its odd complexity. The condition cannot simply be equated with modern ‘depression’. That word refers to something larger than melancholy, which in its well-nigh epidemic Renaissance form, particularly among the rich and intellectually gifted, had a number of quite specific features. Hamlet, for example, no doubt is despondent, but he also characteristically calls attention to his condition in a less than modest yet oblique fashion when he tells his mother in a famous speech (act 1, scene 2) which Daniel rightly quotes (121) that his mourning is not a matter of seeming but that ‘it is’: what is external may ‘seem’, but, he claims, ‘I have that within which passes show’. He is someone special. Of course, it is true that a special fate has struck him, but he is also proud of his malady, and calls attention to it as something inside him which he does not (probably cannot) name. In act 2, scene 1, he says ‘I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercise; and indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory’. Daniel writes a very good chapter on *Hamlet*. In particular, he seems to me right to reject the efforts of those who seek for a specific ‘explanation’ of what is perceived as the ‘mystery’ of *Hamlet*, as though, if only we were as bright as Poirot, we would find out quite specifically what it is that stops Hamlet from carrying out what he knows to be his task, just what sub-text we should assume, etc. *Hamlet*, as Daniel realises, is a play offered to us as, for one thing, a riddle. It is not solved, for example, by a book which

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had not yet come Daniel’s way, David P. Gontar’s *Hamlet Made Simple and Other Essays* (2013), who would have us believe (though with some caution) that Hamlet ‘senses he is not the son of the man he loves but the man he loathes’ (401); he cannot kill Claudius because he is Claudius’s son. There is not a shred of evidence for this assumption, but it shows how far critics of *Hamlet* have gone in their quest for ‘solutions’ which might explain the Hamlet ‘mystery’. Daniel is right to insist that we have to see Hamlet above all as suffering from melancholy as a condition. His various actions and character traits do, indeed, very closely correspond with those that Elizabethans saw as typical of melancholics.

To note that an interpretation of the malady of melancholy is by itself a task of considerable magnitude is not to say that we cannot ever come to revealing conclusions by studying it. The very best chapter in Daniel’s book is to my mind the one in which he discusses Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* as a melancholic. The play starts with Antonio saying ‘In sooth I know not why I am so sad.’ Not only is, for the audience, the protestation of sadness a possible pointer towards melancholy, but more important and indicative is the ‘I know not why’ component. As happens generally, that creates a sense of mystery on the part of Antonio’s friends. When it comes to what might be an actual reason, one soon guesses that at least in part it must be sadness in love. Most readers would now agree that Antonio is in love with Bassanio, while Bassanio appears to be firmly heterosexual: he sees Antonio as his best friend, but wants to get married to Portia. Much of what Antonio does is best explained by Daniel’s interpretation of him as a melancholic who is not merely generally sad, but specifically a masochist, which is to say that he at least to an extent enjoys his suffering. This, indeed, is not untypical of melancholics. Daniel leans fairly heavily on Freud’s description of masochism, and that does not seem to be inappropriate. Renaissance dramatists embodied much thinking in their plays which Freud later came to express explicitly. In any case, the idea of Antonio-as-masochist could, as Daniel contends, explain at a deep level why he willingly accepts a bizarre contract with Shylock which could result in his own death. And when death is nigh he does not fear it, but only hopes that Bassanio will be there to see it (see the end of act 3, scene 3). Bassanio does come, and Antonio declares in act 4, scene 1, that he is ‘a tainted wether of the flock, / Meetest for death’. A ‘wether’ is a castrated ram, and I must confess I have for long believed that Antonio uses the expression for one thing as an allusion to what he sees as his inherently ‘feminine’ nature, as a homosexual. But I had not quite realised that Freud saw fantasies of male masochists in a ‘feminine’ form ‘place the subject in a characteristically female situation; they signify, that is, being castrated, or copulated with, or giving birth to a baby’ (cited by Daniel, 109-110).

Daniel has written a complex but richly rewarding book which is a significant contribution to studies of a very important strand in Elizabethan society and culture, and which is also of great interest today, with various forms of depression unfortunately much on the increase.

**Joost Daalder**
A Country Too Far: Writings on Asylum Seekers edited by Rosie Scott and Tom Keneally (Penguin Viking, 2013)

In January 2014 a news story broke in Australia. An employee at the Manus Island detention centre had posted the following on Facebook: ‘Merry Christmas all. One of these jokers just swallowed a pair of nail clippers. RALMFAO.’\(^1\) G4S, the corporation which manages the centre, responded by promising to review its training procedures, and a spokeswoman for the Minister for Immigration inevitably announced how ‘inappropriate’ it is to mock self-harming behaviour among the detainees.

This story is sickening, but the fuss made about the boorish behaviour of one employee at one detention centre downplays wider and more fundamental questions about successive Australian governments’ treatment of asylum seekers. Subsequent events, including the death of asylum seeker Reza Berati in the Manus Island detention centre, have compounded the horror of the situation.

So this book, A Country Too Far, is heartening in a way. It confirms that there are Australians who believe that there must be a better way. But the book is in equal measure distressing and depressing. With these intelligent, articulate people arguing the case, how is it that neither side of politics shows the smallest interest in changing their inhumane policies?

Tom Keneally sets the argument out most clearly in his carefully-argued essay ‘A Folly of History’. He explains the inconsistencies in government policy – at the time of writing it was a Labor government – and the familiar statistics about the small number of boat arrivals compared to plane arrivals, and the large proportion of asylum seekers who are eventually judged to be genuine refugees. He is careful to counter the arguments about ‘sending messages’ to people smugglers and stopping leaky boats before they set out. He tellingly compares the way the current governments deal with Displaced Persons with historical examples. As Keneally says, the DPs of the Second World War were ‘people without documents, a condition which is now, in Australia, depicted as something between a crime and an arch stratagem’ (228). Australia accepted 170,000 DPs from Europe between 1947 and 1952.

