

BOOK REVIEWS

- 308** LORENZ, PHILIP. *The Tears of Sovereignty: Perspectives of Power in Renaissance Drama*. New York: Fordham UP, 2013. Pp. 379.

Alejandro García-Reidy, Syracuse University

The Tears of Sovereignty: Perspectives of Power in Renaissance Drama offers a comparative and richly theorized reading of five key plays of the early modern English and Spanish stage: Shakespeare's *Richard II*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Winter's Tale*, Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna*, and Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño*. Founded on a wide range of concepts and methodological approaches from modern thinkers such as Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, or Jacques Derrida, together with notions taken from psychoanalytic theory, Philip Lorenz delves into the complex world of early modern discussions of sovereignty, its intersection with political theology and the process of secularization, and, most importantly, how theater problematized these concepts through the production of a rich net of tropes. As the author states in the introduction to his book, "what *The Tears of Sovereignty* attempts to make visible is a series of co-implications between sovereignty's baroque stagings and its contemporary (both seventeenth- and twenty-first century) theorizations" (19). The five plays chosen as the object of study are therefore situated into a comparative framework that stresses their connection to issues of power and how it is deeply anchored in the problem of representation, as sovereignty is presented as torn and restored in different ways—the "tears" of sovereignty. The ideas of Spanish Jesuit theologian and philosopher Francisco Suárez constantly emerge throughout the five chapters in which this book is divided as a useful and much-needed dialogue with political thought from the early modern

period, clearly one of the strengths of this book.

Chapter 1 focuses on *Richard II* and how it presents sovereignty as a dispersed concept, a “changing condition” (57) that is not located in a single body but is dependent on mediation and mutation. According to Lorenz, the old analogies surrounding the king’s body as representative of sovereignty give way to the possibility of modern fluctuation of power through the importance of the flow of power through spaces and bodies. Chapter 2 closely follows this idea as it centers on *Measure for Measure* and how the presentation of the bodies of power on stage represent the transfer of this same power in order to attempt to restore health to a decaying body politic. According to Lorenz, in these plays sovereignty requires a metaphorical substitution because it is basically nothing and thus needs to constantly be re-presented in order to stay real. Chapter 3 deals with *Fuente Ovejuna* and the way it presents on stage an act of resistance against a certain type of corrupt sovereignty, embodied by the Comendador. Lorenz examines several topics related to power present in his play, from the subversion of conventions embodied by the reference to amazons to the importance of royal pardon and the discourse of love and friendship, all of which lead the author to point out how “*Fuenteovejuna* stages [...] a suspension of power” (149) and its relationship to waiting and the future as central to the concept of democratic sovereignty. Chapter 4 turns to Calderón’s *La vida es sueño* and how the Spanish playwright presents issues of sovereignty in relation to the problem of time, knowledge, the figure of the monster, and allegory, all of which Lorenz sees as leading to “how the presumption of sovereignty is always met with an absence” (203), especially through the figure of Segismundo. Chapter 5 returns to Shakespeare and *The Winter’s Tale*, and how it can be paired with Suárez’s theological text *Misterios de la vida de Cristo* in order to examine the Bard’s use of metaphors, especially in relation to the character of Hermione; this is done to stage sovereignty effects through “psycho-political theology” (236), thus making sovereignty a possibility, as a new type of embodiment. The book ends with an “After-Image” that offers final reflections on the fluid and contemporary representation of sovereignty that these early modern plays put in motion on the stage and through language.

309

The plays chosen by Lorenz for his analysis in *The Tears of Sovereignty* are certainly paradigmatic, both from the perspective of presenting models “of the representation of political-theological sovereignty” (24) on the early modern stage and of their canonical status within their respective traditions. I believe that Lorenz’s approach can benefit from a wider perspective, one that incorporates plays that are closer to the margin of the canon and yet open up new perspectives related to the complex issue of representation of sovereignty on the early modern stage. In this sense, Lorenz would have profited from a closer reading of Melveena McKendrick’s book *Playing the King: Lope de Vega and the Limits of Conformity*, or from consulting Antonio Carreño-Rodríguez’s monograph *Alegorías del poder. Crisis imperial y comedia nueva (1598-1659)* (Tamesis Books, 2009). For example, *El rey por su semejanza*, a play attributed to Lope but most probably penned by another playwright, presents the case

of a shepherd who is physically identical to the king and is asked by the queen to take his place after she kills her husband out of jealousy. The topic of the doppelgänger intersects with a critical confrontation between lineage and *virtus* as basis for the claim of true kingship, and offers a fascinating place from which to expand the issues of sovereignty and analogy that Lorenz analyzes in several sections of his book.

As a Hispanist, I cannot but point out that there are several mistranslations of the Spanish text that can hinder the reader's experience and, most importantly, lead to incorrect interpretations. For example, Lorenz translates the following lines from Lope de Vega's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, "Los casos de la honra son mejores, / porque mueven con fuerza a toda gente, / con ellos las acciones virtuosas, / que la virtud es dondequiera amada," as "The cases of honor are the best, / because they move everyone with / force, [towards] virtuous actions, / since virtue is everywhere loved", thus presenting honor as "the force [...] that moves people towards virtue" (109). However, Victor Dixon's English translation correctly illustrates this passage:

310 "Matters of honour are the best as subjects; / they powerfully move all kinds of folk; / and so do acts of high heroic virtue, / for virtue is admired on every hand;" what Lope is stating in this section of his *Arte nuevo* is that honor and acts of virtue are the best topics to choose from for writing an emotional play. Similarly, when talking about *Fuente Ovejuna*, Lorenz states that Spanish uses the expression "de cabo a cabo—from cover to cover" (137) as a way to describe that a book is read from beginning to end, and thus that Laurencia's line "Jacinta, tu grande agravio, / que sea cabo" (correctly translated by Lorenz as "Jacinta, your great injury will be / our corporal") provides "the added turn, or return, to the play's thematic of reading and power" (137). However, the correct Spanish idiom is "de cabo a rabo," and Laurencia's words cannot be metaphorically seen as related to the topic of reading and power. Finally, in the chapter on *La vida es sueño*, Lorenz understands and translates the word "cuenta" from Clarín's lines "¿no es razón que yo sienta / meterme en el pesar y no en la cuenta?" as "tale," and therefore that the on-stage presentation of this character is based on the fact that he "wants to be included in all of the story, and not merely the suffering part" (184). However, here Clarín is probably complaining that Rosaura has left him out of the number ("cuenta") of those who can actively complain (or those who will have a meal at the inn, an interpretation suggested by Professor Ruano de la Haza). These are some of the most significant examples of certain problematic translations of Spanish texts, which cast a shadow on the way they are read and incorporated into the comparative discourse of analysis.

