Book Reviews

328 Fletcher, Angus. *Comic Democracies: From Ancient Athens to the American Republic.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2016. Pp. 224.

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Modern democracy is a complex and contested idea. We can view it as a system of government that loosely describes most of the institutions of politics in the West, or we can view it as a way of life defined by the pursuit of freedom and equality. Both views may, in our moment, be under assault by various forms of demagoguery. We, in the West, seem to agree that whatever our view of democracy happens to be, its origins are in ancient Athens, and that the idea itself may need some revitalization in order to continue to meet the demands of our ever-changing sociopolitical landscape. Angus Fletcher's *Comic Democracies* is both a look back at the historical origins of thinking about democracy and a set of suggestions for how we might best cultivate and improve our current democratic practices. This book begins with the contention that the origin of democracy is tied to the origin of comedy and that these ties require us to ask why the two developed together and what contemporary uses might be made of the connection between the two. To begin to develop a narrative that will answer those two questions, Fletcher makes a careful distinction between ancient and modern democracy that informs the argument of the book. He claims that modern democracy is "more principled" in its attempts to actively promote human rights and freedoms, while ancient democracy is "more pragmatic" in its attempts to alleviate hunger, poverty, and misery (3). In order, therefore, to promote modern democracy, we can borrow some of the ancient pragmatic techniques embodied in comedy to address some of the issues of our current predicament.

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To develop the distinction between ancient and modern democracy, Fletcher describes a "liberal-electoral model" that originates in Enlightenment philosophy yet seems incapable of effectively responding to the current setbacks that have plagued so-called "free-market liberal democracy" (4). In response to the limitations of this liberal model, Fletcher argues that old comedies can "actively support" the growth of democracy through examples of the ways in which "pluralist, problem-based, and empirical approaches" (8) to decision making and public life have succeeded. Ancient democracy was empirical in that it was inductive and used a "feedback-driven logic," pragmatic in that it was driven by the search for practical responses to material problems, and pluralist in that it actively changed course and engaged multiple alternatives whenever situations demanded. The characteristics of pluralism, pragmatism, and empiricism were the underlying values of comedy as well. Fletcher covers a catalogue of authors that contain an "eclectic variety of comic practices for encouraging flexible, cooperative, and inclusive societies. These practices thus provided an effective (if unintentional) resource for cultivating *demokratia*" (13) and a "crudely empirical way of measuring" (13) the success of comedy to promote democracy.

The first chapter offers a thoughtful reading of Aristophanes and the support that his trilogy offered to "the less perfect and more pragmatic dynamics of Athenian populism" (26). One of the ways in which *Frogs*, for example, helped the development of ancient democracy was by acknowledging and demonstrating the ways in which the citizens of Athens and the gods themselves were "ludicrous" and thus these plays showed us that we ought to "recognize that every authority has its limits" (26). Fletcher goes on to claim that "[t]he best that could be said about any political course was that […] it answered the crises of the times, making it wise to hold onto alternatives that might prove their worth tomorrow" (28). The plays also equate Athenian civic problems with hunger, indigestion, and sexual pain, which meant that Aristophanes focused the attention of his audience on material concerns. The whole movement of the plays, therefore, was to turn people's attention to the practical logic of worldly problem solving. From the perspective of this trilogy, democracy is not the search for the universal ideal of freedom, but is instead the "discovery that diversity is an effective resource for solving civic concerns" (28)—freedom emerges organically from bodies, not principles. Fletcher promotes this view of democracy in the rest of the book by reading comic authors for their portrayals of successful developments of democracy. Laughter is always oriented toward pragmatic, material problems and is often able to promote the values of freedom and equality that are central to democratic ways of life.

In the subsequent chapters, Fletcher reads a series of different comic authors in order to trace the details of five different comic techniques that work toward the same ends as Aristophanes's trilogy. First, he describes the slave trick of *impetuoso* in Machiavelli's *La Mandragola* and Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. *Impetuoso* is a comic technique that shows how boldness and audacity can aid in the redistribution of power. Second, *imitatio*, an ancient technique Shakespeare copied in the comic

portions of his *Henry IV* plays, was a way of using imitation to produce laughter that fostered the empowerment of audiences. Third, *indolentia*, which was used in Epicurus's materialist ethics and Thomas Jefferson's preamble to the Declaration, emphasizes the comedic practice of forgetfulness in order to promote populism. Fourth, quixotic governance, which Miguel de Cervantes and Henry Fielding both derived from ancient comedy, highlights the ways in which eccentricity helped manage the growth of popular power. Fifth, self-revision, which was used as early as Homer's *Iliad* and appropriated by Frederick Douglass, allows for a form of inclusive laughter. All of these practices mobilize a rhetorical tool in order to address a public concern, and all five practices build on one another to increase their collective democratic gains. We disrupt the concentration of political authority through *impetuoso*. We learn to rule ourselves through *imitation*. We spread power more equally through indolence. We stop the majority from taking advantage of the minority through eccentric governance. We maintain the authority of popular governance without becoming overly reactionary through the inclusive laughter made possible by self-revision.

The strength of Fletcher's book lies in his hermeneutic practices and his encyclopedic knowledge of examples of comedy. There are rich and provocative readings of classical texts throughout the book. However, if there is one limitation to this book (a book fully attentive to comedy and the bodily, material considerations that give rise to laughter), it's that it just isn't funny at all. The writing itself feels disembodied and distant; the treatment of laughter and the comedic feels entirely intellectual and rational. The author clearly leans into the Enlightenment liberal project that he so candidly and cleverly critiques in the opening pages. This review is no better: it is a dry and distant treatment of what ought to be a wet and visceral subject. That may be a result of the conditions and expectations of academia, but one might start to wonder if the same limitations of modern liberal democracy plague intellectual work as well. Can we grow our own critical insights through attention to the same pragmatic, pluralist, and empirical values and style that concerned the comedic writers treated in this book? If we did, what might happen to our intellectual projects and our writing practices? How am I to use any of the five comedic techniques that Fletcher describes? I am not Jon Stewart, so I cannot end a short review with a clever line intended to evoke laughter and promote egalitarian democratic values. Perhaps that is why comedy was so closely linked to tragedy in the ancient world.

Lindvall, Terry. *God Mocks: A History of Religious Satire from the Hebrew Prophets to Stephen Colbert*. New York: New York UP, 2015. Pp. xi+347.

