

BOOK REVIEWS

- 798 PYLE, FOREST. *Art's Undoing: In the Wake of a Radical Aestheticism*. New York: Fordham UP, 2014. Pp. xi-xiv+302.

Rita Bode, Trent University

In his preface to *Art's Undoing: In the Wake of a Radical Aestheticism*, Forest Pyle reveals that the origins of his present study trace back to his previous work, since at the end of *The Ideology of Imagination: Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism*, he felt a sense of incompleteness concerning his treatment of aesthetics and politics in Percy Bysshe Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*. With spectres of repetitive and belaboured analyses looming, such an origin for a subsequent study does not always augur well, but this is not the case for Pyle's current volume. *Art's Undoing* is a substantial exploration of Romantic aesthetics that offers a new way of thinking about aestheticism's presence, function, and effects throughout the nineteenth century.

Pyle's introduction covers much ground providing the expected overview of the chapters to follow, explaining and continuously expanding, with care and nuance, his concept of radical aestheticism. Pyle initially draws on a straightforward understanding of aestheticism's presence in the texts under consideration: they "must *reflect* on art and its effects, either literature itself or its 'sister arts' of music and painting or the relationships between them. Or the text aestheticizes the object of its reflection" (3). The selected texts necessarily include "the constitutive elements—the figures, images, semblances—that are at the root of any aestheticism" (4). The relationship of these texts to their contexts, moreover, to history or knowledge, or through the "ethical, political, or theological responsibilities" (3) that their sensuous aspects carry, is

of prime importance, for the moment of radical aestheticism occurs when the context is subsumed into the “constitutive elements” of its text. Quoting from Paul de Man’s interpretation of Romantic literature, Pyle points to his own interest

in what happens when “imaginative literature” of the Romantic tradition presents us at certain moments in certain texts with an aesthetic experience of art in which the object [...] “arrests the senses” and “becomes the occasion for an expression of feeling” that not only happens “involuntarily,” but that overwhelms the other “prevailing concerns”—whether this be politics, ethics, poetics, theology, love, even aesthetics itself—of these Romantic writers. Those events I call radical aestheticism. (10-11)

From the outside, the “moment” of radical aestheticism appears as a kind of “black hole of imagelessness,” but the interior view is of “a preponderance of untethered images” (4) that eliminates the awareness of an outside while destabilizing the sense of reliability in the inside. Pyle designates it “an interference [...] that undoes the claims made in the name of the aesthetic—as redemptive, restorative, liberating, compensatory, humanizing, healing—claims that are [...] often spelled out in their most compelling forms by the writers themselves” (5). Pyle’s recognition and elucidations of this “undoing” deliberately circumvent traditional assumptions about aestheticism’s function. He sees the occurrence of a radical aestheticism as a resistance to resolution. It is a return to the “radical,” “to the roots of the aesthetic [...] reduced to ashes [as in Shelley] or to sighs [as in Hopkins]” (xi-xii) before there is any hope of a fire kindling or a sound ensuing.

799

Pyle puts this theory of radical aestheticism into productive practice. In addition to Shelley, he devotes a chapter each to selected works by Keats, Dickinson, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Hopkins, and Wilde. In recognizing that the poetic “forms and figures” (4) of these writers belong to their own individual poetic idiom, he retains a flexibility of approach that resists the strain of imposed readings and strengthens his critical authority. Pyle’s consistently rich analyses amply illustrate that rather than creating a clever framework for bringing together a spectrum of diverse texts, he identifies an important aspect of aestheticism’s function that speaks to the doubts, fears, and uncertainties, whether personal or societal, informing and disrupting nineteenth-century experience.

In the discussion of each author, Pyle specifically invokes one, or sometimes several, twentieth- and twenty-first-century critical theorists. Walter Benjamin’s ideas on the aura, for instance, figure prominently in his discussions of Shelley and Hopkins; and various aspects of the thinking of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Georges Bataille, to name a few more, are used to elucidate the experience of radical aestheticism in the work of the other writers. Pyle admits that the works of these theorists become “parallel” texts which, through the “mutual illumination” between the poetry and theory, extend “this problem of aesthetics and aestheticism in new historical contexts and in new critical idioms” (20). If there is the occasional slight drawback to an otherwise penetrating and original study, it rests here in the abundance of these parallel texts along with the plethora of wide-ranging references,

for the effectiveness of this “illumination” is difficult to sustain and the results are sometimes inconsistent. Pyle’s writing and thinking are dense. His knowledge of art and literature is thorough, and he is in full command of each writer’s critical history. Occasionally, however, the multiplicity of authoritative voices is distracting, as in the section on Rossetti, in which Michael Fried’s concept of theatricality, and Lacan’s and his follower Slavoj Žižek’s ideas on the ethics of desire, among other theorists, mingle with a wide range of critical commentary on Rossetti’s poetry and painting. The chapter presents a series of consistently fascinating complications, but they are of varying usefulness in the chapter’s movement toward the assessment “of the fate of love in the face of a radical aestheticism” (202) in Rossetti’s final sonnets in *The House of Life*. On the whole, however, Pyle’s range of thought and reference is as much a strength as a drawback, for if it does at times slow the reader’s progress, it also consistently offers brilliant connections among thinkers and writers and constantly opens up new areas for thought.

800 Not surprisingly, Pyle’s readings of Shelley’s poems are an early highlight of the book. In each chapter, Pyle provides key terms that act as touchstones for the development of his analyses. Positing politics as “the project that animates Shelley’s poetry,” Pyle identifies “spelling [as in casting spells] and kindling” as “the two terms through which aesthetics and politics repeatedly converge” in Shelley (29). The chapter works its way toward *The Triumph of Life* and the Rousseau figure’s encounter with “a shape all light” (line 352). Pyle identifies in Shelley’s lines, “All that was seemed as if it had been not, / As if the gazer’s mind was strewn beneath / Her feet like embers, and she thought by thought, / Trampled its fires into the dust of death [...]” (lines 385-88), a moment of radical aestheticism, for the poem offers a critique of history “as triumphal pageant” without the consolation of “historical illumination” (63). This, in Pyle’s interpretation, enacts an “*aestheticism* that burns a hole in the heart of this poem,” as it “undoes the possibility of historical reckoning” and leaves instead “ashes, cinders, embers” (64). Pyle’s commentary on Shelley here illustrates a significant aspect of radical aestheticism in making clear that it is a performance of the poem itself enacting its own undoing.

Oscar Wilde’s inaugural lecture for his 1882 North American tour, “The English Renaissance of Art,” whose discussion of “‘our Romantic movement’ identifies [...] the aestheticist’s strain of the Romantic tradition” (11), is instrumental in Pyle’s choice of writers. Pyle eliminates Poe from Wilde’s list, but he adds Hopkins and Dickinson, two poets with whom Wilde was not familiar. Like Wilde’s selection of Poe, Pyle’s inclusion of Dickinson is important for expanding the tradition of radical aestheticism into a transatlantic context of Anglo-American connections; it is also significant for positioning Dickinson’s work alongside writers with whom she is infrequently associated. Pyle’s approach to his writers through key words works particularly well for his analysis of Dickinson through her “discourse of the zero” (106) in which her powerful first lines, a frequent point of commentary in Dickinson criticism, dissipate into “a destitution of sense experience” (106). Pyle’s use of Derrida’s

“event-machine” concept to explore Dickinson’s “path of abstraction, negation, ‘zeroing’” (108) represents a particularly successful pairing of poetry and theory.

Pyle’s discussions of Keats’s ethical turn in terms of his “figures of weakness” (71) and Hopkins’s theology and “sighs” provide satisfying sections as does the final chapter on Wilde toward which the volume, in a sense, moves under Wilde’s guiding principle for “the aestheticist strain.” In this final chapter, Pyle affirms that art’s undoing “can [...] extend to a project dedicated to art itself” (210). His keyword for the study of radical aestheticism in Wilde is “extravagance,” and he invokes Bataille’s “nonproductive expenditure” (213) to develop his analyses, but his commentary in this final chapter provides a fine example of his use of multiple theories and references operating at its most incisive. Turning to drama, and identifying the “obsession with the gaze” (224) in Wilde’s *Salomé*, Pyle invokes Laura Mulvey’s theories of cinematic looking only to move beyond them in arguing that the play’s “wandering field of crossed and crossing looks [...] are [...] features of a more general extravagance of the gaze [...] an optical economy [...] for which the male gaze of feminist psychoanalytic film theory is less pertinent [...] than Bataille’s account of the deconstituting ‘anguish’ of the desiring gaze” (226, 229). Through his comparative movement from Mulvey to Bataille, Pyle’s complications here clarify rather than derail our understanding of the moment of “undoing” in Wilde’s drama, and this understanding, in turn, opens up the workings of his radical aestheticism in the area of another genre.

801

Pyle’s book is a challenging and rewarding study. His articulation of “radical aestheticism” provides a creative map for reading key nineteenth-century texts, and the volume’s graceful embrace of theory and close readings points to its potential for future scholarship to take up its numerous threads.

BOYSEN, BENJAMIN. *The Ethics of Love: An Essay on James Joyce*. Odense: UP of Southern Denmark, 2013. Pp. 654.