Finally, although Lorenz clearly states that his interest lies in a series of tropes that appear in the plays, and therefore on their textual and rhetorical aspect, we can never forget that theater is image as well as spoken word. Sovereignty is therefore performed on stage in the Baroque as much as it is verbalized through images, and this performative aspect of theater does not appear in *The Tears of Sovereignty* as much as it should. Lorenz does point to it, for example, when he mentions how the peasants of *Fuente Ovejuna* parade the Comendador's head on a spear in a scene of the third

act of the play, an extremely visual way of showing the dismembering of a certain type of sovereignty at the hands of the village's inhabitants. And yet we later find, in the chapter on *La vida es sueño*, that, according to Lorenz, "by the play's end it is impossible to fully see Segismundo's body because it is in constant motion, changing through the forms of the living skeleton, animated corpse, human monster [...] and, finally into invisibility itself" (197). This is quite a puzzling statement when faced with the fact that, for the audiences of the play, Segismundo is fully visible on stage at the end of the final act, when the Polish prince defeats his father's troops and victoriously takes over the kingdom of Poland. Other elements of the performative nature of the texts analyzed—such as the use of space in *La vida es sueño* to symbolically represent power and repression—would have enriched different ideas proposed by Lorenz.

In spite of these few shortcomings, *The Tears of Sovereignty* as a whole offers a compelling analysis of some critical aspects of sovereignty, representation, and the power of theater as seen through the lenses of modern political theories but in the context of early modern Spain and England. More importantly, this book represents a fine example of how a comparative approach to these theatrical traditions can generate a rich and fascinating dialogue between two early modern *corpora* of texts—and, in this book, twentieth-century theorists—that offer a fascinating array of points of contact, but are not approached in conjunction by critics as often as they should. Students and scholars who are interested in any of the topics covered in *The Tears of Sovereignty* should definitively read it, as they will find a lot to reflect on.

311

FREITAG, FLORIAN. *The Farm Novel in North America: Genre and Nation in the United States, English Canada, and French Canada, 1845-1945*.

Rochester: Camden House, 2013. Pp. 372.

Albert Braz, University of Alberta

Florian Freitag's comparative study of the farm novel in the United States, English-speaking Canada, and Québec between 1845 and 1945 is a very impressive contribution to North American literary culture—excepting Mexico. Freitag makes a compelling case that "the farm novel played an important role in making the farm a symbolic space of the United States, English Canada, and French Canada." More precisely, he argues that rather than "merely portraying agriculture as an economic venture or a way of life—which they also do—farm novels dramatize the relationship between farming and constructing the nation and depict farming as a social practice that has helped to articulate the nation" (5). That is, while the farm novel emphasizes the naturalness of both its location and the lifestyle it promulgates, it is shaped by cultural and political concerns and deeply imbricated in the national project of the given polity to which it belongs.

Although Freitag notes the many similarities among the three literatures that he examines, he contends that each possesses distinctive “national” characteristics. For example, he maintains that most US “farm novels focus on pioneer farmers or settlers and portray farming as a way of realizing the American dream of material and non-material success” (6). Québécois farm novels, in contrast, depict “well-established farmers or farmer dynasties” and reflect “the French Canadian national myth of agriculturalism,” presenting “farming as a way—indeed, the only way—of ensuring the survival of the French Canadian cultural community on the North American continent” (6). At last, like their US counterparts, English-Canadian farm novels generally “concentrate on pioneer farmers and settlers, but here the representation of agriculture is informed by English Canadian ideals of ‘Peace, Order, and good Government’ or ‘Order and Control’” (6).

312 Freitag supports his thesis that the US, English Canadian, and Québécois farm novels “tend to portray specific types of farmers and to project particular national myths or ideologies onto the farm space” (22) by examining a wide variety of texts. After producing a theoretically and historically informed survey of the field, he analyzes the genesis of the genre in such “proto farm novels” (66) as St. John de Crèvecoeur’s “History of Andrew, the Hebridean,” Patrice Lacombe’s *La terre paternelle*, and Susanna Moodie’s *Roughing It in the Bush*. He then explores how naturalism informs the portrayals of farm life in Frank Norris’s *The Octopus*, Albert Laberge’s *La Scouine*, and Frederick Philip Grove’s *Settlers of the Marsh*. In “New World Demeters,” Freitag scrutinizes the role of farm women in Willa Cather’s *O Pioneers!*, Louis Hémon’s *Maria Chapdelaine*, and Martha Ostenso’s *Wild Geese*. In “Rich Harvests,” he investigates whether “materialism is [or is not] an integral part” of farm existence (186) in Joseph Kirkland’s *Zury: The Meanest Man in Spring County*, Claude-Henri Grignon’s *Un homme et son péché*, and Frederick Philip Grove’s *Fruits of the Earth*. Freitag then probes the impact of the Great Depression of the 1930s in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, Félix-Antoine Savard’s *Menaud, maître-draveur*, and Robert J.C. Stead’s *Grain*. Finally, before closing the book with an epilogue about developments in the North American farm novel since the mid-1940s, he assesses such “farm epics” (269-70) as Louis Bromfield’s *The Farm*, Ringuet’s [Philippe Panneton] *Trente arpents*, and Grace Campbell’s *The Higher Hill*.

Not the least significant achievement of *The Farm Novel in North America* is that, despite the sizable number of texts that he examines, Freitag provides close readings of all of them. For instance, upon discussing the characterization of young women in several Québec *romans de la terre*, he contends that “what ultimately matters is not whether the daughter’s choice of a husband complies with her father’s wishes, but rather if in choosing a particular suitor, she aligns herself with the rural space and thus complies with the agriculturalist system of values” (159). He adds that much of the power of *Maria Chapdelaine* lies in the fact that Hémon portrays his eponymous protagonist’s “decision to stay on the farm and the enormous personal sacrifice involved in this decision with a frankness that no later imitator of the work would

dare employ" (161). Similarly, Freitag provides an acute reading of Moodie when he argues that it is precisely the English-born author's "deep fear of disorder and a loss of control that makes *Roughing It* a characteristically English Canadian proto farm novel" (95). In addition to his perceptive analysis of his copious primary texts, Freitag relates those works to a variety of kindred texts and to historical, economic, and cultural developments. No less important, whether examining historical novels or tracing the evolution of the genre, he does so with little jargon.

That being said, there is one critical problem in *The Farm Novel in North America*, which is the general absence of Indigenous people in a study of the representations of the land, a lacuna that probably reflects the exclusion of Mexico. After pointing out that it is both odd and significant that "no one has ever examined and compared the genre [of the farm novel] in all three North American national literatures" (6), Freitag acknowledges that there is at least one other nation in the northern part of the continent, Mexico. He further explains that the omission of Mexican farm novels from his book is "dictated by the author's lack of linguistic competence in Spanish" (20), which is of course a legitimate reason. However, had Freitag engaged with Mexican discourse, he almost certainly would have had to come to terms with the Indigenous fact. The elision of the First Nations becomes most conspicuous in his analysis of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Freitag states that "the Joads' fight for their family farm in Oklahoma," which they have already lost by the beginning of Steinbeck's classic novel, is only the last of a series of fights for the land (244). He then quotes a collective cry in the novel: "Grampa killed Indians, Pa killed snakes for the land. Maybe we can kill banks—they're worse than Indians and snakes" (qtd. 244). Freitag, though, cites this astonishingly dated passage without any commentary, not only regarding the text's analogy between "Indians" and snakes but, especially, as to why Indigenous people might pose such a political and psychological threat to self-declared children of the soil. Indeed, if Freitag writes a companion volume to this book, one hopes that he will begin by exploring the paradoxical nomadism of North American "settlers." He has shown that he is definitely qualified to do so.

