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Smart Homes and Shrunken Visions

WILL STRAW

Davin Heckman. *A Small World: Smart Houses and the Dream of the Perfect Day*. Duke University Press, 2008. 224 pp.

More than anything else, Davin Heckman's *A Small World: Smart Houses and the Dream of the Perfect Day* is about the slow disappearance of utopian scenarios concerning everyday life from American culture. As its subtitle suggests, *A Small World* traces this disappearance through an examination of the idea of the "smart house," the dwelling that renders life easy, gratifies desires and stands at the crossroads of information. If the family home has become the space of deployment for a wide range of technological innovations, Heckman suggests, it has also served to domesticate technology. The absorption of technology within the home, where it is inserted within the mundane practices of everyday life, has undermined the utopian visions in which technology was once implicated.

In his introduction, Heckman dwells at length on the Disney corporation's Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT), conceived in the 1960s on a wave of wildly utopian thinking. I worried, briefly, that the book would join the long list of works waving a demystificatory wand over Disneyesque dreams which had never held much sway over this book's likely readership anyway. Heckman spends little time on such demystification, however, even nodding favourably at the ambitiously imaginative and large-scale thinking that presided over the original planning of the EPCOT Center. By the time the Center was finally built, of course, in the 1980s, these utopian scenarios had been stripped away and the final result was a consumer playground. Nevertheless, Heckman suggests, residues of these scenarios returned a decade later, as significant motifs in the marketing of the planned community Celebration.

In any event, *A Small World* is less about utopian scenarios for living than about the shrinking of such scenarios within the more banal initiatives that have sought to make everyday domestic life a little less labourious. The "Perfect Day" of Heckman's subtitle designates the "moderate" scenarios for improved living that have guided

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home and community design since the 1950s. These scenarios are no longer about living in a radically transformed future. Instead, "the perfect day" is little more than the dream of easy access to consumer goods, home-based entertainment and labour-saving technologies. The post-war ideal of the suburban home, with its family life centred on the television, is perhaps the purest example of this "moderate" scenario. That ideal, Heckman shows, almost imperceptibly edged out more grandiose visions, like those which imagined futuristic cities in the sky or radically new forms of social organization.The "smart home" whose story is told here represents the last of Heckman's "three eras of domesticity," phases in the development of the middle-class American dwelling. The first, born in the abundance of land, was marked by the conquest of space; the second, driven by the quest for efficiency, involved mastery over time. "Information," the substance defining Heckman's third phase, is treated separately from questions of space and time, rather than standing as one of the means by which these are organized or bound together. (Good Canadian readers expecting an appearance by Harold Innis will be disappointed here.)

Another way of understanding the shift to the third, informational phase of house design is as the passage from electricity as a defining technology (expressed most famously in labour-saving, early twentieth century technologies like the refrigerator and electric oven) to media, like television and the computers that followed. *A Small World* is full of fascinating detail on the introduction of household technologies, from the RCA Whirlpool Miracle Kitchen of the mid-1950s through the H316 Kitchen Computer, released by Honeywell in 1969, and on to the Hubot robot, marketed in 1981 as a combination guard-dog and personal companion. With each successive innovation, the elimination of routine household drudgery declines as a motivating impulse, replaced by the drive to design technologies that will enhance the affective dimensions of everyday life, offering entertainment and sociability. In a key argument sustained throughout his book, Heckman suggests that technology has developed by retreating from grandiose futuristic scenarios in which forms of social organization and human fulfillment are re-imagined. Technology wins our assent through the ease with which it finds a place within the everyday – a place that sits, in Heckman's succinct phrase, between the "ordinary" and the "desirable."

Home technologies, then, function within what Heckman calls a "technically derived system of associations" (93) that guide and tie together our relationships to consumer goods. Our technological world is no longer a coherently imagined future, but, rather, a diversity of options with which we familiarize ourselves, even as the commodities that embody these options take their place within our lives. Nothing, perhaps, better exemplifies this detachment of technological change from futuristic dreaming than the steady advance of the videophone into our lives, through interfaces like Skype or new versions of the iPhone (introduced subsequent to the publication of Heckman's

book). While the ubiquity of the videophone was once, in science fiction narratives and prophetic visions, the very standard by which futures were judged, it is now sneaking into our daily routines with no great heralding of its arrival nor any clarity about its distinctiveness relative to what came before it.

One of Heckman's strongest arguments is, in fact, relatively tangential to the book's main focus, though it addresses, like much of *A Small World*, the withering of utopian thought. The history of modernist design is normally told as the crusade to eliminate ornament from everyday objects, a process intended to "focus the user's attention... on the essence of the object or space at hand" (43). Those who, in the 1970s, traded in their parents' wood-encased televisions and stereo systems, designed to look like furniture, for stark, metallic component systems whose wiring was exposed might well have imagined themselves casting off the last vestiges of stuffy Victorian duplicity for the honest functionality of the modern world. Perceptively, Heckman traces the ways in which sleek, streamlined design became its own "ornamentation," a signifier of efficient modernity. This embrace of an instrumental, minimalist look for household technologies signalled both generational change and the Bourdieuian struggle for taste-culture distinctiveness, but it also expressed a new sense of media technologies as controllable, banal features of everyday domestic life.