James Gifford, Fairleigh Dickinson University

I read Benjamin Boysen’s impressive *The Ethics of Love: An Essay on James Joyce* while on a summer research trip to Reed College in Portland, Oregon. This might not matter much, except that it set out a stark contrast around Boysen’s central theme. The thick, black brick of a book sat on the passenger seat beside me while I drove down the coast, and it became entangled in my mind with the rest stops on the Interstate 5 Highway and the supposedly unrelated lowbrow audio book that kept me company. The crux of Boysen’s argument rests on an oeuvre-spanning continuity in Joyce centred on love as an ethical relation with the Other, of love given from the Other but never possessed, and of sensuality and amorousness caught in this fecund ethical entanglement. In the Reed archives, separate from my intended research

materials, and much to my surprise, I found the fonds of a pulp novelist whom I had read as a child and teen, David Eddings, who I then discovered had misled his readers with his biography: he had been a tenured literature professor, not only a grocery clerk, and there I was reading his lecture notes on Joyce's *Ulysses* with Boysen's study fresh in my mind and chiding me from the desk in my Airbnb... The teaching notes are good, very good, which is a surprise for a writer best known for 1980s popular fantasy novels. Any of us could reasonably trot these notes out without remark for a senior undergraduate seminar on *Ulysses* today. However, the point of contrast was Molly: "Molly is a slut—a pig. She is the creation of a mind trained to think of woman as dirty. She is deliberately obscene" (Eddings Fonds 7.20 n.pag). Eddings was emphasizing the point that female sexual liberation, in his 1960s moment, meant that judgments of sexuality were now obsolete, so Joyce's celebration of lusty gusto was likewise the dialectical conflict of a different time, now gone, whose morality no longer held sway—this is not so terribly far from what *ought* to be seen, and what

802 Boysen rightly recognizes in his study, as an ethical gift of love for the Other *as* Other for the sake of difference and heterogeneity, not commonality or kinship. The ethical gesture is shared, but only insofar as one includes the implicit value judgement "wrongly" for how the mind was trained to think of the gendered Other a century ago. Boysen, to whom we must have gratitude, articulates what was too difficult to say fifty years past.

The difference resides in Boysen's reading of Molly and Bloom's love. For his study, it "destroys previous ideas of love which promoted bad faith in sexuality and morality (Victorian sentimentalism, Christian dualism, idealism, spiritualism, romanticism, libertinism, etc.)" (258). Boysen's reading of Molly—and it is difficult not to be in agreement with his assessment after this study—finds her unique in literary history based on "the almost total absence of bad faith in her thoughts" (258), which he contrasts against *Madame Bovary*. In effect, the ethics of love rests in the contrast between Molly as the "white rose" of Dante's Beatrice, which is the wrongly trained mind to which Eddings objects, in contrast to which we instead find her possibly standing as a "red yes," but not pruriently. The indeterminacy Boysen emphasizes instead disrupts the archetypal readings of the virgin-whore that typified scholarship on Joyce fifty years ago, readings that are temptingly facile yet fraught. Instead, Molly is, as with love in this study, caught up in the streams of desire rather than a reflection of a role. Boysen relies repeatedly on the Blakean allusion to "mind-forged manacles" (259) for an understanding of love that is distinctly innocent amidst experience, by being beyond virtue or sin.

Boysen's encyclopaedic thoroughness in *The Ethics of Love* impresses immediately. The book is a major accomplishment and traces his central thesis on love as an ethical concern across Joyce's oeuvre, although with more attention to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* than any other texts after the theoretical opening. For some, the approach may surprise, but Janine Utell's *James Joyce and the Revolt of Love: Marriage, Adultery, Desire* is a clear precursor and influence here. Boysen also responds at several points

to Jean-Michel Rabaté's *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism*, especially Rabaté's discussion of language and its concreteness in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* leading to a dissolution of reactionary attachments. In both instances, Boysen's approach to "love" invokes what Rabaté describes as "hospitality" and Utell casts as responsibility to the Other—it is temptingly close to John Cowper Powys's distinction between the ethical engagement with difference in "compassion" in contrast to the domination implicit in his sense of "love," and the comparison is not casual. The commonality in both, as well as to Rabaté and Utell, is ethics, and Boysen opens by invoking his gratitude for Joyce's "gift of love" (11) in the sense of love and meaning both being gifts given yet never possessed. Martha Nussbaum and Julia Kristeva are likewise important to Boysen's work here; the former is a crucial influence on the introduction but does not appear in the bibliography. For its understanding of love, the study moves fluidly between Derridean, psychoanalytic, and materialist paradigms to work through Joyce's ethical gift of love. The ease with which Boysen moves among these critical paradigms is most impressive, and although he acknowledges that he only explicitly gestures to the critical work on Joyce where it connects directly with his core argument, his capacious knowledge of current scholarship is continually evident.

803

The major difference between Powys's sense of compassion and Joyce's of love, to which I allude above, is eroticism—in this respect, Boysen is thorough and again encyclopaedic. Through the erotic entanglement with the Other in love, or a love given as a gift rather than as a form of possession, Boysen suggests a negative theological sense of "a subjectivity disclosing itself for itself as it loses itself in a *higher, dim, selfless dimension* of the Other, who proves to enclose a reality more identical to the self than the self as the *all-self*" (355). In this, the gift to the Other is as a form of yielding or merging to a universality. When the position of the subject is lost in *Finnegans Wake*, "this dissolution of identity becomes a lofty, amorous vision" (356), which again immediately calls back Blake and the sexualized pleasure in these experiences of dissolution. Hence, Joyce's "aneither" loses both the Self and Other through an erotic culmination, and by permitting humour into this eroticism, he again loosens Blake's *mind forg'd manacles* or "the fearful chains of our minds in a most funny and comical manner" (440). It is not the depiction of sexuality in love that elides domination by titillating for Boysen's reading of Joyce, but rather erotic experience that is not taken seriously even while it opens the mystical sublime, that erases the imposition of a barrier between Self and Other.

Boysen comes full circle in his conclusion, "An Ethics of Love," to again engage with Rabaté on egoism and intersubjectivity and through Utell with the alterity of the Self in its responsibility to the Other. This decodes his opening gesture to his own gratitude to Joyce for the gift of love (11, 626). Because "the other makes the ego feasible in the first place," the subject is continually in a dialectical manifestation of being that is relational such that "one comes face to face with the radical indebtedness of existence" (626). As a consequence, the ethical dilemma of responsibility toward the Self or Other falls to the powerful solvent of love and erotic experience

in the *Mit-Sein*. This avoids Hans Gadamer's critique of Martin Heidegger, since for Boysen, the impossibility of distinguishing a mutuality that is called into being by love (to divide is not to be) blurs the Self and Other, and hence "there is principally not an insurmountable difference between the good of the subject and that of the other" (627). In other words, this loving mutuality resolves the problems of egoism he cites from Rabaté. The final closing point is, then, also a rapprochement of Joyce's and Powys's difference. In it, different forms of mutuality, by which the gift-exchange that calls Self and Other into being through love, are most properly the basis for an ethics of compassion. Joyce scholars will be grateful to Boysen for his work here, and his model calls to and into other ethics of reading the gifts given from Joyce's contemporaries as well as those of his scions.

- 804** SMARO KAMBOURELI AND CHRISTL VERDUYN (EDS). *Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. Pp. 296.

Sarah Krotz, University of Alberta

Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies, the final collection of essays in a series generated by the TransCanada Institute's three thematically linked conferences over the last decade, registers the tensions and nuances of Canada as a cultural site inhabited by overlapping nationalisms, diasporic and translocal identities, literary and cultural forms, and, indeed, species. Following the conferences' theme of interrogating "Literature, Institutions, [and] Citizenship," this volume is, like its forerunners, an index of a changing critical landscape of Canadian literary and cultural studies and its shifting "field-imaginar[ies]" (229-32). As Christl Verduyn's conclusion to this volume lucidly recaps, the TransCanada project's aim has been to mobilize transdisciplinary approaches that facilitate critical engagement with what Kamboureli, in her introduction to the second volume, called the "situational and material conditions" (227) of culture, while also expanding "our understanding of what the literary entails" (227).

As one would expect from the broad scope of the conference, the essays range across a diverse array of topics and concerns. Contributors Roy Miki, Sa'ke'j Henderson, Julia Emberley, Marie Battiste, Larissa Lai, Catriona Sandilands, Cheryl Louiseley, Laurie Ricou, Julie Rak, Winfried Siemerling, and François Paré are book-ended by Smaro Kamboureli's characteristically rich theoretical introduction and Christl Verduyn's engaging conclusion. All are gathered under the overarching rubric of indigeneity, diaspora, and ecology—a timely intervention when Canada's most urgent concerns are reconciliation/decolonization, the refugee crisis, and climate change. This explicit emphasis on Indigenous knowledges and ecocritical

approaches, the latter of which began at the periphery of the Institute's conversations,¹ alongside the diasporic, which has been a dominant focus of the TransCanada project, distinguishes this volume most clearly from the previous two books. At the same time, there is a clear continuation, here, of longstanding goals of interrogating the nation while elucidating the cultural forms and literary expressions that emerge from its diverse stories.