313

DAVIS, CAROLINE. *Creating Postcolonial Literature: African Writers and British Publishers*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. x + 255.

Nathan Suhr-Sytsma, Emory University

What if the narrative of literary history were focalized not through landmark works or indispensable authors but through the institutions that produce and distribute literary texts? In *Creating Postcolonial Literature*, Caroline Davis attempts just this. Her book focuses on a single British publisher, Oxford University Press (OUP), its business in Africa across the twentieth century, and its publication of African

creative writing through the Three Crowns series. Davis is a senior lecturer at the Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies at Oxford Brookes University, less than three miles up the hill from the current headquarters of OUP on Great Clarendon Street. For much of the history she examines, though, the educational and trade business of OUP was based in London, in contrast to the more scholarly Oxford-based Clarendon Press. Indeed, the relation between what Pierre Bourdieu terms “the economic capital” and “the cultural capital” represented by London and Oxford, respectively, is central to Davis’s account of OUP’s role in the creation of “African literature.”

314 Davis works in the tradition of the history of the book and draws on Robert Darnton’s model of the communications circuit, albeit with a keen awareness, à la Bourdieu, of the “hierarchies and power relations” that such a model can obscure (4). The book rests on empirical methods of historical research, including extensive archival research in England and South Africa. While Davis acknowledges the need to read “against the grain of the archive” at times—and she does so by drawing on oral histories and non-OUP sources—her writing is straightforward, rarely dwelling on problems of knowing (10). This is not to say, however, that the book lacks a critical edge.

To begin with, even as *Creating Postcolonial Literature* recognizes real commitment to African writers on the part of some OUP editors—Rex Collings, James Currey, and Jon Stallworthy, in particular—it challenges liberal views of British publishers as benevolent patrons. Davis concludes that African Marxist critics such as Chidi Amuta come closer to identifying the “asymmetrical relationship” that was actually obtained between OUP and the African writers whom it published (141). At the same time, her book engages with Bourdieu-inspired sociological approaches to postcolonial and world literature developed by Pascale Casanova, Graham Huggan, James English, and Sarah Brouillette, among others, and provides an alternative to some of their assumptions. In place of the complicit or assimilated postcolonial authors theorized by these critics, Davis finds African writers to have instead been frequently “divorced from the publishing process” (194). Most substantively, *Creating Postcolonial Literature* revises Bourdieu’s equation of symbolic value with a calculated refusal of economic profit by showing how the geography of publishing matters for perceptions of value. With OUP, Davis contends, “the value of a publication was defined not only by its place of publication but also by its geographic destination,” specifically, in the case of Three Crowns, the schoolbook market in African countries (34). Davis uncovers what she terms “a system of cross-subsidisation of cultural and economic capital that was global in scale”: educational publishing for African and other Commonwealth markets generated profits that underwrote the scholarly work of the Clarendon Press, the cultural capital of which, in turn, helped to sell OUP products abroad (31).

Following the introduction, the book is divided into two parts. Part I, Oxford University Press in Africa, 1927-80, begins with a chapter focusing on OUP’s opera-

tions in Britain's African colonies during the early twentieth century. The chapters that follow detail the histories of the African branches established after the Second World War in Nigeria, East Africa (primarily Kenya), and South Africa. While alert to historical shifts, Davis stresses the continuities between colonial and postcolonial publishing systems. For each branch, Davis has compiled accounting tables. These tables show that sales and profits peaked in East Africa in the early 1970s, in Nigeria in the late 1970s—at one point, the Nigerian branch accounted for nearly 20% of OUP's total turnover—and in South Africa at the end of the 1970s, just as East and West Africa ceased to be profitable. The profitability of the South African branch owed much to its complicity with Bantu Education and its increasing unwillingness to publish books that addressed apartheid or race. These chapters also reveal the struggles between the branches and the London office over publishing priorities. In Kenya, Jonathan Kariara spearheaded an effort to develop three literary series that would publish new drama, fiction, and poetry in English—part of this effort involved trying to woo prominent women writers Rebeka Njau and Ama Ata Aidoo away from other British publishers—but found little support from the London office, which insisted that branches needed to prioritize turning a profit.

315

In Part II, *The Three Crowns Series, 1962-76*, Davis considers what literary publishing OUP did undertake. Africanist literary scholarship about publishing has so far fastened on the more influential Heinemann African Writers Series, so much so that I know of only one other scholar, Gail Low, who has written about *Three Crowns*. Following a chapter that surveys the founding of the series and the tenures of its various editors, this section includes a pair of chapters on “Judging African Literature” and “Editing *Three Crowns*,” for me the most engaging of the book. In them, Davis charts the network of literary brokers and gatekeeping processes that African writers had to navigate en route to publication. She discovers no hint that OUP ever asked an African to evaluate a manuscript, in marked contrast to Heinemann's reliance on Chinua Achebe throughout the 1960s. A number of brief case studies detail striking moments in the history of *Three Crowns*, from editorial debates over whether Léopold Sédar Senghor's poetry was of sufficient aesthetic value to the unexpected success and UK promotional tour of South African poet Oswald Mtshali. The section wraps up with chapter-length case studies of the series' most famous and profitable authors, Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard. Davis argues that Soyinka was alienated not so much from Nigeria, as critics have charged, but from the publishing process. Regarding Fugard, she perceptively suggests that OUP's insistence on Fugard's aesthetic universalism can be read as “a strategy to ‘universalise’ the market for Fugard's plays” (164), while the publisher's promotion of him as a celebrity author vitiated the initial radicalism of Fugard's collaborations with black theater practitioners John Kani and Winston Ntshona. The fact that both Soyinka's and Fugard's plays were eventually moved from *Three Crowns* into the Oxford Paperbacks series underlines the central office's identification of *Three Crowns* with low-status publishing for African markets.

The great strength of Davis's work is its book-historical precision, which includes a careful use of concepts—the distinction between peritext and epitext, for instance, which is often lost in references to Gérard Genette's notion of the paratext—as well as evidence. The only place where I would quibble with her discussion of the evidence is in an apparent misreading of the Nigerian branch's total sales for 1977 as its profit. In keeping with the protocols of book history, there are few observations here about what happens within literary texts and no close readings. Davis in fact critiques literary studies' fixation with the formal features of literary texts (194). As a consequence, *Creating Postcolonial Literature* leaves little space for the world-creating force of the aesthetic. Instead, the story is centered on OUP, even as Davis does register authors' disagreements with editorial decisions—or, just as often, their indifference to the publisher. In terms of its theoretical contribution, the book offers a measured assessment of Bourdieu and his most well-known successor, Casanova. It remains to be seen, however, what bold new theories will displace Bourdieu within sociological approaches to literature. Whatever comes next, Davis's book will provide a model for historical research into the institutions of literary production.