Joining him in this volume are some of Australia’s most celebrated writers: poets Les Murray, Dorothy Hewett, John Tranter, Judith Rodriguez, Ouyang Yu – and Judith Wright, recruited posthumously. A short introduction by Wright’s daughter explains the extract from her memoir and links it to the current project: ‘She would have heartily approved of the present anthology and its aims’ (149). There are many vivid short stories, by Rodney Hall, Debra Adelaide, Denise Leith, Gail Jones, Kathryn Heyman, and Eva Hornung; all devastating in their empathy and deployment of telling details. Stephanie Johnson has imagined a future in which the tables are turned: Australia is becoming uninhabitable due to climate change and her mordant story, ‘Camp Ahitereria’, is set in a refugee camp for Australians in New Zealand. Anna Funder and Alex Miller, in fiction and non-fiction respectively, draw the parallel between the current situation and the refusal of various countries to accept Jewish refugees during World War Two. Both Sue Woolfe and Geraldine Brooks confess to being the daughters of illegal immigrants who lived successful lives under


the radar in Australia. Elliot Perlman and Christos Tsiolkas give personal accounts (in Tsiolkas’ case, extremely personal) of encounters with men they think likely to be refugees. Kim Scott presents the Aboriginal point of view, linking it with a historical encounter, when it was a nineteenth-century runaway sailor who was the ‘boat person’ and the Aboriginal people who had to deal with his arrival. As he says, ‘the identity of the hosts and refugees – who are the Australians and who the non-Australians? shifts and turns about’ (143). Arnold Zable and Fiona McGregor provide powerful journalistic accounts of the lives of individual refugees. Raimond Gaita's essay ‘Obligation to Need’ looks in depth at notions such as ‘dignity’ and ‘universalism’ and the limits of their application to issues of human rights. An extract from Robin de Crespigny’s book The People Smuggler gives a new and unexpected view of that maligned trade.

This book is worth reading for the sheer quality of the writing. I think I might have arranged the contents differently – it can be a shock moving from immersion in the intensely personal world of a detainee to a coolly argued dissection of public policy, but I can see that the editors’ decision to resist neat categorisation by form results in a different kind of reading experience, and might even encourage a more thorough reading. In some cases it took me some time to sort out the fiction from the non-fiction, and that in itself could be a worthwhile exercise. And how better to end than with Eva Hornung’s beautiful short story about Iraqi children imagining themselves flying away from their devastated homeland to a new start on the other side of the world?

As Rosie Scott says in her introduction, ‘It was inspiring to find such a communality of feeling and generosity among Australian writers’ (3). I only wish I could share her belief that ‘it’s not too much to hope that we can meet this crisis with compassion and optimism instead of cruelty and despair, constructiveness instead of damage, honesty instead of lies’ (3-4).

Gillian Dooley
Pak’s Britannica: Articles by and Interviews with David Dabydeen, edited by Lynne Macedo (University of the West Indies Press, 2011)

Pak’s Britannica: Articles by and Interviews with David Dabydeen and Talking Words: New Essays on the Work of David Dabydeen, both edited by Lynne Macedo, represent two important contributions to the less than plentiful sum of scholarly sources on David Dabydeen’s oeuvre. The fact that David Dabydeen is not just a Caribbean-born author whose fictional output consists of six novels and three collections of poetry, but also an established academic and a Professor of Literary Studies, is thus duly and suitably reflected in these two collections.

Pak’s Britannica, which takes its ingenious title after ‘a two-part series written and presented by Dabydeen in 1993 for BBC Radio 4’ (199) and is the first book ‘devoted solely to Dabydeen’s academic works’ (xiii), is divided into two parts. The first part comprises nine of Dabydeen’s scholarly articles, several of which have originally been written as lectures, spanning the period from 1985 to 2010. In the chosen articles from this twenty-five-year period, Dabydeen writes not only about his Caribbean heritage as the prism through which he, as the ex-centric author and scholar, came to view the very white centre of both literary scene and academia, but also about more general and less origin-conditioned subject matter, such as his views on eighteenth century English literature or artists such as Shakespeare and Hogarth. Regardless of the topic, Dabydeen’s tone is ‘measured and authoritative’ (xviii), yet deeply personal.

The second part of Pak’s Britannica offers the transcripts of seven interviews with Dabydeen, two of which have not been published previously, covering the period from 1995 to 2010. As Macedo states, the common thread that runs through these interviews is ‘an overwhelming sense of Dabydeen’s abiding and undiminished passion for the very act of writing’ (xix). Moreover, they provide an additional, intimate insight into Dabydeen’s body of work, both artistic and academic, underlining what they have in common: the author’s ease at unmasking and transcending all sorts of given boundaries, including those of a cultural, ethnic, linguistic or purely racial nature. For Dabydeen, the parameters of ancestry are not to be found only in the notions of blood, origins, or colour. Instead, what should come into account is ‘the cultural situation in which you find yourself’ (146), as he states in the interview with Clarisse Zimra. It is no wonder, then, that his insistence on hybridity, plurality, flexibility, and interconnectedness, which he sees as prevalent in both Caribbean history and Caribbean society, so tellingly translates into the hybrid, multifaceted qualities of his writing.

Regarded in relation to Pak’s Britannica, Talking Words comes as a complementary collection of ten essays focused exclusively on Dabydeen’s fictional and poetic output. The first part of the collection, titled ‘Poetic Reappraisals’, consists of three essays tackling Dabydeen’s poetry from different perspectives; what connects them are the ways in which ‘they identify the many contradictions inherent in Dabydeen’s writing’ (ix). In addition to his ambivalence towards the issues of national identity and historical representation, which was one of the main issues in the interviews, these texts question the application of theory, thus reinforcing Dabydeen’s opposition to the use of Western and Eurocentric theory as a means of understanding Caribbean writing, as explained in his ‘Teaching West Indian Literature in Britain’ from Pak’s Britannica.

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The second part of Talking Words, titled "(Re)reading the Novels", follows Dabydeen’s development as a novelist by analyzing intertextuality in his novels (chapters 4 and 5), representation of the slave narrative genre (Chapter 6) and the idea of "postcolonial exotic" (Chapter 7). Jenny de Salvo’s "Translating The Intended", however, differs from the remaining essays in the fact that it focuses on the problems inherent in the process of translating and thus promotes a unique approach to the novel in question. Although centering on some of the features that other authors tackle as well, the translator views the text from a specific vantage point and with a clearly defined goal. In this respect, de Salvo methodically outlines the central issues and challenges she faced when translating the novel into Italian: intertextuality, the variety of languages and registers used by the characters, and the question of translating the title.

The book’s last three chapters focus on Dabydeen’s most recent novels, Our Lady of Demerara and Molly and the Muslim Stick, where Dabydeen returns to the qualms of identity and belonging, but simultaneously introduces a vision of Guyana as a redemptive force. Both readers and scholars notice the change that undoubtedly marks this stage of Dabydeen’s novel writing, which can possibly be best summarized as a poignant bringing together of brutally realistic and fantastic or magical elements. This apparent clash, as well as literalization of shifting forms and identities in Dabydeen’s latest novels, thus should be adequately considered within the tradition of magical realism, which is precisely what Michael Mitchell focuses on in the ultimate chapter of this insightful collection.

What transpires through the interviews, Dabydeen’s scholarly texts and new essays on his fiction, is the notion that Dabydeen unashamedly questions and re-evaluates the established categories of identity, heritage and culture, but also literary, social and cultural theories and their application within diverse domains. Together with his refusal to be tied to any specific notion of ‘blackness’ or ethnicity, Dabydeen’s fondness for controversial issues and his cosmopolitan interests underline the subversive and redemptive powers of his writing. Illuminating the complex and diverse work of David Dabydeen from varied perspectives, these two collections ultimately manage to paint a rounded picture – one in which the author’s academic work is as multifaceted as his fictional writings.