The TransCanada project is committed to “unmaking the nation through translocalism and unsettling histories of colonial complicity through a poetics of relation” (back book jacket description). Canada remains the frame for this varied and relational poetics, which “consists of essays that are as much about Canadian literature and Canadian critical discourses as about the body politic in Canada and the role and responsibilities of critical readers” (6). But gone is the nation as a romanticized object of literary study or history. Northrop Frye is here, as are a few writers recognizable as Canlit, but they appear alongside figures and approaches long excluded by this canon and its disciplinary affiliations.

805

In keeping with the broad aims of the TransCanada project, this volume is politically charged, its diverse essays united by their collective resistance to many of the values and assumptions that have underpinned conventional Canadian literary studies. Read individually, each essay enacts these calls for resistance in very different ways, some more explicitly than others. Working at the intersection of all three of the collection's principal topics, Larissa Lai's “Epistemologies of Respect: A Poetics of Asian/Indigenous Relation” offers an ecologically and diasporically sensitive reading of respect and kinship in a novel, a short story, a piece of experimental community theatre, performance art, and a play. Julie Rak brings to life two translocal writers who show that Canada has long been, in many ways, “trans”—in Rak's estimation, a “stage” and “condition” shaped by figures with unstable identities, translocal affiliations, and popular writings that do not fit easily into the “lit” category of “CanLit” (197, 178). Julia Emberley showcases the kinship lessons that structure Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*. The challenges that these and many other contributors pose to the disciplinary practices and allegiances of traditional literary studies do not preclude compelling close readings of individual texts and nuanced and historically-grounded attention to authors, among other conventional disciplinary practices of literary studies. Yet these practices are also opened up to forms of storytelling, knowledge, and ways of conceiving the relation between writing and the world that both traditional literary studies and romantic conceptions of the nation have tended to elide.

It is as a whole, perhaps, that the collection most compellingly resists these powerful frameworks through its insistence upon the collaborative and conversational nature of scholarship, and its explicit recognition of the disturbances and gaps that mark our conversations. Moving away from the authoritative stance of scholarship to embrace a more tentative, exploratory one, the collection disavows any totalizing impetus, espousing instead a practice of “seeking epistemic kinships while maintain-

ing a willingness to not-know” (jacket). Battiste and Henderson’s essays pointedly underscore both the violence of Eurocentric epistemologies and Indigenous resilience and sovereignty that can lead to new forms of solidarity and collaboration. Indeed, all of these essays are enriched by being put into conversation with one another. Ricou’s pedagogy of habitat, which “undisciplin[es]” literary studies (231) by shifting its frames of reference and research to biology and ecology, and to the physical world into which it quite literally plunges, has much to gain by being placed alongside essays that prompt thinking about Indigenous ecological knowledge, for example. Paré’s essay on the “autochthonous” (217) nationhood of Acadians, which takes up questions of geography, exile, and diaspora, prompts further thinking about the complexities of colonialism, particularly with respect to the Indigenous habitation and nationhood to which Battiste and Henderson both point. This is a collection that invites readers to think across its multifaceted intellectual and cultural terrain, to explore how the essays speak to and supplement one another. It is an embodiment of one of the ways scholarship always works as, to return to the collection’s title, “critical collaboration.”

806

The questions are: what ultimately emerges from this collaboration, and does it demonstrate the critical and ethical value of “undisciplining” our practices as literary and cultural scholars? Among the many reasons for doing so, surely we must unsettle established frameworks and hierarchies because this is what the artists and writers we study so often do. And yet, it needs to be acknowledged that the result is uncomfortable: it lacks a centre; it embraces opacity; it highlights the gaps in our knowledge rather than filling them. In these ways, the critical shift reminds me of the move from tonal to atonal music that abandoned the comforting harmonies and sense of resolution that tonal hierarchies impose, embracing instead a sometimes inscrutable dissonance that nonetheless better reflects the world without erasing, homogenizing, and totalizing its elements. The trouble with atonal music is that this aesthetic alienated some listeners, and I expect that some readers will find this volume’s gestures too radically postmodern, too politically charged, theoretically driven, and lacking in historical depth. Still, there is value in unsettling assumptions about the literary and who and what it attends to, and in getting a little lost at the edges of what we think we know. There is beauty in being reminded of the extent to which knowledge is provisional and incomplete. This book is a testament to the struggle to find forms through which we might speak across the gaps.

NOTE

1. As Laurie Ricou remarks in a note to his essay in the volume, at one point during the TransCanada Institute’s inaugural conference, ecocriticism was reportedly jokingly dismissed “with the epithet ‘earth critters’” (247 n. 2).

GRUBISIC, BRETT JOSEF, GISÈLE M. BAXTER, AND TARA LEE (EDS.) *Blast, Corrupt, Dismantle, Erase: Contemporary North American Dystopian Literature*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. Pp. 480.

Jack Fennell, University of Limerick

I found this to be an enjoyable and edifying collection. The breadth of subject matter and variety of critical approaches gathered herein is extremely impressive; I learned a lot from reading these twenty-five essays, and if space were not an issue, each of them would warrant a full review-response of their own. The field of study is North American dystopian literature, a categorization that at first seems a little over-broad; however, not only does this handily allow for the inclusion of Mexican and Canadian texts alongside works from the United States, but it also problematizes the economic homogenization of the continent: all the literature considered here was published after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which came into effect in January 1994.

807

However, my enjoyment was not unqualified. For one thing, with a collection of this size, an index would have been useful. More worryingly, many of the contributors do not seem to realize that utopian studies, incorporating the study of literary dystopias, is an established field with a substantial body of scholarship. A large number of the contributors to this volume neglect to make any reference to that scholarship, and in places, they seem to be unaware of its existence, hence the high number of essays that establish their critical parameters through comparisons to well-known works of dystopian fiction. It is not my intention to be prescriptivist, but some engagement with that scholarship might have made the contributors' jobs a little bit easier.

Furthermore, some contributors seem almost afraid of "genre" literature and waste a good bit of effort distancing themselves and their chosen texts from it; others presume that the reader is unacquainted with dystopia and science fiction, and consequently spend more time than is necessary defending those genres. In some cases, contributors stretch the definition of *dystopia* to make their contributions fit the theme, resulting in some very strong essays that nonetheless might have worked better in a different critical context. This is not just hair-splitting on my part: a dystopia is, to paraphrase Lyman Tower Sargent, a fictional world intended to be interpreted as considerably worse than the author's empirical environment. Obviously, the author cannot control the interpretive process; the reader's subjectivity can make a utopia of a dystopia and vice versa, as surely as cultural change or the passage of time can. Regardless of reader response, though, the point of dystopian literature is not to simply replicate the world as it exists now, even in all its present awfulness. The closest a dystopian work can come to reportage is to emphasize and exaggerate the problems of the day.

The collection gets off to a strong start with Janine Tobeck's "The Man in the Klein Blue Suit: Searching for Agency in William Gibson's Bigend Trilogy." Tobeck uses the

figure of the enigmatic arch-conspirator to present a satisfying analysis of the ways in which the human propensity for narrativization and storytelling can be exploited. However, she seems to argue that this propensity can be overridden through artistic innovation; I do not believe such an act of will is possible, but this is a personal philosophical difference rather than a cogent critique of Tobeck's argument. My other quibbles with this essay are down to what I see as missed opportunities: there is space here to (briefly) criticize the idea of a technological singularity, and when she mentions that "the concept of the individual will be a inevitable casualty in the unlegislated future" (40), she does not flag this as an inherent contradiction within the neoliberal ideology she has been critiquing thus far. Still, this essay bodes well for what is to follow.

808 Sharlee Reimer, writing on "Logical Gaps and Capitalism's Seduction in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*," uses up some space with unnecessary genre defence and perhaps defers a little too much to her sources, but delivers an excellent essay that I would not hesitate to assign as required reading for a postcolonial SF class. Again, I have a slight quibble, regarding the "unexplained" reason why a character with 0.03% carp DNA is not considered fully human within the world of the story: I would have thought it self-evident that this exclusion is simply convenient for those who want cheap/indentured labour to exploit, much as how, prior to Abolition, a slave in the US was counted as "three fifths of a person."

Richard Gooding contributes an excellent piece on M.T. Anderson's YA novel *Feed*, as does Sharon DeGraw on Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring*. The contrast between the subject matter of these essays is illustrative of the variety of forms dystopian settings can take: on the one hand, an ironic pseudo-utopia in which every want and need is catered for and the overstimulated, consumerist population lives in a state of perpetual adolescence; on the other, a near-future world of urban blight in which survivors work together to build new communities, in spite of the precarious nature of their existence. Each of these settings, exaggerated though they may be, is a horribly truthful extrapolation of present-day trends such as the application of Freudian psychoanalysis to advertising, and municipal economic mismanagement, which Gooding and DeGraw foreground in their respective readings.

One of the strongest aspects of this collection is the representation of Latin American dystopias, beginning with an essay by María Odette Canivell, who highlights the distinction between "utopias for Latin America" and "utopias of Latin America"—the former, the imperialist utopian dreams European settlers had for the place after landing there; the latter, the legitimate utopian impulses of a population seeking a better world (240). She explores this through Angeles Mastretta's 1997 novel *Mal de Amores* [*Lovesick*]; again, I was a bit conflicted about the characterisation of *Lovesick* as a dystopian novel rather than a historical novel, but it is nonetheless relevant to this collection for its depiction of the tragic betrayal of the Mexican Revolution's utopian ideals.