316

AWADALLA, MAGGIE, AND PAUL MARCH-RUSSELL, EDs. *The Postcolonial Short Story: Contemporary Essays*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pp. 240.

Kathryn Lachman, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Maggie Awadalla and Paul March-Russell's edited volume, *The Postcolonial Short Story: Contemporary Essays*, offers an eclectic look into the evolution of the short story over the past 35 years across a wide range of geopolitical contexts, from the transnational cities of London, Singapore, Vancouver, and Cairo, to India, Pakistan, the Gulf, South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, the United States, and New Zealand. Awadalla and March-Russell present the short story as a highly expressive and flexible medium that sits at the interstices of high and low culture and reflects the fragmentation and dislocations of the postcolonial condition. The volume is loosely organized around themes of cultural memory and historical trauma, urban and diasporic experience, gendered violence and sexuality, and democracy. While the editors affirm the value of eclecticism as "an entry point into the messy complexity of the postcolonial world" (10), this is ultimately both a strength and limitation of the volume. Despite the variety of geographical contexts studied, the focus remains firmly Anglocentric. Only four of the essays venture beyond Anglophone writing to address work in Urdu, Afrikaans, or Arabic; none of the essays mention works in French or Spanish, thus missing out on the opportunity to engage in a truly comparative discussion of the postcolonial short story. The Caribbean is represented, but

only through the lens of Jamaican and Trinidadian subjects in Canada; North Africa is entirely absent, as are Francophone Africa and South America. While there are inevitable lacunae in any collection of essays, the exclusions of this particular volume reinforce the disciplinary bias of postcolonial studies towards the Anglophone world at a moment when many critics are looking to expand and break out of these linguistic boundaries.

Awadalla and March-Russell provide an expansive introduction in which they sketch the history of the short story's critical reception and establish the genre's slippery marginality and political significance. They argue that the short story's keen importance to postcolonial writers is at odds with its "critical and popular neglect in the West" (4). One of the most interesting features of the short story is its resistance to categorization: it is "simultaneously a product of mass and minority culture," circulating in popular magazines, online forums, and volumes published by avant-garde, small presses. It poses considerable technical difficulty for writers and is endorsed by major literary prizes such as the Caine Prize (established in 2000), yet has garnered sparse critical attention. What the short story may lack in critical prestige, however, it more than makes up for in diversity and complexity: the genre draws on the fantastical and vernacular elements of the oral folktale as well as the realist and economical elements of the sketch. It inverts discursive hierarchies by giving constituent voices equal treatment, rather than relegating minor characters to the sidelines. Awadalla and March-Russell also point to the troubled relation between the short story and orality; orality functions both as a force of disruption and as a limit to which the genre reaches. Indeed, orality is a recurring issue throughout the collection. There is an uneasy slippage between the novel and the short story in many of the essays, underscoring the restlessness of the genre itself. In her contribution, for instance, Awadalla discusses a novel in four parts that she chooses to see in line with short story; this is also the case for Caroline Rooney, who focuses on Arab "short story novels." More attention from the editors to this generic slipperiness would have been helpful in the introduction: how precisely are the "long short story" or "the short story novel" to be distinguished from the novel or from the short story?

In assessing the state of the field and the dearth of criticism on the postcolonial short story (the editors point out that only one prior volume had been published on the subject), Awadalla and March-Russell call for further investigation into the role that magazine culture has played in the evolution of the short story. In fact, however, many critics are already working on this very issue, particularly in the South African context (Lindsay Closes, Tyler Fleming, Dorothy Driver, Stefan Helgesson, and others). Their focus on Anglophone texts reinforces instead the need to bring postcolonial studies into dialogue with broader discussions on World Literature, Caribbean, African, and Francophone studies. The role of recent anthologies (such as the *Granta Book of the African Short Story*, edited by Helon Habila) in disseminating (and canonizing) short stories and the role of online media and translation (the University of Indiana Press's Global African Voices series, for instance) in opening

up new avenues for publishing are also issues worthy of further investigation.

318 Nonetheless, readers can learn a great deal from the twelve varied essays in the volume, each of which adopts a distinct theoretical framework. Thus, Alex Padamsee draws on trauma theory to illustrate how the trauma of Partition is inscribed in the contemporary Urdu short story by calling attention to tropes of repetition, absence, and unspeakability. Michelle Keown evaluates how the short stories of Māori author Patricia Grace respond to the burden that confronts Māori intellectuals to counter historical injustice and the denigration of Māori language and culture. In this light, Keown points to Grace's code-switching between English and Māori expressions, refusal to gloss Māori words for Western readers, and experimental play with syntax to inscribe the grammatical patterns of Māori into English; Keown suggests that more recent Māori fiction by Alice Tawhai speaks to gains made by young Māori who form a growing professional class and are increasingly confident in their cultural identity. In a chapter on three contemporary English-language authors from Singapore, Suchen Christine Lim, Alfian Sa'at, and Wena Poon, Philip Holden argues that the short story is primarily an urban, not a national form; Holden shows how Singapore disturbs the standard chronologies of postcoloniality as a hypermodern city which has long encountered the salient features of the postcolonial experience, namely social inequality, state surveillance, and multiculturalism. Alisa Cox explores the gendered experience of space in narratives set in Vancouver by Alice Munro and Nancy Lee. March-Russell considers the articulation of urban space in works by Iain Sinclair and Syed Manzurul (Manzu) Islam, examining Sinclair's reconfiguring of flâneurs and fugueurs and Islam's ontology of otherness. Antara Chatterjee reads Jhumpa Lahiri's short fiction as snapshots into the immigrant experience of Bengali-Americans that highlight the "painful and productive possibilities of immigration in the twenty-first century" (109).

Caroline Rooney's essay on recent Egyptian short stories by Khaled Al Khamissi and Ahmed Alaidy stands out as particularly timely and insightful. Rooney links the aesthetic form of these short stories and the growing consciousness of a democratic movement in Egypt between 2003 and 2008. The two works she studies (which she classifies as short story novels rather than as short stories in the strict sense), Al-Khamissi's *Taxi* and Alaidy's *Being Abbas El Abd*, "reflect and create the kind of popular consciousness necessary for the Egyptian revolution" (111). Rooney shows how these texts are indebted to the traditional *māqama*, an "Arabic prose form of episodic or picaresque storytelling, allowing for composite forms, featuring virtuoso linguistic displays and roguish characters, and entailing social critique, parody, and satire" (128). In *Taxi*, Al Khamissi reshapes the authorial role into a collector of diverse conversations between Cairo taxi drivers and passengers set against the background of audiocassette sermons. Rooney argues that the dialogical, multifaceted assembly of stories gives rise to a sense of common purpose and shared history, giving the text attributes of a popular assembly or civic forum. "Democratic values emerge not only through the exercise of free speech and the frequent criticisms of

corrupt authorities” [...] but also through “a kind of grounding of the sacred, something that was testified to in the collective spirit of Tahrir Square” (121). Rooney then turns to *Being Abbas El Abd*, in which she locates an ethics in “outrageousness and a sense of outrage” (127). While Rooney’s claim that “democracy is literature” and that the assemblies of Tahrir Square might be read “as avant garde *māqamat* or like a short story novel come to life” might strike readers as a bit hyperbolic and celebratory, her readings are wonderfully attentive to how aesthetic forms respond to multiple traditions (to traditional *māqama* and to popular cultural references such as the film *Fight Club*, Facebook, et cetera) and reflect and anticipate cultural, historical, and political shifts.

