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In this engaging and galvanising text, Lorna Finlayson provides a critical introduction to feminist theory as well as applying a special emphasis on the practice and activism of feminism as a movement.

She presents a refreshing account of the history of feminism, which stretches centuries prior to, and denounces, the conventional ‘story’ told in introductory texts. She decisively condemns John Stuart Mill (too often, for Finlayson, credited as the founding father of feminism), the overly represented white middle-class liberal feminists, and the classification and limitations of the ‘waves’ of feminism, which tend to neglect the fluid and continual work of feminists by reducing feminism down to a few exceptional spurts of action and influence. Instead, she points out that twelfth-century Islamic scholars endorsed gender equality; the first female published work of a praise and defence of women dated back to the fifteenth century; in the sixteenth century, British feminist Jane Anger produced pamphlets opposing the dominance of men over women; and she reminds us that Mary Wollstonecraft published A Vindication of the Rights of Woman in the eighteenth century.

Finlayson introduces not only the mainstream theories and salient features of feminism for newcomers, but also attempts to vindicate some of the often overlooked or under-explored facets of feminism today, including radical, anarchist and Marxist feminist theories. She raises some compelling and controversial questions, in particular her discussion on the co-option of feminism, which she argues is a serious challenge for feminists in the twenty-first century.

The process of co-option involves absorbing and converting a separate entity which stands against a system ‘into something which [becomes] a functional component of that system’ (203). Co-option occurs where the incorporating body is in some way opposed, hostile or indifferent to the body being absorbed. This is the inverse of alienation: to alienate is to isolate something that ought to belong and deem it as strange, whereas to co-opt is to seize something that is separate and stands apart from a particular thing and make it part of that very thing. Tokenism is one form of co-option; for instance, white Western groups co-opting a number of non-white people to defuse the challenges raised by, for example, cultural sadness or anger towards oppression. The election of Barack Obama as president in the United States can be understood as a tokenistic decoy to assuage ‘black anger’ (205).

Finlayson explains that when feminism is co-opted, bought and sold, it reduces it to something ‘cheerful’ (222). Obvious examples of this are beauty campaigns such as L‘Oréal’s ‘Because you’re worth it’ slogan, which co-opts the empowering sentiments of feminism and reduces them to something simplistic and available for purchase and consumption. In the more serious case of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars (in which women have been able to fight alongside men on the frontline), it takes the efforts of feminists to gain equal rights and validation and uses it as a gagging device to stop feminists highlighting and opposing the harm done to women (and men) through these wars.

Importantly, practices, ideas and language can also be co-opted, which Finlayson argues is the case for contemporary feminism; its name, theory and practice have become appropriated by the very systems it actively opposes with hostility or is at least indifferent toward. This has been the case for justifying an unjust war. By affording female soldiers the right to fight alongside men in combat, the moral debate about whether the war is indeed just becomes diverted into an ostensible concern for women’s liberty. In fact, women in combat do not actually achieve much for women’s
liberation: neither for the soldiers nor for the women and girls of the invaded countries. In this instance, the sentiment of equal political and employment representation has been co-opted and muddled. Not only are women not represented as military leaders, they risk sexual assault and losing their lives to fight in an unjust war under the guise of ‘feminism’. Moreover, many of the women and girls from the war torn countries have also lost their lives and their autonomy has not been improved by Western military involvement. Finlayson emphasises that the strongest forms of feminism involve a focus on challenging and transforming existing social structures of patriarchy and oppression, which cannot be achieved through a simplistic approach of inserting more women into those structures (210-11). Thus, she explains, by co-opting feminist theory, Western leaders have been able to make claims about the liberty being achieved for women by invading countries under the guise of a feminist or democratic cause. But in fact, the Afghanistan and Iraq wars have not benefited or liberated women and have instead worsened their lives in a myriad of ways.

Finlayson links this to Susan Moller Okin’s prominent thesis that there is a conflict between a commitment to women’s rights and multiculturalism, specifically a conflict between liberal tolerance of cultural diversity and feminist ideals of equal worth and autonomy for women. For Okin, many minority cultures are illiberal, more patriarchal and incredibly harmful for women (for example, religious ‘honour killings’ and forced and under-age marriages), than are the majority cultures in Western democracies. But, Finlayson argues, liberals such as Okin fear being labelled as ‘cultural imperialists’ but fail, so Finlayson thinks, to gain even a basic understanding of the cultures they are criticising (218-9).

Finlayson thinks this debate comes down to asking ‘are we doing “ideal theory”, or are we arguing about what should happen in the world as we know it?’ (219). If it is a case of ‘ideal theory’, then she advises us to abandon it, as it is ‘decadent’ and nonsensical, for we cannot properly understand the kinds of minority cultural practices that would exist in an ideal just society without being influenced by effects of racism and colonialism.

If it is a question of ‘non-ideal theory’, the response should be to highlight the fact that women are harmed by not only racism and social exclusion but also by the act of being ‘rescued’ by policies bolstered by racist or colonial principles. In fact, Finlayson argues, liberal feminism is harmful for the women from non-Western minority cultures that Okin seeks to liberate, but also for white Western women as well. This is due to the way it shifts feminists’ attention away from the facets of their own cultures which are misunderstood as liberal rather than oppressive (219).

Finlayson’s discussion of co-opting is a compelling account of the state of things as they are, and a real challenge for contemporary feminist theory. As a cautionary tale of how feminism is ‘absorbed, hijacked, twisted and betrayed by the world it seeks to change’ (198), it alerts us to the ways our struggle to achieve political representation, employment and economic equality, non-discrimination, and so on, has been blurred and ‘achieved’ in ways that have further cemented our oppression. Representation in the frontline of war has not liberated women, just as telling women to buy into conventions of beauty because it ‘empowers’ us does not help us to be viewed by men as political equals. Co-opting seems, then, to be a good way to disarm and gag the oppressed.

Finlayson’s aim seems to be to raise the alarm and consciousness of feminists to the threat of co-option, but she stops short, admittedly, of offering a solution. How ought we respond to the threat of co-option and reclaim and control feminist theory once more? Finlayson appears to suggest we resist co-option, but does not provide an alternative. Resistance to social and political inclusion is not a strong political strategy. Would Finlayson prefer women to retreat altogether and reject an attempt at non-discrimination in the workplace because it risks feminism being co-opted? Is she suggesting that African Americans would prefer not to have had an African American president elected? A strong political strategy cannot take the form of digging your heels in to stay separate
and resisting all efforts of social reform. It seems Finlayson may be doing her own form of ideal theory here by refusing to accept moderate and sporadic improvements and wanting to begin in the achievement of an ideal egalitarian society.

Finlayson does not think women are worse off now than they were 200 years ago, but her concern over the subtle and crude nature of patriarchy today, and her dislike and scepticism of liberal feminism’s capacity to respond to it, says that she is refusing to recognise how powerful liberal feminism is. Even though this may allow for some co-option, by participating in the non-ideal patriarchal structure, liberal feminists could be in a strong and conscious political position. Liberal feminists, who Finlayson underestimates, may be responding with the same subtlety that is being used against them. Reclaiming and retrieving feminism from the inside to achieve equal representation, rather than standing on the outskirts, may be a powerful strategy, instead of a passive one. This is an advantage because it makes it harder for the ‘enemy’ to resist real feminist policy suggestions, for the enemy needs to at least sound coherent by engaging with and using feminist language to justify their practices. Thus, this strategy works, and important gains are achieved, despite occasional co-opting.

Overall, Finlayson’s bright, challenging, inclusive and humorous introduction to feminist theory will be engrossing for female and male philosophy students alike, and enjoyed by more experienced feminists.

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V.S. Naipaul’s literary opus consists of a wide variety of works, traversing multiple genres in both fiction and non-fiction, to create a distinctive style of writing that has long been considered the prototype for the sub-genres they represent. Naipaul’s prolific career spanning over half a century has been peppered with a lively engagement with the politics of his native Trinidad and Tobago, and also of the chronologically post-colonial world. The Nobel Prize and Booker Prize-winning author of nearly 30 works has often been discussed in critical pieces, ranging from widely read tomes to obscure specialised research output, celebrated journal pieces to dissertations. It is at the juncture of the author’s writing over five decades that Ajay K. Chaubey’s V.S. Naipaul: An Anthology of 21st Century Criticism intervenes to produce a corpus of critical appraisals that delineate the author’s copious output. The book is divided into three sections and seventeen chapters which analyse Naipaul’s works from multiple critical perspectives. The volume also contains a comprehensive Introduction and a Foreword by Manjit Inder Singh, a notable figure in Naipaul scholarship.

The Foreword to the volume graphs the present prominence of Naipaul as a deft craftsman of fiction as well as non-fiction and foregrounds the necessity of the volume: ‘At this point of time when Naipaul’s works go back to nearly fifty-five years, and when awards and fame are behind him, there is a Naipaul curiously divided between admirers and detractors’ (vi). By constructing a binary in terms of subjectivity, the book never trivialises opposition but instead supports multiple views. The Introduction presents the arc of writing that exists on Naipaul. A veritably erudite essay, the Introduction combines the aesthetic tethering of Naipaul with the scholarly qualifications.

The book is divided into three sections titled ‘Contexts and Convergences in Naipaul’s Fictions’, ‘V.S. Naipaul’s Travel Narratives: A Post-colonial Passage to the Globe’, and ‘Identity, Home, Marital and Gender Discourse through Text/s: Critical Essays on V.S. Naipaul’s A House for Mr Biswas’ containing eight, four and five chapters respectively. The 17 chapters address myriad concerns in Naipaul’s writing and, while the first two sections offer wider surveys of the author’s works, the third and final section focuses on a single fiction work of Naipaul in an attempt to rigorously engage with the novel and to provide a framework for intensive critical survey of individual works by the author. The second section contains essays that accentuate the divide between the prefix ‘post-’ with its imperial-historical other, the ‘colonial’, and schematises Naipaul beyond his immediate cartographical periphery as a spokesperson for global travel.

The first chapter, Prakash Chandra Pradhan’s ‘Race, Ethnicity, Sexual Violence and Neocolonialism in V.S. Naipaul’s Guerillas: A Postcolonial Reading’, places Naipaul’s 1975 novel Guerillas in the context of multiple critical approaches – critical race studies and ethnicity, gender and sexuality studies, and a study of neocolonial power structures. The chapter is sufficiently exhaustive and serves as an apt initiation into the book by presenting an overlay that locates Naipaul’s writing on the literary and critical map of postcolonial Caribbean literature. The following chapter, ‘The Dialectics of Homelessness in V.S. Naipaul’s The Mystic Masseur and Half a Life’ by Vishnupriya Sengupta, deals with the contingencies of diaspora in the two works by Naipaul. Extensively locating Naipaul in comparison with Said, Sengupta successfully
brings the textual and the critical together without the generic bias towards over-analysing the textual content.

The third chapter, Valiur Rahaman’s ‘Invention, Memory, and Place in Magic Seeds: A Perspective of Reading’, is a significant contribution, detailing one of Naipaul’s more recent works with a critical acumen that allows for diverse academic traditions to coalesce and create a ‘perspective of reading’ that cures the afflictions of reading as well. Although Said prefigures here too as an important critical standpoint the ontological enquiry into space and cognition helps develop a significant method for analysis applicable to other works of Naipaul as well. The fourth chapter, Chandan Kumar Panda’s ‘Affirming the Different: A Study of V.S. Naipaul’s Caribbean Fictions’, is a wider survey that bridges the lacuna generally found in specific studies that avoid linking the diverse oeuvre of Naipaul – often a daunting task. While the systemic rigour of the chapter may inadvertently produce a sense of limiting the study to a characterisation of difference in the novels discussed, the additional influx of Plato, Ricoeur and Koselleck provide essential milestones for intense engagement with generic envisionings of Naipaul’s writing.