Nina Muždeka

*The Garden of Eros* is what it claims to be; namely, the story of the Paris expatriate, post-war literary scene and those bookish acolytes who arrived in the fifties to emulate Joyce, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Miller. But it is also much more. Calder’s engaging, intimate style and personal recollections of the characters, the place and the period is part memoir, part anti-censorship polemic, as well as a cultural and social history. With his reputation as a long-term and passionate promoter of modernist/beat/post modernist writers, John Calder is an icon of British publishing. He established Calder Publications in 1949 and ran the company until 2007 when he sold out to Oneworld Classics. During his extended and often times controversial career, Calder’s publishing list included nearly twenty Nobel literature laureates. Now 87 years old, he is one of a triumvirate of publishers who post-war, created a trans-Atlantic network to publish the modernist and transgressive avant-garde. Calder is the only one of the three who is still alive today.

In its publishing heyday, the triumvirate embraced John Calder in London, Maurice Girodias (Olympia Press) in Paris and Barney Rosset (Grove Press) in New York. Although this chronicle invests hugely in the avant-garde writers of this post-war period, it also skews the crucial focus away from them and onto their publishers. Many of the celebrated texts by the authors profiled in *The Garden of Eros* had to withstand censorship battles both prior and post publication. These combats demanded unwavering conviction, moral courage, as well as money. Barney Rosset in New York, John Calder in London and Maurice Girodias formed the unlikely partnership which was prepared to print and damn the consequences. Collectively they promoted ‘literary lists that were iconoclastic, bucking current literary trends fostered by the establishment that did most of the reviewing, and politically anti-authoritarian and libertarian’ (154). Accordingly, these three ‘derring-do’ publishers are the real luminaries of the *The Garden of Eros* and especially so in the case of Maurice Girodias for whom this book is somewhat of an homage. Rabelaisian, gargantuan in his appetite for life, pyrrhic, manic and an inexhaustible lover of women and literature, Girodias subsidised the publication of his literary list with his proceeds from his db’s (dirty books) – the soft pornography that he also printed. Rosset and Calder, to divergent degrees followed suit in the United States and Britain. Calder sums up the transatlantic alliance:

A bond was formed that in spite of later quarrels, recriminations and even lawsuits, was never broken. It is also fair to say that all three of us were, in different ways, eccentric, stubborn and motivated by our own literary convictions, which were far from identical, but most of the time coincided near enough. (154)

Predictably, given the subject at hand, Calder’s account is littered with legendary literary names of the twentieth century: Henry Miller, Samuel Beckett, Jean...
Genet, William Burroughs, Eugène Ionesco, Allen Ginsberg, Vladimir Nabokov, Alain Robbe-Grillet and ‘his colleagues in the nouveau roman’ – the list goes on (116). Not all the authors shine in this retelling of the trials and tribulations of publishing their work. The anecdotes run the gamut from scandalous, salacious, squalid and sobering. Moral edification is not the specialty of choice for iconoclastic libertarians and bohemians. During the prosecution to ban his books in post-war Paris, Miller is defended as a ‘naive American, a noble savage’ (27). However, Henry Miller ceaselessly susceptible to feminine charms, is politically disengaged and to some extent a moral coward: ‘he had always run from trouble, from wars and violence and unpleasantness’ (27). Allen Ginsberg and his lover Peter Orlovsky turn up paranoid and ‘doped to the hilt’ at the Olympia Press office, demanding to see the publisher’s correspondence with Ezra Pound (102). Unable to overcome the resistance of the office manager they devise a devious ploy to make her leave: ‘they undressed and began to make love on the floor’ (102). On the other hand, there is Vladimir Nabokov, neither libertarian nor bohemian but a white Russian in exile who subsists as an ‘old style aristocrat unhappily teaching American students’ (140). Right through the preparations to publish Lolita, Vladimir Nabokov, is ‘icily polite’ and contemptuous of his ‘unsavoury publishers’ (140). His wife Vera edits his letters as Nabokov is in a ‘constant state of inner rage’ at the necessity of accepting his publisher’s ‘unclean money’ (140). Vera is described as Nabokov’s ‘anti-nymphette, the opposite of a Lolita and his terrible dragon’ (140). There are also other writers such as J P Donleavy and Marguerite Duras, who once their literary reputations are established, are equally contemptuous and disloyal towards the publishers who first dared to print their ‘obscene’ work.

Moreover there are tales of those whose fame is intertwined with infamy, writers who became standard bearers for the counter culture such as William Burroughs and the lesser known and less prolific Alexander Trocchi (Young Adam, Cain’s Book). A long-standing smack addict, Trocchi proselytises heroin. He prostitutes his wife, Lyn, to support their habit. Lyn is dead at 35. Their eldest son, addicted in the womb, dies of cancer and the younger son commits suicide – both boys die in their teens. William Burroughs notoriously kills his second wife, Joan, with a revolver. Although he is given a suspended sentence, he leaves their son Billy in the care of his long suffering parents. At sixteen, when Billy decides he wants to get to know his father, he arrives in Tangiers where Burroughs lives in a ‘highly unconventional household’ (239). Two of Burroughs homosexual lovers lose no time in ‘trying to seduce the boy’ (239). Billy is also subjected ‘to the advances of many queens in the area and introduced to kif-smoking on arrival’ (239). And the moral of this story is that counter culture writers and heroes make very bad parents and husbands. But Calder is not in the business of moral judgments and it is to his credit that amidst the drug-addled mayhem he is able to evoke sympathy and understanding for both Trocchi and Burroughs. Nonetheless, Calder is unstinting in his praise, for the worth of one writer, Samuel Beckett – both as a human being and an artist. His assessment of Beckett in both respects is worth reading. As well, The Garden of Eros gives an excellent overview of the literary magazines of the period, their considerable
influence and the people who devoted themselves to them: magazines such as *The Paris Review, Merlin* and *Evergreen Review*.

Beneath the bohemian cavalcade, *The Garden of Eros* provides a dark and often times menacing motif for the metaphor of creation. Always in attendance is the tense polarity of opposites: eros and thanatos, creation and destruction, order and mayhem, violence and tenderness, loyalty and desertion, honour and disgrace, repression and abandoned utterance. Given the catastrophe of two European world wars within fifty years, perhaps such a feverish post-war environment was foreseeable. Undeniably, we are still indebted to the passionate publishers of the vehement, writerly cacophony that this period produced. Girodias and Rosset, alongside with Calder were prepared to risk both jail and bankruptcy to publish a legacy of extraordinary writing. Their moral courage needs to celebrated and emulated in the lack lustre, ‘brave, new world’ of global publishing.