In the volume’s second piece on Arab writers, Awadalla examines short fiction by Arab women authors working in the 1980s and 90s, Ahdaf Soueif, Hanan al-Shaykh, and Alifa Rifaat. Awadalla claims these authors subvert “restriction, seclusion, imprisonment, and prohibition” (139) through the use of fantasy and the inversion of patriarchal codes. Awadalla brings Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of a minor literature and Bhabha’s notion of unhomeliness into dialogue with Arab critics Ferial Ghazoul, Rehab Bassam, and Sabry Hafez; as noted above, however, the essay is nonetheless slightly out of sync with the volume’s focus on the short story, as one of its focal texts is al-Shaykh’s novel *Women of Sand and Myrrh*. Awadalla justifies this decision by explaining that the novel is divided into four sections featuring characters that are economically and socially isolated from one another, and thus the work shares many of the characteristics of short stories, but this move further undermines the generic boundaries of the short story that the collection aims to theorize. Women’s writing is center stage in the essays on diasporic Caribbean writing that follow. M. Catherine Jonet considers how Caribbean-Canadian authors Shani Mootoo and Makeda Silvera articulate the sexual subjectivity of queer women in the Caribbean diaspora. Jonet argues that Mootoo and Silvera’s work secures visibility for sexual identities that have been ostracized or silenced; comparative consideration of the many queer, worldly protagonists in the fiction of Guadeloupean author Maryse Condé could have been useful. Lee Skallerup Bessette examines the representation of the female body in the short stories of Caribbean-Canadian author Nalo Hopkinson, pointing to the author’s “use of black postcolonial bodies to symbolize the oppression still faced by those who were victims of colonization” (179).

The final two essays take up the African short story. Barbara Cooke offers a probing look at short stories by Afrikaans writer Etienne van Heerden that convey the damage wrought by apartheid on subjectivity and reciprocity. The concluding essay of the collection is also one of the most innovative as it explores the emerging possibilities for online publishing and the attendant impact on form, language, and the author/reader relationship. Shola Adenekan and Helen Cousins analyze how African writers have harnessed digital media to free themselves from the constraints of publishers and editors in order to connect directly with an African readership. Online collectives, blogs, and social networking sites have radically reshaped the African

short story, leading to the emergence of new genres such as “flash fiction,” texts so condensed that they fit into the space of two SMS messages or tweets. Adenekan and Cousins point to the development of innovative reading practices and modes of collaboration and experimentation that facilitate interaction between writers and authors so as to challenge the Western valorization of individual authorship. They also argue that these new modes of online publishing make fiction available to African readers whether on or off the continent. They signal how these platforms have led to significant changes in prose and narrative conventions, noting the proliferation of abbreviations and interest in themes that keep apace with current social issues such as homosexuality, prostitution, and class. Among the particularly interesting features of flash fiction are its impermanence, episodic and ongoing potential (in direct contrast with the aesthetic of unity celebrated by Edgar Allan Poe), and its ability to include hyperlinks and sound effects. The exchanges between writers and audiences around works like *Chika Unique* and *Adichie* illustrate the potential for these online short stories and the responses they generate to produce a collective enunciation and redefine gendered performances. Adenekan and Cousins even look at the emergence of narrators who are not an individual subject, but an assembly or collective persona. While they argue that the lingua franca of the internet is English and posit that the African story is *the* postcolonial genre as opposed to the novel, their analysis would have been richer had they taken into consideration the vibrant online literary production of Francophone figures like Congolese author Alain Mabanckou.

In sum, *The Postcolonial Short Story: Contemporary Essays* offers a compelling and varied contribution to the scholarship on postcolonial fiction and the short story. The collection reflects some of the biases and limitations of the field of postcolonial studies (particularly with respect to language), but also the dynamic engagement of its best practitioners. The essays offer probing reflections on an important and often over-looked literary genre, capturing the postcolonial short story’s capacity for political critique, social commentary, and formal innovation, as well as its evolving relation to new media.

PARKER, ADELE, AND STEPHANIE YOUNG, EDS. *Transnationalism and Resistance: Experience and Experiment in Women’s Writing*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013. 301 pp. \$84 (paperback).

Polina Kroik, City University of New York

Transnationalism and Resistance: Experience and Experiment in Women’s Writing is a wide-ranging, theoretically informed collection of essays that explore the inter-relations between the concepts and categories of the title. The volume appears to be carefully curated, representing writing by women from many parts of the

globe. While some of the texts that the authors analyze are widely read, many are not well known. One of the volume's strengths is in bringing critical attention to marginalized authors and texts. The volume's authors and editors also raise important questions about the politics of identity and representation in an era of greater geographic mobility and increased transnational cultural production. Though the authors and editors offer some answers to these questions, the tension between the variety of perspectives represented in the volume seems more productive, opening up avenues for future inquiry.

In their introduction, Adele Parker and Stephanie Young situate the volume within the field of transnational studies, distinguishing this perspective from a "global" approach, represented here by David Damrosch's concept of "World Literature." Citing Françoise Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shih's argument that the transnational perspective is "less scripted and more scattered" than the "global" and noting that it may be more attentive to cultural specificity, the editors conclude by leaving the political value of transnationalism open: "One of the debates currently in circulation is whether transnationalism is a move beyond the traditional nation-state paradigm, or is just another name for an institution that reinforces the nation state" (3).

321

While few of the authors engage with transnationalism on a metatheoretical level, most regard the transnationalism in women's writing as a positive "deterritorializing" force. For example, in Liama Durán Almarza's essay about Josefina Báez's performance *Dominicanish*, Almarza focuses on the liberatory character of the hybrid or "nomadic" identity that Báez seems to embrace in her work. Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's influential *The Location of Culture*, Almarza writes that Báez creates "a Janus-faced 'third space' where traditional linguistic, ethnic, and generic boundaries are transgressed and transcended" (47). The author goes on to claim that "the transcultural body of the narrator is enacted in all her multiple embodied subjectivities" only at the "interstices" of the contacts between Dominican and US experience. Adele Parker's essay on the Slovenian French-language author Brina Svit somewhat similarly (though less emphatically) suggests that transnationalism offers insights and reveals aspects of identity that cannot be accessed in a monolingual, national culture.