Sayantan Pal Chowdhury’s ‘V.S. Naipaul’s Half a Life: A Study of Powerless Group of the Third World Women’ presents a study of the novel from a gender studies perspective, unlocking patterns that are useful across the study of Naipaul’s fictions. Paramita Ghosh’s ‘The Concept of Migration and Exile in V.S. Naipaul – A Selective Study’, builds a framework to study narratives of migration and displacement in Naipaul. ‘V.S. Naipaul: The Quest for Identity amid Deracination’ by Satendra Kumar and Balkar Singh proposes a survey from the purview of identity and race studies. This exhaustive chapter is an important part of the section, helping develop the statements from supporting chapters into a cogent whole.

Asis De’s ‘An Apology for Failure: Searching Home and Identity in V.S. Naipaul’s The Mimic Men’, a theoretically rich chapter appearing well into the volume, suitably rounds off the section. As per ‘contexts and convergences’ to which the section attests, De’s contribution is primed to project a suitable context of examination and a point of convergence and de-compartmentalisation altogether highly essential for the vision of the volume to succeed.

The second section of the volume sets off with Shashank Shekhar Sharma and N.D.R. Chandra’s ‘Discourse on Travel Theory and Naipaul’s Travelogue: Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey’. The chapter, despite its primary focus on Among the Believers, deals comprehensively with travel narratives and theories of travel writing. Amod Kumar Rai’s ‘V.S. Naipaul: A Pioneer in Non-fiction Writing’ further sets the tone for the section, discussing Naipaul’s non-fiction endeavours, and thus balancing the act of critical comprehension of his fictions. Aju Mukhopadhyay reads into Naipaul’s assessment of his ancestral land in ‘V.S. Naipaul’s Reflections on India: A Critical Examination’. This offsets the perspectives of diaspora studies by looking at a crucial aspect of Naipaul’s travels – his travel back to the country of his ancestral origin. The 12th chapter of the volume, ‘Naipaul’s The Masque of Africa: Exploring History, Culture and Civilization’ by Bishun Kumar, engages Naipaul’s 2010 non-fiction work with a specific study of cartographical lineage as viewed by the author.

The first chapter of the third section, and the volume’s 13th chapter, ‘V.S. Naipaul’s A House for Mr Biswas: An Incessant Quest for Identity and Independence’ by Madhu Sharma, discusses the fundamental issues of the novel in a lucid way, addressing the same from a perspective agreeable to intermediate readers and seasoned scholars alike. Vineet Kashyap’s ‘Significance of “Home” in V.S. Naipaul’s A House for Mr Biswas’ considers within its remit the linguistic/lingual metaphor of home and dissects the underlying diasporic consciousness
operating in Naipaul’s psyche as he sends his protagonist on a consistently thwarted quest for a shelter or a space of belonging.

Deepak Kumar and Shagufta Naj in their essay ‘Anguish and Defeat of Unhoused and Unnecessary: A Critical Study of V.S. Naipaul’s A House for Mr Biswas’ extend on the premise developed by the previous two essays, intensifying the postcolonial engagement with the novel to yield newer results. Mujeeb Ali Murshed Qasim’s ‘The Theme of Marriage in V.S. Naipaul’s A House for Mr Biswas’ applies theoretical underpinnings of gender studies to unlock the dimensions of patriarchal diasporic overtures in the novel. ‘Fossilized Folks: Women in Naipaul’s A House for Mr Biswas, The Mystic Masseur and Half a Life’ undertakes the gender studies perspective in a wider applicability, reading into three of the author’s works in a systematic and methodical engagement that allows for a broadening of outlook with regard to the way Naipaul addresses women in his works.

There exist critical volumes on Naipaul which endorse an erudition that is lost on the reader who attempts to grasp the subject. There are also such volumes that overtly trivialise the subject and render it in a manner that scholarly engagement is denied. Though there certainly do exist volumes that transcend this binary and situate themselves in various genres, it must be noted that the present volume is successful in distilling the strengths of the two dominant patterns. The voluminous exercise into unravelling and decoding the fictions, narratives, techniques and arrangements of Naipaul leaves little to be desired. It is a holistic critical endeavour that endorses critical engagement rather than passive absorption of critical materials. A thoroughly well-edited book, V.S. Naipaul: An Anthology of 21st Century Criticism presents Naipaul’s writings through a scholarly lens that is densely as well as lucidly populated by critical terminology necessary to delve into the author’s writings, his “archaeology of knowledge”, which has the exceptional flair to intermingle murky places and people’ (xviii).

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How was literary realism introduced to the Colony? Was it derivative in form or were there disruptions made into it? Was realism passively determined by the political energies of the times or did it actively inform the radical qualities within politics and help constitute the individual’s differential relations with the nation? These are some of the questions that Ulka Anjaria raises in her book, *Realism in the Twentieth Century Indian Novel*. With the exceptions of Priyamvada Gopal (2005) and Toral Gajarawala (2012), Indian literary realism in the colonial context have received little critical attention since Meenakshi Mukherjee’s classic *Realism and Reality* (1985). Anjaria however departs from Gopal in claiming that realism was not only a set of aesthetic techniques responding to the deeper and more significant issues of nationalist politics and gender, but precisely that form whose disjunctive and indeterminate nature qualified and conditioned the multiple and contradictory political practices of the nation.

Building on Lukács’ use of the false mirror in reading Tolstoy and equating it with Premchand’s idea of realism as a ‘concave mirror’, Anjaria argues that the writers using this form were acutely aware of the paradoxical condition of the anticipation of a better future and the disillusionment of the present times: in short, India’s problematic ‘historical entrance into modernity’ (12). They used realism not as simple mimesis but as a metafictional mode where the limits of mimesis are called into notice in order to understand life under colonial rule – ‘a mode of engagement, innovation, and imagination within writing under colonialism, rather than as a colonial left-over’ (29).

Anjaria engages with her subject through two categories – character and temporality – and writes two chapters each on them. The first chapter, ‘The Contours of the Human’, takes up the question of character in the dialectic between humanity and saintliness in Premchand’s *Rangbhumi* (1924) and *Godan* (1936). In *Rangbhumi*, despite referring to cases of dehumanization, Premchand foregrounds the ideology of human saintliness in the central character Surdas. In *Godan*, however, Anjaria argues, Premchand shifts to an ideology of common equality which acknowledges class and character-related differences and understands humanness to be a dialectic of human personality (formed through class-based limitations, manners, clothing, speech, etc.) and the possibility, and the lack of it, of transcendence (saintliness). Realism in this capacity appears to be a form of representation that highlights anticipation and the impossibility of materialisation (for instance, ‘godan’ or the ceremonial giving of cow never happens), and thus should be read symptomatically in the strategies of metonymy, alienation, or ambivalence.

The second chapter, ‘Experiments with Gandhi’, investigates character through the lens of individual freedom in a reading of allegory that affixes a higher reach of meaning to the mundane and appears not as antithetical to realism but the process through which realism creates meaning (62). Anjaria takes up four novels here, Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935) and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), Premchand’s *Rangabhumi*, and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938) – all involved in the nationalist allegorisation of Gandhi but unable to materialise the possibilities in individual characters. Thus, Bakha in *Untouchable*, Lalu Singh in *Sword*, Vinay and Sophia in *Rangabhumi* and Moorthy in *Kanthapura* seem to form a relation of sympathy and disappointment with the Gandhian politics, which she terms the ‘contingency-symbolism dialectic’ (73), and become more isolated from and unyielding to the magnetism of Gandhi’s

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character. She reads how Kanthapura’s ‘new aesthetic of radical difference’ (85) from the colonial model was in effect a systematic consolidation of nationalism’s homogenising tendencies and eclipse of all forms of dissent, and argues how those systems are called into question by the novel’s fraught rhetorical projection of overdetermined subjectivity, especially in Moorthy’s self-searching questions in the end (93-6). Allegory was meant to bridge the correspondence between the novel and the nation, but the instability and ambivalence within the form compelled an introspection on writing the nation itself.

The third and fourth chapters direct our attention to the issue of temporality through a close reading of Ahmad Ali’s Twilight in Delhi (1940) and Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s Aparajito or The Unvanquished (1932). Anjaria seeks to show how the discourse of historical time which is marked by linearity, maturity, and progress appears in Ali and Bandyopadhyay. In a chapter titled, ‘Staging Realism and the Ambivalence of Nationalism’, She finds in Ali the use of the standard Urdu form, ‘shehrashob’ which is a lament on the decline and loss of Muslim culture in South Asia and which parallels the historical progress (the novel following a pattern located from 1857 to 1940) with a poetic time that is built through moments of nostalgia, regret, and disjunction. This temporality is marked by the ‘operative principles’ of ‘synchrony’ and ‘interruption’ (107). By isolating his work from contemporary nationalist discourses and focusing on the story of a rich but dying culture, by paralleling the enactment of both the times, Ali addresses the ‘profoundly indeterminate’ nature of the future for Muslim culture in India and the heterogeneity in imagining the nation (122). In the final chapter titled, ‘Aimless Bildung and the Longing for Form’, Bandyopadhyay, Anjaria argues, hints at the impossibility of the ‘bildung’ in the colony by rejecting the standard narrative of the bildung in three respects: he challenges the coherence and verticality of time by infusing several digressive episodes; he refuses to allow his protagonist, Apu, to be assimilated into and subsumed by the city, which is often the most significant feature of the bildung (the successful overcoming of struggles between the individual and the urban world outside); and he denies Apu the paternalistic quality of the bildung – bourgeois family, domesticity, and inheritance of paternal values – by sending him to a solitary journey to the South China Seas (148-50). Anjaria points out that this is somehow compromised in Satyajit Ray’s internationally acclaimed film from The Apu Trilogy (1956) which ends with the much-cited scene of Kajal sitting on the shoulders of his father, Apu. She reads these disjunctions in Bandyopadhyay and Ray as suggestive of different artistic commitments – Ray for a social realism of nationalist colour in the recently independent India and Bandyopadhyay for the aimless longing for form that could address the difficult transitions from the colonial to the nation formation.

Through close readings of the texts and the literary devices used by the so-called ‘realist’ writers, Anjaria both responds to the questions of the historical crisis registered in the texts and the sophisticated and complex use of the form in the colonial context. A few questions remain unanswered nonetheless. Half of the works that Anjaria uses here are originally written in vernacular languages, such as Hindi and Bangla, which have specific genealogies of realist style of their own. How do these genealogies influence or shape the use of realism here? For instance, Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s work is preceded or accompanied by the ‘realist’ works of Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Tarashankar Bandopadhyay, and Manik Bandyopadhyay – all of whom ingeniously infuse indigenous aspects in a colonially imported realist form for political reasons ranging from nationalism to race, gender, caste, or modernization questions. An understanding of this genealogy remains crucial for the writer’s politics and style of using the ‘bildung’ form. Also, it is puzzling as to why Anjaria says nothing...
of the politics behind the choice of her texts, which are all written by male authors. Despite these omissions, Ulka Anjaria’s work remains important as it insightfully points out the radical qualities within literary realism in the late colonial Indian context, and as it powerfully attempts to restore an area of study that has unfortunately been met with long negligence and disregard in Indian and postcolonial literary studies.

