

## Reviews

Nadine Attewell. *Better Britons: Reproduction, National Identity, and the Afterlife of Empire*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. 324 pp. \$65.00.

On 12 March 2016, Leilani Muir died at her home in Devon, Alberta, leaving no heirs. Muir came to national attention in 1995, when she sued the government of Alberta for wrongful sterilization, forcing Canadians to acknowledge the extent to which the state actively intervened in the reproductive lives of its citizens. Muir herself was sterilized in 1959, and the Alberta Sexual Sterilization Act was not repealed until 1972, nearly five years after a young Pierre Elliot Trudeau uttered his famous phrase, which has since become an integral part of Canada's self-image as a nation of liberal toleration: "there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation" ("There's no place").

The frightening durability of eugenicist policies within putatively advanced Western liberal democracies is the occasion for Nadine Attewell's *Better Britons*, which in five chapters evaluates the imbrication of reproductive crises in cultural and political responses to Britain's imperial future beginning at the *fin de siècle*. At this time, serious conversations began about imperial decline. Duncan Bell's *The Idea of Greater Britain*

(2007) describes how many were attracted by the idea of uniting the United Kingdom and its settler colonies in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa into a globe-spanning political community of “Anglo-Saxons” (see Bell). *Better Britons* moves across this landscape—focusing mainly on Australia and New Zealand—reflecting “on the centrality of reproduction to settler and British projects of nation building” (4). Skilfully weaving postcolonial with feminist, queer, and critical race theory, Attewell explains how decolonizing settler colonies felt “a crisis of inheritance” over the shape of their postcolonial national identity. To understand that crisis, she assembles a diversity of documents, including not only fiction and film but also official memoranda, speeches, photographs, and newspaper reports aimed at manufacturing “better Britons” worthy of inheriting the postcolonial future.

Chapter one identifies a paradox: whilst fictions that explore eugenicist fantasies are still read—and read widely!—today for their “prophetic relevance” (36), the contemporary state policies designed to manage reproduction are consigned to a quiet section of the history books. By returning the literary texts to their historical contexts, Attewell brings key elements of both into sharper relief. Here attention rests upon Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), H.G. Wells’s *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), and Eleanor Dark’s *Prelude to Christopher* (1934). For Attewell what unites these texts is their shared interest in representing the crises of reproduction both within the colony and across the empire in the utopian form. In each, “the voyage *out*, to an insular site marked out ... for colonization, occasions a voyage *in*, to an insular site marked as metropolitan” (37). This places Attewell’s book within scholarship that resists the centre-periphery model of imperialism and rather views the Empire as a circuit, across which ideas, commodities, and bodies traffic with increasing ungovernability.

Chapter two examines a specific reproductive project of the early twentieth century. The “White Australia” policy encompassed attempts by the nascent Australian state to manage its population biopolitically, through legislation like the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 and the rhetoric of politicians like James Deakin, the prime minister who believed his nation was animated by “the desire that we should be one people, and remain one people, without the admixture of other races” (84). These are instances of conservative biopolitics—that is, attempts to manage the gene pool by reducing intercourse between races. Attewell approaches “White Australia” quite differently, by focusing on its radical counterpart: the so-called “breeding out the colour” project practised in Australia’s frontier jurisdictions. This project practises radical biopolitics insofar as,

instead of restricting, it *encouraged* intercourse, “an attempt at [the] biological absorption” of the Aboriginal population into the (white) national body politic (71). By returning to the official archives, Attewell recovers a series of memoranda replete with rhetorical gymnastics that attempt to justify this project under the umbrella of conservative biopolitics. However, rather than point out their hypocrisy, she reads them at their word in order to ask more fundamental questions about producing whiteness in a settler colony, where it is impossible to reconcile national identity and sovereignty with geography. For Attewell, these documents highlight the anxious efforts to re-spatialize the national territory in ways that indigenize white subjects.

These chapters form part one of *Better Britons*. Taken together, they highlight how reproductive projects “bear especially heavily on women as embodied subjects who do much of, and are identified with, the labour of reproduction” (113). Part two examines occasions when women resist or refuse to accept their roles in the fantasy of national reproduction. Chapter three reflects upon the politics of abortion, using 1934 novels by Jean Rhys and F. Tennyson Jesse alongside contemporary political and scientific conversations about the failure of the nation to reproduce enough (of the right kind of) citizens for the next generation. Chapter four turns to texts where children become the object of ideological capture for the postimperial future. Attewell works with two texts by New Zealand author Robin Hyde that use a particularly morbid version of *apotropaïos*—a narrative strategy designed to ward off future evils—wherein “children are secured against a threatening future through being denied any future at all” (28). Chapter five moves to postcolonial England, a nation increasingly caught up in the wider “demographic panic” in postwar Europe, where declining birthrates became entangled in rhetoric around fear about “undesirable” immigration populations.

Quickly we appreciate the value of Attewell’s study. Anyone who has read chapter two knows how this has all happened before, when Australian policymakers feared an “Asian tidal wave” (84) overwhelming the national gene pool and, hence, culture. All you need do is replace “Asian” with “West Indian” in the 1960s and 1970s or “Muslim” in the 1990s and 2000s, and you have practically generated a *Daily Mail* headline. The difference is that early twentieth century politics offered the option to pursue explicitly eugenicist projects, and so imagine a better future. The postwar era, in the shadow of the Holocaust, offers no such hope for the would-be eugenicist. For Attewell, this explains why postwar anxieties about the national future are expressed in apocalyptic rather than utopian tones. The chapter identi-

fies the turn toward the apocalyptic genre, beginning with a discussion of Enoch Powell's infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech of 1968, using Powell's rhetoric against (black and brown) immigrants from the Commonwealth as a lens through which to read how "panics of engulfment and disintegration" (171) are represented in speculative fiction and film, with an emphasis on Danny Boyle's 2002 zombie apocalypse film *28 Days Later*.