Eleni Pavlides
Albert Einstein’s observation was quite apt that ‘nothing happens until something moves’, but what happens when time-honoured curtains are raised, startling truths are unravelled and new public spheres are erected is dexterously showcased by Pramod K. Nayar in his slim e-book, *Cabling India: WikiLeaks and the Information Wars*. It is a well-researched exposition of ‘information wars’ in the ‘information age’ and the consequences of ‘informed people’ connecting to fill in the ‘oh! not to be filled’ silences and gaps.

The short book is systematically organised, classified into appropriate sections, each unfolding a newer dimension of the phenomenon of the ‘leak culture’ and its impact across the globe with special reference to ‘India Cables’ started in India by the leading national newspaper *The Hindu* in collaboration with WikiLeaks.

At the very outset we ‘connect’ with the author when he pronounces, ‘not since independence have we, the “common” public, been so very “connected” either as we are today’ (6). In the introductory part he traces in brief the historical roots of WikiLeaks, which does the much needed groundwork. We are oriented how Daniel Ellsberg for the first time blew the whistle on America’s Vietnam War politics by releasing the Pentagon papers and their publication in the *New York Times* changed American public opinion on the war forever. Convincing instances which reveal the involvement of journalists, ministers and bureaucrats in dubious dealings, like revelation of information in Afghan war diaries, Iraq War Logos, torture manuals for Guantanamo Bay, Kenyan Human Rights Commission Reports, Radia tapes in India, the author makes us pause for a while and think over the rightness of Ms Hillary Clinton’s view that WikiLeaks’ revelations were ‘an act of theft’ and hinder the ‘American pursuit of justice and human rights’ (7).

The interesting parallel between ancient Greek’s rhetorical system of *parrhesia* or ‘truth telling’ and WikiLeaks not only reminds us of parrhesiasts like Socrates, but also brings to fore the fact that truth has always craved to break open all the enclosures. Though the author does not dwell on the details of who those parrhesiasts were, he induces a sense of the continuity of past as we are instantly reminded of Socrates, who played the role of a parrhesiast at the behest of Oracle of Delphi. As a reward for unmasking the pretence and unethical acts of the political leaders, for ‘truth telling’ Socrates was accused and punished by the ‘owners of terrestrial power’ for ‘the crime of reforming the society’. Bringing together past and present, Nayar states:

Parrhesia dealt with and ‘outed’ truths about those in power. We are now somewhat in the same position; we discover we are governed by people who cannot be trusted. ‘The India Cables’ reveal corruption, sabotage of the democratic processes, manipulative linkages of the economy, media and politics among the people with enormous power. (8)

The discussion of parrhesia becomes more meaningful when he coins the term ‘Digital Parrhesia’ (27) to refer to WikiLeaks.

The conceptualisation of ‘WikiLeaks as a cultural phenomenon’ is laudatory as mostly it is politicised. The commonly held notion that ‘technocrats’ steer the culture is denounced by the author when he observes ‘it is the culture that drives the technology’ (9). He further argues,
It is not the technology that creates the culture of ‘leaks’, rather it is the emergent culture of leaks, sharing, transparency that uses the technology in particular ways? Culture precedes the technology. (9)

Representation of WikiLeaks as the ‘Culture of Porosity’ brings to light the inextricable link between communication and community and how the culture of porosity is the ‘culture of information-virus’. The author asserts:

Wiki Leak communications has brought us together as a community: a community of victims, where we have been lied to, misinformed, deceived, robbed and manipulated by the very people we put in place to speak the truth to us, keep us informed, safeguard our interests and lead us to better lives. (13)

From the ‘culture of porosity’ we are introduced to the concepts of ‘culture of secrecy’ and ‘culture of expert’. The author dwells on the relationship between the ‘secrecy of culture’ and ‘culture of the expert’, which, according to him, bifurcates the society between elites and commoners. It is at this juncture that he very promptly remarks that WikiLeaks open up ‘specialized knowledge domains of converting specialized knowledge into common knowledge’ (18). To avoid any kind of ambiguity which might be misleading, the difference between positive secrecy and negative secrecy is explained. We are convinced when the author observes that ‘in some cases the states or organized bodies have to keep some things secret for the greater good of the people which is positive kind of secrecy’ and we are all the more convinced when he disapproves of the unscrupulous situations when public is deliberately kept in dark, their trust in the government is abused, public secrets are thoroughly misused and ‘fears of the abuse of this public trust are the engines for WikiLeak’s (15).

Perceiving the inherent link between ‘culture of leaks’ and ‘culture of hacking’, the author rightly considers ‘WikiLeak as an extension of both Hacker subculture and Hacktivism’ (19) and with ease explains the technical intricacies involved in hacking and leaking and also points out some dissimilarities.

As we flip through the pages we realise that the book is not solely about the ‘culture of leaks’ in India but it projects it as ‘global culture’. The author’s apprehension of legal and judicial acceptability of WikiLeaks documents does not make him waver as he firmly states ‘we begin to understand ourselves as a society, as a culture, not always through official histories, statistics or Reports but through these fragmented, personalized sometimes dramatic –hysterical stories’ (25).

The analysis of democracy and WikiLeaks towards the end expresses the author’s concern over retaining the democratic ideals and human rights. He compels us to introspect and find answers for some very fundamental questions – can there be democracy without information sharing? Is democracy not about the visibility of power? How does one recognise that somebody has been denied his fundamental rights? How long will we remain politically illiterate? Who will raise the consciousness of the victimised?

The author does not become pedantic and pompous, but instead presents with much clarity and lucidity allowing us to flow with the thought. Ironic tone surfaces at several places, but it suits the temper of the book. Keeping in view the objective of the book, i.e. ‘truth telling’, he seems to have taken utmost care in collecting adequate documents from several sources (newspapers, periodicals, T.V. etc.) for authenticity and to bare the truth.
When I picked up this book, prompted by the sheer desire to read something ‘new’ and ‘different’, I was not away from the clouding apprehensions of encountering heavy political discussions, but to my utter astonishment it only left me delighted in the end. Much has been written, is still being written, about WikiLeaks, but what makes this slim e-book ‘a must read one’ is its new way of perceiving WikiLeaks as a ‘cultural phenomenon’. Its interdisciplinary framework adds to its relevance. Without indulging in any kind of political debate, raising judicial issues, alleging any particular group, it makes us realise our rights as democratic citizens to be ‘informed’, to be honoured for reposing trust in governing bodies, and deep down in our hearts we agree with Nayar and say ‘we ought to be’.