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Simon Dentith, *Nineteenth-Century British Literature Then and Now: Reading with Hindsight* (Routledge, 2016)

Routledge’s Nineteenth Century Series is edited by Vincent Newey and Joanne Shattock and aims to reflect, develop and extend the great burgeoning of interest in the nineteenth century that has been an inevitable feature of recent years, as that former epoch has come more sharply into focus as a locus for our understanding not only of the past, but of the contours of our modernity. (ii)

But problems associated with reading texts with reference to their histories have plagued critical debates for decades. Simon Dentith’s contribution to this series is an enjoyable and cogently argued book. As its subtitle indicates, it directly addresses the challenges of reading texts with hindsight.

His argument begins with an exploration of the ambivalences inherent in the term. While it may promise ‘improved knowledge’ and a ‘reconstructive backward look,’ which could help to ‘make fuller sense of the past,’ hindsight also threatens to ‘sell short the legitimate beliefs, attitudes and actions that were taken or adopted in the light of the best knowledge then available’ (1). But rather than repudiate hindsight as a possible source of ironies that could rob ‘the past of its authenticity’, Dentith argues that such ironies should be considered encouragement for readings that understand the relationship between the past and present in terms of both continuity and difference (1). This position, he contends, makes it possible for critics to respect the authenticity of nineteenth-century writers and their original readers. It also enables considerations of ways in which nineteenth-century ideas have persisted throughout history to challenge contemporary social assumptions. Drawing on the differentiation between ‘memory’ and ‘memories’ in the work of Paul Ricoeur, Dentith shifts his focus from individual to historical hindsight. Ultimately he suggests that critics should read intersections between Victorian texts and the modern world dialogically, following the traditions of Mikhail Bakhtin and Hans-Georg Gadamer (19). Having established this as the principal approach of the book, Dentith turns his attention to specific examples to argue that the connections made with cultural artefacts of the nineteenth century are grounded in traceable histories.

One implication of reading with hindsight is to recognise that historical and present-day texts may fictionally anticipate futures that look back on their pasts and, in so doing, pass oblique commentary on the social contexts of their composition. Dentith provides readings of Thomas Carlyle’s *Past and Present* (1843) and Alfred Tennyson’s ‘Locksley Hall’ (1835) and ‘Locksley Hall Sixty Years After’ (1886) as nineteenth-century examples to illustrate this claim. Establishing parallels with contemporary texts to further demonstrate the functions of hindsight, he also considers the temporal shifts in *The Book of Prefaces* (2000) by Alisdair Gray, *The Good That We Do* (2001) by John Lucas and a diary piece by John Sutherland published in the *London Review of Books* on 21 August 2003. This discussion then serves as the backdrop for a series of chapter-long readings of Victorian novels including George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1859-1860) and two of Anthony Trollope’s works, *Phineas Finn* (1867 - 1868) and *Phineas Redux* (1873-1874). In his analysis of Eliot’s work, Dentith demonstrates how issues of gender, sexuality, and female education in *The Mill on the
Floss come to the fore for the character and author, as well as for twentieth and twenty-first-century feminist critics. David Copperfield serves as a model text for Dentith to demonstrate how reading with hindsight enables critics to examine previous assessments – in this case, those made by D.A. Miller and Mary Poovey – in light of the multiple interpretive possibilities that occur when historical continuity and contradiction collide.

The argument then progresses to show possible ways in which reading with hindsight reveals how nineteenth-century insights and concerns can be used to critique current social and political climates. To do this, Dentith considers the political realism of Anthony Trollope. He argues that Phineas Finn exploits the author’s personal ambivalence about the parliamentary system by restaging the debates about democracy and the extension of the franchise in the Second Reform Act of 1867. Phineas Redux, Dentith continues, builds on the political examination of the first novel and demonstrates how extending the franchise serves only the elite, an inevitability over which Trollope remains conflicted. Just as Trollope’s novels present imaginative parallel universes he created to examine political possibilities of his time, so Dentith invites readers to reconsider contemporary political states of affairs, such as Thatcherism or the economic crises of 2008, through a process of defamiliarisation, as mirrors of Trollope’s nineteenth-century concerns. Similarly, Dentith pairs John Ruskin’s Unto This Last (1860) and William Morris’s News from Nowhere (1890) in two penultimate chapters to show how these works ‘suggest equally complex relations to current concerns’ as well as ‘challenge too easy an assimilation to our present preoccupations,’ with a particular focus on ecological issues (101). Applying Georg Lukács’s label of ‘romantic anticapitalist’ to Ruskin, Dentith illustrates how unfair the practise of substituting current vocabulary on evolving political economies and terminology can be, as it inevitably leads to misreading. Dentith considers Morris to be Ruskin’s most significant successor. He argues that re-contextualising Morris’s utopian novel is only valid if critics engage with the text aware of their propensity for falling into ‘bad hindsight’ (142), especially given the critical emergence of the so-called ‘Green Morris’.

At this point, the argument changes focus again and, in a final chapter that can best be described as anticlimactic, shifts from the act of reading to the act of writing with hindsight. Here the chapter length is counterproductive. Dentith is unable to fully develop the level of detail in his interpretations of his examples of Neo-Victorian novels that have been the hallmark of the book’s analyses so far. Its conclusions, as a result, seem perfunctory and unsatisfying.

But this does not detract from Dentith’s argument as a whole, nor does it in any way negate the enjoyment of his fine and subtly polemical prose and masterful readings. The work is not only a fine addition to the Nineteenth Century Series; it serves as a clear invitation to further study in this field.

Sean James Bosman
Rhodes University

Scottish journalist and writer Cal Flyn’s memoir, *Thicker than Water: History, Secrets and Guilt* offers a compelling exploration of the impacts and legacies of British settler colonialism in Australia. It arrives in the transnational literary landscape at a time when questions of postcolonial settlement continue to trouble the Australian settler psyche. The Referendum on Constitutional Recognition supposed to take place in May 2017 appears to be stalled, if not indefinitely deferred, and renewed calls for a Treaty in its place point to the divisions both among Indigenous Australians, and between settler Australians and Indigenous Australians, about the best way to move towards a greater postcolonial justice for First Australians. Flyn’s memoir is a reminder that the settler state was forged as a consequence of a brutal unofficial war against Aboriginal people, which aimed to clear the territories to make way for British settlers. While the work of Henry Reynolds has contributed to increasing recognition of this warfare, and records of several massacres of Aboriginal people have come to light, this history of colonial violence remains deeply contested, and elided in many of the ‘official’ histories of settlement.

*Thicker than Water* is a story about these contested histories. It is also, as Flyn notes, ‘a study of nationalism’ (320). Flyn writes as an ‘outsider’, retrieving the ‘secret’ history of her Scottish ancestor, Angus McMillan, who is celebrated in the official records as the founder of Gippsland, yet was involved in a number of massacres of local Aboriginal people. Fresh from the Highland Clearances, which resulted in the dispossession of Scottish tenant farmers, he was persuaded to board ship for Australia, where he arrived in 1838, and worked on cattle stations in New South Wales, before going on to lead an expedition across the Australian Alps in 1839, in search of the fertile lands which would later become known as Gippsland. This two-year expedition was also a competition, as a rival party, funded by James McArthur, and led by the adventurer Pawel Strzelecki, also sought to lay claim to the lands. McMillan prevailed, setting up a property that encompassed 150,000 acres on the banks of the Avon River. If he had lost his lands in the Clearances, in Gippsland, he had become ‘laird’ of Bushy Park (127), and was later elected to the Legislative Assembly as Victoria’s member for South Gippsland. However, ‘settlement’ did not occur without conflict. It required the dispossession of the Gunai/Kurnai people, and this took the form of a series of ‘dispersals’ and ‘reprisal’ killings for incursions such as ‘skirmishes’ and stealing sheep (27). As Flyn’s investigation into her ancestor’s history reveals, McMillan led the infamous 1843 massacre at Warrigal Creek, where up to two hundred Aboriginal men, women, and children were shot, and a further eight massacres between 1841 and 1850. These have become known as the Gippsland Massacres, and resulted in the deaths of several hundred local Aboriginal people. McMillan is, of course, not alone as a prominent colonial figure whose official reputation is recast in the beam of historical evidence of mass killings. These include WA Governor John Stirling, who led a massacre of the Bindjareb (Nyoongar) people in 1834, shooting some twenty-five or thirty men, women, and children. Many massacres were conducted by landowners and pastoralists, and most went unpunished, although the Myall Creek massacre of 1838, which resulted in the hanging of eleven of the perpetrators, is a notable exception.

Flyn sets out to discover how a ‘pious’ man can become the ‘Butcher of Gippsland’ (6). The memoir opens with a powerful fictionalised account of the Warrigal Creek Massacre, and then retraces McMillan’s journey to Bushy Park, and the subsequent loss of his fortunes. Blending fiction, memoir, and excerpts from McMillan’s journals, *Thicker than Water* is a convincingly-researched intervention into the colonial archive, and how it represents, or misrepresents, the past. Flyn navigates the conflicted terrain between an historical record that is rather a form of
‘hagiography’ (23), and the revisionist histories and contemporary newspaper reports that reveal McMillan was ‘responsible for the cold-blooded murder of hundreds of aborigines (sic)’ (26). Flyn’s journey both mirrors and reframes her ancestor’s, as she records deeply personal conversations with the descendants of the Gurnai/Kurnai people, historians and country museum staff, even a DJ working in a local country hotel, to interrogate her sense of ‘inherited guilt’, and whether ordinary Australians accept or deny any sense of collective responsibility for our history of colonial violence. These passages are deftly and sensitively handled, as Flyn confronts questions about postcolonial justice that are difficult to resolve because colonial amnesia continues to result in collective denials of the past. Flyn recognises that she is nonetheless entangled in this brutal history, and that this history complicates contemporary relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

*Thicker than Water* offers a refreshing insight into the inheritance of the not-quite colonial subject, left to account for the dark and disturbing elements of her ancestor’s colonial reputation. It demonstrates that the legacies of Australian colonialism extend beyond our borders, resulting in questions for descendants of those colonial subjects, about exactly what roles they have played in the violence of Australian settlement. As Flyn notes, she cannot ‘become an apologist for a murderer, a defender of the indefensible’. McMillan, she writes, ‘must be defined by his worst actions. He was a murderer. A mass murderer. A proponent of genocide’ (336). These closing reflections are juxtaposed with an Epilogue comprising an excerpt from the Melbourne *Argus*, detailing a party to ‘honour’ McMillan as the ‘discoverer’ of Gippsland in 1856 (343-4). This final colonial record glorifies McMillan’s exploits, to sit uneasily against Flyn’s closing reflections, which aim to reflect the ‘moral ambivalence’ of the colonial subject, and the ‘conflicts between his actions and ideals’ (337) that led him to murder.

*Thicker than Water* is a relevant and timely interrogation of what it means to be a prominent figure in Australian colonial history, of how we remember the past, and whose achievements we celebrate or deny. It has particular relevance to scholars of postcolonial studies, to those with a critical interest in the limitations of formal policies of Reconciliation, and to those with an interest in cultural memory and cultural trauma studies.

Laura Deane
Racism and Sociology edited by Wulf D. Hund and Alana Lentin. Racism Analysis Yearbook Series (Lit Verlag, Wien, 2014)

As the recent mass migrations of refugees fleeing Syria make clear, there is a racial politics of immigration and multiculturalism at play in Europe. Germany opens her arms, Austria shuts her borders. Barbed wire fences and water cannons slow, if not halt, the flow of refugees into the West, amid fraught public debates about how to respond to these human and humanitarian tragedies, centred on the need to restrict the flows of ‘migrants’ that ‘threaten’ Europe’s territorial integrity. In light of this, Racism and Sociology makes a timely contribution. This book’s theorising of the postracial in matters of immigration and multiculturalism has relevance not only in Europe, but also in Australia, where governments refuse to comment on operational matters related to strict policies of border security. It is also of relevance to scholars working with the literatures of asylum seekers, immigration, and nationalisms.