The strength of Attewell's study is its ability to use the case study as a method to illuminate a cultural movement that extends over a century and over a globe. While the arguments she develops from those case studies are compelling, I sometimes wished she would give a sense of the larger archive from which her chosen texts were selected. As Attewell acknowledges in her introduction, eugenics was in the cultural mainstream in the early twentieth century, and Donald Childs has shown how influential eugenical thought was on writers like Woolf, Yeats, Shaw, and others. Since Attewell writes so thoughtfully in chapter two about her own experience in the Australian colonial archives, I was surprised that elsewhere she doesn't acknowledge the depth of her literary archive. Without it, the rationale for grouping Wells, Huxley, and Dark in chapter one seems eclectic at best: is it a novel from the 1890s and a pair from the 1930s? or, a novel by a woman from the colonial periphery and a pair by canonical men based in the imperial metropolis? There are virtues to the case study approach, to be sure. When it is done well, it performs something akin to what Walter Benjamin identifies as the first step toward a properly historical materialism, carrying "over the principle of montage into history": "That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event. And, therefore, to break with vulgar historical naturalism. To grasp the construction of history as such" (461).

Attewell's focus on specific moments of reproductive crisis across diverse geographies and genres allows her to illuminate the centrality of reproductive projects to shaping the "better" civic subjects in both decolonizing and postcolonial contexts. In doing so, *Better Britons* makes a welcome and valuable contribution to the field of empire studies.

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Smaro Kamboureli and Christl Verduyn, eds. *Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2014. 286pp. \$42.99.

*Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies*, edited by Smaro Kamboureli and Christl Verduyn, is the third edited collection from the TransCanada Institute’s conference series that began in 2005. The three collections cumulatively attempt to think across the field of Canadian literature as it is complicit in or challenges the formation of nation and the field as institution, methodology, and, ultimately, collaborative and transformative politics. Consistent with all of these collections are their authoritative weight. All of the contributors are long-established experts in their respective fields, the majority in literary criticism. *Critical Collaborations*, comprised of twelve essays, plus an introduction by co-editor Smaro Kamboureli, shifts slightly from the two earlier collections. Although the first two collections include Indigenous scholarship, environmental scholarship is absent. In its inclusion of ecological thinking, *Critical Collaborations* can be seen as either a corrective or as a deliberate wind-up to the conference series. Either way, it is edifying to see a new collection merging Canadian studies with ecological epistemologies and in inspiring multidisciplinary ways.

Although the essays do not necessarily speak to one another directly, there is a connective thread through repeated concepts, “trans-,” of course, being the underlying one. Yet more subtle and provocative is the persistent emphasis on generative thinking, which occurs when the scholars cross over into the possibility of other complementary or intersecting methods

of enquiry and seek interconnection. While some use the term “generative” explicitly, such as Roy Miki in his call for an arts-based or creative-critical reading approach, a field that has been gaining popularity in the humanities and social sciences over the past few years, others, such as Laurie Ricou in his “Habitat” studies, establish the concept as inherent to their methodological practice. The articles in *Critical Collaboration* offer intellectual rigour and insight, and, although a couple are a bit theoretically opaque at times, the majority make for invigorating reading. That said, there are many standouts in this collection, but space allows me to touch upon only a few highlights.

After Kamboureli’s introduction and Miki’s essay, the collection seems ordered into three parts: Indigenous scholarship, environmental criticism, and diasporic studies. The first part of the collection focuses on Indigenous scholarship and offers methods for de-colonization of Western epistemologies. The essays, respectively by Sa’ke’j Henderson (law), Julia Emberley (literary criticism), Marie Battiste (education), and Larissa Lai (literary criticism) move from more general theoretical engagement to literary analysis. All are outstanding. In “Ambidextrous Epistemologies: Indigenous Knowledge within the Indigenous Renaissance,” through an investigation of the conflicts between Eurocentric pedagogy and Indigenous knowledge (IK), Marie Battiste illustrates the ties between ecological thinking, language, decolonization, and educational reform. She demonstrates an educational model inclusive of IK promotes “a participatory consciousness” (91), which cultivates empowerment, agency, and ultimately fulfils the terms set out in the 2008 UN *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the subsequent UNESCO conventions. Larissa Lai presents a practice model for building creative alliances between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples, which further enriches Battiste’s and Sa’ke’j Henderson’s call for institutional and political reform. In “Epistemologies of Respect,” she calls for a practice of ethics that allows room for ongoing learning and transformation—an “ethics-under-construction” (99). The practice, Lai contends, both acknowledges complicity in the production of colonial-settler power structures and participates, through creative practices, in “remaking of contemporary culture and an imagining of the nation” (99) to construct a different future. As successful collaborative and cross-cultural illustrations, Lai provides persuasive readings of Lee Maracle’s “Yin Chin,” The Movement Project’s *How We Forgot Here*, and Marie Clement’s *Burning Vision*, three works that explore engagement between Indigenous peoples and non-white settler cultures in Canada.

The second part of the collection shifts to environmental criticism, and decolonization becomes associated with the challenges in transforming human relationships to the biophysical environment. The three articles, in their respective methods, offer subversive politics for transgressing material and conceptual divides. In “Acts of Nature,” Catriona Sandilands observes that, while ecocriticism has done critical work in establishing recognition of environmental issues and their historical and social contexts, she tests its contribution to politics—its doing. To this end, Sandilands brings into dialogue Martha Nussbaum’s proposal that literature is a political corrective and Hannah Arendt’s notion that literature is “an artifact with specific political capacities” (132). In Sandilands’s reconceptualization of Arendt’s point, environmental literature is an artifact of and thus also a generative “act of nature” (139) capable of transfiguring material events into memorable moments. As such, with literature’s imperfect or elusive representations of nature, the biophysical environment evades subordination to a singular knowledge or interest. Literature becomes a dynamic space in which we *act* out our politics, “exercise judgment” (136), and so defies Nussbaum’s static view of literature as supplement to politics, enhances judgment. Cheryl Lousley’s “Ecocriticism in the Unregulated Zone” complements Sandilands’s piece and furthers ecocriticism as political practice. In a reading of Larissa Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl*, Lousley takes up Bruno Latour, Lorraine Code, and Donna Haraway to reassess environmental modes of engagement with capitalism. She explores how texts are immersive artifacts that open up relational processes among diverse agents and networks. These interactive processes “de-stablize lines between natural and unnatural” (153) and expose the underpinnings of and authorization of matters of concern (such as politics, science, climate change).