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An ambitious study of a long and rich comic tradition, Terry Lindvall's *God Mocks: A History of Religious Satire from the Hebrew Prophets to Stephen Colbert* is an informative, yet problematic, introduction to religious satire in Western culture. Lindvall begins his broad survey by discussing the Jewish and Greco-Roman satire of the ancient world, and his first two chapters are "Circumcised Satirists" and "Caesar Salad Satirists." From there, he covers many forms and genres of English, American, and continental satire on spiritual matters, grouping satirists by nationality and geographic region. The idea of the satirist as prophet is a theme Lindvall introduces and develops in *God Mocks*, a title that intimates the divine origins of satire; he recognizes the foundations of contemporary satire in the moral joking of the Hebrew prophets, who practiced the "restorative art of exposing folly and sin and summoning one's audience to be corrected and cleansed" (18). Sensitive to changes in satiric tone and style, he notes the shifting aims of the satirist, who at different points in history has alternately privileged moral instruction or entertainment. Tracking this genre's evolution, Lindvall posits that each age has its own particular vice to which satirists respond, but observes continuities within this tradition, namely the extent to which religious satire was directed at Church corruption.

Laughter, a crucial by-product of satire, is a central issue in *God Mocks*. Lindvall touches on a number of important theories of laughter (e.g. Hobbes, Freud, etc.) and acknowledges the transhistorical importance of satirical laughter within a community of believers; he cites historically specific debates about comedy's place in Christianity, referencing Augustine's skepticism about laughter and Isaac Barrow's sermon on the uses and abuses of humour. *God Mocks* raises—and tries to answer—perennial questions about the nature of satire: Should it target individuals or general social ills? How does it differ from mockery? Should it deploy shame? Also, does it actually work? Lindvall presents various definitions of "true satire," his own and others, including a twentieth-century editor of *Punch*, who avers that "the business of a humorous or satirical magazine must be to ridicule the age in which we live, and particularly those set in authority over us" (253). Lindvall excels in showing links between satiric themes and works across time, connecting *Monty Python's Life of Brian* with the "Rabelaisian spirit of carnival" (256) and discussing the enduring image of satire as a "glass" or mirror of vice and folly in several chapters. He regularly references other scholarship on western humour and, perhaps most helpfully, brings up important concepts and terms as various writers and their works are considered. For instance, in his chapter on medieval satire, Lindvall explains the comic celebration of the Feast of Fools (*festa stultorum*) and describes the "art of flyting," which he pithily describes as "a sort of medieval jousting with insults" (66).

Lindvall positions the major authors of each chapter on a "quad of satire," the quadrants being humour, rage, ridicule, and moral purpose. Though some academics might balk at the imprecision of this evaluative exercise, readers new to this material will undoubtedly find these graphs helpful. Indeed, throughout *God Mocks* Lindvall does a fine job of distinguishing between the satiric modes of different historical periods, citing, for example, the emphasis on purposeful critique in Reformation satire, while noting its continuities with Medieval satire, namely its coarseness. His precis of François Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* in Chapter Four, "Medieval Jesters and Roosters," is an excellent introduction to this sprawling, bawdy masterpiece. Clearly comfortable in the early modern period, Lindvall engages with the humanist satire of Thomas More and Erasmus and the scatological writings of Luther, who, like Swift after him, equated sin with shit. *God Mocks* generally complies with accepted metanarratives about historical periods (e.g. the wildness of the Restoration), although sometimes to the detriment of complexity. Nonetheless, Lindvall's registers the emphasis on hypocrisy so fundamental to the satire of eighteenth-century writers like Henry Fielding, who, as Lindvall astutely observes, "saw the satirist as a physician, as the one who brought health to the social body, even if there might be some pain in treating the disease" (119). Chapter 6, "Augustan Poets and Pundits," benefits from careful summaries of prominent works of religious satire such as John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* and Jonathan Swift's *Tale of a Tub*. He also spends considerable time on Alexander Pope's verses.

Despite its engaging treatment of Molière, *God Mocks* gives short shrift to the dramatic tradition; however, as Misty G. Anderson shows in *Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Enthusiasm, Belief, and the Borders of the Self* (2012), the stage was an important forum for religious satire. Lindvall only briefly mentions the religious plays performed during the feast of Corpus Christi, a missed opportunity for discussing vernacular humour and the "festival" aesthetic of medieval comedy. Lindvall is perceptive about the individuality of specific satiric practitioners, such as Mark Twain's distaste for "sham" (203) and G.K. Chesterton's "celebration of divine frivolity" (238), but has a tendency to foreground and praise the moralistic satirists operating from a place of faith rather than skepticism. Such writers fare best in *God Mocks*, which regularly sermonizes about the functions of satire where scholarly analysis would be more desirable.

Problematically, women are largely absent from Lindvall's chronicle of religious satire, though he does include an account in Chapter Five of Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron*, a version of Bocaccio's *Decameron* that satirizes lascivious clergymen. Other chapters ignore women altogether, implicitly gendering the role of religious commentator. As Lindvall makes room for multiple satirists, major and minor, in each chapter, it would not be amiss to include female writers like Margaret Cavendish, whose seventeenth-century utopian fiction *The Blazing World* imagines an Empress imposing her own religion on her subjects. He might have also alluded to Jane Austen, as *God Mocks* includes other authors for whom religious satire was

not central to their comic agenda. Enough scholarly ink has been spilled on Austen's satire of Church of England clergy, a subject treated at length in Michael Giffin's *Jane Austen and Religion: Salvation and Society in Georgian England* (2002), to warrant this novelist's inclusion in *God Mocks*. Female satirists are perhaps most conspicuously absent in a chapter on contemporary religious satire. Other gaps in *God Mocks* are evident, however. The section on "Victorian Wit" is thin, missing that crucial figure from the period, Anthony Trollope, who satirizes low-church clergymen in *The Warden* (1855).

The style of *God Mocks* will not be to every reader's taste. Lindvall occasionally overdoes his waggish delight in jokes, puns, and colloquial language. In his treatment of *Piers Plowman*, the author declares that Mead, a character in Langland's spiritual allegory, "doesn't care whom she screws, as long as she keeps her influence" (60). Elsewhere, he uses the disputed term "whore" without quotation marks. Combined with the book's lack of engagement with women satirists, this uncritical parroting of his subjects' casual, old-fashioned misogyny is discomfiting. *God Mocks* also has a tendency towards a subjective assessment of its subjects that feels dated. An effusive section on Stephen Colbert—whom Lindvall situates in the tradition of the "holy fool"—veers a little towards the panegyric, concluding his assessment: "the apotheosis of true satire stumbles forth in a Kierkegaardian persona of Stephen Colbert" (266). Colbert, Lindvall underlines, is a practicing Catholic who teaches Sunday school, a fact the author seems to feel gives greater weight to his ethical humour.