In this series of seven essays, scholars from Europe, the UK, and Australia address the problem of the ‘postracial turn’ in social and cultural studies. The postracial is broadly understood to be a theoretical society where racial discrimination no longer occurs, an abstract conceptual ‘state’ in which social or institutional structures of racism no longer exist. Yet, conservatives have been quick to champion, for example, the election of the first Black President in the history of the United States as evidence of the existence of a postracial State. As Hund and Lentin point out in the essay that opens this collection, the problem is that ‘postracialism is a mechanism for the refusal of the discussion of the function of race: what race does rather than what race is’ (13). This book argues that the intellectual project of postracialism, in its concern to move ‘beyond’ race, poses dangers as it silences meaningful discussion about what racism is and how it persists in contemporary social structures and institutions. Sociology’s embrace of postracialism, this book contends, marks it as increasingly ‘defined by its silence on matters of racism’ (14), accompanied by a ‘failure to grapple with its own colonialist and racist legacies’ (17). This seven essays presented here argue that sociology must ‘reorient’ itself, to examine how its disciplinary underpinnings have been implicated in the production of racism from its origins to the present day, and to draw attention to the influences and marginalisation of Black sociological scholarship. The book is structured in two parts. The first, Exposés, traces the relations between sociology and racism from the earliest developments of the discipline to the elision of race in contemporary migration, ethnicity, and minority (MEM) studies. The second part, Studies, provides a range of critical interventions questioning how and why analyses of racism remain marginalised in contemporary sociological theorising.

Exposés opens with Hund’s essay, ‘Racism in White Sociology: From Adam Smith to Max Weber’, to show that racist ideologies such as Social Darwinism and the naturalisation of racist taxonomies were instrumental in the production of sociological knowledge. As Hund points out, ‘sociological thought considerably contributed to the modernisation of racism’ and played a role in legitimising imperial Europe’s colonial project (58). In ‘Postracial Silences’, Alana Lentin contends that the field of MEM is marked by ‘the glaring absence of race as a fundamental theoretical frame through which to historicise and decode the effects of migration in Western European societies’ (70), calling for a decolonising approach that is race-critical, and aware of the origins of racism and colonialism as specifically Western European concepts and practices (99).

Felix Lösing’s essay, ‘From the Congo to Chicago: Robert E Park’s Romance with Racism’, opens the section named Studies, with a searing critique of Robert Park, an important early contributor to American sociology. Lösing argues that Park’s work on the Congoles was coughed

in a colonialisric discursive frame that naturalised African inferiority, so that his campaign to reform the Congo was nothing less than the ‘civilising mission’ of imperialism (110-111). Further, Park’s construction of Black American tenant farmers as a ‘peasant class’ relied on a discourse of ‘primitivism’ that was actually an iconography of race (115), leading him to naturalise race relations and champion racial segregation. Les Back and Maggie Tate’s essay, ‘Telling about Racism’, traces the contribution of Stuart Hall as pre-eminent scholar of black experience and the ‘Du Bois of Britain’ (133). Reading Hall’s work as an ‘anti-sociology’, they argue that the white sociological tradition relegates the study of race relations to Black scholars on the basis that racism is outside of white experience. In light of this, they advocate the need to ‘do sociology differently’ (137). In dialogue with this, Barnor Hesse outlines the development of a white sociological tradition that ‘forecloses historical and contemporary commentary on the colonial-racial order of the West’ (143). To fully understand racism, Hesse argues, sociology needs first to refuse the tendency to reduce racism to individual ‘aberration or pathology’ (153), and secondly, to take critical account of a Black analytics to dislodge white sociology’s colour-blindness, particularly its blind-spot about whiteness.

Intervening into this blind-spot, Sirma Bilge argues that intersectionality is becoming increasingly depoliticised, as race is elided in the project to ‘scientise’ intersectionality as a legitimate field within sociology (‘Whitening Intersectionality’ 176). Its formations in critical-radical Black scholarship mean it has been considered an ‘insurgent’ knowledge, charged with ‘lacking scientific rigor and having politicized curricula’ (197, 194), which has resulted in attempts to ‘discipline’ intersectionality through a set of Eurocentric standards that also operate as ‘whitening’ strategies. Closing the volume, Silvia Rodríguez Maeso and Marta Araújo discuss ‘The Politics of (Anti-) Racism’ in their examination of approaches to ‘integration’ in Portugal. Contending that integration discourse is the product of the ‘institutionalisation of racism in European democracies’, they argue that it sustains a ‘systematic denial of racism in the Portuguese context’ (208).

Together, these essays aim to decolonise sociology of its under-interrogated racial assumptions. *Racism and Sociology* is an excellent intervention into sociological knowledge production and the relations of ‘race’ that structure European and ‘settler’ societies today. However, the inclusion of an index and notes on the contributors would be thoughtful additions to the text, as would some clear indication of what first brought these scholars together. Australian scholars with less than rudimentary German may at first find the use of German stylistic marks in place of quotation marks somewhat distracting, but should also heed the need to reorient our own reading practices to meet scholarly works from around the world.

Laura Deane
Flinders University

Kristen J. Warner’s *The Cultural Politics of Colorblind TV Casting* provides an important understanding of the shortcomings of colorblind casting, a widespread industry practice used to increase the number of racial minorities on America film and television. Colorblind casting (or blind casting) is the process of hiring actors of color to play (mostly minor) roles that could be played by actors of any race, and to play characters of a minority race or ethnicity other than their own if they look similar to members of that race or ethnicity. Warner examines both the process and the results of colorblind casting. She argues persuasively that blind casting is well intentioned, but that the results – more actors of color onscreen, but playing normative roles (written for whites) and unintended racial stereotypes – are actually detrimental rather than a progressive way to increase both the quantity and the quality of racially diverse representations.

Warner uses a variety of research methods to investigate the process of blind casting, and she ends with a comparative analysis of colorblind cast and race-conscious cast television dramas. She combines field research results (from observations of casting sessions and from personal interviews with Hollywood guild representatives and casting executives) with the insights and concerns of critical race and whiteness theorists and media scholars (such as Gary Peller, Stuart Hall, Richard Dyer, Herman Gray, and Sasha Torres). She also examines social media postings (by fans and casting directors), and she analyses the colorblind cast dramas *Grey’s Anatomy* (ABC 2005-) and *The Vampire Diaries* (CW 2009-2016), and the alternative color- and race-conscious dramas *Homicide: Life on the Street* (NBC 1993-1999) and *The Wire* (HBO 2002-2008).

The Preface and Introduction explain how colorblind casting aligns with and promotes the equally detrimental cultural politics behind the notion of a colorblind society. Warner’s Preface notes how colorblind casting matches the way she, as a black woman, is expected to blend into America’s supposed colorblind society and become invisible, even though, like actors of color, she ‘can never be invisible or completely blend in’ (xii) because what is labelled normal in a supposed colorblind society is actually white both ‘on television and in the “real world”’ (xiii).

The Introduction explains how character roles that are ostensibly ‘race neutral’, ‘normative’ and ‘universal’, and can thus seemingly be played by actors of any race, are actually ‘synonymous with white mainstream values’ and ‘displace the racial and ethnic cultural specificity of the actors portraying them’ (2). Warner finds that white values underlying a supposedly race-neutral, colorblind society, in the words of Gary Peller, do not ‘threaten white privilege’, but do mandate that everyone must ‘attempt to succeed on the same terms as whites rather than overturning white definitions of success’ regardless of their privileged or disadvantaged status, and propose that the cure for white prejudice is for people of color to become as much like whites as possible (5). Warner’s ‘idea of racial progress’ does not match the colorblind norm of people of color blending into a white society designed for whites, and does not mean having more people of color on film and television screens acting white. Instead, she defines racial progress in terms of a ‘more authentic depiction of America’, with ‘characters of color [who are as] multidimensional and culturally specific’ as the actors who play them (6). Instead of colorblind casting, Warner would like to see ‘culturally-specific casting’ (27) that recognises white cultural norms as white and highlights the many cultural differences among people of color instead of neutralising them into normative white roles.

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Chapter One begins with the recognition that television ‘has the daily power to reinforce attitudes or reshape them’ (31) and that colorblind ‘casting functions as a mode of cultural production that shapes and maintains racial hierarchies’ by assuming white is the American norm into which everyone can and wants to fit (32). This chapter examines who and what are responsible for the widespread practice of colorblind casting. Hiring power, Warner finds, is in the hand of casting directors, but television producers and film directors make the final decisions (39), and scriptwriters are accountable for the roles they create (50). Most decision makers believe blind casting is an easy way to reflect American diversity, without having to discuss race and with no need to care whether or not the actor is the same race and ethnicity as the character. Warner notes that colorblind casting answers to media watchdog groups and benefits guilds and actors of color, to the extent that they have prioritised gainful employment for actors of color; that it benefits television networks, to the extent that they can use colorblind casting to include more actors of color in order to avoid protests and boycotts; and that it benefits white actors, who remain centre stage, and white audiences, who like seeing themselves centre stage, and on whom network television advertising still depends. Warner also reveals the substantial disadvantages inherent in colorblind casting: it does nothing to promote knowledge about America’s multicultural diversity, it confuses the American public and even casting directors regarding who actually belongs to what race and ethnicity and what cultural values they bring to America, and it erases the cultural identities of people of color.

Recent and current primetime scripted television dramas get individual attention in the next three chapters, beginning with Grey’s Anatomy, as case study examples of how colorblind-cast dramas differ from race-conscious alternatives. Warner credits Grey’s Anatomy’s black female showrunner Shonda Rhimes for creating a blind-cast television drama that includes a multitude of racial minority characters in an integrated work place, and for treating white characters and characters of color equally regarding screen time and social and occupational status (67). She also criticises Rhimes for completely ignoring racial issues in favour of depicting supposedly race-neutral issues of family dynamics, hospital emergencies, and individual ambitions and personality quirks; for depicting interracial romances that never acknowledge racial differences (69); and for relying on her characters’ tacit assimilation to white normality to depict their ‘racial transcendence’ (84). In blaming Rhimes for failing to ‘depict the world as it actually is’ in favour of depicting racial difference as visible color differences only, Warner finds that Grey’s Anatomy ‘provides audiences and networks the opportunity to feel diverse while maintaining white as the standard that characters of color must adopt if they desire to remain successful’ (87, 88).

In her chapter on Julie Plec and Kevin Williamson’s The Vampire Diaries, Warner focuses on how the blind-cast race change of a lead character, from white (in the original book series) to black, resulted in what fans criticised as racial discrimination against the show’s only woman of color (97). This, and this character’s repeated slippage into racial stereotypes, Warner offers as examples of some of the possible pitfalls when a role ‘written for a normatively white character ... becomes racially and historically loaded once an actor of color takes the role’ (110).