The third section of the book investigates diasporic literature. Julie Rak’s essay explores authors who take up false identities, passing as other ethnicities, and how that troubles questions of authenticity and belonging in a nationalist context. Francois Paré’s and Winfried Siemerling’s essays continue Rak’s preoccupation with belonging, but from Acadian and Quebec black cultural geographies respectively. Siemerling examines Montreal’s jazz age (1920 to 1950) literature and critics’ oversight of the local black community and its institutions in constructing a significant period in Quebec’s cultural and political history. Paré situates his enquiry within Acadia and questions the tensions and paradoxes of peoples occupying a cultural location but not a geographical place in the mapping of Canada. Paré examines not just how Acadian culture has historically maintained identity but also explores the impact of the arrival of new francophone

immigrants who do not share Acadian narratives of identity and unity. How does this influx disrupt Acadian sense of cultural and geographical belonging? Paré interrogates what it would entail for Acadians to embrace pluralism, to both guard against and reject the narratives of “common memory” (217) that have sustained their cultural identity.

*Critical Collaborations* is a must-read. There are, as Chad Weidner notes in his review of this book, few edited collections that specifically engage with Canadian literary studies and ecology, particularly ones that emerge from conferences. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, with its Indigenous Studies, Environmental Humanities, and TransCanada series, has done great work over the last ten years to address this gap and to build scholarship in the three areas this collection commendably covers. I do end this review on a down note, but it should not diminish the collection’s quality or my endorsement; rather, it is a call to open up the excellent dialogue begun here or, more precisely, at the conferences that inspired this book. My one disappointment with this collection is that, while these ideas emerge from a conference of established and new scholars, the absence of inclusion and citation of the latter in these essays seems to counter or undermine the principles espoused here, particularly in the spirit of ecological—or generative—thinking: as the collection’s title and the contributors acknowledge in their pieces, political change comes through collaborative effort, through intergenerational thinking.

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Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz. *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2013. 292 pp. \$23.95.

Ajay Heble and Rob Wallace, eds. *People Get Ready: The Future of Jazz is Now!* Durham and London: Duke UP, 2013. 312 pp. \$25.99.

Since the turn from the past century, after jazz completed its decades-long ascension from ribald musical novelty to what so many listeners consider the soundtrack of refinement and urbanity, it has become commonplace to suggest that the music isn’t just a notable artform but, more broadly, a model for social organization as well. What, after all, might illustrate the



egalitarian, idealized set of interactions we all crave than a music that, at its very core, insists upon collective improvisation and the unification of individual voices in constant democratic exchange? The ur-text for this line of thinking may be Ken Burns's mammoth nineteen-hour documentary *Jazz*, which first appeared on PBS in 2001. The first words we hear in the film come from trumpeter (and frequent evangelist) Wynton Marsalis, who tells us "jazz music objectifies America. It's an artform that can give us a painless way of understanding ourselves." Expanding on this broad claim, Marsalis explains that since group extemporization is the jazz tradition's aesthetic centre, then naturally the music constitutes the most essential embodiment of the American necessity of negotiating diverse agendas. "That negotiation," Marsalis concludes triumphantly, "is the art."

If the gospel of Burns and Marsalis—as influenced by the prophets Albert Murray and Stanley Crouch, both notable African American intellectuals who earlier described jazz in this redemptive manner—is pleasing and unthreatening to many, its ameliorative tone has also earned its share of criticism, not least for the self-congratulatory way it fuses jazz music's "triumph" with an imaginary move toward cultural pluralism. And as many have argued, the very way that Burns and Marsalis tell the artistic story of jazz amidst their democratic frame is indicative of their gospel's problems. They focus conservatively, that is, on jazz styles that primarily emphasize the aesthetic qualities "swing" and "blues" and on those that at some point achieved commercial success, as performed by a line of artists beginning with Louis Armstrong and proceeding through Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and Miles Davis to Marsalis himself. Those more avant-garde or hybridized styles, like free jazz or fusion, get short shrift, discussed only briefly as less important offspring within the music's genealogy. One effect of these choices is to marginalize the importance of those jazz artists potentially threatening to the mainstream audiences most invested in triumphant narratives of American democracy and capitalism. Note, for instance, the disparity in narrative screen time Burns accords to white swing clarinetist Artie Shaw, jetsetting star of the Swing Era, versus that given to the politically outspoken African American bassist Charles Mingus. Or register how shamelessly the film neglects the legendary Chicago-based musicians' collective, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, a network of avant-garde artists who have successfully self-governed their activity and mentored across generations for the past fifty years. Moreover, while the Burns film quiets some of jazz history's most politically incendiary figures, the documentary's warped chronology—covering 1900 to 1960 in its first seventeen hours and then

squeezing four decades into its final episode—also consigns “the jazz tradition” primarily to the past, rendering the heterogeneity of the music’s complicated history as a stable canon rather than a lively, discordant set of practices that continues still.