Though these and a number of other contributors succeed in demonstrating that transnational encounters are symbolically rich and potentially liberating for individual subjects, the celebration of cultural hybridity does little to advance scholarly understanding of transnational literary production. Theorists like Homi K. Bhabha and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari—whose work underpins many of the arguments in this volume—made important interventions in the 1980s and 1990s when transnational experience and literature were still regarded with suspicion in hegemonic high and popular culture. Concepts such as hybridity, deterritorialization, and a "minor literature" allowed authors and critics to claim and study identities and cultural objects that were either devalued or excluded. Yet, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, many kinds of hybrid identities, as well as the capacity

for cultural and geographic mobility, have become highly valued in the dominant culture. Though this valorization is problematic and excludes other kinds of transnational identities, the theoretical apparatus needs to account for these historical changes.

On the other hand, in this volume, essays that valorize hybrid transnational identities are placed in a productive tension with ones that portray transnational subjectivity as fraught, painful, or traumatic. Stephanie Young's essay explores the work of Yugoslav author Dubravka Ugrešić, focusing especially on her experimental novel *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*. Young develops an interesting reading of Dubravka's work in the context of literature and art of "ostalgie"—the somewhat nostalgic reprisal of Soviet Bloc-era popular culture, exemplified in Ilya Kabakov's well-known installations. Like Kabakov, Ugrešić seems to incorporate into her work the bric-a-brac of daily experience (designated in Russian by the complex term *byt*) which no longer exists. Yet what sets Ugrešić's work apart from some of the other texts discussed in this volume (as well as Kabakov's ironic postmodernism) is her foregrounding of the pain associated with the loss of the original national identity. Young cites an article entitled "Zagreb, Autumn 1992" in which Ugrešić relates a personal exchange with a state official while applying for an ID card. In a dialogue that quickly becomes antagonistic, Ugrešić insists on identifying herself as "Anational" or "Other" rather than aligning with a national group. Along with this scene, the title of Ugrešić's novel highlights not only the political violence that produces many transnational identities, but also the fact that many subjects are coerced into adopting a foreign identity which may diminish rather than expand their subjective experience.

Another essay that investigates the traumatic nature of transnationalism also reminds readers of the long history of transnational exchange. In her reading of Gayle Jones's *Corregidora* and Dorothy Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina*, Tamara Lea Spira "examines the struggle between remembering and oblivion" of the legacy of US slavery. In both narratives, the politics and experience of slavery that have been consigned to the past return in embodied and often violent form. Women's racialized bodies are often subjected to sexual violence linked to this historical trauma. Spira places her reading in the context of the "neoliberal amnesia across the international division of labor" (115) and makes a strong case for the political significance of reading these texts today (137). Yet the framing of US slavery in psychoanalytic terms, as a traumatic experience, may obscure its structural relation to the violence of contemporary US imperialism, most often perpetrated against non-white populations. Ruyben Murillo's essay, which follows Spira's in the collection, offers a productive corrective by reading Margarita Cota-Cardenas's *Puppet* in the context of Chicana writing. The reading highlights the ongoing state violence against, and economic oppression of, racial and ethnic minorities.

While the collection represents a range of transnational perspectives, its take on "experience" in women's writing is somewhat limited by the editors' emphasis on psychoanalytic and Deleuzian theory. The epigraph for Parker and Young's introduc-

tion is by the Lacanian feminist Julia Kristeva, in which the latter interprets Freud's views on "foreignness." These psychoanalytical approaches, along with Deleuze and Guattari's work, inform many of the contributions to the collection and especially the first section, entitled "Bodies of Female Experience and Experiment." Though the interpretations are interesting, in some instances they tend to essentialize and/or universalize "women's" experience, while obscuring the economic and political forces that shape these experiences. The emphasis on such approaches runs the risk of limiting "resistance" to an individual aesthetic or subjective act.

The final essay in the collection, Pavithra Narayanan's analysis of the transnational publishing industry and an examination of the Bengali writer Mallika Sengupta's literary production, stands out in its focus on the economic forces that shape transnational literature. Drawing on Jan Aarte Scholte's theory of "supraterritorial" spaces created by globalization and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Narayanan discusses the influence of the international publishing industry on Indian cultural production. With a small number of media conglomerates controlling most literary publishing, these publishers wield an enormous cultural influence. Since they publish almost exclusively English-language Indian writing, the publishers favor a small number of popular Indian authors and contribute to the dominance of the English language within India. In discussing Mallika Sengupta's feminist writing in Bengali, Narayanan suggests that regional language writers can be influential in their own language among a regional audience. When Sengupta ultimately decides to translate her work into English it functions as a "counter-hegemonic strategy" (279). It is unfortunate that Narayanan's essay is appended to the volume as an "epilogue" instead of being integrated into the collection.

On the whole, *Transnationalism and Resistance* is an interesting and important collection that contributes in various ways to the study of transnational women's writing. Yet the theoretical framing of the volume is politically problematic because of the limits it places on the scope of inquiry. Though "globalization," "neoliberalism," and "the global division of labor" are mentioned in the editors' introduction and a few of the essays, there is little emphasis on the ways in which these three terms inform "women's experience" around the world. As has been well documented, the opening up of borders for free trade and other contemporary capitalist processes have increased the numbers of women employed in industrialized and exploitative occupations and those participating in labor migration (Caraway; Schiff, Morrison, and Sjoblom; Parranas). On the other hand, women have also often formed a vanguard of militant resistance to economic violence (Louie). While the psychoanalytically-informed theory foregrounded here has been useful in combating patriarchy among the ruling classes in Europe and the US, such theory can offer only a limited understanding of the salient experiences and struggles of the majority of the world's women.

WORKS CITED

- Caraway, Teri L. *Assembling Women: The Feminization of Global Manufacturing*. Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007. Print.
- Louie, Miriam Ching Yoon. *Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take On the Global Factory*. Cambridge, MA: South End P, 2001. Print.
- Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford UP, 2001. Print.
- Schiff, Maurice, Andrew R. Morrison, and Mirja Sjoblom, eds. *The International Migration of Women*. The World Bank, 2007. Web. 16 May 2015.

- 324 ALBUQUERQUE, SEVERINO J., AND KATHRYN BISHOP-SANCHEZ, EDS.
Performing Brazil: Essays on Culture, Identity, and the Performing Arts.
Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015. Pp. 305.

Axel Pérez Trujillo, University of Alberta

Bridging the gap between Brazilian Studies and Performance Studies, the collection of essays included in *Performing Brazil* provides a critical approach to a plethora of cultural manifestations that rehearse and represent Brazilian identity. *Brasilidade* or Brazilianness as a core concept is revisited in each of the chapters, explored as a performative act through which national subjectivity is enacted and perceived. Whilst adopting an interdisciplinary methodology that blurs the lines between different fields of study, the book invites the reader to reflect on a broader “understanding of performance in the Brazilian context” (4). Rather than offer a limited perspective on how certain cultural elements in Brazil lend themselves to performativity, the multidisciplinary approach that each essay offers challenges notions of cultural identity. That is perhaps one of the strongest aspects of the book: the heterogeneous yet cohesive analysis of various cultural phenomena that range from film to capoeira and even video art projects. As Albuquerque and Bishop-Sanchez argue in their introduction to the book, “this critical collection in its entirety is part of an effort to destabilize traditional notions of culture, art, community, and representation, and, as such, it questions the concept of cultural hegemony in Brazil” (7). Although other monographs have focused on specific fields of research that helped pave the way to the present collection of essays, such as Christopher Dunn’s exploration of the Tropicalia musical movement in *Brutality Garden* (2001), Diana Taylor’s book on Latin American performance *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), or Lúcia Nagib’s analysis of film in *Brazil on Screen* (2007), the originality of *Performing Brazil* stems from its multifocal approach that opens up a wider discussion on how performance

can support and destabilize cultural identities.