Admittedly, the biographical material Lindvall includes alongside his summaries of important satirical works is, for the most part, both interesting and relevant. Many of the thinkers treated in this book are believers whose faith fuels their opposition to individuals and institutions that do not live up to the creed they espouse. In his strong discussion of Evelyn Waugh, Lindvall references the novelist's conversion to Roman Catholicism, a crucial moment in his spiritual and cultural self-positioning. Unsurprising in light of Lindvall's prior published work on C.S. Lewis, his treatment of *The Screwtape Letters* is likewise robust. His superficial and rather dismissive treatment of Oscar Wilde is less successful; Lindvall ends his discussion of Victorian wit with the claim that "Feathers are not part of the arsenal of satiric weapons" (233). Many academic readers would agree that the proclivity to judgement in *God Mocks* seems out of place in modern scholarship.

Despite the wealth of information contained in its pages, from time to time *God Mocks* feels unpolished. Quotations regularly stand alone as sentences or are inadequately contextualized and discussed. For instance, a section on Kierkegaard abruptly ends with a superfluous block quotation about a clown announcing a fire in a theatre. Yet the sheer breadth of Lindvall's study leaves little room for in-depth discussion of such passages. Impressively, the author treats satire from different eras, nationalities, and media. A selection of the artworks discussed in *God Mocks*, many drawn from Yale's extraordinary collection of satiric prints at the Lewis Walpole Library, are reproduced in the book. These fascinating images by William Hogarth,

Thomas Rowlandson, Gustave Doré, and others compliment Lindvall's useful discursive work in charting a history of religious satire to the present day. Despite the challenges presented by the book's vast scope, *God Mocks* is engaging as an intellectually vibrant overview of *divina satira*, or divine satire. Lindvall is a deeply learned author, and generously conveys his vast knowledge of religious writing, producing a book that paints with the broad strokes so valuable to readers in search of a wide, albeit not fully comprehensive, understanding of Christian humour.

Wong, Edlie L. *Racial Reconstruction: Black Inclusion, Chinese Exclusion, and the Fictions of Citizenship*. New York & London: New York UP, 2015. Pp. 304.

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Edlie L. Wong's *Racial Reconstruction: Black Inclusion, Chinese Exclusion, and the Fictions of Citizenship* explores a range of literary texts produced between the 1850s and World War I to show how the processes of racialization of the Chinese diaspora, mainly in the United States, intersected with evolving post-Reconstruction concepts of American citizenship. Wong recovers and examines a variety of largely forgotten literary and journalistic genres about the phenomenon of Chinese immigration to, and presence in, the United States. She threads together the relationships between racializing discourses around African Americans and Chinese residents through an exploration of travel narratives about "coolie" labour in Cuba, journalism exposing white labour's fears in California, apocalyptic Chinese invasion narratives (harbingers of new forms of science fiction), and Chinese and English literary sentimentalism, which protested the treatment of Chinese in the United States and its expanding Pacific empire. Wong's incorporation of transpacific literary forms, including Chinese-language writing, into the corpus of the literature of the United States—which, by extension, would locate American literature in a kind of literature of the Pacific—is one great contribution that this book makes. Employing a highly theorized approach to literary and journalistic texts, Wong's *Racial Reconstruction* contributes an important chapter to the long, vexed, sad, and complex story of race in America, a story that continues to unfold.

Wong demonstrates the roles that norms and assumptions around labour, religion, and family played in the racializing discourses that generated what Wong calls a "dialectical configuration of black inclusion/Chinese exclusion" (3). This "dialectical configuration" structured arguments around the rights of both African Americans and those characterized as Chinese, wherever they were born or raised. She illuminates the wondrous illogic that permitted men viewed as abject virtual slaves (though of course bound by exploitative contracts) to be seen simultaneously as a looming

threat to the very existence of the (white) United States. She suggests how the characterization of African Americans—no longer susceptible to enslavement but still subordinate—inflected the characterization of Chinese residents as fundamentally unassimilable. She shows the absence of Chinese women—because they were legally excluded from the country—being interpreted as a sign of how very different the Chinese in America were in their approaches to familial relations and thus, again, in their assimilability. Wong weaves into the text the way that the supposed "heathenism" of Chinese residents in the United States also set them apart, and she links this religious angle to refusals to accept indigenous people's claims to American citizenship during the same period. I would have been curious to learn more about whether and how characterizations of people of Spanish and Mexican descent in California and the rest of the Southwest also inflected the racialization of Chinese immigrants and their descendants, in the nation as a whole or in the Southwest. Wong's discussion of journalistic depictions of the purported threat to white labour in California suggests that racialization was at least to some extent region-specific, with newspapers and stories—even if they circulated nationally—being interpreted against a regional or local context.

Wong's discussion of literary forms is punctuated by treatment of legal milestones—cases and statutes—which created intolerable, frequently unstable, and even incomprehensible legal situations not only for migrant Chinese workers but for their American-born children. The literary and the legal were mutually constitutive. The contemporary echoes make these stories even harder to read than they would be if they could be comfortably relegated to the bad old days of the distant past. Relying on a solid base of legal historical scholarship, Wong describes the development of the doctrine that the decisions of immigration officers are not reviewable in courts and that Congress (not the president, it should be noted) has plenary power to make laws to defend the nation, even though this power is not among the enumerated powers that the states, through the Constitution, delegated to the federal government. The judgment of the much-lionized Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. in *United States v. Ju Toy* (1905) was pivotal in determining that due process was served through the vesting of unreviewable discretion in immigration officers. A small difficulty I had with the book is that the legal history is not always presented chronologically—for the very good reason that the chronology of the literary genres is the focus—but probably this is only a legal historian's quibble. The larger point is that it is far from heartening to be reminded that the legal and constitutional doctrines being employed so brutally today emerged in the context of excluding vulnerable Chinese immigrants and American-born citizens from the country.

Edlie L. Wong is to be commended for her illuminating and sadly timely contribution to our understanding of the processes of racialization, the way that fiction and journalism contribute to what is "known" about race, and the interaction of law and literature in creating both discriminatory legal regimes and resistance to them.

Nakamura, Miri. *Monstrous Bodies: The Rise of the Uncanny in Modern Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Asia Center, 2015. Pp. 153.