The two volumes under review in this essay confront these problems extensively. Together, they argue for a more complicated imagining of jazz music’s capacity for social organization and ethical interaction, as they also challenge both the rigidity of the Ken Burns canon and the illusion of its finite status. Unsurprisingly, the unifying figure across both projects is Ajay Heble, longtime artistic director of the Guelph Jazz Festival and a major force over the past two decades in offering productive ways to marry the vitality of improvised music in performance with detailed academic attention to that music’s potential for political engagement and disruptive change. The Guelph Festival is historically unique for sponsoring an annual scholarly colloquium on jazz and improvised music. Since the late nineties, the event’s special energy has transferred into multiple related projects, all directed at expanding our thinking about music and its social resonances. These efforts include the online academic journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études critiques en improvisation*, the massive SSHRC-funded Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice research project (headquartered at the University of Guelph but with connections to McGill and UBC), and various volumes of scholarly work, including Heble’s 2000 monograph *Landing on the Wrong Note: Jazz, Dissonance, and Critical Practice*, his recent *Improvisation Studies Reader* (2014), and the two earlier collections he has edited with Daniel Fischlin, *Rebel Musics: Human Rights, Resistant Sounds, and the Politics of Music Making* (2003) and *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue* (2004). In the first volume here, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation*, Heble and Fischlin reunite again, this time in collaboration with George Lipsitz, notable scholar in both critical race and popular music studies. Their collaborative effort offers not just a rigorous articulation of improvised music’s ethical potential but also a manifesto about how that potential’s realization should take place. Indeed, their imperatives about how to use improvised music meaningfully work to explode Marsalis’s genteel platitudes about jazz and democracy, by reminding us in much more tangible terms how justice and equality are always imperiled by the gluttony of commercial interests and the tone deaf self-interest of so many political players. As they suggest, what jazz teaches us—at least in the freer, more outside styles they champion most loudly—is an understanding of mutuality too often lost by people sound-

ing their own voices without being attentive to those other voices around them. (Marsalis, for all his idealized rhetoric, that is, is often the longest and loudest soloist in any given room.) The second book here, *People Get Ready: The Future of Jazz is Now!*, edited by Heble and Rob Wallace, is an excellent companion, presenting a diverse range of voices on the various aesthetic, social, and economic contexts bearing on improvised music currently and fleshing out how jazz and its aesthetic corollaries negotiate with these material factors through an ongoing stylistic restlessness and capacity for exchange.

If one were to characterize Marsalis and Burns as conservative, in both their aesthetic classicism and their seeming comfort with corporate influence (note how General Motors was a key sponsor for the *Jazz* documentary; the club that Marsalis helped launch at Jazz at Lincoln Center is called Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola), then the writers across these two volumes certainly represent what the critic Herman Gray calls "the jazz left." (Indeed, Heble, Fischlin, and Lipsitz, citing Gray, acknowledge as much in *The Fierce Urgency of Now*.) In Gray's formulation, the jazz left is a dynamic faction, less interested in institutional validation and canonical fixity than in keeping alive the music's possibility for transgression, innovation, and dissent, by actively resisting the idea that jazz can only benefit by moving from the margins to the cultural centre. As such, for the past several decades, the artists who best represent this political position are exactly the avant-garde, less commercially minded musicians whom Burns and Marsalis egregiously undervalue. The AACM, for instance, with its freer musical aesthetics and active cultivation of professional independence from the demands of "popular" taste, is a representative body. In artistic approach and material practice, they resist many of the contemporary perils that the authors criticize at length here, and accordingly the AACM hovers over both projects as guiding spirits. (The edited collection, for example, features a long transcription of the collective's fortieth anniversary roundtable from the 2005 Guelph Jazz Festival colloquium.)

Just as the AACM has worked for decades to imagine open-ended possibilities in musical performance as they stare down the material contingencies to which that expression relates, Fischlin, Heble, and Lipsitz bring a similarly ambitious idealism to their collaborative monograph. As they state in their rationale, "Improvisation for us is more than an artistic conceit, more than the spontaneous creation of notes by musicians or words and gestures by actors. In its most fully realized forms, improvisation is the creation and development of new, unexpected, and productive cocreative relations among people" (xii). From there, the authors make good on their

bold intentions, by pointing out that in its freest forms, jazz improvisation requires a constant shared attention among players, an empathetic imperative to listen with exactness as one articulates one's own musical statement. The important critical intervention they propose is thinking of this aesthetic exchange less as merely a *metaphor* for democratic exchange (the favoured metaphor, to be sure, of Marsalis and others) and instead as an actual model for interaction: one that ensures human rights by recasting society from a post-Enlightenment veneration of the individual to a more jazz-centred communal ethos. The stakes for a successful collective improvisation in this way provide the guidelines for a political path that privileges mutuality over one's individual pursuit of happiness. "To belong," the authors write in explanation, "one must perform one's role as both oneself and as oneself in relation to others ... [T]his kind of performative relation to a community's comportment plays an important role in improvisatory musickings where self- and community-definition occur as a function of enacted and embodied presencing" (74).

*The Fierce Urgency of Now* tempers the potential abstractness of its ethical propositions with an awareness of the real world's tangible problems and an eye to showing the problems generated by alternatives to their communal model. In the second half of the book, for example, the authors consider the plight of impoverished African Americans in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. It is an appropriate example, since historically this same demographic generated the very foundations on which jazz as a practice stands, and the authors use this recent narrative to criticize our existing paradigms for social organization. As they suggest, for all of the West's idealistic sentiments about human rights and ethical governance, our most vulnerable populations are perennially endangered by enduring hierarchies and the easy co-opting of rights discourses by casually inhumane politicians and investors. How much better off would the aggrieved people of New Orleans be if they had been led by people with the communal impulse of free jazz improvisation? As the authors remind us—using important work on the city by the scholar Clyde Woods—"both major political parties, the corporate media, private foundations, and investors used the crisis [of the hurricane] as an excuse for implementing measures designed to redevelop the city at the expense of the black, working-class and poor neighborhoods of the city" (182).