V. Prem Lata

*Narrative, Identity, and the Map of Cultural Policy: Once Upon a Time in a Globalized World* studies and attempts to define the meanings of the terms ‘globalisation’ and ‘transnationalism’ through the concept of narrative and explicates how they work out in contemporary society in the light of cultural policy and policy making in general. In the Introduction the authors describe narratives as a product of culture while accepting the view that the obverse is true too. Globalisation, they contend, is a homogenising force that is rooted in economics and often overrides anything to do with cultural values, tradition, heritage and art. Defining transnationalism in the context of cultural policy, the authors note that it embraces difference and takes in the arts and culture under its rubric along with economic concerns. Devereaux and Griffin claim that while globalisation might seem to do away with the notion of boundaries, transnationalism works to secure the idea of a nation.

Explaining the ideas of globalisation and transnationalism, the authors raise questions as to what effect narratives have on policy: how and to what extent narratives differ, how narratives might emerge in the area of cultural policy so as to influence policies, and how narratives differ; whether and to what extent differences in terminology have practical significance and what transnationalism and globalisation have to offer to practitioners in the field of narrative. Questions are raised as to what kind of stories transnationalism and globalisation offer to practitioners working in the area of narrative. They contend that viewed through the idea of the narrative, patterns, relationships, trends, characters and situations emerge pertaining to the themes of transnationalism and globalisation.

Chapter 1, ‘Tales of Transnationalism and Globalization’ negotiates with the meaning of the two terms ‘globalization’ and ‘transnationalism’. Noting the origin of the term, transnationalism, with reference to Randolph Bourne’s 1916 essay ‘Trans-National America’, the authors use the example of the film *Mississippi Masala* as a narrative that weaves ideas of both these terms to discuss the history of the formation of national identities. It also introduces a framework for narrative in cultural policy analysis that could be applied to varied examples of cultural policy. The second chapter, ‘History, Transitions and Frameworks for Analysis’ discusses the nature of narrative, its structure and form and the nature of the relationship between the narrative to the context in which it is located. Tracing the idea of narrative to the work of French Structuralists, notably Ferdinand de Saussure, and Roland Barthes, Russian Formalists such as Vladimir Propp and American narrative theorists such as Wayne C. Booth and Robert Scholes as well as cognitive scientists such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the authors note that these theorists expanded the notion of narrative to include not just literature, but also the visual and performing arts, political speeches and many other forms. It is the work of these theorists that helped understand the idea of narrative as not having a limited meaning and expanding its horizons to law, philosophy, anthropology, film, media, sociology, psychology, management and policy.

Chapter 3, ‘Case Studies: Stories in Conflict’ examines four cases in which narratives and their framing play an important role. Examining a period from 1945 to the present, from occupied Berlin to the Hopi lands in Arizona, the authors chose four examples that reveal the varying contexts of culture. In post-World War II Berlin, for instance, transnational issues are at work as world powers vie for power. This framing often takes the form of two conflicting frames that invalidates each other’s context. The authors refer to the work of scholars who have worked in the area of narrative.
Book reviews: *Narrative, Identity, and the Map of Cultural Policy* by Constance Devereaux and Martin Griffin.

Nishi Pulugurtha.

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Crosstalk: Canadian and Global Imaginaries in Dialogue edited by Diana Brydon and Marta Dvořák (Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2012)

Crosstalk addresses the intersections of Canadian literature and culture within the context of citizenship, globalization, and cosmopolitanism. The chapters and contributing authors are in dialogue, talking across ‘the differently constituted borders of nation, discipline, and genre to draw attention to some of the conflicts within Canadian – and international – literary studies today’ (8). The collection aims to critically explore some of the intricacies involved in reading multiple voices in Canadian literature over national and global territories, and offers new critical insights in the understanding of Canadian literature, with a particular focus on the themes of collaboration, voice and space. As the editors note, the chapters in the book ‘develop different, and sometimes contradictory, views of the ways that ... shifting relations between national and global imaginaries interact with cultural, theoretical, and literary imaginaries’ (2). Furthermore, they complicate the ways in which Canadian imaginaries are constantly altered as a result of global shifts. The book is divided into three parts: 1) Collaboration, Crosstalk, Improvisation 2) Dialogism, Polyphony, Voice, and 3) Space, Place and Circulation. Each section, in different ways, deals with the complexity of Canadian literature – as it is more commonly coming to be understood – as a literature that encompasses the plurality of a culturally diverse nation.

In the first section, in their chapter ‘Voicing the Unforeseeable: Improvisation, Social Practice, Collaborative Research’, Ajay Heble and Winfried Siemerling discuss the interrelationship of literature and other media, and the current dynamics of collaborative research. Providing details about their research initiative on musical improvisation which may present a model for the coming together of theory and practice, they assert that new ‘methodological paradigms [can] emerge [only when we] foster genuinely interdisciplinary research’ (50). This is followed by two articles, one by Daniel Coleman and the other by Ric Knowles, who both separately discuss different indigenous histories and literatures. Coleman uses the theory of melancholia and investigates the ‘residual effects of historical colonial trauma’, and the role of ‘spiritual cosmology’ in attending to the past (53). Likewise, Knowles’s reading of Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way, Monique Mojica’s collaborative theatre and research project, extends an example of the way literature and performance can become tools for healing and moving forward from the wounds of the colonial past. In another chapter, arguing that ‘all literary writing is in some sense collaborative’ (95), Alison Calder uses the example of the poetry group ‘Pain Not Bread’ and explores polyphonic readings of poetry and the construction of ‘the relation between artist, material, and audience’ (95).

Focusing on dialogic and polyphonic voices, the second section includes five chapters on works by Canadian authors such as Dionne Brand, Larissa Lai, Hiromi Goto, and Margaret Atwood. As she studies texts by J.M. Coetzee, Margaret Atwood, Lloyd Jones and others, Marta Dvořák’s chapter looks at the construction of cultural narratives and the process of canonization in current consumerist society, since multiple forms of fictions, including visual and audial, have now destabilized the place of ‘the hypotexts often referred to as master narratives’ (111). Frank Davey, in the next chapter, reads the poetries of the group ‘The Four Horseman’ as simultaneously Canadian and global. Chapters by Pilar Cuder-Dominguez and Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida engage with the questions of cosmopolitan citizenship and Canadian diasporic communities.

Section three focuses on the intertwining of the local and the global. It includes two chapters on Jane Urquhart’s texts, a reading of Robert LePage’s The Dragon’s Trilogy, a chapter on South Asian...
culture, and a discussion of the Hérouxville debate. Claire Omhovére and Catherine Lanone, in their respective chapters, provide readings of landscape and the questions of space, place, and time in Urquhart’s work. Chelva Kanaganayakam, in his article on South Asian culture, discusses the concept of ‘home’ and the ways in which “home” is affected and transformed by the diaspora and the two-way cultural exchange – from Canada to South Asia and vice versa (242). Diana Brydon provides an interesting analysis of the now ill-famous Hérouxville declaration\(^1\) for immigrants, and argues that one needs to read the declaration ‘within translocal terms’ and not simply as ‘rural Quebec’s nostalgia for a simpler and more homogenous past’ so that culturalism may be understood broadly and within global settings (253).