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What are monstrous bodies and what implications do they pose for our understanding of Japanese modernity? Miri Nakamura's *Monstrous Bodies: The Rise of the Uncanny in Modern Japan* sets out to answer these questions in four chapters that expose powerful tensions and anxieties in imperial-era Japan. Her book wades into an already crowded field of scholarship on monsters, ghosts, and the like, including Marilyn Ivy's *Discourses of the Vanishing* (1995), Susan Napier's *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature* (1996), Gerald A. Figal's *Civilization and Monsters* (1999), Nina Cornyetz's *Dangerous Women, Deadly Words* (1999), Michael Foster's *Pandemonium and Parade* (2009), and Mark Driscoll's *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque* (2010). *Monstrous Bodies* is at its best when its author engages in close reading of its five primary literary texts and offers some refreshing insights on the topoi of hygiene, eugenics, and madness in relationship to colonialism. Yet the book at times falls short of expectations in its methodology, the strength of its central thesis, and its selective relationship to existing scholarship.

The book consists of a brief introduction and conclusion bracketing the four chapters. The first chapter reads an allegory of public sanitation campaigns against cholera into Izumi Kyōka's phantasmagoric, modern reinvention of medieval tale literature, "The Holy Man of Mount Kōya" (1900). In keeping with the theme of twins and doppelgängers, the two middle chapters share the common header "colonial doubles" to read hidden contradictions in the imperial imagination, first in Edogawa Rampo's short story "The Twins" (1924), and next in the discourse of schizophrenia in Yumeno Kyūsaku's magnum opus *Dogura Magura* (1935). The final chapter is a comparative look at two identically titled short stories, ostensibly science fiction narratives of artificial reproduction: Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke's "The Artificial Human" (1928) and Takada Giichirō's "The Artificial Human" (1927). With the possible exception of Kyōka, an outlier both in terms of period and canonical status as an author of *belles lettres*, the book mostly treats genre fiction writers closely associated with the popular literary magazine *Shin seinen* (*New Youth*), which ran from 1920 to 1945, then fitfully resumed after the war until 1950.

In the first chapter Nakamura reads epidemiologically into the figure of a Circe-like sorceress living in a remote mountain fastness, who seduces the men who wander into her domain and then transforms them into dumb beasts when she tires of them. She meets her match in the form of an itinerant monk who just barely manages to escape her charms and lives to tell the tale. Namakura sees in the story a confluence of emerging discourses of sanitation and medical sciences overlaying the familiar tropes of purification and exorcism associated with Buddhism. While seeing in the femme fatale even a metaphorical vessel for fears of sexually transmitted disease,

Nakamura provides valuable background on the health campaigns in the rise of the Meiji era's (1868-1912) modern nation-state. On the other hand, where Nakamura claims a direct correlation to discourses of hygiene against cholera, there exists at best circumstantial evidence. This marks a recurrent pattern in her book, in which she mounts varying degrees of historical evidence to reinforce literary interpretations. Unfortunately, missed opportunities abound to situate her work in dialogue with scholarship in the field and accordingly shore up her own claims. In her sole mention of *setsuwa* (tale literature) in the book, Nakamura recalls the dangerous sexuality of the woman reborn as a vengeful giant serpent in the endlessly reimagined Dōjōji tale, as well as tales of supernatural foxes that bewitch men in the guise of beautiful women. Yet it is well established that Kyōka drew upon *setsuwa* for the text's framing technique as well as some of its dominant tropes. While this arguably goes against the grain of conventional attitudes toward the prevailing ethos of "Civilization and Enlightenment," Kyōka's derivation of conversational speech from *rakugo* (popular theatrical storytelling) modulates his supposed resistance to the unified style and transcriptive realism approach of his Meiji-era colleagues. Needless to say, Nakamura does not engage in such debates, preferring to stick to her own interpretation. Yet, in so doing, she simply ignores Cornyetz's earlier and far more rigorously psychoanalytical construal of the femme fatale in "The Holy Man of Mt. Kōya."

The second chapter looks to the most popular Japanese detective and mystery fiction writer of the early twentieth century, Edogawa Rampo (spelled throughout as Ranpo). Akin to the previous chapter, she documents the fascination with eugenics and the heredity of biological twins in turn-of-the-century medicine before shifting to another metaphorical reading, this time of the fraught doubling between Korean colonial subjects and Japanese colonizers. Here, too, she finds a plurality of signifying threads instead of a single master narrative. Nakamura argues that "the story can be read as an allegory of the Great Kantō Earthquake" (68), in whose aftermath thousands of Korean residents of Tokyo baselessly accused of sedition were brutally murdered by mobs and even by policemen. This strikes me as a highly provocative but tenuous claim in need of further support. Ultimately, however, my chief concern with this chapter is not overreach, but focus. If, as she claims, "There is a need to put the triangular structure of Japanese colonialism, consisting of the West, Japan, and Asian colonies, back into the mix" (46), why choose Rampo, as opposed to works that were directly set in the colonies and/or written by colonial writers, such as Kim Saryang's "Tenma" ("Pegasus," 1940) or Ushijima Haruko's "Shuku to iu otoko" ("The Man Called Shuku," 1940)? Although I appreciate Nakamura's attempt to read a pervasive cultural logic of colonial sameness/difference into prewar Japanese modernity, my sense is that Rampo's "The Twins" provides more of a pretext here than a master text upon which to erect that scaffolding.

By far the strongest part of the book, in my estimation, is her discussion of Yumeno's *Dogura Magura*, a modernist experiment that has baffled and stymied

readers since its publication. Nakamura traces aspects of its narrative of a serial killer in the insane asylum back to the ideas of Kure Shūzō, a pioneer in the study of schizophrenia arising out of war trauma. She introduces as well reworking of Kure's theory into "abnormal psychology" by Nakamura Kokyō (no relation to the author), who founded the journal *Hentai shinri* (*Abnormal Psychology*, 1917-22). She provides a wealth of sources for readers who wish to learn more about the history of psychology in Japan, which was also a valuable source of literary inspiration for highbrow and lowbrow writers of the prewar era. Her integration of scholarship from Miriam Silverberg and Friedrich Kittler, as well as a range of perspectives from colonial and film studies, made reading this chapter a richly rewarding experience.