While the book's efforts to bridge the chasm between philosophical abstraction and material application are often self-conscious and persuasive, I admit I did find myself mildly distracted by a somewhat conspicuous silence throughout their entire discussion: namely, around matters of

musical taste. That is, while the authors are most apt to present musicians who play free jazz or creative music as the potential modelers of a productive new social order, they do not always acknowledge the very subjective ways that music also travels. The form, even at its most discursive through lyrics, is an affective one, and it constitutes a marker of listeners' identities and a potential binding force for communities in complicated ways. At times I feared the implicit conflation of the authors' ethical narrative with their own idiosyncratic tastes. (Case in point: they excoriate reviewer Scott Yanow's "feeble assessment" of Wadada Leo Smith's somewhat outside *Human Rights* LP for not sounding, in Yanow's mind, enough like jazz, but, elsewhere, they diminish the power of trumpeter Terence Blanchard's *A Tale of God's Will (Requiem for Katrina)* by noting that his playing, while "indebted to improvisational discourse" [113] is also "conventional in many respects" [168].) In addition, when Heble and company suggest at one point that the "more corporatized the music, the more it enters the logic of capital and media presence, the less true it is to the improvisatory impulse" (134), they move, I fear, toward positioning the musicians they favour as more noble, less ethically compromised, because those artists privilege improvisation over mass appeal. The implicit binary that emerges—between the heroically unpopular and the effectively slighter artists under the corporate world's embrace—is an uneasy one for me. Is that to say that some "corporatized" forms of music are not also politically meaningful to the aggrieved populations whose problems the authors are vocalizing? I would suggest that more of Katrina's victims were listening to commercially successful hip-hop than visionary free jazz in that dreadful autumn of 2005, and I imagine that same music was politically inspiring for many of those people, as well. If the authors' faith in music turns on the form's capacity for productive change, is it worth completely dismissing, say, a corporatized artist like Beyoncé who has introduced a generation of young listeners to the writing of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie? Or what of that early jazz dissident Louis Armstrong, who mobilized "the logic of capital and media presence" to such notable—if not complicated—effect in the early decades of the twentieth century? I raise all of these questions only to ensure that in the tension between a so-called jazz "left" and "right" we never resort merely to trading one problematic orthodoxy for another.

The edited collection, *People Get Ready*, helps mediate some of these potential criticisms because the variety of voices contained in the volume diversify the perspective on musical taste, market concerns, and technology. The collection, like its sibling volume, is chiefly interested in free jazz and creative music, but there are a number of discussions that extend the

conversation by admitting other genres and contexts. Co-editor Rob Wallace, for example, offers a cogent meditation on connections between free improvisation and punk music. Elsewhere, in separate pieces, both Greg Tate and D. J. Spooky reflect on the place of jazz and improvised music in our time's ever-increasing technological context. Perhaps the liveliest section of the volume is a lengthy debate launched by guitarist Marc Ribot's suggestion that municipal governments (in Ribot's specific case, that of New York City) should subsidize venues for free improvisation to reward the cultural benefits that musical innovation enacts. All of these conversations are vital for taking stock of where jazz and improvised music fit into our current economy, especially with regard to technological access and corporate mediation of the arts. Unsurprisingly, many of the essays originated in the Guelph Jazz Festival colloquium and, characteristically, they represent that forum's ongoing commitment to political engagement and scholarly rigor. Befitting Guelph's place as a multifaceted headquarters for new directions in jazz studies, these two volumes are comprehensively lively and provocative throughout.

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James Gifford. *Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2014.

*Personal Modernisms* is an original and thought-provoking study of a network of Late Modernists in Europe, China, and North America. Gifford is overly modest when he suggests he has "merely reordered already existing information, albeit in a unique configuration" (200). He has done much more than that. His examination involves, among other things, a comprehensive overview of the critical blinders that have hampered our understanding of the "Personalists" (a circle of poets, writers, and critics who promoted their tendency as "New Apocalypse," "Personalist," and "New Romantic") in the current literature. Gifford undertakes a devastating critique of Fredric Jameson's failure to grapple with the anarchist currents he is examining and brings a fresh historical perspective to bear on contemporary "postanarchist" theories of the subject propounded by political theorist Saul Newman and others. Finally, his work foregrounds a Late Modernist constellation that has largely gone unrecognized (with the notable exception of Arthur Edward Salmon's foundational 1983 overview,

*Poets of the Apocalypse*), and important figures in the canon, notably Henry Miller, Robert Duncan, Elizabeth Smart, and Lawrence Durrell, emerge looking quite different. *Personal Modernisms* is one of those rarities—a foundational revisiting of a key period in the history of twentieth-century literary modernism.

The opening chapter, “Late Modernism Inside the Whale: The Shape of Literary Criticism,” provides a genealogical overview of Late Modernism’s codification, beginning with its historical framing in Alan Wilde’s *Horizons of Assent* (1981) as “a transitional period between the modern and post-modern” (2). Samuel Hynes’s *The Auden Generation* (1976), which endorses the partial accounts of its protagonists to the detriment of the circles Gifford examines, is the touchstone for Wilde’s study and a host of ensuing treatments, culminating with Tyus Miller’s *Late Modernism* (1999). In lockstep with his predecessors, Miller reduces the currents amalgamated under that term to an ineffectual reaction, absent any cohesive political-literary vision of its own, to “the Auden generation and its communism as well as High Modernism’s elitism” (Gifford 42).

Gifford’s purpose is to configure our understanding of Late Modernism through the concerns of World War Two era anarchist-oriented poets, critics, and novelists. His point of departure is Henry Miller’s Paris-based “Villa Seurat” circle. Gifford’s second chapter, “Narrative Itinerary: From Villa Seurat to English Post-Surrealists,” focuses on Miller’s impact in the late 1930s, when he began attacking Surrealism for its complicity with Communist politics, most famously in his frequently reprinted “An Open Letter To Surrealists Everywhere” (1937). Refusing to commit to leftist politics of any kind, Miller adopted an anarchist position of disengagement in the name of creative freedom, a stance that influenced Herbert Read, David Gasgoyne, Durrell, and others. Gifford charts how Durrell’s *Delta* journal promoted this brand of anarchism during 1938–39, first in Paris and then in Greece. During World War Two, Miller’s position also found a welcome reception in Britain, where “post-surrealist” currents eventually coalesced around *Transformation* (edited by “Personalist” anarchists Henry Treece and Stefen Schimanski) and a host of other journals. Gifford also detects Miller’s trace in far-flung places such as New York, San Francisco, Cairo, and Shanghai, although what this amounts to is less than clear. (By the early 1940s, Personalism’s theoretical epicentre is clearly Britain and its international network develops from this base.)