Boundaries of Canadian literature have witnessed considerable transference since the 1980s. The implementation of the Multiculturalism Act and newly invigorated discourses around the nation-state saw the emergence of aboriginal and new immigrant writers rendering Canadian literature more diverse than ever before. As dialogues about the nation, identity, integration, and multiculturalism continue to generate debates, scholars continue to situate and resituate Canadian literature and culture not only within the framework of these debates but also broadly in the context of postcolonialism, globalization, diaspora and transnationalism. Many recent works, by scholars such as Smaro Kambourelli, Cynthia Sugars, Laura Moss, Roy Miki, Rosemary Chapman, Imre Szeman, George Elliott Clarke, and E. D. Blodgett among others, have identified the changing trajectories of Canadian literature and Canadian literary and cultural history. Crosstalk complements and adds to this ongoing discourse. However, as a comparatist who works on heritage language literatures in Canada, I would be interested in seeing the boundaries of this crosstalk pushed even further to include literatures written in other languages, and moving towards a globalectical reading – to invoke Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s term – of Canadian literature. Canada has a cosmopolitan mix of authors writing in a variety of languages but, to date, these authors remain marginalized; Canadian literary scholarship would be richer for their inclusion in this ongoing crosstalk.

The fifteen articles in Crosstalk were originally written for a workshop ‘Voice and Vision: Situating Canadian Culture Globally’ held in 2008 at the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris. The collection, as a whole, is cohesive, and could be seen as an example of a collaborative project examining texts across cultures, genres, and authors/performers, and finding meaning through crosstalk. The book is a very valuable resource for scholars interested in Canadian literature, diaspora studies, globalization, migration and multiculturalism.

Asma Sayed

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\(^1\) Hérouxville, a small Quebec town with mostly white, Catholic, Francophone population, in 2007, in the context of argument over ‘reasonable accommodation’ of immigrants, passed a declaration for potential new immigrants to Quebec. The proposed code of behaviour became widely controversial as it was perceived to be racist, fostering cultural stereotypes, and meant to keep immigrants away.

Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature, edited by Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Julie Hansen and Carmen Zamorano Llena (Rodopi, 2013)

In a recent issue of the London Review of Books (20 February 2014) James Wood reflects upon the burgeoning forms of ‘secular homelessness’ or ‘varieties of not-belonging’ in contemporary world literature. This writing, made possible by the fluid and often voluntary movement of peoples from one country to another, sometimes overlaps with and sometimes diverges from the older and more established categories of émigré, multicultural or postcolonial writing. Wood comments that the international movement of peoples in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has exceeded old paradigms of analysis ‘because emigration itself has become more complex, amorphous and widespread’ (6).

In similar fashion, the editors of the collection Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature assert the need to find new ways to address this transcultural phenomenon. Throughout the twelve essays, the term ‘transcultural’ is made to wear the cloth of many nations, grafted through many border crossings. The collection arose out of discussions within a research group of academics teaching at Dalarna University and residing in Sweden who themselves come from varied backgrounds (Swedish, Algerian/French, Spanish, German, Russian, Taiwanese and North American). The editors define ‘transculturality’ somewhat broadly as ‘the formation of multifaceted, fluid identities resulting from diverse cultural encounters’ (ix). They aim to reconceptualize various modes of transculturality in literature, exploring texts that emerge within a variety of different western and non-western global locations. Although the endeavour is welcome, the essays here seem hampered by the critics’ choice of authors, texts and critical tools of analysis.

The twelve essays in the collection are presented into four general sections, organized to engage conceptually with issues of migration, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and translingualism. The first section, ‘A New Kind of Migration’, considers works by three writers who explore migrant processes of uprooting, resettling and assimilating into new societies. These include naturalized American Joseph O’Neill’s Netherland, Russian-American émigré Lara Vapnyar’s Memoirs of a Muse and short stories, and British writer Chris Cleave’s The Other Hand. In each essay critics adopt familiar approaches, largely indebted to 1990s postcolonial theory, to address their texts. The second section attempts to redefine ‘Cosmopolitanism’ in the light of changes to global politics including: everyday fears brought about by the terrorism of 9/11, climate change, and unpredictable economic forces. Literature addressed includes British migrant writer Monica Ali’s novel In the Kitchen, Robert Olin Butler’s Pulitzer prize-winning short story cycle A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain, and examples from contemporary German literature. Critics variously invoke the work of Appiah, Levinas, Beck and others to tease out the implications of the death of national literatures, refugee identity, and the global exchange of cultures in specific locations. In the third section, on multiculturalism, essays provide an overview of debates that challenge assimilationist perspectives in Canada with reference to the novels of Michael Ondaatje and Neil Bissoondath, take up black American identity with reference to Philip Roth’s The Human Stain and Percival Everett’s Erasure, and expose the inherent racism within the patriotic myth of American tolerance and unity in John Updike’s Terrorist.

The fourth, and perhaps most interesting, section of the collection turns to a consideration of ‘translingual texts’, that is texts written by authors in more than one language, or in a language other than their ‘mother tongue’. A chapter by Stefan Helgesson features two French novels by Algerian...
writer Assia Djebar, and teases out the ways the author reaches beyond bilingual practice to grapple with issues of female identity, Islam and postcolonial experience, linguistically graphing her fractured subjectivity into the text. Another extends translilingual considerations to several Francophone writers from the Magreb. In the final essay, J.B. Rollins takes up the multilingual, multimodal starkisties of Tawainese poet Hsia Yu in her poetry anthology Pink Noise, which defies ‘translation’ in its use of fragments of French and English poems, translated into Chinese by a web-based artificial intelligence program and delivered on transparent plastic pages which allow the three ‘languages’ to play off each other. Rollins considers Hsia Yu’s extreme linguistic inventions while also introducing the nuanced perspectives of Lydia Liu and Ruth Speck on ‘translingualism’, coupled with Baktin’s model of ‘interference’.

The collection points to significant new directions in literature with an expanded sense of global possibilities, given the movement of peoples and the impact of economic and political forces of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. With few exceptions, however, most of the essays could have been written ten, if not twenty, years ago. One is left wondering if it might have been possible for authors to take fuller advantage of the literature if different texts had been chosen and/or if those texts had been subjected to new paradigms for reading and analysis. O’Neill’s Netherland (as a transcultural text by a transcultural author) is a rare exception in this regard, but one not fully realized in the critical approach offered in the anthology. Carmen Llena fashions the text as a ‘post 9/11 American narrative of identity’, modelled on The Great Gatsby. Her essay juxtaposes the protagonists Hans van den Broek, a Dutch oil-futures analyst residing in New York with his family just after the 9/11 attack, who narrates the story, and his friend Chuck Ramkissoon, a Trinidadian migrant with south Indian origins, who seeks to refashion himself and redefine America through the game of cricket. But Llena’s critique stalls on Chuck and his search for a new identity not only for himself but also for the United States which, he proposes, might be accomplished if cricket were to become the national sport. The focus on the protagonists’ search for identity and how their two intertwined stories ‘propound a new narrative of American national identity in the post 9/11 context’ (12) limits the capacity to recognize more significant transcultural elements in the novel.