In the fourth chapter, Nakamura departs from the one author, one text basis of the previous chapters to comparatively situate the two works entitled "Jinzō ningen," the preferred Japanese equivalent to Karel Capek's 1920 neologism *robot*. Although Capek's use of the term *robot* to mean a synthetic human being tracks closely to the literal meaning of "artificial human," prewar detective and science fiction authors such as Hirabayashi, Takada, and their contemporary Unno Jūza chose to exploit the ambiguity—or uncanniness—of simultaneous meanings. As in the other chapters, Nakamura delights readers with amply researched supporting texts and documents, only to confound them by ignoring scholarship that inconveniently anticipated her own insights. I include one of my own articles—which in fact cites an earlier version of *Monstrous Bodies*'s third chapter—in that latter category.

Inevitably, the questions that confront the reader, but are never satisfactorily resolved, are what connects these texts to one another and what methodology in fact binds the project as a whole. Nakamura's chapter-by-chapter investigations are at times deeply insightful, and laden with historical and critical backgrounds that enhance her analysis. Yet, it is not clear the extent to which the themes and texts chosen are paradigmatic of a larger discourse of the monstrous and uncanny, much less what that discourse actually represents to Japanese modernity. While Nakamura is on firm ground when she works at the granular level with respect to the five texts and their respective sociohistorical background, she falters when addressing national particularisms to universalistic theories. Her discussion of the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny is a case in point. Nakamura repeatedly invokes Freud's essay "The Uncanny" (1919) in ways that strike this reader as inchoate and misguided. On at least one occasion her apparent willingness to champion the position of Ernst Jentsch over Freud's appears to lead in the direction of endorsing the notion of alternative modernities. She insists in the book's conclusion, "The Japanese uncanny is much closer to Jentsch's definition than to Freud's, for at the heart of it lies the *uncertainty* (cognitive dissonance) that Jentsch emphasized in his theory" (132, emphasis in original). I would offer, by way of comparison, the strategy Stephen Brown adopts in *Tokyo Cyberpunk* (2010). Discussing the role of the uncanny that Hans Bellmer-influenced dolls and automata play in Oshii Mamoru's anime film *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, Brown clarifies, "I am more concerned with discussing the uncanny

as literary and artistic with philosophical implications than I am in the explanatory power of Freudian discourse to account for the psychosexual etiology of the uncanny" (14). In this way, Japan is not implicitly attributed with characteristics radically different from, or lying outside, the rest of the modern world.

Much as *Monstrous Bodies* would have benefitted by following the lead of scholars such as Cornyetz and Brown, so, too, would it have been strengthened with comparative armature from other literary texts and contexts by the same authors or their prominent contemporaries. For instance, some mention of the explicit colonial allegory in Rampo's *Strange Tale of Panorama Island* alongside her treatment of "The Twins" would be useful, as would references to Unno Jūza's numerous robot narratives alongside Hirabayashi's and Takada's. One in fact finds in Nakamura's earlier iteration of the third chapter mention of Unno and the broader coterie of detective fiction-cum-science fiction writers in *Shin seinen*. Still, in "Horror and Machines in Prewar Japan: The Mechanical Uncanny in Yumeno Kyusaku's *Dogura Magura*" (first published in *Science Fiction Studies* in 2002, then reprinted as the first chapter of the book *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams* in 2007), she offers only a slightly different polemic on the uncanny, which is less Japanese than perhaps idiosyncratic to this one author: "Although as many parts of *Dogura Magura* demonstrate, Yumeno was certainly influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis, Yumeno's mechanical uncanny is quite different from the Freudian uncanny. Yumeno's discourse of fear is strongly linked to his own sense of nationalism" (10). A more cautiously crafted statement delimiting her scope such as Brown's would avoid opening the proverbial can of worms.

On a final note, I would like to have seen greater mention of the diversity of translations now fortuitously available to the English-language reader. Nakamura not only omits Anne McKnight's excellent translation of Hirabayashi's story as "The Man-Made Baby" (2013), but even leaves out of the bibliography the *six* book-length translations of Edogawa Rampo published between 2008 and 2012, including a handful of his works noted in passing throughout her book. Whether these absences indicate a lack of awareness or a general disregard for other contributors to the field, it leaves Nakamura's book impoverished as a result.

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Norman, Will. *Transatlantic Aliens: Modernism, Exile, and Culture in Midcentury America*. Hopkins Studies in Modernism, Douglas Mao, Series Editor. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2016. Pp. xii+263.

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Modernist studies and American Studies, remarks Will Norman, "rarely speak to each other" (15). *Transatlantic Aliens* offers at once an origin story for this silence, an inventory for what these fields have to talk about, and a dialectical reading practice capable of mediating between the antithetical interpretive categories that constantly risk dividing the institutional and aesthetic history of modernism from the daily, material reality of postwar American culture. By focusing upon a group of European exiles who arrived in the United States and took on "complex engagement[s] with the emergence of a fully fledged mass culture" (2), Norman unsettles the "persistent misconception by which the United States at midcentury functions as modernism's banal other" (2). These transnational émigrés not only lived through, but indeed embodied, the "disorienting and uncanny juxtapositions" (2) constitutive of the 1940s and 1950s, when "reified categories of nation and cultural hierarchy" (2) were still being constructed. This moment, Norman rightly states, "is one of the most complex and least understood in modern US cultural history" (5) whose "radical instability" meant "it was far from clear what constituted a legitimate aesthetic regime and what didn't, whether an American crime novel could be considered high literature or a *New Yorker* cartoon be considered high art" (5).

Norman's book dwells in the "repeated process of entanglement, improvisation, and compromise" (211) through which his transatlantic aliens navigated such tensions. His reading practice draws upon Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the cultural field, which emphasizes how artists and intellectuals must negotiate competing positions in a market for distinction. And yet, to this reader's relief, Norman does not belabour abstract sociological categories, but rather adopts a biographic narrative method that continuously emphasizes how negotiating the cultural field involves "restricted but necessary choices made by individuals in their lives and work" (11). His book provides a refreshingly grounded look at what it means for intellectuals to grapple with mass culture "in those moments when theory is wrenched from the abstract and returned to the historical grounds of everyday alienated life" (48), a process he simply and aptly calls "coping" (48).