Gifford’s third chapter, “Authority’s Apocalypse: Theories of Personalism,” revisits Marxist assertions that anarchism is a “bourgeois individualist” ideology, a misrepresentation underpinning Jameson’s claim that Late

Modernists are boxed into ineffectual processes of “self-consciousness, reflexivity and irony or self-reference” divorced from any “revolutionary transmutation of the world of actuality itself” (Gifford 154) and one that figures as well in David Weir’s naive reading of contemporary anarchism as a cultural variant of postmodern capitalism (Gifford 157). Gifford is having none of it: tracing the “relations among thought, form, and praxis” in the poetic, literary, and critical writings of the “Personalists” (notably Treece, Alex Comfort, Dylan Thomas, Durrell, Duncan, D.H. Lawrence, Miller, and Kenneth Patchen), he demonstrates, unequivocally, that Late Modern anarchists infused their work with anti-authoritarian values in a bid to awaken the reader’s capacity for social responsibility, a manoeuvre that pivots on the instability of the subject-in-process that is integral to anarchism’s conception of revolutionary change. In the final chapter, “Rereading and Recasting: Miller, Durrell, Smart, and Duncan,” Gifford revisits four major works by the aforementioned authors—*The Colossus of Maroussi* (Millar), *The Black Book* (Durrell), *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (Elizabeth Smart), and “An Ark for Lawrence Durrell” (Duncan)—through this new interpretive lens.

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Linda M. Morra. *Unarrested Archives: Case Studies in Twentieth-Century Canadian Women’s Authorship*. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2014. 244 pp. \$29.95.

Linda Morra opens the first case study of *Unarrested Archives* by describing an enticing archival lead that suddenly went cold: the material in question was simply missing from the fonds. This anecdote epitomizes Morra’s own approach to the cultural politics of archives. That is, she doesn’t shy away from the gaps and peculiarities of the record but instead highlights the circumstances that affect the formation and reformation of particular archives over time, especially as women writers have negotiated their presence in public and for posterity. Morra situates her contribution in terms of archive theory generally (including engagement with Foucault and Derrida) and scholarship on Canadian women writers’ archives more specifically, to which she has already made an important contribution (Morra, Rule). As the book’s title indicates, she develops terminology around arrest/unarrest that provides a conceptual framework for her



analyses. Beginning with Derrida's discussion of the etymology of "archive," which evokes documents that would have been under "house arrest" in a magistrate's home, Morra plays with the varied definitions of "arrested" to situate different archives and their resonances. The "unarrested" archive is non-institutionalized—but archived material might also be "unarrested" as it is mobilized by researchers. As she deploys these terms, arrest/unarrest is not a staid binary; rather, it provides vocabulary for addressing the creation and uses of archives in very different circumstances. In other words, this terminology is productive because Morra exploits its slipperiness. It provides a continuity to the volume, as do the recurring themes of feminist self-agency, the national imaginary, institutional frameworks, and archival formation.

Organized chronologically, the five case studies that make up the monograph draw on archival material that spans more than a century. The first case study uses Diane Taylor's concept of "scenario" to offer a "critical repositioning" of Pauline Johnson's public performances, particularly "A Cry from an Indian Wife." The chapter is a wonderful combination of historical contextualization and innovative close reading that explores gaps in Johnson's "arrested" archive, as well as her on-stage transgressions of gender, race, and class norms. The second chapter draws on Judith Butler's notion of kinship to discuss how Emily Carr navigated her reliance on Ira Dilworth to legitimate her writings in the public sphere. In its discussion of Carr's *Klee Wyck* and *Growing Pains*, the chapter reflects on the masculinist underpinnings of the genre of autobiography and the extent to which Carr's narratives subvert those assumptions. The following chapter also traces a writer's recourse to male authority to manage her writings: this time, Sheila Watson's interactions with Fred Flahiff. Here, Morra suggests the especial collaborative nature of research in this particular archive: Watson deposits funds with gaps (or "imminence") that lend themselves to future "unarresting" by researchers.

Morra's longest chapter synthesizes extensive archival material on Jane Rule's interactions with her literary agents over the course of her career. The main focus is on Rule safeguarding her "literary integrity" by resisting censorship, maintaining final authority over her publications, and conserving ("arresting"—in a positive sense) her archives for posterity. The chapter is bookended by accounts of Canadian state seizure ("arrest" in the negative) of some of Rule's written material in two instances: when authorities targeted the gay liberation periodical *The Body Politic* in 1977 and when they seized books destined for the Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium in 1986. Morra's final case study invokes a similar sense of the

fraught relationship between a writer and the nation-state. It focuses on Marlene NourbeSe Philip, and particularly the aftermath from the 1995 radio broadcast in which Michael Coren made reprehensible comments about NourbeSe Philip. NourbeSe Philip authorized Morra to peruse five of her own boxes of records. Although Morra characterizes this archive as strategically “unarrested” because NourbeSe Philip has refused to lodge it with an institution, Morra’s treatment of it is, as she discusses, not unhindered. She and NourbeSe Philip agree that NourbeSe Philip will “monitor and ultimately sanction” (157) Morra’s presentation of the material. In addition, NourbeSe Philip is legally bound not to reveal the terms of the settlement that she reached with Coren in 2002. Nevertheless, Morra successfully narrates this compelling story by engaging in a close reading of Coren’s comments, documenting NourbeSe Philip’s determined response to Coren, and situating this in terms of the broader media portrayal of African Canadians. Thus Morra positions NourbeSe Philip’s “minor archive” as a resistant rejoinder to a larger “media archive” that projects an exclusionary national imaginary.