Lysa Rivera's "Neoliberalism and Dystopia in US-Mexico Borderlands Fiction"

stands out as a particularly good examination of the use of science fiction to critique the hypocrisy and differential inclusion that characterize US policy towards Latin American immigrants; she traces connections between the past, present and future through a consideration of the *corrido*, a genre of Mexican ballads documenting oppression and injustice, as a forerunner of political science fiction films such as Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer* (2008). In an analysis of two novels by Homero Ardjis, Adam Spires also emphasizes the importance of tangible connections to the past, positing that Ardjis's work draws upon a cyclical conception of "mythological time" (352) to link Mexico's future with its Aztec history, establishing a cultural permanence opposed to the neoliberal order, in spite of Mexico's attempts to "catch up" with other industrialized nations (341). Zac Zimmer's "Archive Failure? *Cielos de la Tierra's* Historical Dystopia" cleverly contrasts Carmen Boullosa's threefold narrative—with one section set in the sixteenth century, one in the 1990s, and another in a post-apocalyptic future—with Francis Fukuyama's pronouncement of the "end of history" following the dissolution of the USSR; there is always an *after*, and there will come a day *after* the homogenizing effects of neoliberalism.

809

Finally, Luis Gómez Romero uses Carlos Fuentes's *La Silla del Águila* (2002) to examine the history of Mexico from the sixteenth century to the near future; where others might call that history a palimpsest, with its overlaid-yet-translucent combination of ancient and modern empires, cultures, and politics, Romero describes it as a "labyrinth," after a Borges story about a mythical unfinished novel that depicts every possible outcome of a given event occurring simultaneously. Following Canivell's piece on the utopian energies of yesteryear, the artistic and cultural continuity between past and future elucidated by Rivera and Spires, and Zimmer's assurance that a new world will eventually come after this one, Romero's meditation on Fuentes and Borges brings the theme of historical possibility to an apposite climax.

The anthology closes with Lee Konstantinou's essay "Another Novel Is Possible: Muckraking in Chris Bachelder's *U.S.!* and Robert Newman's *The Fountain at the Center of the World.*" This essay is notable for Kostantinou's coining of "The Franzen Orthodoxy," a very useful shorthand for the introspective, politically-noncommittal values of Anglo-American high-art 'realist' literature; at the same time, though, the American horror of 'monologic' narratives could have been interrogated a little more robustly. Still, this is a very interesting piece, and one which I will definitely cite in the near future.

In spite of my various objections and quibbles, I would definitely recommend this collection to students and researchers of science fiction, dystopian literature, and utopian studies. In addition to fascinating insights into individual texts, *Blast, Corrupt, Dismantle, Erase* provides a rhizomatic jumping-off point into a steadily diversifying field. You may disagree vehemently with some of the arguments and definitions put forth in its pages, but then, that is what continues to make dystopia so compelling.

CHUTE, HILLARY L. *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2016.

Harriet Earle, Sheffield Hallam University

810 Comics Studies has spent an inordinate amount of time defending itself, despite its existence within the academy since the 1980s. It seems as if any study of comics must begin with an explanation of why this form is worthy of scholarly attention. In truth, all literary and artistic forms go through a similar period of derision as they gain academic import and interest, but considering that comics are not a recent invention, this desire (or requirement) to argue for the comics form is starting to wear thin. With this in mind, any new text in the field must maintain a fine balance between arguing for the legitimacy of the form and avoiding an over-exuberant polemic against literary snobbery. In her 2016 book *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics and Documentary Form*, Hillary Chute navigates this tricky path and boldly suggests, as many others have, that rather than languishing in their history as disposable narratives of little value, the form has developed into one that is both innovative and forward-thinking: the comics form has repeatedly shown that it is capable of representing difficult topics precisely because it dares to “engage the difficulty of spectacle instead of turning away from it” (17). Her primary textual focus is narrow, and she concentrates on texts by Keiji Nakazawa, Art Spiegelman, and Joe Sacco, after providing a historical reading of comics and conflict through the examples of two printmakers, Jacques Callot and Francisco Goya.

That comics can do fascinating and diverse things with questions of representation is and of itself not a new suggestion; indeed, Chute’s book is one of many currently appearing in the academic marketplace that deal with the handling of trauma, conflicting, and witnessing in the comics form. These types of comics are among the most highly regarded within the field: “work that is historical and specifically ‘testimonial’ or testimonial is the strongest genre of comics” (Chute 6). She is explicit in her explanation of her corpus: she works with what she calls “documentary comics” —texts that represent historical events from the point of view of a witness, employing Lisa Gitelman’s definition of documentary as “an epistemic practice: the kind of knowing that is all wrapped up with showing, and showing wrapped up with knowing” (qtd. in Chute 18). Her categorization of texts by this definition is clear and many of the works considered, especially Joe Sacco’s works, are well-suited to this classification, although there is a wealth of theory that is thus ignored. Why, for example, does she decide to categorize the explicitly autobiographical *Maus* as documentary and not autographics? Are there ways in which the three artists herein discussed are *more than* just documentary but exist across different genres and categories? And what, if this is the case, does that say about such categories? These questions remain unanswered.

Regardless of questions of genre and categorization, Chute’s insistence that comics

are doing things with trauma that jars with traditional ideas of representation is a bold thread within the text: “Movingly, unflinchingly, comics works document, display, furnish. They engage the difficulty of spectacle instead of turning away from it. They risk representation” (Chute 17). One of the most important facets of contemporary trauma theory is the move away from seeing trauma as “unrepresentable” and positioning it more as an issue that raises questions of representation, agency, and affect. Chute brings comics to the fore as a form for the representation of trauma—and especially through the lens of witnessing—to add another prong to the intervention of contemporary trauma theory. If, indeed, trauma was so unrepresentable as previously believed, we would not have such a healthy corpus of comics that battle questions of trauma, that risk representation. If trauma is a highly visual experience, as many scholars believe it is, comics emerges as the preeminent form for its representation, as especially when those same narratives deal with “history.” The spatial syntax of comics “offer opportunities to place pressure on traditional notions of chronology, linearity, and causality—as well as on the idea that ‘history’ can ever be a closed discourse, or a simply progressive one” (Chute 4). It is in her analyses of historiographies and autobiographies that Chute’s fierce defence of comics as a valid and complex narrative form comes to the fore.

811

Chute’s truest contribution to the comics studies conversation is to be found in her historical grounding. In the first two chapters of the book, she positions modern documentary comics in the wider context of visual conflict arts, creating a clear chronological movement from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printmaking to the present day. Comics as a form have an unusual history: there is no definitive “first text,” and scholars are divided in their opinions of when comics in their modern incarnation first developed. Some scholars, including Scott McCloud and Danny Fingeroth, trace the lineage back as far as Egyptian tomb paintings and pictograms; others identify the first comic as *The Glasgow Looking-Glass* in 1825. Chute is not so expansive, and in forging a history that begins with the close text-image relationship of captioned etchings and political cartooning, she is able to argue effectively for the form’s importance as a vehicle for representations of conflict and trauma. Furthermore, rather than joining with other scholars who consider 1986 as the turning point for modern comics, Chute identifies 1972 as the key year. This is both the year of publication for Keiji Nakazawa’s *I Saw It* (the title a clear reference to Goya), and the year in which Art Spiegelman began *Maus*. Not only does this reconfiguring of the rise of the modern comic shift the narrative slightly, but it also clearly positions these two comics of conflict as central to the whole form.

There is much in Chute’s book that feels like she is revisiting much of her previous work, or of the general themes of contemporary comics scholarship. Previously, Chute has published on women comics artists (in *Graphic Women*, 2010) and has interviewed Art Spiegelman for *MetaMaus*, in which the artist talks about the creation of his award-winning comic *Maus*; she has published a number of peer-reviewed articles on a range of topics within comics, as well as co-editing several

volumes. Her career successes are impressive, but the themes and artists who inform her research appear over and over. It will not come as a surprise to readers of *Disaster Drawn* who are familiar with her corpus to find huge numbers of references to *Maus*. This is not to say that writing on a long-established and critically acclaimed text is to be discouraged, but with such a large corpus of other texts that provide a clearer fit for the documentary model—many of them of equal richness and narrative complexity as *Maus*, if not as widely acclaimed—Chute’s choices require more explanation for their inclusion than is provided.

812 Despite the slight feeling that we have read some of this before, *Disaster Drawn* comes together into a homologous whole. In placing the three primary texts, all from different comics traditions, in conversation with one another, Chute is able to trace, not only the historical development from Callot and Goya to Spiegelman and Sacco, but also how these historical reference points have radiated outwards into the international tradition. On reaching the final chapter, “Coda,” readers feel as though they are on a bus that is braking hard. There is no neat and tidy conclusion to wrap up this text. Instead, Chute launches into a closing discussion of several recent instances of comics and cartoons at the centre of controversy: most notably the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons that sparked violent protest in early 2006 and the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings on January 7, 2015. The text comes to an abrupt halt with a frank exhortation of the power of the image, of the Internet, and of the comics form: on discussing Coco Wang’s *Earthquake Strips*, a collection of comics about the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, Chute states “That Wang’s strips circulated so quickly and widely is a testament not only to the internet but also to the undimmed force of hand-drawn image” (Chute 265). There can be no better conclusion than this for a field that is fresh and emerging. The last word of this work is not a last word but a first one. *Disaster Drawn* is an opening into a new field of research and a fine introduction for the texts that will follow soon.