The first chapter in the volume, titled “On the (Im)Possibility of Performing Brazil,” sets up a close examination of the concept of performance, especially in regards to the Brazilian cultural context. Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez focuses on the links between Brazilian national identity and some of the cultural performances associated with the construction of nationhood. *Brasilidade* is explored through performances such as capoeira, samba, and the FIFA World Cup 2014, emphasizing the destabilizing effect of staging such cultural products: “Ultimately, our ability and willingness to embrace performativity in this context will determine the extent of Brazil’s imagined performa-community” (35). Following Diane Taylor’s central argument in *The Archive and the Repertoire* that performance entails a specific epistemology which cannot be entirely reduced to written or archival instances, Bishop-Sanchez challenges the reader to embrace the impossibility of fully encapsulating the staged identity of Brazilianness.

This topic leads the reader to one of the prominent themes of the collection, the notion of *antropofagia* or cultural cannibalism, espoused by poet and intellectual Oswald de Andrade in his “Manifesto Antropófago,” published in 1928. How does the impossibility of performing a stable identity manifest itself in the Brazilian context? Fernando de Sousa Rocha analyzes the concept of cultural cannibalism in Brazilian film in the chapter titled “Biting the Meat, Spitting it Out.” After exploring the complexities of cannibalism in Andrade’s text, he goes on to analyze how that concept became a metaphor deployed in Joaquim Pedro de Andrade’s *Macunaíma* (1969) and Nelson Pereira dos Santos’s *Como era gostoso o meu francês* (1971). Rocha argues that such a metaphor “on the basis of devouring, has signaled the possible relationship between the subject and his others” (46). Alterity is at the heart of the discussion, for performance of Brazilianness is intimately linked to the way the others view Brazil and the other is assimilated in a staged event.

Several chapters are dedicated to the role of danced performances. Particularly fascinating is Cristina Rosa’s study of the internationally famed Grupo Corpo and its hybrid choreographies that incorporate *ginga*—a traditional swaying that forms part of the capoeira repertoire—into more traditional ballet movements. It is that combination which permits the “oscillating between an implicit Africa/Europe dichotomy” (84). That is, it puts into play the dialectic between identity and alterity present in the discussion of *antropofagia*. Grupo Corpo’s choreographies dwell on the racial miscegenation in Brazil, challenging spectators to broaden what it means to be Brazilian in such a wide spectrum. In Chapter Four, Ana Paula Höfling also analyzes the danced performances of the Viva Bahia ensemble, emphasizing the Afro-Brazilian elements of the groups choreographies and their evolution in successive stagings. Another essay in the collection, “Global Identities of Capoeira and the Berimbau: Keeping it Brazilian Overseas,” centres on the spread of capoeira in the northeastern United States. In this chapter, Eric Galm argues that it was the less traditional capoeira *regional* that first took hold in that region, whereas it was only later that

American students of capoeira began inquiring as to the role of capoeira *angola* and its African roots (136). Although capoeira has been perhaps one of the most important promoters of Brazilian culture, especially in North America, the appearance of capoeira schools abroad has also put into question the cultural roots of the performance. Chapter Six discusses the influence of Brazil in Mardi Gras, focusing on how Brazilian immigrants have shaped the festivities in New Orleans. In this essay, Annie Gibson discusses how Mardi Gras “offers a unique space for hybrid Brazilian performances,” a place to stage alterity (166). All in all, the chapters mentioned challenge monolithic notions of cultural danced performances by manifesting the inner tensions culturally staged within Brazil and abroad; that is, the complexity of staging performances at local and global venues.

326 In Chapter Nine, Benjamin Legg explores the notion of miscegenation present in anthropologist Gilberto Freyre, whilst inquiring as to the roots of the eroticized and sexualized images of Brazilian women through the study of the celebrated actress Sônia Braga. A successor to Carmen Miranda’s stardom in Hollywood, Braga also became an archetype of Brazilian femininity in North America. Legg, however, argues that both Miranda and Braga manifest different female archetypes in the Brazilian and American imaginary: whereas the former is a “female clown archetype,” the latter represents the myth of Brazilian “superior sexuality” (208-209). Moreover, Braga does not only perform that archetype as the exotic other to North American audiences, but also plays on the ideal of the *mulata* as a national symbol of miscegenation within Brazil (211).

Chapter Ten is titled “Body Language and Embodied Spaces” and is written by Alessandra Santos, a specialist on Brazilian performer and musician Arnaldo Antunes. Her essay explores Antunes’s video-music montage *Nome* as a “critical poetics” (225). Drawing from a diverse theoretical background that includes poststructuralism and postmodernism, Santos offers an excellent analysis of Antunes’s performances, whilst presenting an insightful study of the intersection between space, technology, and body. Particularly thought-provoking is the concept of “polyphony of information” as a means to understanding the dichotomies between public and private spaces: “private gestures of invading bodies, and public gestures of exploring the social and civic spheres” (244). Santos delivers a stimulating essay that manifests the wide-reaching and interdisciplinary aims of *Performing Brazil*.

The final chapters revisit the concepts of cultural cannibalism and performance from different and original perspectives. In “Post-Periphery Performances: Reclaiming Artistic Legacies, Histories, and Archives,” Simone Osthoff discusses the transition from *antropofagia* to *tecnofagia* in the visual arts. The emerging role of technology in the artistic scene forces critics to reconsider their methodologies (265). The last chapter, “Performative Devices in Clarice Lispector’s Texts” by Maria José Somerlate Barbosa, explores the performative elements in Lispector’s writing, especially those centred around death rituals.

Diverse and refreshing, many of the essays in *Performing Brazil* offer the reader a

stimulating survey of current research on Brazil. Broad in scope, the book manages a balance between a multidisciplinary approach and a cohesive analysis of performed Brazilian identities through drama, cinema, dance, visual arts, and music. It is both an excellent introduction to Brazilian Studies for those new to the field and a valuable display of scholarly research by some of the most notable specialists available. It is without a doubt an original and necessary collection of essays that fosters the continued analysis of Brazilian culture through the focus on its performative dimension.

WORKS CITED

Dunn, Christopher. *Brutality Garden: Tropicalia and the Emergence of Brazilian Counterculture*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2001.

Naqib, Lucia. *Brazil on Screen: Cinema Novo, New Cinema, Utopia*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007.