Morra hopes that her book will encourage researchers to think more broadly about archives’ formations, their locations, and the relationships they organize and epitomize. Her case studies provide a sustained engagement with these issues, although each could be read as a fascinating stand-alone piece. As I was writing this review, Morra’s book was shortlisted for the Association of Canadian and Quebec Literature’s Gabrielle Roy Prize, awarded annually for the best book-length studies in Canadian and Québécois literary criticism. For its breadth, detail, and thoughtful framing of five diverse stories, *Unarrested Archives* would undoubtedly be a worthy recipient.

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Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne, eds. *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss: William Morris's Radicalism and the Embodiment of Dreams*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2015. 378 pp. \$39.95.

The aim of this book is to show that William Morris's politics, artistic, and literary endeavours, his understanding and practice of craft design, and his essays on the arts and industry are intimately and, if not always obviously, substantively interrelated. The fractured Morris, the Morris of disconnected passions and projects across his life is a common idea that has been held for a long time and to some degree still is, although not among knowledgeable Morris scholars. It has taken specialized digging in many areas to bring out and give expression to the wholeness that is Morris. E.P. Thompson's magisterial biography, perhaps more than any other work, signaled the need to see the integrative nature of Morris's life, personality, and work. *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss* falls within this broad characterization of contemporary Morris scholarship. And for this reason the collection of essays is to be welcomed.

The twelve essays (including an introduction and conclusion) are, with one exception, the work of literary scholars in the interdisciplinary field of Victorian studies. The editors characterize the collection as being "pitched to the specialized scholar, but also to a wider readership." Morris is such a large figure across so many disciplines that almost anyone looking into his work will, sooner or later, and usually sooner, feel themselves, in some respects, to be part of a wider readership. I imagine that Morris felt this way himself from time to time; after all, his painterly talents were modest and did not develop (amusingly perhaps, he could not draw birds and relied on his architect friend Philip Webb for this sort of detail), by his own admission the classical political economy of Marx literally made his head hurt, and he had to work hard, and did so successfully, to connect with audiences far removed from his own class experience. Even Morris was not an expert in everything that he did.

The book sets out to make manifest the impulses of Morris's life-long radicalism in the literary and design arts and to show their anticipations and reverberations in his later political activities and interventions. In a clear statement the introduction defines the objective of the collection thus: "to delineate and define Morris's unorthodox radicalism and, in doing so, to uncover the consistency and precocity of his innovative social thought." For the most part the essays are faithful to this task. Illustrating this approach, for example, Florence Boos's fine opening essay states her

intention to “examine the apparent paradox of Morris’s representations of violence, interpret them as sublimated expressions of personal and political conflicts, and argue that his increasingly explicit abhorrence of ... British imperialism found resonances in his literary representations of warfare and peace.” This kind of method is worked out in various ways through the essays in respect of the following range of topics: the non-publishing of the so-called Pre-Raphaelite *Aeneid*, Morris’s last romances, song rhythms in Morris’s later work, the play between his poetics and politics, Morris’s dreams of revolution, and of course, as might be expected, in further meditations on *News from Nowhere*.

At the risk of being overly selective, I would like to bring the attention of readers to Tony Pinkney’s imaginative proposal to write a sequel to Morris’s much loved and still much read *Utopian Romance* and even, perhaps, to a sequel of the sequel—which is given the working title of *News from Nowhere Three*. Pinkney offers seven principles for how we might “think with Morris about the future,” in an era when “socialism” has been degraded to colourless social democracy and domesticated criticisms of capitalism. Of all Morris’s works, none pulls together or hints at so many interests and themes in his life as *News from Nowhere*. For this reason, Pinkney’s project promises to develop, in a contemporary grain, the kinds of continuities evident in Morris’s oeuvre.

I want to register a couple of criticisms that detract somewhat from the overall value of this book. First, and notwithstanding the claim made by Michelle Weinroth, I do not find the “logic” of spectrality borrowed from Derrida to be a very convincing move, and I am inclined to think that neither do the essayists because, for the most part, they make little or no use of the idea. Whatever merit the “spectral” might have, it is difficult to see how this thin idea could plausibly provide “the basis of a full-blown analytical framework, a conceptual tool.” As a matter of fact, what minimal use is made of “the spectral” in this collection comes nowhere near acting as either “an explanatory paradigm” or “as a launching pad.” It mostly seems unnecessary and distracting as a heuristic device. My second criticism has to do with the overall organization of the book. The collection is weighed down by an introduction that is too long. Whatever the conventions of introducing writers in an edited collection, this could have been done with more focus. The introduction and the conclusion might have been taken together and the collection could then have been introduced with more economy. That would have precluded the need for a substantial concluding chapter, which in any event introduces fresh material and commentary.

Overall, this is a worthwhile and informative collection centred on important continuities in Morris's work, from which there is much to learn. In a word, readers will find here reasons for taking William Morris as he deserves to be taken and should be taken—that is, whole.

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Ross Barrett and Daniel Worden, eds., with foreword  
by Allan Stoekl. *Oil Culture*. Minneapolis: University of  
Minnesota Press, 2015. 424 pp. \$30.

The oil industry boasts a grand history that stretches over a century and half, and oil studies itself as a field of inquiry emerged about half a century ago, meaning that oil has been part of our modern cultural and intellectual life for at least a hundred and fifty years. Yet, humanistic scholars have come only recently to the work of probing and forging the conjunction between oil and modern culture. This gap can be traced in part to a reluctance or perhaps even an indifference in the humanities to a field that is often perceived to be the exclusive preserve of the natural sciences. But even a very casual observance of contemporary life, even in the most remote parts of the world, will reveal the mutual interdependence of oil and modern civilization. Our rapid postmodern culture is essentially propped up by oil, and everyday culture itself in turn shapes the sometimes mind-boggling adventures in the oil sector. If the oil industry has pushed its operations to dangerous limits, expanding its operations to unthinkable ocean depths and unimaginable far away frontiers, it is because it constantly seeks to respond to our postmodern civilization marked by militarized capitalism, consumption, consumerism, and a rapid technologized postmodern life lubricated by oil. So oil has never been that far from culture, only we haven't paid careful attention to the links between the two. It is this crucial work of linking oil and culture that Ross Barrett and Daniel Worden do in *Oil Culture*.