ANDREWS, CHRIS. *Roberto Bolaño’s Fiction: An Expanding Universe*. New York: Columbia UP, 2014. Pp. 279.

Antonin Mireault-Plante, Université Lyon 3 Jean Moulin

Chris Andrews, premier traducteur de Roberto Bolaño en langue anglaise, a fait paraître en 2014 cette étude assez complète sur les mécanismes de la fiction bolanienne et, accessoirement, sur sa réception dans le monde anglophone. Le livre s’interroge d’abord (ch. 1) sur les causes de cette étonnante réception, question qui, de l’aveu de l’auteur, n’est pas essentielle à l’étude présente et se tient quelque peu en retrait des autres chapitres. Le livre commence véritablement, dit-il, au chapitre deux, où s’enclenche l’analyse textuelle qui ne s’interrompra pas jusqu’à la fin du

septième et dernier chapitre. Globalement, le livre est aussi caractérisé par un mouvement interne, ou un changement (*shift*) dans l'arrière-plan conceptuel. L'analyse est d'abord focalisée sur la forme, passe ensuite au contenu, et aboutit aux « valeurs implicites » (*implicit values*) des œuvres à l'étude.¹ Il passerait donc, selon ses propres mots, de l'analyse narratologique à l'analyse philosophique, sans jamais toutefois abandonner le fil de la critique littéraire.

La question de l'excellente réception de Bolaño dans le monde anglophone n'est pas absolument sans rapport avec l'analyse textuelle, dans la mesure où Andrews croit que le succès fulgurant de Bolaño tient à son « extraordinaire productivité », laquelle tient à un « fiction-making system », terme qu'il s'approprie en l'empruntant à Nora Catelli. Andrews propose d'analyser ce système en approchant les œuvres d'un point de vue génétique, qui consiste à chercher des traces de méthode dans les œuvres achevées. Ces procédés sont : 1. l'expansion, par laquelle Bolaño fait « exploser » ses propres textes en introduisant des détails descriptifs et des actions subsidiaires, sans jamais déformer le récit dans sa totalité ; 2. la circulation des personnages (*circulating characters*), procédé se déclinant en trois types : le retour des personnages (d'une œuvre à l'autre), renommer les personnages (sans changer leur identité), et leur transfiguration ; 3. la métareprésentation, par quoi il introduit des textes ou des œuvres d'art imaginés. Ce procédé découle du faux résumé bourgeois (*pseudosummary*), dont Bolaño fait toutefois un usage fort différent : les œuvres imaginées ont une fonction a) réaliste, lorsqu'elles caractérisent le personnage (artiste) qui les produit, et b) ludique : l'évocation d'œuvres d'art improbables permet non seulement à Bolaño de se faire plaisir, dit Andrews, mais de détendre les exigences de vraisemblance propres à la fiction et d'activer l'imagination spéculative du lecteur ; 4. la surinterprétation, par quoi les personnages ou les narrateurs s'emparent (eux-mêmes) de certains détails infimes et les emplissent de sens, et inventent des histoires hypothétiques pour les raccorder et les expliquer. C'est là, selon Andrews, le seul procédé qui est souvent délégué aux personnages ou aux narrateurs, tandis que les trois premiers ne peuvent qu'être menés par l'auteur en tant qu'agent extérieur à l'œuvre.

Le troisième chapitre est consacré à l'étude des mécanismes de la tension narrative chez Bolaño. S'ensuit une analyse de plusieurs « stratégies », dont le suspens de genre (*generic suspense*), empruntant ses procédés, par exemple, au cinéma d'horreur et relevant principalement d'une provocation, chez le lecteur, à élaborer plus ou moins inconsciemment « ce qui va se passer ». Sont ensuite analysées quelques œuvres sous ce qu'Andrews appelle le « modèle Piglia-Martínez » (75), admettant deux « histoires » ou deux logiques différentes sous une nouvelle : la logique commune (*the logic of common sense*), et la logique fictionnelle, que l'auteur met en rapport de façon à créer l'ambiguïté faisant émerger la tension narrative. Dans les œuvres plus longues, particulièrement dans *2666*, la tension serait décentralisée, ne répondant pas à une « question » englobante, reposant plutôt sur des personnages marginaux. La dernière partie de ce chapitre est consacrée à le « poétique de l'inconclusion » du romancier, exploitant la continuité

et la fragmentation, aussi bien à l'oeuvre dans ses nouvelles que dans ses romans.

Le quatrième chapitre laisse un peu derrière les analyses techniques et formelles, pour se pencher sur la relation des personnages bolaniens au temps, plus précisément sur la façon dont ils s'expérimentent eux-mêmes dans le temps. Si ses personnages sont souvent sans but (*aimless*), c'est qu'ils dérivent dans un temps épisodique (fracturé, sans continuité), ce qui s'explique par deux choses : le climat politique qui a été celui de Bolaño (caractérisé par le déracinement et l'exil), et sa préférence esthétique pour les formes narratives discontinues, inconcluantes et errantes (*drifting*), Andrews renouant alors brièvement avec l'analyse formelle.

814 Les cinquième et sixième chapitres se penchent sur la latence de la violence et du mal dans l'oeuvre de Bolaño, délaissant définitivement l'analyse technique. Le cinquième chapitre établit une comparaison entre la violence, à la fois latente et actuelle, chez Bolaño, avec les travaux de Borges, afin d'en faire ressortir les différences, une fois passée la première impression de similitude. Chez le premier, la violence n'est pas inévitable, elle représente un test de courage ou de virilité et n'est pas, comme chez le second, l'occasion de la révélation d'un destin et d'une identité. Là, donc, où le duel borgésien est une épiphanie chez le personnage, et une culmination du récit, il est plutôt transitoire chez Bolaño, et ne concerne pas qu'un seul individu. L'auteur conclut en admettant toutefois que ces contrastes ne sont pas rigoureusement exacts, dans la mesure où ils ne prennent pas en compte les oeuvres tardives de Borges, où le duel épiphanique n'est plus présent. En cela, là où il y a confrontation physique, Bolaño se rapprocherait du dernier Borges. Le chapitre se clôt sur une discussion philosophique portant sur l'héroïsme bolanien et son rapport au temps. Selon une définition donnée par Bolaño lui-même en entrevue, l'héroïsme est l'empressement de sublimer ou mépriser sa propre vie, et son abandon désintéressé. La conception du temps de pareils héros est, encore selon R.B., marquée par l'absolu, comme une « opulence au ralenti » (*slow-motion luxury*), où une seconde peut équivaloir à dix ans. Le vrai héros est donc celui qui la capacité de dilater le temps et de s'y mouvoir plus lentement, de prendre le temps qu'il faut pour agir (ou non) face au danger. Andrews fait alors son entrée dans le domaine de l'éthique, puisque l'héroïsme qu'il décrit est souvent dirigé vers la protection d'autrui.

Le sixième chapitre étudie l'advenue du mal, en tant que « torts intolérables et raisonnablement prévisibles produits par d'inexcusables injustices », tel que défini par Claudia Card.² Ces torts apparaissent, dans les oeuvres de R.B., à travers quatre types de personnages : le complice, le dictateur, le sociopathe et l'administrateur. Le dictateur Pinochet (*Nocturno de Chile*) et le sociopathe Wieder (*Estrella Distante*) sont décrits de loin, à travers les yeux d'autres personnages, l'un sur le mode fantastique, l'autre satyrique. L'administrateur Sammer (2666) et le complice Urrutia Lacroix (*Nocturno de Chile*) entraînent eux-mêmes le lecteur dans leur monde mental. S'ils peuvent être décrits séparément en tant qu'ils contribuent chacun différemment à la réalisation du mal, R.B. tente aussi de tracer entre eux une relation symbiotique leur permettant d'encourager et de systématiser le crime. En exposant les relations entre

les différents éléments humains qui interviennent dans la réalisation du mal, R.B. fait son anatomie et offre ce qu'Andrews appelle une compréhension post-théologique de ses causes. Cette compréhension ne va toutefois jamais au fond des choses, entre autre parce que Bolaño ni ses personnages n'ont la réponse définitive sur « le secret du mal », mais parce que la résolution du problème du mal par une explication quelconque irait contre la stratégie narrative d'inconclusion et de stimulation de l'imagination du lecteur par l'exploitation de « trous » délibérés dans le tissu narratif (comme en témoignent tout particulièrement les textes *El secreto del mal*, et *La parte de los crimenes* dans 2666).