Warner’s chapter on ‘Alternatives to Colorblind Casting’ examines both Homicide: Life on the Streets and The Wire (created by white showrunners Barry Levinson and Tom Fontana, and David Simon respectively) as race-conscious alternatives to the colorblind ‘arbiters of whiteness’ by providing ‘culturally diverse characterizations of minorities’ (134). Warner notes, for example, that conversations between the racially diverse Baltimore police department detectives in Homicide are often about racial issues, including colorism (142) and how they
understand the legacy of slavery differently (143-4). And in *The Wire*, which also ‘includes people of color in lead and supporting’ roles (144), depictions reveal how ‘race shapes the experiences of each person as well as their positions, institutionally and socially’ (146). In these television dramas, Warner concludes, minority characters are written as minority characters and then cast with actors ‘whose experiences both racially and culturally enrich the characterizations’, in direct contrast to the ‘prototypical normatively white characterizations written for all characters, regardless of race’ in colorblind cast dramas (146-7). These race-conscious dramas are, to Warner, examples of rare yet essential alternatives from an industry that is increasingly embracing a post-racial ideology that sustains white hegemony.

**Carole Gerster**

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Edward King, *Science Fiction and Digital Technologies in Argentine and Brazilian Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan 2013)

Edward King’s *Science Fiction and Digital Technologies in Argentine and Brazilian Culture* joins the ever-growing tide of English language Science Fiction Studies focusing on Latin American publications. (Within the Spanish speaking world and internationally Science Fiction Studies has for the past few decades established itself as a relevant field of academic inquiry through numerous symposiums, journals and publishing houses specialising in both Science Fiction proper and studies of the genre). *Science Fiction and Digital Technologies in Argentine and Brazilian Culture* is an ambitious book that engages with, theorises and makes visible the changing political and ideological landscapes of Brazil and Argentina under neoliberalism. King’s book achieves this by engaging with the science fiction literature produced in those countries since the zero point of their respective dictatorships and highlights how that very brutal shift toward the neoliberal social model is reflected and challenged in works from this genre. The book is comprised of an introduction, six chapters that analyse a series of texts (novels, a trilogy of novels and in the final chapter, a graphic-novel series) and a conclusion.

*Science Fiction and Digital Technologies in Argentine and Brazilian Culture* opens with a strong introductory chapter which discusses the prevalence of technological imagery (specifically implants and transmitters) in recent cultural texts from both Argentina and Brazil, before stating King’s main thesis: that due to the dictatorial experience and the imposition of neoliberalism from above, both Argentina and Brazil have been the ground zero of the global shift from the ‘Disciplinary Society’ (Foucault) of the traditional nation state of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to the ‘Society of Control’ (Deleuze) of the era of globalisation. King further proposes that the Science Fiction produced in these societies plays out and makes apparent many of the social anxieties and changes in subjectivity engendered during this transition. For King, Argentina and Brazil’s Science Fiction corpus must be read in this post-dictatorial context, as through its critical (parodic, ex-centric) use of classic genre tropes, it challenges new and old attitudes and conceptions about race, class, gender, memory, the state and national identity in Brazil and Argentina. In this way, King introduces the book’s underlying conceptual framework as one that engages with the interfaces of philosophy and cultural theory, developing in particular the concept of ‘affect’ as discussed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, whilst simultaneously contextualising this critical framework by way of a discussion of the recent history of Brazil and Argentina. King also situates contemporary Argentine and Brazilian science fiction in a historical context, mentioning the Latin American classics of the genre, as well as discussing the key texts of the science fiction canon from the perspective of the present day Latin American reader. (King mentions in particular the work of William Burroughs, Philip K. Dick, Thomas Pynchon and William Gibson as key influences for the science fiction being produced in Latin America, especially in the context of post-dictatorial countries like Argentina and Brazil).

Where the book’s introduction produces a convincing and original argument in a transversal approach (cultural theory, genre studies, history of literature), the following chapters of the book set out to test these ideas against King’s secondary thesis, that the Science Fiction produced in Brazil and Argentina makes possible a mapping of the breakdown of the social subject as the subject’s experience in society is reconfigured from that of operating within the confines of a ‘Disciplinary Society’ (a pre-globalisation nation-state) to engaging with and enacting the values and symbols of the present-day ‘Society of Control’.

The first chapter, ‘Espírito Digital in Cyberfiction from Brazil’, critically engages with representations of disembodiment in Brazilian science fiction (specifically in Tupinipunk works by Alfredo Sirkis and Fausto Fawcett, *Santa Clara Poltergeist and Silicone XXI*) by juxtaposing the popularity of *Espírito (Spiritism)* in nineteenth-century Brazil, against the cultural values made possible by late twentieth- and twenty-first-century technologies in Brazil through the novel *Santa Clara Poltergeist*. In the first case, King proposes that *espiritista* disembodiment provides an escape valve for nineteenth century anxieties with regard to the hegemony of the positivist ideology as the discourse of the nation-state, whereas in the second case, disembodiment through technological means presents the reader with the chance to confront head-on the ‘affective dynamics that drive high tech consumer culture’ (62), best represented by the parodic use of the *cyberpunk* genre trope of body transcendence. In King’s reading of *Santa Clara Poltergeist* and *Silicone XXI*, the use of this trope remains ambiguous: it at the same time celebrates and problematizes the values of late-capitalism.

The second chapter ‘Race and the Digital Body’ continues with the analysis of the novels of Sirkis and Fawcett, this time focusing on how *Santa Clara Poltergeist*, *Silicone XXI* and *Básico Instinto* call into question racialized ideas of national identity established during the 19th century through the Science Fiction tropes of *otherness* and through representations of race as modulated by the possibilities of the *digital body* as part of a global image culture delineated through flows of affect. For King, the texts analysed enable a digital-parodic return/reading of the 19th century romantic myths of the nation states of Argentina and Brazil and in such a way they ‘highlight the fact that there is a continuity between the exclusions that were constitutive of the national social body […] and the flexible body of the global market’ (205).

The third chapter ‘Cruz Diablo: Cyberspace as Frontier’ frames the novel *Cruz Diablo* in the context of the return to the myth of the romantic imagination with regard to its portrayal of cyberspace as frontier and simultaneously explores the adoption of neoliberal ideology in Latin America as a form of neo-coloniality, whilst also foregrounding the possibility for modulation, that is, for ‘unprogrammed and potentially progressive side effects’ (124).

The fourth chapter ‘Distributed agency in Marcelo Cohen’s Casa de Ottro’ explores, through King’s reading of the novel in question, representations of Cyberspace as both a map of ‘how power functions in neoliberalism as well as a blueprint for how to begin to negotiate it’ (King, 152).

The fifth chapter and sixth chapters, ‘Memory and Affective Technologies in the Argentine Comic Book Series *Cybersix*’ and ‘Prosthetic Memory and the Disruption of the Affective Control in the Graphic Fiction of Lourenço Mutarelli’, explore ideas about the construction and representation of memory in graphic novels, highlighting especially the disruptive possibilities of the genre as a response to the ‘affect-saturated image world’ (178) that is the ‘emerging paradigm of power of the neoliberal era’ (202).

King’s conclusion is brief and reiterates the rhizomic concepts explored in the previous chapters through textual analysis, reiterating the creative act in Argentina and Brazilian Science Fiction as a subversive attempt to use genre tropes, or ‘the potential of the market’ (207), as an attempt to ‘free the positive potential of capitalism – the capacity for life to create ever-new connections and potentials – from its regressive or archaic tendencies to reduce those connections to one axiomatic of production’ (207) and in this way reject and make problematic the ‘narrative of technological progress and development’ (207) that is the myth of neoliberalism.

King’s *Science Fiction and Digital Technologies in Argentine and Brazilian Culture* is an important book that shines an interesting light on hitherto unexplored elements of now classic texts of Latin American fiction and a key reading for researchers interested in the contestatory, critical
nature of Latin American science fiction and in exploring how this body of work interacts with critical theory and questions the hegemonic values of contemporary Latin America.

Israel Holas Allimant
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Space and Place in Children’s Literature, 1789 to the Present, edited by Maria Sachiko Cecire, Hannah Field, Kavita Mudan Finn and Malini Roy (Routledge, 2015)

Children’s literature in its early days was never written solely for children. Myths and legends were aimed at a mixed audience of adults and children; often these stories were instructional and pious. The father of children’s literature, John Newbery, was the first to prove the economical returns of the genre, that it was a sustainable industry and could generate commercial success. By the later part of the eighteenth century, children’s literature expanded rapidly. A whole series of factors could have influenced the rapid growth: a growing middle class, new innovations in book productions or new ways of looking at childhood.

However, one does not get to see this aspect of children’s literary history in this book. The book is a collection of articles which came out of a conference on ‘place and space in children’s literature’ held at the University of Oxford in 2009. This explains why the focus of the book remains that – analysing and examining the meanings of space and place in children’s literature. The book is divided into four parts, each part consists of two to three articles on various sub-topics: The Spaces between Children and Adults; Real-World Places; Traversing the Imaginary and Book Space. It is a rich collection written by scholars and specialists of children’s literature not only by those who live in the United Kingdom but also those who live in Europe, South Africa and the United States. With contributions from writers of diverse backgrounds, the book has successfully examined texts across periods, genres and national traditions which makes the book inclusive, offering various perspectives on space and place. It is pointed out in the Introduction how, for the past 300 years, children’s literature has been written for children who were predominantly white, middle-class and heterosexual (5). The book offers multiple, and often postcolonial perspectives, bringing to the centre questions on who is the child, and what is the relationship between the social and physical place of children and adult power. Peter Hunt in his article ‘Unstable Metaphors: Symbolic Spaces and Specific Places’ asserts that storytelling is about power and that there is a need to strike a balanced power between the adult writer and the child reader which is rare to achieve (23).

Aneesh Barai in her article ‘Speaking the Space between Mother and Child: Sylvia Plath, Julia Kristeva and the Place of Children’s Literature’ explores Kristeva’s theory on mother-child relations and her semiotic reading of Plath’s work which focuses on studying the relation between poetic language and maternity. The article convinces us that a feminist reading of children’s literature would offer us a better understanding of maternity and Plath has successfully used physical spaces in the home to connect to the idea of motherhood from a domestic setting (52).

Part two of the book looks at issues surrounding using real-world places and the impact real space and place might have on child readers. Francesca Orestano’s ‘The Neapolitan Gouache of a Strong-minded English Lady: “The Little Merchants” by Maria Edgeworth’ focuses on the use of a long literary tradition which allows writers to use places they have never visited as the settings of their stories. Edgeworth did this in her story ‘The Little Merchants: A Tale’ in which Naples and its renowned environs are used as a background landscape to the story (taken from picturesque guide books). Realistic situations are used to assert moral issues and it is clear that Edgeworth is not very concerned with description or aesthetic objects but would resort to that old-fashioned way of telling a story: to instruct and assert on the idea of reward and punishment as an important pedagogical element in educating a child (58). Orestano’s mix of children of various nationalities (the child...
protagonist is Italian who meets a few English characters) is seen as an effort to teach notions of geography, geology, archaeology and economics (if not capitalism) as asserted by Wilkes:

we are shown how young people must apply themselves to the tasks of the new industries if they and their families are to thrive in the new economy, and just as importantly, if they are to develop and to hold on to their moral character. (72)

Renata Morresi’s ‘Borders, Pachangas, and Chicano/a Children’s Picture Books’ takes us to a different level of interculturalism in that it highlights issues of identity, self-awareness, representation, and access to literary and social integration as well as language use and other forms of cross-cultural encounters. This article discusses the distorted history of Chicano/a Children’s Literature in which the Chicano/a child is often portrayed as backward and ill-bred. The 1974 Bilingual Education Act was a turning point for Chicano/a children as Chicano/a history was revisited and reinterpreted. As history is reinterpreted, stories which celebrate Chicano/a hybrid identity and culture trigger a sense of self-awareness to specifically Chicano/a children. Morresi cites Azade Seyhan as saying,

Multiple migrations end in the loss of our homes, possessions, and memorabilia. When the smoke clears, we are faced with charred pieces of identification, shards of language, burned tongue, and cultural fragments. However, from the site of this fire, the phoenix of a transnational, bi- and multilingual literature has arisen. (87)

Parts three and four explore what imagination in the form of space and place in children’s literature can do to a child. Citing Benedict Anderson’s concept of imagined communities, Maria Sachiko Cecire’s article on ‘English Exploration and Textual Travel in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader’ highlights how C.S. Lewis as the author of The Voyage of the Dawn Treader used mediaeval elements, the legacy of early modern explorations and nineteenth- to early twentieth-century imperialist adventure narratives to shape ideas of national and cultural identity in the English child (112-13). Such an employment in children’s fantasy literature marks a new approach in striking a balance between educating both children and adults about the idea of English identity and nationhood.