Norman's first chapter introduces "methodological models" for his book in the unlikely pairing of C.L.R. James and Theodor Adorno (16). James's revolutionary optimism about popular media has made him a heroic figure in American and postcolonial studies, while Adorno's abyssal cynicism about the culture industry has left him "sadly reified" as an elitist defender of European modernism (17). Yet Norman demonstrates how these antithetical positions emerged as reciprocal responses to a shared émigré experience of American mass culture. Norman first traces how

James's early writing was informed by a blend of nineteenth-century cultural criticism and sentimental Hollywood movies. Popular art forms such as film and radio, James came to believe, could channel the "violent desires" of the working class "into revolutionary praxis" (28), and eventually create a unified national culture. After introducing Adorno's far more cynical account of the culture industry, Norman turns to *Minima Moralia*. Reading this idiosyncratic, pseudo-self-help book in the tradition of the modernist novel, Norman emphasizes how Adorno's writing renders intellectual alienation in post-war American culture through "the fragility and pathos of its own subjectivity, the resolutely ethical underpinning of its insistence on remaining unhomed in America, and the freight of its estranging style" (48). For all their manifest differences, Norman concludes, James and Adorno "were interested more in criticizing the process by which culture was being stratified in the American 1940s than in the policing of the divisions themselves" (32). In this way, Norman maps the dialectical movement of his own book, which sustains an engagement with mass culture poised between undue optimism and bleak alienation, circumscribing the aesthetic and academic categories that typically install midcentury modernism and postwar American culture as antithetical domains.

Chapter Two continues this project by repairing a perceived breach in the work of visual artist George Grosz, who leapt from the Berlin avant-garde into the "realist, romantic, and kitschy" (55) world of American illustration after moving to the suburban USA in 1933. Calling into question the binaries that inform this narrative—"Europe and America, experimentalism and convention, modernism and popularism, success and failure, resistance and betrayal"—Norman shows how Grosz drew upon American mythology as "a language with which to present the West's crisis of modernity" (51) throughout his entire career. Images of the American frontier, which saturated the print culture of fin-de-siècle Germany, gave a young Grosz the "sense that modern liberty was always shaped by unrestrained self-interest and violent individualism" (54). Moving from Grosz's American-themed drawings from 1915-17, such as *Erinnerung an New York* (*Memory of New York*), to his later role in the under-studied magazine *Americana*, Norman shows how the United States operated not as a "geographical space" in this work but as a consistently "ideological one in which the market dominates every aspect of life" (76).

Chapter Three begins with the "great paradox" of Raymond Chandler's career: "The most famous practitioner of that typically American art form, hardboiled detective fiction, thought of himself as a British exile" (90). Norman positions Chandler as a transnational modernist by showing how his hardboiled fiction was forged by the friction between a youth immersed in England's "cultural and educational tradition, ethical virtue, and refined taste" (91), and a career unfolding in the decadent modernity of Los Angeles. Chandler's early encounters with Shakespearean verse and French aestheticism installed in him a belief in aesthetic autonomy, which "allowed [him] to abstract the aesthetic potential of American language from the social reality of those who used it every day" (97). This sense of linguistic autonomy, imported

from England, helped Chandler forge hardboiled fiction's defining American dialect. But while investing in an "emphatic style" allowed Chandler to achieve a distinct position in the cultural field, it also increasingly came to define the "extravagant, decadent, but empty forms of Los Angeles and its cultural industry" (107). Chandler's ongoing struggle, which Norman traces throughout his mature work, became how to "resist complicity in the same vacuous decadence he critiqued" (105) within the "increasingly claustrophobic generic space" (121) of hardboiled fiction.

Norman returns to the "unlikely couple" model in Chapter Four, which considers Simone de Beauvoir's *America Day by Day* (*L'Amérique au jour le jour*) alongside Nabokov's *Lolita* as "estranged émigré perspective[s] on the classic American road trip" (124). In the late 1940s, the road trip was institutionalized as simultaneously a "ritual of citizenship" and a "potent master narrative for American exceptionalism" (125). Carrying European traumas into this postwar American dream, however, Beauvoir and Nabokov used cross-country journeys to narrate concerns about "aesthetic authenticity" and "the social effects of mass consumption" (125). Beauvoir's under-studied memoir chronicles her struggle to "reconcile the United States' representation of itself in the movies with her subjective view of it as she travels across the country" (129). By abandoning tenuous distinctions between superficial leisure and authentic experience, Beauvoir finds that the road-tripper "paradoxically arrives at a greater understanding of the nation by skimming continually over its surface" (135). Norman's sections on *Lolita* cover more familiar territory, building on his historicist work in *Nabokov and the Texture of Time*. Hotels and cars, those symbols of American freedom, end up becoming authoritarian spaces for Humbert Humbert, tyrannical European father, to control and abuse Dolores Haze. At the same time, Humbert fails to recognize the way justifying his desire for Dolores as a rarified aesthetic relation "reaches such a comfortable accommodation with the ways of seeing and desiring fostered by the culture industry" (144) that constantly surrounds them during their illicit trips.

If Norman's first chapter best outlines his method, his last chapter represents its most sophisticated performance. By tracking Saul Steinberg's career from 1943 to 1958, which ranged from early works featured alongside Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns at MoMa, to a long tenure as a cartoonist for *The New Yorker*, Norman examines how the stratification of postwar American visual art was enacted through modernism's growing orthodoxy in a Cold War cultural field. Norman impressively demonstrates how Steinberg "incorporated the institutionalizing practices of taste formation and performance" (165) into his drawings for *Harper's* and *The New Yorker*, rendering modernist abstraction into topical content, and thereby collapsing the supposed distance between the autonomous form claimed by the New York art world and popular commercial humour. Norman closes this impressive chapter by calling attention to Steinberg's complicity in Cold War institutions, especially his work as a propagandist for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). If Steinberg's wartime drawings for *The New Yorker* "anticipate the Cold War fantasy of a benign US

presence dispersed across the globe" (181), his mural at the Brussels World's Fair in 1958, entitled *The Americans*, finally signals how Steinberg's equivocal art had positioned him to grapple with a central question in the Cold War cultural field: "How to represent a state?" (189). This chapter benefits enormously from the accompanying black and white photographs as well as the elegant set of colour prints at the center of the book.

In his conclusion, "Not to Grin Is a Sin," Norman briefly reconnects his cohort by considering their shared "structure of feeling." After their experience of Europe's disasters in the 1930s, these émigrés assumed a "critique of the cult of happiness in midcentury America" (203). Norman aligns his transatlantic aliens, not with the immediacy and satisfaction of the smile, but with the grin, a performance of internal division, coping with the deception, complicity, and failure that inevitably accompany a modern, alienated intellectual's search for refuge.

Lopez, Lori Kido. *Asian American Media Activism: Fighting for Cultural Citizenship*. New York: New York UP, 2016. Pp. 272.