When Netherland first appeared in 2008, James Wood reviewed it in The New Yorker (26 May 2008). With his antennae attuned to the new elements in both the text and the author’s background and experience, Wood judged it to be ‘an extremely subtle novel’ that juxtaposes the different origins and expectations of the two central characters. His review, acknowledged but not cited in Llena’s essay, teases out the author’s unique transculturality, one that might be seen to influence his interests, curiosities and writing style. It was Wood who first noticed the echoing’s of Gatsby in Netherland, but he contends that both The Great Gatsby and A House for Mr Biswas loom large as interlocutors in a powerful text imbricated of myth, desire, history, politics and power. In distinction to Llena, he contends that Netherland is a post-nationalist novel (emphasis mine) that offers ‘fresh permutations on the national story America tells itself’. In his review, Wood alerts the reader to the novel’s unique transculturals elements as he probes the author’s background and the text, forged out of migratory journeys and embedded within colonial, imperial and postcolonial histories. In doing so, he manages to exceed existing critical paradigms. This was the intention of the editors of Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature. Would that more authors in this anthology had followed a similar lead.

Kay Schaffer


If I were handing out prizes for book covers I’d give one to Alice Marwick for her clever pictorial interpretation of the content of this book: two hard covers spread wide, those artfully parted pages revealing a lotus shape with a central darkness, all on a soft pink background above the words The Vagina writ large, it is both innocent and suggestive, and arresting enough to make anyone stop and look twice. Emma Rees’s book was for a long time going to be called Can’t, suggesting both the negativity or ‘cannot’ of language and the taboo word ‘cunt’. In British English, the pronunciation of the two words is very close, but the title was dropped when a friend pointed out that in many American English accents the two words sound nothing alike. Aware that the authors of Freakonomics had sold four million copies of their books, Rees briefly toyed with the title Vulvanomics but finally realised ‘the power of the straightforward title in an age of search engines’. This straightforwardness stands, even if it comes in the wake of an earlier book with a similar title, Naomi Wolf’s 2012 book for Virago, *Vagina: A New Biography*. Wolf contributes a generous puff on the back cover (‘lively, thought-provoking, and richly researched’) and most reviewers are agreeing with her, giving the victory laurels to Rees.

Rees gets off to a cracking start, with the c-word rearing its head in the introduction, as the author discusses the troubling question of ‘the naming of parts’, noting that the OED first definition of ‘cunt’ is ‘the female external genital organs’, while ‘vagina’ is very anatomically specific and refers to the birth canal. Her book, which pays due attention to vulva, labia and clitoris, is therefore mistitled. Do we, she asks, need to develop a new language for women’s bodies, or do we rehabilitate the old one? Some three hundred pages later she arrives at no definite conclusion, beyond throwing out the challenge to come up with a ‘powerful word, an accurate word ... and one that does not infantilize, by sounding “cute”’. I go along with Caitlin Moran, with a firm vote for ‘quim’.

It is fascinating to learn that the word ‘cunt’ dates from about 1230, but was not regarded as indecent until the nineteenth century. It appears in medieval street names such as the former Gropecunte Lane in London (now disappointingly renamed Grape), and placenames such as Clawecunt, Clevecunt, and Cruskunt, which Rees assures us were not at all sexual, let alone obscene, the Old English origins of ‘cunt’ coinciding with terms for hollow, gulley and cleft. Her book is an exploration of how the word and those who possess it came to be objectified, glorified and demonised through five fields of artistic and cultural expression: literature, film, television, visual and performance art.

Rees begins with the myth of the *vagina dentata*, the toothed genitals of bawdy medieval fables, and shows its reaches into today’s novels, plays, films and television shows. I regret missing the episode in Season 10 of *South Park* which featured Oprah Winfrey’s talking vagina, Minge, an episode which the author points out plays into a ‘long and well-established representational tradition of the autonomous cunt’. Hillary Clinton found herself similarly autonomized on *South Park*, when the CIA suspect she might have a nuclear device ‘up her snatch’, and an aide volunteers to go in and defuse it.

If you devour popular culture, you’ll find Rees’s book an enjoyable read as she takes on everything from *The Vagina Monologues* to *Sex and the City*. Being more low- than high-brow, I really appreciated these parts of the book, particularly Rees’s analysis of the fifth of the 94-episode run of *Sex and the City*, called ‘The Power of Female Sex’. It’s the episode where uptight Charlotte has her intimate portrait painted and is thus empowered by uniting her female self with her female body. Broadcast in July 1998 on the US channel HBO, it was the first of its programmes to broadcast...
the word ‘cunt’. (Take that, Tony Soprano!) The empowerment is short-lived: Rees takes apart the episode ‘The Real Me’, broadcast just three years later, which also focuses on Charlotte, trying to face up to her fear of inspecting her own vagina, and is a reversal of everything the earlier episode established. Rees devotes sixteen pages to these two episodes, and why not when the show was syndicated in over 200 countries and whose final episode was watched by 10.6 million Americans.

There is content which is more academic – Rees is senior lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Chester, UK, and has a background in early modern and Renaissance culture – couched in the language of feminist studies, and some of it can be difficult to follow or even care about. I could have done with less analysis of the ‘cunt art’ of Judy Chicago, which is given thirty-five pages, for example, and some of the more obscure performance artists, but in general Rees seems to be targeting her book at a general rather than an academic readership. Or perhaps both.

This is not the definitive text: Rees is clear about the fact that no one book can cover the entire literary and cultural representations of female genitalia, and she sensibly keeps her focus on the West. She points out that the Sunday Times in 1992 broke the story of the occurrence in the UK of what was then called ‘female circumcision’; in 2012 the same paper revealed that despite the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 there are doctors in the UK willing to carry out the procedure for 750 pounds: ‘For this, you can have your daughter's clitoris cut off, and her vulva sewn up’. Very few prosecutions have been brought, at least in part because of what the newspaper calls ‘a warped sense of respect for different cultural traditions’.

Ruth Starke

As a student of Romanticism, I expected to be in my comfort zone with *Secular Mysteries*; however the density of ideas and my lack of knowledge about the Stanley Cavell oeuvre made for hard going. Yet despite the gaps in my philosophical education, I enjoyed the ideas and arguments in Duffy’s text. He is an interesting and widely-read scholar, and his original criticism of Shelley and Wordsworth offer new perspectives on their well-known works.