The whole idea to instruct and delight continues to pervade the remaining chapters of the book and Philip Pullman’s ‘Epilogue: Inside, Outside, Elsewhere’ sums up children’s literature’s past, present and future, outlining the joy and threats of children’s literature specifically in the digital age with regard to interpretations of texts and pictures one would encounter in children’s literature. He explains the importance of understanding the concept of the ‘borderland’ which will help a child (and adult) achieve a new way of looking at things. There is some magic in the borderland which keeps attracting readers to read and reread, says Pullman (219).

Space and Place in Children’s Literature, 1789 to the Present makes an important referral source for those researching or writing on Children’s Literature.

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Book reviews: Space and Place in Children’s Literature, 1789 to the Present edited by Maria Sachiko Cecire, Hannah Field, Kavita Mudan Finn and Malini Roy. Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf. Transnational Literature Vol. 9 no. 1, November 2016.

In *Toward an Urban Cultural Studies* (part of Palgrave Macmillan’s Hispanic Urban Studies series), Benjamin Fraser delineates a relatively new field of interdisciplinary inquiry: urban cultural studies. Fraser does this by demonstrating a model for merging the fields of urban studies and cultural studies through a reading of Henri Lefebvre’s theoretical framework. Through Lefebvre’s work, which Fraser argues ‘yields a loosely organized but cohesive framework for understanding urban culture’ (1), this text seeks to illustrate a method for scholars to engage in urban cultural studies. Deeply rooted in a complex understanding of multiple fields of inquiry, the text strives to resolve potential conflicts within interdisciplinary studies. The introduction to the text re-examines the longstanding cultural studies debate between Charles Percy Snow and F.R. Leavis before concluding that Leavis’s ‘global attack on the notion of isolated cultures’ (9) aligns closely with Lefebvre’s rejection of specialised fields of knowledge and his assertion of a singular culture. However, Fraser asserts, ‘Lefebvre’s work suggests that this one culture that envelops all others is, significantly, an urban culture’ (11).

Fraser’s detailed and nuanced readings of Lefebvre’s entire oeuvre, consisting of various theoretical subjects over several decades, delineates Lefebvre’s often neglected importance as a cultural critic. *Toward an Urban Cultural Studies* is composed of two parts. Part I: Theoretical Ground consists of three chapters that seek to provide a roadmap for an understanding of this new field of ‘urban cultural studies’. Part II: Textual Variations, building upon the framework established in part one, consists of four chapters of readings that exemplify the urban cultural studies approach. These chapters contain interdisciplinary readings of literature (Chapter 4), film (Chapter 5), music (Chapter 6), and digital spaces (Chapter 7). While these chapters are all exemplary of the type of interdisciplinary scholarship that Fraser advocates through Lefebvre, the fourth chapter is probably of greatest interest to scholars of transnational literature.

Part I of Fraser’s text outlines urban cultural studies as a burgeoning field. Fraser notes in Chapter One that his book, ‘is indeed a first of sorts – in that it constitutes an attempt to begin a more overt, consciously scholarly discussion of the opportunities urban studies offers to unite the humanities and social sciences through discussion of the urban problematic’ (26) and that drawing from Lefebvre’s work provides a perfect model for this type of inquiry. Essentially, Fraser’s reading of Lefebvre’s work contains within it the embryo for an urban cultural studies approach through Lefebvre’s insistence on totality and his examination of works of art and cultural products. The second chapter deals largely with what Fraser sees as Lefebvre’s revision of the Marxist concept of alienation and its usefulness for an urban cultural studies method. Lefebvre saw that, ‘Marxian thought needed to be reformulated in order to become more closely attuned to the spatial character of contemporary capitalism and to the pernicious “colonization of everyday life” that was so essential to understanding postwar urban society’ (46). This spatial character meant that Lefebvre’s particular version of alienation differed slightly from Marx’s. For Lefebvre, alienation permeated everyday life, and his writings illustrated ‘the modern triumph of the city as exchange-value over the use-value of urban spaces’ (48). Fraser claims that Lefebvre’s work seeks to reclaim lived space from its concealment by the alienating effects of conceptualized space, urbanism, the ‘colonization of everyday life’, and forms of knowledge in which static, fragmentary, and specialized/compartmentalized views have obfuscated an apprehension of movement and process. (51)

Book reviews: *Toward an Urban Cultural Studies: Henri Lefebvre and the Humanities* by Benjamin Fraser.

Adam R. McKee.

*Transnational Literature* Vol. 9 no. 1, November 2016.

Furthermore, Fraser argues that ‘the task of the urban cultural studies critic is thus to venture across and outside of the boundary of the individual work of art to grapple at once with the realities of urbanization and its alienating effects’ (66). The third chapter examines the role of the work of art in Lefebvre’s thinking and the difference between Lefebvre and more traditional Marxist views of art. Fraser explains that, ‘The advantage of Lefebvre’s Marxian theory of art is that it notably reasserts the powerful potential of art while in effect dissolving the border between aesthetic matters and contemporary urban life more broadly considered’ (70). For Lefebvre, the work of art can be disalienating. Throughout this chapter Fraser details the differentiation in Lefebvre’s work between the product and the work (which mirrors the distinction between exchange value and use value) through the artist’s ‘creative capacity’.

Part II of the text moves towards investigation of particular genres and specific examples of cultural products. Chapter Four, the chapter of most interest to the scholar of literature, examines the concept of ‘urban dominant’, derived from Russian Formalist Roman Jakobson notion of the dominant, and the parallels between the ‘urban dominant’ and Lefebvre’s theorisation of everyday life. Fraser discusses Lefebvre’s affinity for James Joyce’s Ulysses for its depiction of the everyday and, while this chapter doesn’t directly discuss many novels, Fraser outlines what the examination of literature through an urban cultural studies method may look like and he extends the discussion of possible analysis to various world cities. He writes that,

much may come (much has already come) of the reconciliation of specific cities that are, to use Lefebvre’s wording, ‘enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about’ in literature with their extraliterary referents (e.g., Madrid, Paris, Berlin, Beijing, Buenos Aires, etc.). (116)

Fraser continues his chapter by explaining what an urban cultural studies method of literary analysis would look like through the lens of Lefebvre’s work.

Throughout the remaining chapters of the text Fraser continues into the interdisciplinary nature of the urban cultural studies method. In Chapter 5, Fraser examines recent scholarship on cinema and geography and performs an urban cultural studies reading of Biutiful by Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu. Chapter 6 focuses on an urban studies method for looking at music, with special attention paid to Lefebvre’s work in Rhythmanalysis, and an analysis of the work of Basque post-punk band Lisabó. The last chapter of the text examines the potential benefit of expanding the urban cultural studies method into the digital world of video games and digital humanities.

Fraser’s text offers a wide-ranging perspective on the development of urban cultural studies as a method. Throughout the text, the challenge of establishing a new field of inquiry is met with detailed and insightful readings of texts (both literary and theoretical) and interdisciplinary fusions that allow the work to be of value to scholars in multiple fields. Indeed, one of the primary goals of the text is an attempt at negotiating disciplinary boundaries. Additionally, throughout the work Fraser examines cultural texts from a variety of nations and urban environments, emphasising the transnational contributions of the text and the potential in the burgeoning field of urban cultural studies.

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Michelle M. Wright, *Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015)

The reality of a persistently and often violently racial(ised) contemporary politics and discourse has illuminated continued global inequalities and injustices, undermining the notion of a post-racial twenty-first century. In academia, the concomitant revival of anti-imperialist and anti-racist theory and pedagogy as a societal transformation imperative has precipitated widespread renewed interest and scholarship in institutions of Higher Learning in that discipline broadly defined as Black/ blackness studies. Efforts herein to retrieve and reposition in the global imagination the quantitative substance and value of blackness are necessary. But the inverse temptation for a counter politics premised on a nativist, Afrocentric or Pan-Africanist approach – on progress narratives based on the ‘return’ to an idealised, originary past – risks fomenting a heteronormative ideology that does not account for the qualitatively multiple constituents and dimensions of this racially-identified and historically-connected collective.

The call, then, in Michelle Wright’s *Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology* for new ‘definitions of Blackness that do not exclude, isolate, or stigmatize’ (5) is a bold, urgent, and necessary injunction for more representative and inclusive philosophies of blackness. Noting the ‘increasing proliferation of diverse Black communities of individuals whose histories and current statuses as “hyphenated” Black identities across the globe’ (5) defy definitive categorisation, Wright’s thesis disrupts the typically accepted ways in which black people (are said to) inhabit and know the world by offering a provocatively refreshing, revisionary approach to traditional, canonical studies of blackness across the diaspora.

Observing that most discourses on blackness in the United States and in the Caribbean are located in the history of the Middle Passage, linking black cultural practices and expressions, politics and social sensibilities historically to the ‘experience of slavery in the Americas and the struggle to achieve full human suffrage in the West’ (7), Wright accedes the quantitative functional relevance in global postwar moments of this formative causal Middle Passage epistemology which delineates black shared experience and progress through ‘a direct connection to the etiology that first defines and necessarily frames that collective’ (73). But Wright finds inaccurate and inadequate this epistemology’s workings within and through the parameters of an established and predictable linear spacetime; informed by (mis)translations in the humanities of classical physics’ Newtonian quantum theory, this epistemology deploys a methodical, sanitised linear progress narrative that elides the diversity, intricacy and mutability of blackness.

*Physics of Blackness* argues convincingly for a reframing of the black epistemological narrative to acknowledge ‘Epiphenomenal time’, a combined constructivist and phenomenological reading of blackness that operates within a spacetime which does not preclude in the subjective process any and all causal relations but articulates one of the current moment, the “now” through which the past, present, and future are always interpreted” (4). That is, contrary to traditionally prescriptive and restrictive depictions of blackness, Wright defines blackness as ‘the intersection of constructs that locate the Black collective in history and in the specific moment in which Blackness is being imagined – the “now” through which all imaginings of Blackness will be mediated’ (14). This spatiotemporal reconfiguration of being
black in space and time as a fundamentally existential and experiential phenomenon thus advocates a context-responsive appreciation of blackness predicated qualitatively on ‘when and where it is being imagined, defined, and performed’ (3).

The danger of ‘qualitative collapse’, the collapse ‘of meaningful, layered, rich, and nuanced interpellations’ (142) of blackness that occurs in linear spacetime interpretations is revealed in what is typically engendered: vertically aligned and hierarchically realised paradigms that maintain a gendered, heteropatriarchal status quo and risk perpetuating intraracial exclusions. In a reading of W.E B. Du Bois’s The Souls of Black Folk, Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s The Signifying Monkey and Paul Gilroy’s The Black Atlantic, chapter one of Physics of Blackness illuminates the masculine, androcentric character of established black (diasporic) Middle Passage philosophies. Chapter two extends to the diaspora an interrogation of the Middle Passage epistemology by foregrounding the ‘problem of return’ in literature and criticism for blacks outside of Africa. Focusing on James Baldwin’s collection of essays, Notes of a Native Son, chapter three explores the at times flawed and limited intersectional multidimensionality of blackness realised through the cosmopolitan encounter. Entitled ‘Axes of Asymmetry’, chapter four reveals how the quantitative richness of a post-World War (II) epistemology is consistently thwarted by moments of qualitative superficiality that denies its varied geographical and demographic breadth.