Dans le dernier chapitre, l'auteur tente de contrecarrer l'impression d'anomie³ et de vide éthique que les œuvres de R.B. provoquent en représentant la prostitution, la brutalité, l'usage de drogue comme des faits établis et normaux. Andrews croit au contraire que Roberto Bolaño, à l'instar de Ruwen Ogien,⁴ est un minimaliste éthique, ainsi qu'un ennemi du paternalisme, et que ses œuvres refusent l'idée de devoirs envers soi-même. Ce qui importerait en définitive, pour R.B., sont un petit nombre de qualités personnelles, qui se révèlent chez quelques personnages à travers la complexité de leur caractère et des situations où ils se retrouvent. Les vertus cardinales, du point de vue du romancier, seraient le courage et la générosité, faisant de lui un « anarchiste romantique », ce qui, argue Andrews, ne doit pas être compris péjorativement. R.B. privilégierait en effet les élans volontaires et spontanés de certaines formes de solidarité plutôt que les institutions, et son anarchisme prendrait la forme d'une pensée anti-hiérarchique, combattant l'attraction servile des puissants (et, pourrait-on ajouter, l'obéissance aveugle à ces mêmes puissants, comme l'administrateur Sammer qui obéit « innocemment » aux ordres du parti nazi). Le chapitre se clôt sur quelques caractéristiques du romantisme bolanien, privilégiant la poésie comprise non seulement comme activité artistique, mais comme un mode de vie aventureux. Son romantisme apparaîtrait aussi dans l'ouverture et l'immaturité « achevée », autant dans la vie que dans l'art, où ces qualités signifient : faire confiance au jeu risqué de l'imagination (et de la vie), et se jeter dans le vide sans l'assurance de résultats justifiables.

Un livre en somme très didactique. Chaque partie débute par une explication théorique simple et bien référencée, suivie d'une multitude d'exemples puisés dans les œuvres, rendant le propos très clair. On souhaiterait pourtant que l'auteur trace davantage de rapports entre les parties de son livre : par exemple, comment le maintien de la tension narrative, par les procédés énumérés, contribue en même temps à l'expansion et à l'éclatement des œuvres, ou comment la surinterprétation peut contribuer aussi au suspense, en introduisant des signes étranges et ambigus dans le moindre détail. Aussi, au troisième chapitre, Andrews semble négliger certains aspects de 2666 en affirmant que la tension narrative est décentralisée. C'est, semble-t-il, oublier que les cinq livres qui le composent sont joints par une sorte de tension métaphorique qui va bien au-delà de celle générée par la vie des personnages marginaux. Enfin, à cause d'un manque de regard global sur ses propres analyses, Andrews

semble passer à côté de certaines interprétations très stimulantes, qui, toutefois, peuvent être facilement réalisées par le lecteur grâce à ce très bon panorama des œuvres de l'auteur chilien.

NOTES

1. « I will be concentrating here on the published fiction itself and asking how it was (and is) composed, how it manages narrative tension, how Bolano's characters experience their selves in time, how they damage and protect one another, and what ethical and political values are implied by their interactions » (xi).
2. « reasonably foreseeable intolerable harms produced by inexcusable wrongs » (Card 18 ; cité dans Andrews 149).
3. Du grec : *a-nomos* : sans loi.
4. Philosophe français, auteur de *L'État nous rend-il meilleurs ? Essai sur la liberté politique* (2013).

816

OUVRAGES CITÉS

Card, Claudia. *Confronting Evils : Terrorism, Torture, Genocide*. Cambridge UP, 2010.

Ogien, Ruwen. *L'État nous rend-il meilleurs ? Essai sur la liberté politique*. Gallimard, 2013.

DABASHI, HAMID. *Persophilia: Persian Culture on the Global Scene*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2015. Pp. 285.

Leila Moayeri Pazargadi, Nevada State College

Persophilia: it is this compelling title that heralds scholar Hamid Dabashi's latest work, and perhaps his most striking contribution to postcolonial, comparative, literary, and Persian studies. Offering his readers new insight into the way Europeans conceived of and shaped representations of Persian literature, culture, and aesthetics, Dabashi, Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, provides us with a Persian counterpart to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Not only does Dabashi sketch out the various ways in which Europeans have attempted to represent Persia, but he also traces the ways in which Persianate cultures have been affected by these attempts of representation. Building upon the theories of Edward Said, Raymond Schwab, and Jürgen Habermas, Dabashi employs a comparative, critical approach to directly assess what would have been formerly considered an orientalist preoccupation with all things Persian. Just as Said's *Orientalism* was groundbreaking for contemporary Middle Eastern cultural

studies, so is Dabashi's twelve-chapter study similarly innovative for Persian studies, as it cleverly resurrects Persophilia not only as a designation, but as a diagnosis for Europeans who are obsessed and fascinated with representing Persia.

Dabashi begins his discussion by investigating the epistemologies, attitudes, and movements of European and American Persophiles preoccupied with Persia and its peoples. Not only concerned with Euro-American motivations for carrying out such projects, Dabashi is also invested in tracing the legacy of imperial Persophilia on contemporary Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. In his text, the author strives to "focus on the consequences for Iranians of this European (and therefore global) interest, in the form of a potent case study that inquires what happened when people on the colonial side of the imperial divide saw themselves in these European mirrors?" (Dabashi 4). What ensues is a project that evaluates European representations of Persia and the self-fashioning of Iranians, who look at themselves through the prism of European primacy. Indeed, these infinity mirrors reflecting Persian and European dynamics illuminate how European perceptions of the Persian court spilled into the competing public spaces of European intellectualism and Persian nationalism.

817

By critically engaging Raymond Schwab's *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Discovery of India and the East: 1680-1880* along with Said's works, Dabashi points out that European Orientalism did not remain in Europe, but *travelled* to Iran to take on a new form. In doing so, Dabashi borrows the notion of "travelling" from Said and fills in gaps left behind by both Said and Schwab, who primarily focus on Eurocentric formulations of the Orient, and thus ignore the ways in which those notions resurfaced in those imagined spaces, building into replicated discourses and anticolonial rhetoric at the site of the European representation: Persia. Persian studies scholars will find this an interesting argument and echo of Jalal al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi/West Strickenness* (1962), which critiqued Iranians for their superficial fascination with Western culture and adoption of cultural modes for expression. In their reverence, some Persians narcissistically enjoyed the images that the West created, which al-e Ahmad warned would result in a loss of Persian cultural codes, customs, values, and aesthetics (Dabashi 22-23). For postcolonial scholars, Dabashi's discussion and use of Schwab and Said point out how fascination with Persia left a space for the "west" to colonize, control, orientalize, and geopolitically cannibalize the "east," despite fearing literal cannibalization during the colonial encounter.

At the heart of Dabashi's evaluation is an interest in the ensuing conceptions of homeland by Persians who are ironically afflicted with European Persophilia. While Dabashi offers numerous examples of Persophilia and explores how scholars engaged with the phenomenon, he also focuses on its (un)intended consequences for Persian civil identity in the public sphere. As Dabashi notes, "I am interested in Persian cultural heritage and what happens to it when, in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and under the influence of European imperial encroachment, it finally exited the Persianate court and emerged to form a bona fide *public space* that it would eventually call *Vatan/Homeland*" (11; emphasis in original). By com-

binning Jürgen Habermas's work on the bourgeois public sphere in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962) with Schwab's and Said's discussions of Orientalism, Dabashi hopes to show that Iranian public spaces and subsequent conceptions of identity were infected by Europeanized portrayals of Persians in Europe. His aim, perhaps not always in view, is to show how the "postcolonial public sphere was triggered by the European bourgeois public sphere in formal and representational affiliations" (228) and how Iranians either rejected European representations or conversely supported and recycled those representations.

818 What is impressive and most interesting about Dabashi's text is that his investigation surveys an expanse of European Persophiles and Persian subjects and receivers alike. European figures in this study include Montesquieu, Sir William Jones, Goethe, Hegel, Nietzsche, Mozart, Edward FitzGerald, Matthew Arnold, James Morier, and E.G. Browne, all of whom encounter and refashion Persian artifacts, literature, music, and culture according to their own perceptions and values. Persian figures include Zoroaster, Hafez, Omar Khayyam, Sa'di, Ferdowsi, and Sadeh Hedayat, amongst others, who are discussed against the backdrop of Persian culture, court, and politics. To prove his thesis, Dabashi begins this extensive survey with European literary, musical, and artistic representations of Cyrus the Great, the most ancient and perhaps most famous figure of his study. It is worth pausing a moment and evaluating Dabashi's discussion of Cyrus the Great in his first chapter, "Distant Memories of the Biblical and Classical Heritage," as a means for gaining insight into his approach throughout the text.

Cyrus the Great, who is heralded in the Bible as the emancipator of the Jews enslaved in the Babylonian captivity, has been widely celebrated as a hero in popular European narratives, most notably in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (approx. 370 BCE). Extensions of Cyrus the Great are today more popularly found not just in *Cyropaedia*, but also in the Cyrus Cylinder, an ancient (approx. 2600 years old) clay cylinder marking the Babylon capture of 539 BCE. Celebrated as an early human rights record freeing Jewish slaves in the region, or merely reporting the Babylonian conquests, as it never names the Jewish people, the cylinder left the British Museum in 2013 and toured five American museums, where it was linked to *Cyropaedia*, Thomas Jefferson's ownership of the text, and the state of Iran/US politics (Dabashi 30; Joneidi). Perhaps just as striking as the cylinder itself are the discussions recontextualizing its connection to the US. As Dabashi notes, the Smithsonian exhibition at the Freer and Sackler galleries showcased Jefferson's copy of *Cyropaedia*, about which he had told his grandson, "when you start learning Greek, the first book you should read is *Cyropaedia*, applauding Cyrus's rule as one based on social diversity and tolerance" (Dabashi 31). Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, also lauded Cyrus for presenting the Middle East with an archetype for multiculturalism as a legacy (32).