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Lori Kido Lopez's study of Asian American media activism is a timely, well-researched, intelligent, and lucid book. Lopez's key argument is that "cultural citizenship is connected to media representation" (4) and that Asian American (Americans of Asian descent, as defined by the US census) activists view their fight as a collective endeavour rather than at the level of the individual (5). Though the study is based on an ethnography of activism organizations in Los Angeles, it encompasses a number of websites, and includes actors in the 1960s, the Asian Pacific American Media Coalition's negotiations with television networks, marketing, advertising, and communication groups who fight to recognize Asian Americans as consumers, and popular Asian Americans on *YouTube* and on *Twitter*.

Acknowledging the works of Darrell Hamamoto, Robert Lee, Kent Ono and Vincent Pham, Gina Marchetti, and Celine Parreñas, who have studied the exclusion of Asian Americans in television, films, and popular culture, Lopez notes, "it becomes clear that media invisibility and mistreatment impacts Asian American communities in profound ways. The limited number of representations serves to fix a particular image within the public imagination and restrict possibilities—both aesthetically within the world of imagery and within society, where racism has clearly material consequences" (7). Her caution against the real-world consequences of misrepresentation of a minority group is even more relevant today with a president whose policy decisions are based largely on stereotypes and distortions.

Lopez points out that on TV, changes have begun with *Fresh Off the Boat* and

Mindy Kaling's *The Mindy Project*. In film, she cites the work of Kal Penn and John Cho in *Harold and Kumar* and its sequels, as well as overseas movies such as *Slumdog Millionaire* and *The Life of Pi*. Her study goes beyond television and film, also paying attention to advertising and online media, as images produced by advertising "swirl around us throughout our daily lives, invading our personal space more insistently than any other media" (9). Instead of simply critiquing advertisers, Lopez views Asian American advertising as an "important site where negotiations between consumers and image producers take place, and in which notions of cultural citizenship are produced and engaged" (9). Similarly, *YouTube* has offered a space in which Asian American stories are shared and media activists are making interventions.

Lopez argues that "in order for individuals to feel like their cultural practices are accepted and that people like them are included within the nation, they must see themselves and their specific communities represented within the media. When they are absent, sidelined, or mistreated, there is a real impact on the ability of communities to feel recognized and validated" (13). Media representation is one important aspect that contributes to a feeling of belonging to a country, but there are a number of other factors, such as acceptance of one's religion or food practices, recognition of one's history, freedom to dress the way they want, that also influence one's sense of belonging. Understandably, Lopez's discussion focuses mainly on media, but a more in-depth study could link some of these various factors to media.

The history of Asian American activism, beginning with advocacy for representation in the theatre in the 1970s, shows how difficult it was, and indeed, even now in Hollywood, to fight "yellowface" practices. Lopez describes such work as a "piecemeal endeavor at best" (47), as organizations formed in reaction to a specific image or incident. The attempt to hold broadcast media accountable for minority representations took a setback in the early 1980s as the Federal Communications Commission "removed nearly all its content regulations" and "let the market prevail" (81), which meant little incentive to create and promote minority content. It is not surprising, then, that as late as 1999, the Asian Pacific American Media Coalition was calling attention to the fact that "no regular roles had been given to people of color in the entire new lineup of fall shows on the four top TV networks" (83). The Asian Pacific American report card on TV diversity gave the four top TV networks Cs and Ds for their efforts to include minorities in the first decade of the twenty-first century (86). Similarly, since Asian Americans represent only four percent of the US population, advertisers are reluctant to take on specific Asian American marketing (121).

In recent years, "online media has produced new opportunities for the formation of meaningful networks and communities, both online and offline [....] an entire generation of Asian Americans born digital has matured into a sophisticated collective of videographers in its own right, deploying the tools of digital media to make new interventions into the world of media production and consumption" (141). Lopez's chapter on *YouTube* celebrities looks at the ways the works of Michelle Phan, KevJumba, Nigahiga, Wong Fu Productions, and Clara C intersect with the efforts of

Asian American media activists. She argues that these *YouTube* stars "do more than simply star in popular media content—their own lives become part of their stories" (145). She discusses how these "participatory cultures" provide "opportunities for conversation, skills training and identity development" (149), even though not all the *YouTube*rs self-identify as activists. Lopez concludes that online social media such as *Twitter* can "certainly lead to mobilization and the propagation of messages to a large audience [....] to an immediate response from media producers, but [...] they can lead to the fracturing of Asian American communities and confusion about what kind of impact is truly desired" (215).

Overall, *Asian American Media Activism* is an important contribution to Asian American Studies. It is a strong, informative, thoughtful, and valuable book for scholars in Media, Communications, and Cultural Studies.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Twentieth-Anniversary Edition). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2016. Pp. 195.

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Initially published in 1996, Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* has been reprinted as a twentieth-anniversary edition and remains a remarkable text for reading trauma. This new edition offers Caruth's original publication plus an afterword in which she addresses some of the criticism her treatise on trauma has received over the last two decades. When *Unclaimed Experience* was first published, "trauma studies" was not a formally declared field. In the mid-1990s, research on trauma was pursued in clinical areas such as psychology and neurobiology, and marginally by Holocaust studies. Caruth's text was one of the first to shape this now recognized field, along with the scholarship of Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Geoffrey Hartman, among others. However, in her newly added endnotes, Caruth resists the designation of "trauma studies" and claims the phrasing "has the disadvantage of codifying the term 'trauma' and eliminating some of its surprise and literariness" (174).

Unclaimed Experience offers an extensive framework for reading narratives of traumatic experience through psychoanalytic and literary theory. Caruth's crucial and contemporarily resonant question for the experience of trauma is posed in her introduction: "Is the trauma the encounter with death or the ongoing experience of having survived it?" (7). Caruth approaches this question by analyzing the "double telling," an oscillation between a "crisis of death" and "the correlative crisis of life" (7); or, a confrontation of death and then of survival, which is elucidated by an intersection between the language of literature and psychoanalytic theory.