Maintaining that the only way to produce a definition of blackness that is ‘wholly inclusive and nonheirarchical’ (14) is through an appreciation of the horizontally interpellative and intersectional dimensionalities that preclude the perpetuation of exclusionary hierarchies of blackness, Physics of Blackness attempts to avert the ‘qualitative collapse’ inherent in linear spacetime interpretations. In this regard, Wright’s thesis simultaneously and necessarily provides instructive realignments and feminist (re)readings of ‘history’. From the nineteenth-century narrative of Mary Seacole, the speculative fiction of Octavia Butler and the transatlantic and transnational perspective of Ama Ata Aidoo, to the important critical essays of Hortense Spillers and Saidiya Hartman for example, Wright revisits and revisions traditional narratives and philosophies of blackness to specifically include historically marginalised and intricate contributions and voices of women across the black diaspora.

Physics of Blackness is evidently influenced by Stuart Hall’s ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’,¹ but revivifies this seminal essay in its configuration of the physics or mechanics of ethnicity through Epiphenominal (re)interpretations that denote ‘the full multiplicity of the dimensionalities’ of blackness created in the moment (49). Committed to underscoring the profound globality of blackness, ‘its location in so many spacetimes across the world and historical eras’ (114), Wright provides a model for delineating blackness across the diaspora that locates and corrects common exclusionary narratives and pedagogy. Its appeal to philosophical, literary, cultural and diasporic studies is apparent; but while contributing significantly to, and grounded in, the humanities, Physics of Blackness is not restricted to it. Its redeployment of analytical categories informs an innovative, interdisciplinary approach that necessarily

reinvigorates and enhances generally academic and societally transformative pursuits for future-oriented, inclusive and nonhierarchical understandings of not just black, but all, racial(ised) ontologies.

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Global transformation imperatives have witnessed a renaissance within academia of anti-imperialist and anti-racist, postcolonial theory and pedagogy. Positioned at the point of the ‘unsatisfied transformation in time and space’ and motivated by the ‘re-formation’ of the academic appellative ‘World Literature’ (xii), Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination, edited by Stephanos Stephanides and Stavros Karayanni, is a timely contribution to postcolonial studies. Specifically addressing the tensions inherent in the meeting or combination of vernacular worlds and cosmopolitan imaginations, this body of scholarly and affective essays questions: how literature and art can ‘creatively and theoretically challenge and unsettle notions of a “commonwealth” postcolonial literature,’ the implication, and effective mediation by postcolonial discourse, of a geopolitical and geo-poetic ‘vernacular’ and ‘cosmopolitan’, as well as the ‘forces and agencies that affect and constrain the production, circulation, cathexis, and reception of cultural products marked ‘indigenous’ and or/global’ (xi).

Drawing on established postcolonial scholarship put forward by the likes of Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Sheldon Pollock, Walter Mignolo, and Bill Ashcroft et al, Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination reinvigorates and expands the traditional in its ambitious pursuit of a ‘new poetics of the imaginary and the imagined, seeing them as social facts, as political and ethical ways of renegotiating the tensions between incorporation and dispersion’ (xii) within postcolonial ‘world culture’. Comprising eminent scholars from locales as diverse as Australia, Canada, Africa, India and Europe, and emanating from disciplines within the humanities as varied as art, literary and cultural studies, this collection offers an expansive, deterritorialis ed approach to postcolonial scholarship through its emphasis on geo-cultural specificities that (attempt to) achieve translational worldwide perspectives.

The inefficacy of postcolonial discourse to mediate between vernacular and cosmopolitan languages and geographical/geo-cultural environments is highlighted in Elsie Cloete’s ‘There’s a Meat Down There: An Essay on English and the Environment in Africa.’ Her discussion of students’ varied, culturally-specific interpretations of an ancient engraving depicting an encounter between members of the colonial Dutch East India Company (VOC) and natives of the Cape of Good Hope, interrogates the ‘potency of English as a pedagogical eco-language’ (21) and concludes that, in marginalizing South African indigenous, vernacular knowledges of the natural environment and wild life, English can be recognised as a ‘potentially contaminant meaning system’ (21). Felicity Wood’s Marxist reading of contemporary oral accounts in the Eastern Cape, of a (feminised) South African supernatural presence, the mamlambo, suggests the prevalence of a ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ (61) in her revelation of the ways in which indigenous beliefs and practices have become interconnected with Western consumer capitalism. In the reconfiguration of this mystical presence into a wealth-giving spirit, Wood argues that the mamlambo exemplifies how indigenous traditions can be redesigned by contemporary global dynamics and vice versa.

Indigenous Indian and Papua New Guinea literatures are the focus of Debashree Dattaray, Padmini Mongia, and Paul Sharrad’s concerns with the marginalisation, cultural survival and reconfiguration of native literatures. In a self-reflexive thesis entitled, ‘Travelling Knowledges’, Dattaray establishes epistemic connections between the indigenous literatures of north-east India.
and Canada. Mongia’s specific examination of the prevalence, success and significance in India of popular pulp fiction written in English for Indians who ‘speak English without being completely at home in the language’ (113), complicates general understandings of the implicit tension between vernacular worlds and cosmopolitan imaginaries in its suggestion of the translational possibilities that derive from within geo-cultural particularities. Sharrad pursues further and expands this theme in his investigation of the distinctly vernacular, localised imaginations of Papua New Guinea (minority) fiction, a writing emerging out of engagement with, and working oppositionally to, dominant postcolonial theory and discourse.

This commitment to disturbing an ‘over-easy cosmopolitan globality’ (142), finds reinforcement and further complication in Diana Wood Conroy’s and Russell McDougall’s studies of differently imagined and articulated natives of Australia. In ‘Vernacular Patterns in Flux,’ Conroy’s reflection of her personal experience of colonisation and change in the Tiwi Aboriginal community of northern Australia, traces the indigenous and insular, yet experimental, patterns of Tiwi printed cloth artists as indicative of an emergent cosmopolitan consciousness. In ‘Indigenous Exotic: Cosmopolitan Dingoes and Brumbies,’ McDougall makes a compelling case for a redemptive posthuman perspective in his study of two of Australia’s famous animal species – the non-indigenous wild dog, the dingo, and the native, heritage wild horse, the brumby. Seeking to complicate the concepts of indigeneity and exoticism as part of a national mythological metanarrative or imaginary applicable to both human and non-human species, McDougall attempts here to re-imagine ‘forms of identity not restricted to the human by the species barrier of humanism but nonetheless enabling of what it means to be human’ (187) in the visualisation of a non-hierarchical, shared life.

Continuing the ethical strain of this collection, Victor Ramraj calls for the reinstatement of the individual in postcolonial literary studies. Lamenting the traditional preoccupation with the predominant socio-political and sociocultural aspects of imperial-colonial concerns therein, Ramraj’s comparative reading of language and perception in the works of two Indo-Caribbean writers maintains the need for a focus on the individuality of postcolonial writers in order to highlight the ‘centrality of the individual and the personal on the postcolonial (sub)consciousness’ (167), and to demonstrate the postcolonial figure as ‘more than a postcolonial configuration’ (170). Paul Stewart’s comparative postcolonial reading of canonical authors, Samuel Beckett and J.M. Coetzee, similarly argues that their deep engagement with historical and local determinants informs the paradoxical tension of postcolonial authorship in which the postcolonial author struggles to avoid re-establishing the very structures, techniques and terms of power under critique. This ethical conundrum presented by and in postcolonial scholarship is addressed in Geoffrey V. Davis’s ‘Doing the Right Thing’, a self-reflexive comparative case study of literary and cultural projects conducted in India and Zimbabwe, the successes of which illustrate how literary studies and social and cultural activism could be profitably reconciled to achieve global equality and inclusiveness.

While one of the editorial goals of creating a ‘magical island of layered transculturation’ (xii) appears both elusive and illusive, a collective focus in the essays presented on globally translational and translatable geo-cultural specificities grounds Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination in the possible. The book’s aim to underscore the anxious but ‘intriguing, unpredictable, and productive tension between subjectivity, indigeneity, and postcoloniality’ (xxii) is reinforced not just in the diverse academic and personal, activist engagements put forward in this collection of essays; its context-responsive and culturally inclusive, interrogative, approach to the inter-
relationality of vernacular worlds and cosmopolitan imagination makes *Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination* a refreshing and worthwhile read for those interested in the reformation of postcolonial scholarship and perspectives and, indeed, of ‘world culture’.

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David Theo Goldberg and Susan Searls Giroux, *Sites of Race* (Polity Press, 2014)

David Theo Goldberg has produced a number of ground-breaking, widely-cited works in his career, *The Racial State* (2002) and *The Threat of Race* (2009) being two of the more influential monographs within an expansive corpus. Both texts have produced critical interventions in the field of critical race theory – the former articulating how race is inscribed in the very formation of the modern state, the latter tracing the ways in which the increasing neoliberalisation of political economies and socialities has simultaneously intensified and depoliticised ongoing racial exclusions and oppressions. In placing *Sites of Race* within Goldberg’s oeuvre, it could, in a sense, be considered as an entry-level summation of a number of the key ideas and concepts developed across these two books, and in the rest of Goldberg’s work. Significant theoretical concepts like racial neoliberalism, the racial state, political theologies of race, ‘buried, alive’ racisms, and postracialism figure strongly throughout.

In keeping with Goldberg’s obvious impulse toward publishing his work in innovative, accessible formats that go beyond academic convention (see, for example, his online digital project *Blue Velvet: Re-Dressing New Orleans in Katrina’s wake*), *Sites of Race* presents the aforementioned key ideas and concepts in the format of a dialogue, melding together a number of conversations between Goldberg and literary/critical theorist Susan Searls Giroux between 2006 and 2011. The dialogical format adds much to the book; not only does it make the text more accessible by inviting the reader into a conversation rather than a monologue or interview, it enables Giroux to cue, interject on, challenge and add to Goldberg’s thoughts in a manner befitting a conversation between the two colleagues (and friends).

The conversations between Goldberg and Giroux are curated to fit neatly into themed chapters, which are further broken up into two five-chapter sections. The first five chapters primarily address questions of theory. The first chapter (‘Race to modernity’) sees Goldberg explaining how the imposition of raced hierarchies and exclusions persist within liberal modernity, despite a nominal commitment within to ‘idealised principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity … as it increasingly insists upon the moral irrelevance of race’ (27). To address this paradox within liberal modernity, Goldberg advances a conceptual reorientation in the second chapter (‘Global racialities’) which he calls ‘racial regionalisation’ – a move away from nation-centric comparativism to a process of mapping the ‘complex of racial arrangements and racist expression’ in their ‘interactive global reach’ (40). Via dialogue between Derrida’s auto-immunitary logic¹ and his own logic of self-strangulation, Goldberg illustrates how racial logics of ‘inside and belonging, contrasted with outside and lack’ not only structure raced hierarchies within borders, but also necessarily across them (46).