However, as Dabashi aptly points out, many scholars refashion Cyrus the Great and his cylinder according to their own perceptions, whether it is MacGregor using

anachronistic evaluations of the past, or Klaus Gallas and Josef Wiesehofer, amongst others, who suggest that Cyrus the Great may have been a shrewd politician apt to spread his political influence as opposed to showcasing his benevolence (33). Almost as an allegory, the cylinder comes to symbolize more than just the declaration of the Babylonian conquests; it also becomes evidence of the ways in which Euro-American scholars and figures have refashioned Cyrus the Great, the cylinder, and the Persian Empire to suit statements of comparison and/or contrast to themselves. This site of comparison is often replicated in the retelling of the Persian loss to the 300 Spartans outnumbered at the Battle of Thermopylae (480 BCE). More recently, and perhaps most offensively to Iranians, was the example of Zack Snyder's 2007 film *300*, which recycled European narratives of defeating Persians long after the battle (33). *300*, which depicts the Persians as grotesque villains, pits noble Spartans against savage Persians in such a way as to make thematic references to contemporary politics as well. As Dabashi points out, *300* continues a fascination with the Battle at Thermopylae expressed earlier in European operas by Francesco Cavalli (1654), Giovanni Bononcini (1694), and George Frederic Handel (1738), but reduces it to an "Iranophobia" instead (33). After surveying Cyrus the Great, his cylinder, and the Persians, Dabashi demonstrates the many ways in which these figures and symbols were created as fantasy and mythology, corresponding to Said's notion that much of the so-called Orient was an "European invention" (Said 1).

819

While most critiques might end here, the second component of Dabashi's argument discusses how Persians reconceptualized themselves through this European image of Cyrus. Centuries-old European Persophilia would give rise to archaeologists, philologists, and good old-fashioned Orientalists from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, who were interested in studying Persia, Persians, and the Persian language. One such figure, notable to this reviewer, is Major General Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, the British East India Company army officer who deciphered cuneiform after scaling the precariously high inscription on Behistun in 1836. What is not commonly known, as Dabashi points out, is that, while much of the copying of the inscription was completed by and credited to Rawlinson, it was in fact a "wild Kurdish boy" who scaled the most perilous part of the inscription, as uncovered by David Damrosch and quoted by Dabashi (43). The Kurdish boy serves as the link between British Orientalism and its representation of Persian history and language; he has a role in gathering the data or supplying the means to acquire evidence, but does not play a role in shaping the representation of Persia. One apt example of Dabashi's interest in the intersection between Europeans and Persians is that while Persians may have a vested interest in representing their history, they may only be means of helping Europeans shape that representation, a representation that they in turn imbibe when constructing their own identity and history. As I found in my research on the photography of Italian military officer and photographer Luigi Pesce, who in 1860 gifted two separate photograph albums depicting Behistun, Persepolis, and the Qajar court to both Nasir al-din Shah and Major General Sir Henry

Creswicke Rawlinson, the ways in which his albumen prints were shot and placed together were later reabsorbed into the Persian imperial psyche as confirmation of its own grandeur and historical legacy extending from previous dynasties (Pazargadi and Terpak 59). Just as the Qajars used photographs to link their monarchic rights to previous dynastic sites, Dabashi argues that Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic of Iran, at various points, both used the Cyrus Cylinder to extend and legitimate their own powers. The author's unpacking of complicated discussions about the ways European study and representation of Persia affected Iranian perceptions of their own history and identity, whether recycled or rejected, is commendable.

Other compelling discussions are threaded throughout the text. In Chapter Two, "Montesquieu, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Rise of Persian Liberal Nationalism," Dabashi explores reactions to Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), which are widely viewed as responsible for contributing to the rise of European orientalism. He not only evaluates how the *Persian Letters* stand allegorically for French politics through the imagined frame of the Persian court, but also how the text contributed to "Francophone liberalism among the Iranian public intellectuals of the Constitutional period (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries)" (56). Scholars of modernist Persian poetry will be interested in noting its influence on celebrated poets such as Iraj Mirza, Mirzadeh Eshqi, Aref Qazvini, and Ali Akbar Dehkhoda, amongst others (56). Moreover, Dabashi's discussions of Occidentalism as they relate to the work of Iranian Studies scholars such as M.R. Ghanoonparvar and Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi is intriguing, particularly since he disagrees with some of Tavakoli-Targhi's arguments. What results is a fascinating discussion of the reconceptualization of Persian culture and the public space by Iranian figures and scholars who continue to push back against colonial rhetoric.

Chapter Three, "Sir William Jones, Orientalist Philology, and Persian Linguistic Nationalism," and Chapter Four, "Goethe, Hegel, Hafez, and Company," will be of interest to linguistics, rhetoric, and literature scholars. Chapter Three compellingly focuses on how the Persian language was nationalized and Europeanized through its categorization as Indo-European (76), which also came at the expense of excluding sub-nationalized languages and identities such as Kurdish, Azari, or Baluchi (79). Dabashi notes that the Europeanization of Persian language and literature aided European colonialists to continue projecting their perceptions of Persia through translations and paraphrases of literature and culture. In German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel's case, for instance, Persia serves as a pseudo-Europeanized space contrasting to the "repellent characteristics, pervading every single feature" of Indian society (Hegel, qtd. in Dabashi 91). Hegel's assessment, like those of so many other Persophiles, illustrates not only how notable European orientalist recreated Persia in their own image, but also how Iranians problematically internalized discussions reinforcing their privilege as compared to their regional Arab and South Asian counterparts.

The exploration of the Iranian public sphere and its various internalizations and

converse reactions to Persophilic European explorations of Persia reoccur throughout later chapters, during which Dabashi observes an overlap between “east” and “west,” not as binaries, but as global public spheres producing knowledge influencing one another. The epistemologies created at the site of European bourgeois public spaces do not stay within their boundaries, but rather travel to the sites of representation, wherein they precipitate the “formation of the Iranian public sphere, reminded it of its own imperial age, resolved its cultural paradox, and created a new *public reason*” (226). Although *Persophilia* is an ambitious text that by its very nature will spark debate amongst scholars specializing in the innumerable fields it discusses, it ultimately provides an alternative mode for evaluating Iranian cultural history, rendering Iranians as agents of their own epistemic legacies, rather than products of European fantasies.

WORKS CITED

821

- Joneidi, Khashayar. “Cyrus Cylinder: How a Persian Monarch Inspired Jefferson.” *BBC News*, 11 Mar. 2013, www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-21747567
- Pazargadi, Leila Moayeri, and Frances Terpak. “Picturing Qājār Persia: A Gift to Major-General Henry Creswicke Rawlinson.” *Getty Research Journal*, vol. 6, 2014, pp. 47-62.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1994.

BUCHHOLTZ, MIROŚŁAWA, AND EUGENIA SOJKA, EDS. *Alice Munro: Reminiscence, Interpretation, Adaptation, and Comparison*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2015. Pp. 226.

Grzegorz Konecniak, Nicolaus Copernicus University

Most book-form criticism on Alice Munro, notwithstanding her ultimate literary success in 2013 with a Nobel Prize in Literature, comes from the period between as early as the 1980s and as recent as 2015. Select publications include, for example, *Probable Fictions: Alice Munro's Narrative Acts* (1983) by Louis King MacKendrick, *Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel* (1987) by Walter Rintoul Martin, *Alice Munro* (1988) by E.D. Blodgett, *Dance of the Sexes: Art and Gender in the Fiction of Alice Munro* (1990) by Beverly Jean Rasporich, *Mothers and Other Clowns: The Stories of Alice Munro* (1992) by Magdalene Redekop, *The Tumble of Reason: Alice Munro's Discourse of Absence* (1994) by Ajay Heble, *Alice Munro: A Double Life* (1995) by Catherine Sheldrick Ross, *Alice Munro* (1998) by Coral Ann Howells, *Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives: A Biography* (2005, 2011) by Robert Thacker, *The Fiction of Alice Munro:*

An Appreciation (2008) by Brad Hooper, *Alice Munro* (2009) by Harold Bloom, and *Alice Munro's Narrative Art* (2011) by Isla Duncan. The list is not exhaustive; yet, it is sufficient to prove long-standing scholarly interest in Munro's life and the issues addressed in her fiction. Of particular interest is the emphasis on the biographical aspect, bearing in mind that she is a secretive, self-effacing author, despite numerous autobiographical allusions in her work. *Alice Munro: Reminiscence, Interpretation, Adaptation and Comparison*, a volume edited by Mirosława Buchholtz (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland) and Eugenia Sojka (University of Silesia, Poland) has been an important contribution to book-form criticism of Munro since the writer received the Nobel Prize in 2013. The editors are experts on Canadian literature whose contributions to the development and promotion of Canadian studies reach far beyond the Polish borders and are international in scope. Both also share significant experience in directing Canadian research centres in Poland: Professor Mirosława Buchholtz was the director of the Canadian Resource Centre in Toruń and dr hab. Eugenia Sojka has been a long-time director of the Canadian Studies Centre in Sosnowiec. Their recent co-edited contribution on Munro includes personal recollections shared by those who have met the Canadian writer (the first part, "Reminiscence"), insightful hermeneutical analyses of Munro's short prose (the second part, "Interpretation"), critical and cross-sectional discussion of Munro's work adapted for various media (the third part, "Adaptation"), and thought-provoking juxtapositions of Munro's literary activity with the oeuvre and heritage of other writers and artists (the fourth part, "Comparison").