In his scintillating foreword to the book, Allan Stoekl captures some of the core questions that *Oil Culture* asks: “[W]hat is oil culture? How are oil and culture conjoined? What is it for oil to be cultural? And culture to be oily? Why is oil culture and its fragmentation in culture so fundamentally important?” Stoekl argues that, although oil is natural in the sense that it is the byproduct of natural processes, “everything that is done with it—the pumping, refining, the grading, the distribution, the use in trans-

port, manufacture, heating, the generation of electricity—is fully cultural.” Although a product of nature’s mysterious fermentation, oil also has its history and politics, which make it cultural. For Stoekl, then, “oil is the ultimate natural-cultural artifact,” reminding us that the natural can also be cultural and the cultural, natural. This unacknowledged reality reminds us that, although human ingenuity is responsible for oil’s discovery, it too has come to define us, to form us, because our contemporary lives are shaped and defined by oil. So to know oil—its history, mysteries, politics, and culture—is indeed to know ourselves.

What *Oil Culture* accomplishes, then, is to call our attention to the dual nature of oil: its materiality and invisibility. By its very material/physical form, oil has a concrete presence, but as a driver of modern life, it has an abstract social aspect at the same time. We not only see oil in its material forms, we smell and feel it, so we know it exists. Yet, we often take it for granted because we do not think consciously of how our lives are built, sustained, and driven by oil. *Oil Culture* reminds us of the multiple natures of oil, its presences and absences. It acknowledges oil’s *naturalness* but also reminds us of oil’s *culturality*. According to the editors, “*Oil Culture* analyzes, interprets, and explicates oil’s presence in culture. This presence manifests in multiple ways: oil is material, mystical, historical, geological, and agential. Oil does things, connotes meaning, and is leveraged by nations, corporations, and individuals.” So oil breeds cultures and, at times, is culture itself. By taking up oil as a subject of cultural analysis, then, *Oil Culture*, as the editors put it, “seeks to remedy the relative silence that scholars in the humanities have maintained about oil.” It calls attention to the centrality of oil in global contemporary life, reminding us of how oil now stands at the centre of our global cultural imagination. While the study of oil has been left mostly to industry insiders, policy analysts, energy consultants, and journalists, *Oil Culture* reminds us of the very urgency of the need for the humanities to pay crucial attention to the oil sector, sifting and mapping out carefully how oil functions in contemporary life as a cultural force. While pointing to early preliminary studies on oil and culture, *Oil Culture* thus inaugurates an important discourse that focuses squarely on the cultural dimensions of oil capitalism in the context of postmodernity.

Divided into five different sections and parading an intimidating array of contemporary philosophers and cultural scientists, *Oil Culture* expands on the cultural analysis of oil that not only “aims to reconstruct those symbolic forms and practices that enabled the emergence, development, and entrenchment of oil capitalism” but also unravels alternative intellectual

resources and routes which may be crucial in making sense of everyday life, petro-capitalism, and the global neoliberal economy itself. The first section examines oil's origins and its links to modernization and modern culture in America. Through a close reading of advertising, early religious tracts, public monuments, and fiction, the contributors in part one of the book eloquently demonstrate the ways in which culture was massively mobilized to legitimize an emerging industry in the United States that was greeted with suspicion, doubts, ambivalence, and, at times, outright resistance. While the oil sector might be a powerful international regime today, this section of the book shows clearly how, from the very outset, it depended heavily on culture for its existence and appeal. If this section reveals anything, it is that the oil industry learned very early to use culture in constructing its sustaining myths.

In part two, Sarah Frohardt-Lane, Daniel Worden, Hanna Musiol, and Georgiana Banita draw on a vast array of cultural texts—films, both documentary and feature, everyday culture, and novels—to show how different cultural projects were mobilized in sustaining or contesting oil capitalism in mid-twentieth century America. Whether in affirming or contesting the oil industry and the modern cultures that emerged in the mid-twentieth century, this section, like part one, throws a significant spotlight on the power of cultural texts in popularizing or contesting oil cultures from the 1950s onward. If the oil industry is powerful and controversial at the same time, it is because cultural texts have done the work of forging its complex personality. Part three remedies what is perhaps initially a shortcoming in *Oil Culture*. In my assessment, the book dwells too much on the United States, and I think part of the problem here is the book's framing of oil culture with primary reference to the U.S. and petrocultural inquiry with primary reference to the American academy. The contributions by Chad H. Parker, Michael Watts, and Jennifer Wenzel, however, saliently remind us that oil has not only generated cultures in the United States, it has done so elsewhere and in very fundamental ways. The different examples of national oil cultures that the contributors offer from Nigeria, Oman, and other places in the Middle East and other petro-territories is a poignant pointer to the fact that, if oil has generated new cultures, it is not in the United States alone that those cultures are unfolding. In fact, if we are to indeed confront the ways in which oil has saturated contemporary culture, in both positive and negative ways, we must look beyond the United States for such answers. Part four opens up more insights into how oil capitalism has permeated contemporary culture by showing the different representations of oil by art institutions like museums, aquariums, art galleries, and

so on. These different exhibitions demonstrate how both cultural texts and art institutions have become “booster vehicles for the dissemination of official booster arguments about oil and a significant venue for the articulation of more complicated perspectives on oil capitalism.” And the final section, part five, is perhaps a meta-commentary on the intellectual effort to forge links between oil and global culture and where such efforts might lead in the future. Taken as a whole, what *Oil Culture* brings to the table of global scholarship is an incredibly savvy intellectual manoeuvre that links Oil Studies with Cultural Studies.

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