The third chapter (‘Modernity’s civic religion’) skitters off into hitherto unchartered territory – that of the interlacing of race and ‘modernity’s progressive self-secularisation’ (49). In this chapter, Goldberg argues that race has ‘increasingly configured that which the theological had served to do in political and sociological terms under earlier regimes of conception, order, and arrangement’ (49). This racial configuration assumes the status of an ordained, infallible order, as the ‘strain of non-godly origin comes to underpin assertions of inherent [racial] inferiority’ (51). The fourth chapter (‘Racial states’) explains how these racial


configurations have been imbricated in the formation of the modern racial state. Goldberg argues, using the absence of the state in Omi and Winant’s (2014) work on racial formations as a cue, that race is not epiphenomenal to the formation of the modern state. Instead, he argues that race is a ‘structuring condition’ of the state; that the ‘technologies of population classification, coordination and management’ that have characterised state formation in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries are and always have been irrevocably ‘racially configured’ (69-70).

This emphasis on the constitutive role race plays in state formation and reproduction is perhaps the first of the two core theoretical concerns of the book. The second concern is related to the first: that of the impacts of neoliberal reform on the contemporary racial state. Against the common misconception that the neoliberal project is out to diminish the role of the state, Goldberg asserts that the functionalities and priorities of the state have instead been shifted. In the context of the contemporary United States, he emphasises two key examples of this: the attack on the caretaker/welfare functions of the state, and the intensification of its securitising and repressive mechanisms:

The attack on the state … is seen as an attack on the state servicing black folk, as the largest employer of people of colour, as making possible affirmative action, as enabling ‘welfare queens’, as not being tough on crime or illegal immigration. (76)

Along with these shifts, the individualising drive of neoliberal sensibility attacks the very explicability of race – how can race be ‘structured by social arrangement, by predefined state possibilities and impossibilities’ if it is a matter of ‘personal preferences, as a habit of the heart, as choices individuals make’? (80).

This work on the racial state and racial neoliberalism segues into the fifth chapter (‘Fearing Foucault’) which includes a lengthy meditation on the influence of Michel Foucault on the development of both concepts, along with the influence of Foucault on other influential race critical theorists like Stuart Hall and Ann Stoler. Some typically forthright responses to what Goldberg perceives as mischaracterisations of his own work and Foucault’s by Heiner, and Kyriakides and Torres are included for good measure.3

Even for a conversational, dialogical text, the sheer nuance and depth of Goldberg’s theory can at times make for dense reading. The second five chapters make a welcome move into purposefully applying these theoretical insights to current issues in American racial politics. Chapter six (‘The raciologics of militarising society’) sees Goldberg forensically unveiling the racial implications of how the deregulation of economic and financial flows mandated by neoliberalism has been entangled with the increased application of logics of militarised efficiency to social life. In the seventh chapter (‘Migrating racisms’), Goldberg traces how race is put to work in shaping migratory flows from South to North, along with the management and moulding of the resulting heterogeneity through multiculturalism in developed societies. Chapter eight (‘Civic lessons’) foregrounds the rollback of civil rights commitments alongside the neoliberalisation of the American state, with particular focus on the attacks on voting rights, affirmative action, and the expanding rates of black incarceration. In chapter nine (‘Racial (ir)relevance’), Goldberg articulates with clarity his conceptualisation of

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‘postracialism’, a condition which involves an ongoing attempt to engage in an ‘erasure of difference and social division predicated on race’, whilst simultaneously reaching for ‘equalising sameness as the baseline for addressing issues of social justice’ (171). Using the horrifyingly scandalous example of Trayvon Martin’s racially-motivated murder at the hands of George Zimmerman, Goldberg outlines a series of mechanisms through which postracialism operates. The tenth and last chapter (‘Reiteracing Obama’) sees Goldberg deconstructing the various ways in which the political phenomenon of Obama ‘represents a range of continuities and shifts in American racial life’ (186).

There are two gaps that one could perhaps discern within this book. The first concerns the relative lack of attention given to the ways in which racial neoliberalism facilitates the ongoing suppression of Indigenous sovereignties in settler-colonies like the U.S., and, of course, Australia and Canada. Relatedly, the second is the book’s strong geographical focus on American racial politics (save for an illuminating discussion about racial neoliberalism and formal apartheid in Goldberg’s country of origin, South Africa [73]). These concerns, however, arguably fall outside the scope of the book, and thus must serve as prompts for further research. Indeed, for Goldberg, the primary concern in this work is to articulate together, in an accessible format, the key concepts and ideas with which race critical scholars might articulate the ‘buried, alive’ racisms which operate across different global sites. This much is clear in his concluding remarks:

How do we live together interactively, justly, without race while negotiating worlds produced and stricken by its changing terms and conditions? And how do we negotiate the existing terms of race critically, from differentiated positions of power and privilege structured historically and contemporarily by race, when its terms and effects of articulation have been rendered invisible, buried but alive? (208)

In Sites of Race, Goldberg has provided race-critical scholars across the world with some richly generative, incisive theoretical tools. As Nisha Kapoor (2013) has already done in the context of racial neoliberalism and counter-terrorism policy in the United Kingdom, it is up to scholars in the antipodes and beyond to take up these tools and do the work of excavating the ways in which race still structures the very terms on which the axes of privilege/disprivilege, inclusion/exclusion operate.

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Spatiality and Symbolic Expression: On the Links between Place and Culture edited by Bill Richardson (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

A growing number of studies acknowledge the interpretative potential of spatial models for the understanding of diverse cultural phenomena. Published as part of Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies, a book series edited by Robert T. Tally Jr., the volume reflects the increasing global interest in spatiality and the immense expanse of spatial approach within the humanities. According to its editor, Bill Richardson, the volume examines ‘how spatial realities inform symbolic expression and how a variety of forms of symbolic expression and cultural production rely on those spatial realities to achieve their ends’ (2). The essays seek to extend recent developments in the field of spatio-cultural studies and apply new conceptual approaches to a variety of cultural forms. This theoretically dense collection works at ‘the intersection of two conceptual “axes”, the abstract/concrete axis and the individual/collective axis’ (3). Richardson connects the multiple lines of interrelationship between the studies into a conceptual schema with four zones of human spatial experience: 1. Abstract-Individual, which is ‘philosophical in its orientation’ (8) (chapters 2, 3); 2. Concrete-Individual, ‘focused on the psychological dimension of spatial expression’ (8, emphasis in original) (chapters 4, 5); 3. Abstract-Collective, based on the key notion of plasticity, understood as ‘the plastic qualities of the imagined world and the plastic qualities of the work itself’ (11, emphasis in original); and 4. Concrete-Collective, focused on the notion of power (14, emphasis in original) (chapters 8, 9).

The eight specific studies assembled around the idea of four zones of human spatiality are framed by two more general essays: Felix Ó Murchadha’s study and Miles Kennedy’s study (chapter 1 and chapter 10, respectively). Ó Murchadha’s opening essay offers an overview of the multifaceted relationship between space and place. He reads Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, among others, in an attempt to illustrate a ‘shift from the understanding of space as a transcendental and geometric structure of experience to an existential and political account of place’ (38). The last part of his essay, ‘Exiles in Space,’ in which he focuses on the works of two contemporary philosophers, Giorgio Agamben and Étienne Balibar, may be of particular interest to postcolonial literary scholars. In it, Ó Murchadha argues that the communal space that binds us together, ‘appears fractured in late (or post) modernity’ and that the experience of ‘the refugee in exile’ is essential for the understanding of this phenomenon (34).

In Chapter 2, Bill Richardson draws upon the idea of ‘the novel as a space imagined by the reader’ (49) and suggests that the exercise of ‘imaginative appropriation of an invented space’ in the process of exploring that space is ‘always an individual and an abstract one’ (42). He reflects on the interaction between the literary text and our own sense of the spatial world in some key works by the Juan Rulfo and Jorge Luis Borges and unravels the multiple meanings generated in the course of this interaction. In their contribution to the collection, Christiane Schönfeld and Ulf Strohmayer explore the ‘deployment of “bridges”’ in different cultural contexts (61). They examine the effects of ‘spatialized language’ and argue for a ‘process-oriented mode of thinking’ (61). Finally, they use the bridge metaphor to propose ‘an openly spatialized, progressive pedagogy’ in transcultural contexts (77).
Lillis Ó Laoire claims that the enactment of music and dance turns space into place, ‘renews bonds of kinship and affection,’ and minimises conflict in small communities (88). To illustrate his argument, he examines two Gaelic songs, ‘It’s a pity I’m not in Ireland’ and ‘The Three-Sailed Boats,’ that deal with concepts such as belonging, emplacement, and displacement, and evidence the importance of native place. For Paul Carter, the question of translatability is central to the identification of the mechanisms that converge on the emergence of symbolic representation in the context of Dawson’s *Australian Aborigines* (1881). He views the book as a symbolic representation ‘not of a people or a place but of the discursive situation itself’ (110).

Paolo Bartoloni discusses authors such as Maurice Blanchot, Michel Foucault, and Édouard Glissant and focuses on ‘the movements and the spaces of language, and its ability to morph, change, and adapt’ (130). He points out the need to think of language and the place we inhabit within it as mobile and dynamic. Taking as a starting point Heidegger’s ‘language is the house of being,’ Bartoloni modulates the reference concept into the concept of ‘the house of language’ to give form to this idea of mobility. The key question that Karen Le Rossignol’s essay poses is whether a virtual village operating as a spatial entity ‘can provide strategies, through narratives, for a community to problem-solve with the aim of increasing its well-being’ (155). She analyses a research project design of a virtual village and in particular the relation between the spatial narratives and the actual place. For her, it is the ‘plasticity’ of the digital storytelling that allows for its integration into the ‘actual narrative and cultural life of the community’ (155).

Conn Holohan’s essay begins with a quote by Elizabeth Bronfen, in which she uses the term ‘symbolic fiction’, interpreting ‘home’ as a fictive rather than a real place. Holohan argues that in many cinematic narratives home is represented as a space under threat from external forces and that by exploring the qualities ascribed to it we may understand the anxieties generated by ‘our desire for spatial belonging’ (178). In his analysis of Ursula Meier’s film *Home* (2008), he addresses ‘the tension between our emotional commitment to the home-space and the necessary repressions that such commitment entails’ (178). Catherine Emerson further develops the idea of culture as a socially produced space. In her analysis of places such as the street corner in Brussels where the Manneken Pis statue is located or the inside of a moving coach, she makes a similar argument to Holohan’s ‘imaginative investment in home’ (182). Emerson investigates how the way in which we discover real places ‘creates abstract places’ and then invests them with meaning (191).

As mentioned above, the eight studies, inscribed in four spatio-cultural zones, are framed by two more general contributions, following the direction of mapping from abstract to concrete. Miles Kennedy’s closing essay focuses on Heidegger and his conception of ‘poetical dwelling’. He reads Tom Paulin’s poetry collection, *The Invasion Handbook* (2002), as ‘a counter-point to the deeply problematic Heideggerian tropes’ (210).

The collection attempts to put into perspective a wider reflection on the productive capacity of spatio-cultural research and the expanding interest in conceptual experimentation. Richardson’s four-zone oriented theoretical schema indicates his awareness of ‘the fact that spatial concerns are as varied as human concerns in general’ (235) and allows for a more nuanced response to these concerns. The volume is a rich resource of fresh understandings of spatiality and the aesthetic dimensions of its symbolic expression in culture. Its great strength

is that it emerges as a dynamic site that stimulates the inclusion of multiple connections between space and human experience and generates interdisciplinary dialogues between scholars in the humanities. This book will hold interest not only for scholars concerned with spatial studies, but also to all those interested in the cultural forms discussed in the essays.

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