Exploring the work of European psychoanalysts, philosophers, and filmmakers, Caruth argues these texts "stubbornly persist in bearing witness to some forgotten wound" (5) in the absence of an immediate understanding of the traumatic experience. For this, she interprets explicit references to traumatic experience, but she also traces the recurrent words and key figures of "departure," "falling," "burning," or "awakening." The first chapter reinterprets Sigmund Freud's theory of trauma described in *Moses and Monotheism*; the second chapter demonstrates the mutual narrative of personal catastrophe within Marguerite Duras's and Alain Resnais's film, *Hiroshima mon amour*; the third chapter returns to Freud to discuss the enigma of trauma as both a narrative of destruction and of survival in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and in *Moses and Monotheism*; the fourth chapter examines the resistance to theory that can be provoked by privileging referential reality, illustrated by the figure of the "falling body" found within passages from Paul de Man's essay, "The Resistance to Theory," and within de Man's essays on Bernd Heinrich Wilhelm von Kleist and Immanuel Kant; and, the fifth chapter elucidates Jacques Lacan's reconsideration of trauma through his interpretations of Freud's texts, particularly *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

By primarily reinterpreting Freud's writing on trauma, Caruth illustrates that the language of trauma is literary because it "defies, even as it claims, our understanding" (5). Beyond pathology, Caruth argues that within these passages is "the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (4). Working with Freud's concept of latency, Caruth explains that trauma is a deferred experience that returns to repeatedly haunt the survivor. After a latency period during which traumatic symptoms are not apparent, subjects then engage in an involuntary cycle of repetition, a reliving of the traumatic experience. For Caruth, this involuntary repetition occurs because the traumatic experience was not assimilated by the subject at the inception—the trauma is so unexpected that the subject experiences a rupture in perception. This rupturing experience then belatedly repeats as nightmares or flashbacks. Essentially, Caruth asserts that a crisis is marked not by "a simple knowledge but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our witness" (5). For these enigmatic aspects of trauma, Caruth suggests a rethinking of reference for resituating trauma "in our understanding," through which "*history*" arises where "*immediate understanding* may not" (12; emphasis in original). The main thrust of Caruth's argument is that the impact of trauma compels a response to the subject who demands to be heard across the distances of culture, history, and disparate traumatic experiences (9). This is to claim that trauma is a belated experience that "is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (18-19). For Caruth, history and trauma is never one's own because "history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (25). Experience becomes dispossessed, unclaimed, by the trauma subject and only belatedly perceived in relation to another subject's traumatic history.

Caruth's new afterword addresses misreadings of her work over the last two

decades. In *Trauma: A Genealogy*, Ruth Leys most notably eviscerated Caruth's interpretation of Freud's writing on Tancred from Torquato Tasso's sixteenth-century epic poem, *Gerusalemme liberate*. Caruth's focal task in the afterword is to reaffirm her interpretation of Freud's analysis of Tancred, as she reiterates the nature of trauma's dispossessed experience as "a history thus constituted, multiply and heterogeneously, around the site of a wound" (121). The story of Tancred, which becomes Caruth's parable for traumatic address, dramatizes the possibility of testimony, "the voice that cries out to *another*" (129; emphasis in original). For Caruth, a trauma narrative cannot be limited to an individual as both individual and collective stories are "sever[ed] and [bound] together, in a history that can only be figured as a speaking wound" (121). In 2016, Caruth encourages us to "turn away [from an insistence on individual pathology] in order to consider the larger demands of collective political and historical dynamics" because "traumatic experience can never with certainty be reduced to, or framed within, the boundaries of an individual life" (121). Because trauma destabilizes subjective perception, it demonstrates a "temporality that cannot be limited to, or fully understood from within, the perspective of the individual" (122). Thus, trauma is a "dispossession of experience that binds the psyche and the political and social realms to each other" (123).

Caruth's implication of trauma as a collective, a history "multiply and heterogeneously, around the site of a wound" (121), refutes the individualization of trauma because "the voice of trauma" is the "force of an imperative—transmitted through the emergence of the powerful address" (131), through which "*a command to respond*" intervenes (132; emphasis in original). Implicitly, Caruth draws attention to the plurality of trauma narratives across history and in literature, but she insists on traumatic address and response as collective. However, some will still take umbrage with Caruth's deliberately imprecise referents for trauma and her reading of collective history as a shared history of implicating others' traumas. To read trauma narratives, even in a literary language, as imploring testimony and commanding a response from one who cannot experientially *know* the trauma seems to also require an acknowledgment that narratives gesture toward meaning in the author's act of writing more so than collectively affirming the (un)certainties of traumatic experience. An exemplar moment of Caruth's purposefully ambiguous referential language for trauma, which invites misinterpretation, appears in the penultimate paragraph of the afterword:

> Sometimes a traumatic address comes from our past. Sometimes it comes from pasts we do not know. Sometimes it is ours, and sometimes the voice of another. Sometimes we speak with a voice that precedes us, a voice that is not ours but whose only opening is through the language that cries out from our wounds. And sometimes our language must find its way through the language of others we will never understand. (139)

In vaguely referring to these "sometimes" moments of traumatic addresses, coupled with the possessive, "ours," some scholars, and trauma subjects, would contest Caruth's points that we are "sometimes" writing with the "voice of another"; or

worse, inadvertently appropriating a past, or another's language, that is not ours to take as an "opening" to articulate "our wounds." In voicing "our wounds," it seems obvious that another's traumatic language or history cannot be appropriated as our own. Social, political, and historical contexts define unique aspects of a culture and arguably demarcate the traumas that arise within them, complicating the task of resituating traumatic address across histories and among heterogeneous individuals.

Throughout the text, and especially in her new afterword, Caruth adeptly illuminates the ambiguities that surround explicating and testifying to psychic trauma and the importance of continuing "to tolerate the uncertainties that arise from [reading trauma] […] in the power of its literary resonance, the theory of trauma addresses us […] in a voice we cannot always identify, and in a language, enigmatic and resonant, that we must still learn to hear" (139). Rather than "learn[ing] to hear an "enigmatic" language, the language of trauma, I argue that we have always been capable of reading, thus "listening," to the traumatic representations that have been offered.

The question for exploring enigmatic representations of trauma remains *how* one ethically writes about the traumatic experiences of others, especially as the comprehensive trauma narrative tends to escape the closest witness—the survivor of trauma. In our roles as scholars, it seems crucial to distinguish that we do not "speak with [the] voice that precedes us" (139) in the act of interpretation or response. Even if traumatic experience seems to resist referential language, especially for the trauma subject, the work of literary criticism is to unravel the "not-knowing at the heart of catastrophic experience" (117) that also paradoxically commands one to respond, despite the uncertainties. Caruth impressively delineates the imprecise nature of locating and explicating traumatic experience, and the richness of exploring trauma narratives through a reinterpretation of psychoanalytic and literary theory. And we may join her in this current discourse on trauma since language, research, and literary interpretation denote our means of codifying (even what we do not comprehensively know about) traumatic experience.