Taylor, Diane. *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.

327

FRANK, MICHAEL C., AND EVA GRUBER, EDS. *Literature and Terrorism: Comparative Perspectives*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012. Pp. 276.

Peter C. Herman, San Diego State University

This collection of essays has a complicated backstory. First, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, there was a general worry that fiction was not up to the task of dealing with events. The novelist Thane Rosenbaum (not quoted in this book) worriedly asked, “Does the imagination have anything to say when it has to compete with the actual horror of collapsing skyscrapers?” (qtd. in Versluys 11). James Wood more or less agreed, asserting in a column published in *The Guardian* that contemporary fiction (he has in mind Jay McInerney, Bret Easton Ellis, Salman Rushdie, and Don DeLillo, among others) is beset by “trivia and mediocrity” (2), and so incapable of meeting the challenge of writing an insightful narrative equal to terrorism’s gravity.

Concomitantly, literary studies also suffers from something of an inferiority complex when it comes to terrorism. As one might expect, after 9/11 there was a spectacular increase in research on terrorism. Outside of literary studies, dissatisfaction with previous modes of inquiry led to the creation of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), an umbrella term for approaches that focused more on terrorism as a social and political construct. Two anthropologists, Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass, co-wrote a book, *Terror and Taboo*, that has become something of a bible for CTS, arguing that terrorism is not a freestanding object, but instead, “heavily relies on myth, making fact and fiction largely indistinguishable” (12). However, the

problem is that literature and literary criticism seem to have no place in CTS: "In its emphasis on representation and narrativization, the approach laid out by Zulaika and Douglass seems to call for the expertise of literary studies" (13), and the editors criticize Zulaika and Douglass for failing "to explain the specific contribution of 'fiction'" (14) to the understanding of terrorism.

Literature and Terrorism has, therefore, a double purpose. First, the editors want to show, *pace* James Wood et al., that literature does have something to offer the study of terrorism. Specifically, they offer fiction's "capacity to narrativize terrorism" (15), or, as Martina Wolf puts it in her essay on Roth's *American Pastoral* and Updike's *Terrorist*:

By providing the various reasons for Merry's and Ahmad's terrorism, literature offers us new perspectives which take into account social, ethnic and geographic heterogeneousness. Beyond such rational approaches, it requires readers to engage with the characters' emotions and thereby offers an insight into "the other." Where, if not in literature, can we dwell inside other peoples' thoughts. (120)

328

Second, the volume implicitly argues that the discipline of literary criticism, with its expertise in close-reading and historicizing, deserves a place at the table of terrorism studies.

To these ends, Frank and Gruber give us a collection of thirteen essays divided into four sections: "The Emergence of the Terrorist in Fiction"; "Pre-and Post-9/11 Representations of Terrorism"; "Narrativizations of Terror"; and "The Question of Genre." Do the editors succeed in their aims? Partly yes, partly no.

On the one hand, if you want to argue that the analysis of fiction can contribute to the understanding of terrorism, it does not help that two of the essays do not deal with fiction at all. Gudrun Braumspender gives us an excellent and lucid explication of the political background for Dostoevsky's *The Devils*, but almost nothing on the novel itself. Similarly, Hendrik Blumenrath explores, in a manner indebted to Foucault, how the inability to discern terrorists led to a shift in cognition: "The rise of statistical knowledge goes hand in hand with a decline of faith in the optical gaze" (73). Fascinating in itself, but saying nothing about literature.

This may be a good thing, however, as often enough, the authors do not seem to like their subjects very much. Roy Scranton, for instance, dismisses Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* as "a tedious, childish novel" (127). Margaret Scanlan bemoans how, a decade after the 9/11 attacks, "we still lack a traditionally realistic novel that represents the perpetrators at some length, attempting to account for their motives" (142). Also, Herbert Grabes ends his examination of 9/11 plays by expressing a similar disappointment: "One needs only to mention Arthur Miller's treatment of McCarthyism in *The Crucible* to dispel such a general skepticism [that drama is unsuited to examining tough contemporary issues]. Yet a play of that quality about 9/11 has still to be written" (262). If one is going to make a case for literature as a vehicle for examining terrorism, repeatedly saying that one's material is just not very good does not contribute much to the cause.

Even so, some of the essays demonstrate that novels can yield significant insights into terrorism. Michael Frank, in his essay “Plots on London: Terrorism in Turn-of-the-Century British Fiction,” delivers one of the very few genuinely insightful contributions to the project of defining terrorism (which someone once described as like trying to hammer pudding to the wall). For Frank, the key is that terrorism is not about the violence that just happened, but about the “collective fear of (more) violence to come—terrorism has always relied on the belief that the next attack is impending, and that it could happen anywhere, anytime” (45). Margaret Scanlan’s essay on Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) is also deeply intelligent and provocative. Scanlan proposes that *The Road* “instantiates the vision of terror we find in theorists like Jean Baudrillard and Slavoj Žižek” (146) by constructing a world, in particular, a United States of America, in which terror is everywhere and entirely domestic: “*The Road* evokes the end times of an America where all the barbarians are native and where sending an army halfway around the world to extinguish terror is no longer feasible” (150). Still, Scanlan never addresses the central problem in looking at *The Road* in terms of terrorism, (i.e., that McCarthy never explicitly says what happened to create this post-apocalyptic landscape). He never ties the eradication of civilization to terrorism, so the connection must always be asserted, never proved.

329

Literature and Terrorism also represents yet another example of how few American critics address terrorism: only two contributors hail from the US; the rest are European. An Italian, Barbara Arnett Melchiori, wrote the first book on terrorism in literature after getting her doctorate at Cambridge; Alex Houen of Oxford wrote the second one; and the first monograph on 9/11 literature was written by Kristiaan Versluys from the University of Ghent. While a scattering of US critics addressed terrorism and literature (most notably, Scanlan, Jeffery Clymer and Ann Keniston), for the most part, terrorism in literature remains a predominantly European concern. The same goes for fiction. After a flurry of 9/11-themed novels, such as DeLillo’s *Falling Man* and Updike’s *Terrorist*, few American novelists today concern themselves with terrorism, either foreign or domestic, which is a pity, as in many ways terrorism remains a deeply influential presence in world affairs. *Literature and Terrorism*, while uneven, reminds us of the tremendous potential, even necessity, for studying terrorism through literature. I hope more people start paying attention.

WORKS CITED

- Clymer, Jeffery. *America’s Culture of Terrorism: Violence, Capitalism, and the Written Word*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2003. Print.
- Houen, Alex. *Terrorism and Modern Literature: From Joseph Conrad to CIAeran Carson*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.
- Keniston, Ann, and Jeanne F.D. Quinn, eds. *Literature After 9/11*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Melchiori, Barbara Arnett. *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel*. London: Croon Helm, 1985. Print.

Scanlan, Margaret. *Plotting Terror: Novelists and Terrorists in Contemporary Fiction*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2001. Print.

Versluys, Kristiaan. *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel*. New York: Columbia UP, 2009. Print.