822

The opening article, "Intertextual Encounters with Alice Munro: Introduction," by Eugenia Sojka and Mirosława Buchholtz" (7-14), sets the goal of examining "a critical international and intercultural standpoint on Munro's art of short story writing that is not limited to a literary interpretation of the genre, but also gives critical perspectives on film and stage adaptations of her work" (8). The editors certainly deliver on this promise because the scope of the volume indeed extends beyond the limits of literary studies and the examination of the short story form in Parts II and III. The collection also includes "comparative analyses with Mavis Gallant's and Eudora Welty's writing by academics from Poland, Canada and France" with a contribution from George Elliott Clarke, informed by a postcolonial perspective; additionally, the volume features "exclusive reminiscences of encounters with the author by such Canadian writers as Tomson Highway and Daphne Marlatt" (8). These aspects of the collection are covered in Parts IV and I, respectively. The specific goals, as set by the editors, determine the order in which the essays will be reviewed here: starting with Parts II and III, then moving into Part IV, and finally to Part I.

The first article in Part II is Lola Lemire Tostevin's "A Touch of Evil in Carstairs" (35-41). Tostevin argues that Munro's stories are about "secrets, fantasies and, ultimately, the confinement of violence found at the heart of the human condition" (35; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 10). The article, intended as evidence of the universality of Munro's short prose, presents a convincing analysis of Munro's characters and

their relation to extra-literary reality (41). As Tostevin concludes, in Munro's figures "readers may [...] recognize themselves and their circumstances" (41). Kim Aubrey's "A Process of Discovery: Exploring Narrative Structure and Tension in Two Short Stories by Alice Munro" (43-57) discusses the stories "Floating Bridge" and "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," which appear in the 2001 collection *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (Aubrey 43; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 10). Aubrey's aim is "to track [her] own search for meaning in Munro's arrangement and juxtaposition of separate sections of prose, and in the tension [Munro] develops between the emotional weight and emotional core of the stories" (Aubrey 45). In other words, she seeks to "explore how the stories move back and forth and around this central conflict, as the narrative alternately hints at and distracts from what lies at the centre" (Aubrey 45). Such endeavours make the article worth reading, as they imply that the two short stories do not yield themselves easily to a narratological analysis and cannot be interpreted in a straightforwardly verifiable manner, which is supported by Aubrey's discussion of Munro's works.

823

Corinne Bigot's "Ghost Texts, Patterns of Entrapment, and Lines of Flight: Reading Stories from *Too Much Happiness* and *Dear Life* in Connection with Earlier Stories" (59-73; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 10) investigates intertextual influences in Munro's work. Alicja Piechucka's article "[T]hat Embarrassed Me Considerably. As It Would Any Man': The Masculinity Crisis in Alice Munro's *Dear Life*" (75-92) offers a compelling examination of several stories from the collection *Dear Life* through the prism of feminism and representations of femininity (Piechucka 75-76). The author seeks "to explore a phenomenon which has psychological, social and sexual dimensions, and which, [she] would argue, may be traced in Alice Munro's *Dear Life*. The phenomenon in question is the masculinity crisis, to which ambiguity is central" (Piechucka 76; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 11). She acknowledges W.H. New's observation that ambiguity is a key concept in Munro's works in general (New 299, qtd. in Piechucka 76), while defending her interpretations of Munro's male characters—"Alister Fox: the failed paternalist" (78), "Howard Ritchie: the cowardly crook" (81), "The narrator of 'Pride': the self-conscious celibate" (83), and "Jackson Adams: the traumatized runaway" (87)—through an in-depth examination of plot structure and character construction.

Part III contains three articles. The first of these, Katarzyna Więckowska's "Adaptation in Alice Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?*" (95-105), takes into account various definitions of the process of adaptation and discusses the title, the collection as a whole, and the individual stories in Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* (Więckowska 96; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 11). Więckowska discusses some of the key concepts related to adaptation, including "formation of identity," "use of stories and storytelling," "theatricality," and "brokenness and constant interruption" (96; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 11), present in Munro's work. Each thematic, critical, social, and genre-related aspect of adaptation is carefully explored and interpreted.

The second article in Part III, Shelley Scott's "*Courting Johanna*: Adapting Munro

for the Stage” (107-27), is based on her experience directing a performance of the play *Courting Johanna* (2009) at the University of Lethbridge in 2014 (Scott 107; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 11) and includes photographs from that production. The play, written by Marcia Johnson, is an adaptation of Munro’s story “Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage” (2001) that premiered in Blyth, Ontario in 2008 (Scott 107; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 11). By applying “a transmedia perspective” (Scott 107; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 11), Scott contends “that by its media specificity—its very nature—theatre can assist a story like this one by Alice Munro to reveal its own nature” (Scott 120).

824 Marta Sibierska’s “Exploration—Adaptation: Towards Redefining the Relation between Literature and Film: The Case of *Hateship Loveship*” (129-44) concludes the discussion of adaptations of Munro’s work. The author asks whether one can “claim that *Hateship Loveship* ‘explores’ rather than ‘adapts’ the Alice Munro story,” and states her intent to prove “that [...] indeed [one can do] so” (Sibierska 130). By discussing the origin of research into adaptation (130-33; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 11-12) and its movement toward “exploration” (133-37; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 11-12), Sibierska examines how *Hateship Loveship* “explores” Munro’s story (137-50; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 11-12). On a universal level, Sibierska’s essay, inspires one to take a critical stance on the presumed superiority of literary works over their adaptations: as the author states, “[n]ot every adaptation is an exploration” (Sibierska 142; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 12), a comment that makes Sibierska’s article itself a space for exploration.

Part IV addresses comparative studies. George Elliott Clarke’s “Alice Munro’s Black Bottom; or Black Tints and Euro Hints in *Lives of Girls and Women*” (147-71) explores Del Jordan’s entry into adult sexuality, and then moves into the postcolonial dimensions of this collection. Małgorzata Poks’s “Impossible Escape from Jubilee and Winesburg: The Making of an Artist” (173-86) compares Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* to Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women* from the perspectives of dislocation and literary development. Similarly, Agnieszka Salska’s “Place in Fiction: Alice Munro, Eudora Welty, and the Tradition of American Small-town Stories” (187-202), notes that “For all the differences of time and place, differences of style and narrative structures that separate the two authors, I cannot help hearing echoes of stories by Welty in stories by Munro” (193), convincingly exploring such “echoes,” as well as the differences between these two authors and their works, with a sense of interpretive objectivity.

The final essay in Part IV, and in the collection as a whole, is Mirosława Buchholtz’s “The Canadian Junction: Mavis Gallant’s and Alice Munro’s Narrative Practice” (203-20). Where Salska uses Munro’s comment on the influence of Eudora Welty as inspiration, Buchholtz notes that comparisons of Munro and Gallant are fairly uncommon, for though “reviewers felt inclined to yoke the two Canadians together [...], scholars have tended to focus either on Munro or on Gallant” (203) or to refer to Munro in passing in studies of Gallant. Buchholtz “places both Gallant’s life and

fiction in the foreground as a lens through which Munro's literary career might be viewed" (213), concluding that their techniques are similar in many ways, though the differences are acknowledged in the introduction and the conclusion of the essay. The "Canadian junction" of the essay's title is Buchholtz's analysis of the similarities and differences in the lives and works of Gallant and Munro (Buchholtz 217; see also Buchholtz and Sojka 13).

I discuss Part I last, as it can be said to serve as a psychological and personal invitation to the more "inter-subjectively verified" (to draw on Roman Ingarden's phenomenological hermeneutics) parts of the volume discussed above. Daphne Marlatt's poem "*Just before...she wrote*" (17) views Munro through the lens of her fiction and gives a sense of the experience of reading *Lives of Girls and Women* when it was first published in the late 1960s. Marlatt's poem concludes of Munro's oeuvre that "the perceptions conveyed in her fiction have gained generational depth, layer on layer. Foundational" (Marlatt 7), and the articles in Parts II-IV of this collection approach that depth from various perspectives. Tomson Highway's "Two Stories" (19-20) is a personal recollection of two meetings with Munro: the first time at a party in 1975 or 1976 (19), and the second "some 22 or 23 years later" (Highway 19; see Buchholtz and Sojka 10). His reminiscence of Munro and the sources of her inspiration gives valuable insights into the person behind the Nobel Prize acclaim. In "Three Encounters with Alice Munro" (21-31), Gerald Lynch gives details of meetings with Munro through reading her story "Walker Brothers Cowboy" (21), in person at the University of Ottawa (23), and by co-organizing the Alice Munro Symposium in Ottawa in 2014, which Lynch regards "as some payment of the interest owing on a lifelong reader's debt" (29; see Buchholtz and Sojka 10). The third encounter is a personal account of the literary development of Munro through the prism of first a reader and then a scholar, which also features a fascinating history of Munro's childhood. The word "reminiscence" in the title of the anthology implies something individual and intimate, shared between Munro's fellow writers, the editors of the collection, and the readers of these insightful and reflective commentaries on her life and works.

Alice Munro: Reminiscence, Interpretation, Adaptation and Comparison fulfills the promises of its introductory chapter while also indicating new research directions. The "symphonic structure" mentioned at the beginning of the anthology becomes a logical flow of academic and personal readings, supported by textual and critical evidence, of surprising juxtapositions and appropriations of Munro's work and its literary and cultural realities.