Duffy’s notion of Cavell’s ‘redemptive reading’ is as inspiring as it is interesting. Although the ‘blurb’ for the text concentrates on the connections Duffy makes between Cavell’s philosophical works and Romanticism, Cavell’s project is as much linguistic as it is Romantic; his aim being to choose words that ‘would let rise the intuitive leaven of what he has at heart to say, and so … deliver into the hands of his readers the promise of a new birth of … glorious liberty, not here effected once and for all but now confidently to be found “in every word, with every breath”’ (33). Redemption is to be found in language, which goes some way to explaining why ‘America’s most distinguished “ordinary-language” philosopher is shown to be tied to the neo-Romantic claim that far from being merely an illustrator of the truths discovered by philosophy, poetry is its equal partner in the instituting of knowledge.’

Romanticism, and in particular Romantic poetry, is seen as a transgressive outbreak of language for Cavell, signalling his own interest in a ‘silent melancholy about everyday living that stems from the need for ‘a romanticism in quest of the (of my) (human) voice’ (35). This arises in part from his central philosophical hope that, through accepting that his words are no longer his, but are abandoned after he has uttered or written them, he may then recognise his voice and in that recognition redeem the words as his own (56).

Cavell intuits Romantic poetry to be both an account of losses and a textual recovery, and Romanticism as a project bent to the effort of seeking secular mysteries from ordinary, everyday experience; a project intent also on the call for words and thought to represent an endlessly becoming world’ (109). Duffy explains how ‘Wordsworth’s vision of a majestic intellect [the “gloomy breathing-place” next to Snowdon in 1850 *Prelude*] does indeed represent the world as so calling for words … signaled by the fact that although this primordial breach is introduced visually as a “blue chasm”, it is thereafter exclusively represented as an auditory phenomenon … “roaring with one voice”’ (109).

Duffy states that the ‘work of Cavell and the texts of the English Romantics call out and answer to each other in ways that sound out the world-historical depths of the questions and purposes animating their poetry and his philosophy’, because all wrestle with both the ‘aspiration to an idea of the human … [and] the mysteries of the human condition’ (202, 224). Overall, the careful reader will be rewarded by Duffy’s original readings of Shelley and Wordsworth, and students of linguistics and philosophy will

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1 Quoted from press release for *Secular Mysteries*.

Kathleen Steele. 
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appreciate this densely packed study of Cavell, and no doubt see the promise in Cavell’s claim that he does not make the world, and the things into which it endlessly gathers and differentiates itself. Neither do ‘I’ he continues, ‘systematize the language in which the thing differs from all other things in the world. I testify to both, acknowledge my need of both’ (83).

Kathleen Steele

Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond: Interfaces of the Oral, Written, and Visual is a collection of seventeen essays on the oral and visual in poetry which is rich in depth, scope, and style. It is both an excellent teaching and academic resource and a celebration of the genre- and border-crossing nature of poetry and poetics. Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond extends beyond the book form: the essay collection was born from Susan Gingell’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Grant, and a Canada Council and Saskatchewan Arts Board-funded international conference and poetry festival held in 2008. The book also has a companion website, with video and audio resources which illustrate and expand the concerns of the collected essays: http://drc.usask.ca/projects/oral.

An important precursor to the conference, the poetry festival, and to this collection, is Marshall McLuhan and Victor Papanek’s Verbi-Voco-Visual Explorations (1967). As with McLuhan and Papanek’s study, Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond seeks to effect a movement away from strictly visual-centric modes of engaging with the literary arts. But Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond moves beyond even the polemic of Verbi-Visuo-Vocal Explorations. Rather than a primacy of the vocalic in poetics, it seeks a renewed understanding of the various manifestations of orality (Gingell and Roy coin this ‘oral+) in poetry as heard and seen alongside the visual and textual, including the different voices of a variety of oral literature practitioners, from poets to storytellers, in the collection. They diagnose ‘a broad and sustained turn to the oral+ in both artistic practices and scholarly disciplines’ (22). Through this urn to the oral+, the volume also explores questions of performance and performativity in terms of embodied oral and verbal culture, in an extension of McLuhan and Pasternak's quest to move away from monolithically visuo-centric methods of engaging with literature in general and poetry in particular.

The comprehensive introduction compliments the ambition of the collection, its related events, and companion website. Entitled ‘Opening the Door to Transdisciplinary, Multimodal Communication’, the introduction opens at once colloquially and also with a highly literary style: ‘word up, dear reader’ This introduction is also a lively exhortation, ‘an urging and an invitation (r.s.v.p.)’ for a renewed exchange on the subject of the vocal and oral side of poetry's crafting and its effects, extending the conference and poetry festival’s aim to ‘foster opportunities for collaboration’ (https://ocs.usask.ca/ocs/index.php/theoral/theoral08/index). The volume sets out to find ‘open spaces within academic environments and scholarly discourses in which orally centred or related ways of making and transmitting knowledges can be affirmed and validated in expanded ways, so that the definition of what constitutes expert work can be enlarged’ (15).

In order to aid this enlargement of the field, Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond’s ambitions are truly transdisciplinary. Adding to the pedagogical value and to the accessibility of the volume, Gingell and Roy’s introduction provides an in-depth glossary of ‘key terms’. These terms, much like the ordering of the volume itself, are clustered into thematic sections: orature / orality; performance / speech / sound; audience / storytelling; text / textualized orature / orality; audience / storytelling. The terms and their definitions do not bound the theoretical angle or the broad scope of the volume. Rather, they provide a navigation aid for the introduction and the essays that ensue, widening the ‘conversational circle’ of the book through the ‘shared vocabulary’
(15) thus established. I will not even begin to try to summarise the seventeen essays in the volume here, as they are as diverse in their scope and style as they are in their approaches. Suffice it to say, their scope spans the globe (from North America, through Britain, to South Africa, Haiti, and Australasia), history (from ancient Indigenous tales, through sixteenth century Ireland, to the present), genre (from the ballad form, to the aisling, to slam poetry), and style (strictly academic, through storytelling, to poetics, cultural studies, and even the visual arts).

Thus, although is difficult to tease apart all of the connected elements of Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond, it also feels somewhat like a false archaeology even to attempt do so. Indeed, Gingell and Roy, in the introduction to the volume, reference Jacques Attali in calling for a certain ‘theoretical indiscipline’\(^1\) to be integral to our approaches in poetry and poetics, from both critical and creative perspectives, and in the academy and beyond. In its wide collection of contributors – academics in literary, social, and cultural studies, poets of all sorts, oral storytellers, writers of fiction and non-fiction, and media artists – and their wide range of interests and insights, make sure that Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond does what many academic-instigated studies of poetry profess to do but never quite accomplish, which is to bridge the creative and the critical in its content and its readership, and to do so with a scope as multidisciplinary and as global as possible.

Heather H. Yeung

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