Heckman's *A Small World* arrives amidst a flurry of scholarship on portable media and the "mobile internet" – scholarship which risks rendering the notion of the informational home a little musty. Certainly, the interconnectedness of homes in Disney's Celebration – with its much touted access to email and chat rooms – seems dated, not simply because access to these things is more widely available, but because the home seems less and less like the site in which these amenities are rooted. Even a decade ago, to move into a new house or apartment was to engage oneself immediately in hooking up a landline phone, getting cable installed and setting up the television set as the organizational centre of domestic space. For my students, increasingly, none of these may happen, as the notebook computer becomes the prime medium for audiovisual programming, and a wireless card or G3 signal, acquired through a cell phone subscription, provides access to the signals that carry it. Homes continue to be weighty clusters and crossroads of informational activity, pursued in behaviour that is often sedentary and familial, but the "smartness" whose history Heckman traces seems more and more to pass through the house rather than marking its distinctiveness.

If there is a weakness to this engaging and well-meaning book, it stems from the variety of agendas that drive it, which render its different parts distinct in tone and focus. From its opening discussion of Disney's scenarios for ideal living, Heckman moves into an extended history of the notion of the "smart" home, pursuing this through

a useful but slightly distracting examination of the idea of "smartness" in relation to such things as bombs and other features of modern warfare. The final chapter of *A Small World* is an extended, polemical engagement with the key terms of contemporary political theory, from posthumanism through biopolitics, personhood, and ideas of the multitude.

Two of Heckman's arguments stand out here, for the clarity and intensity with which they are made. Against calls to embrace our posthumanism, he suggests that "we are already becoming posthuman, whether we like it or not" (152), and diagnoses the problem of the present as arising from a scarcity of humanist discourse rather than its stubborn persistence. "[P]osthumanist speculation," Heckman suggests, "is grounded in a relatively optimistic notion of the present and an unstable and chaotic version of the future – an inversion of traditional utopian models" (153). Faced with this uncertain future, he argues, we are best to insist on an "absolutist regard for human rights" rather than embracing what he identifies, with his theoretical enemies clearly in sight, as the "the transient materialist rights of the bio-political person" (153).

In the arguments that conclude this final chapter, Heckman turns to the question of everyday life. Everydayness runs throughout the book, as a motif whose ascendant cultural centrality is taken to signal the waning of utopian vision. The movement of the everyday to the core of cultural theory, in the work of de Certeau and others, has gone hand in hand with the capitalist redesign of our homes as places marked, more than anything else, by the ease with which we may amuse and gratify ourselves within them. The controlled fleshing-out of everydayness, through television programs that elicit our interactivity or new media that mobilize the memory of community, is, for Heckman, the basis of the "Perfect Day" to which our dreams have been reduced.

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"Intellectual Craftwork": Reading Barbara Godard

ERIN WUNKER

Barbara Godard. *Canadian Literature at the Crossroads of Language and Culture*. Ed. Smaro Kamboureli. NeWest Press, 2008. 412 pp.

I met Barbara Godard once. She was the plenary speaker at the McGill English Graduate Students' Conference when I was in the first year of my Master's. I remember being awed first by the vertigo-inducing complexity of her plenary paper, and then, later, when I was able to talk with her at the evening reception. In the years that followed I remember seeing Professor Godard everywhere: at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences sitting in the audience to see a particular paper at ALCQ-ACQL, then slipping out to make time to attend a presentation at ACCUTE, CACLALS, or any number of associations. More recently I remember her dancing at the last TransCanada conference. But perhaps most of all, I remember coming across one of her articles while I was studying for my PhD candidacy examinations. The article, not included in the collection under review here, was "Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value: The Canadian Context." In it Godard attended to questions about "the constitution of cultural value" by reading feminist periodical production as "participat[ing] in an economy of the gift rather than one of accumulation." "Feminist labour," she cautioned, "risks foundering in a more strongly entrenched private sphere than participating in the collective as citizens" (213). Two aspects of this quintessentially well-wrought essay struck me immediately: its encyclopedic range and its place of publication, the Women's Studies International Forum. I learned more about the history and culture of feminist periodical publishing in Canada in those pages than I had in my graduate career up until that point. And I was alerted to an international organization publishing work on Canadian women's writing. This multi-faceted learning experience is, for me, what it means to read Godard's writing. And so, like Danielle Fuller, I too feel I am a student of Godard's, though I was never in any of the classes she taught ("Reader at Work: An Appreciation of Barbara Godard"). I too submit this review as a work in progress, whose subject, "even as I speak…slips away from me" ("Structuralism/Post-Structuralism" 53). For Godard is always one step ahead in her writing, as she was in her life, blazing trails for scholars and critics alike.

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Canadian Literature at the Crossroads of Language and Culture was published in 2008. The essays it collects function as a chronology of Canadian cultural criticism while, simultaneously, developing lasting, even timeless, problems and argument relevant far beyond the Canadian context. The volume collects nine of Godard's more than two hundred published essays. As editor, Smaro Kamboureli states in her notes that this is merely a selection, "so, though this volume is long, it includes only a small selection of her writings" (13). The editor's choice of essays offers an attempt to reflect the " 'wide net' within which [Godard] always cast her writing" (13). Kamboureli's editorial hand is not heavy. Indeed, save for a lengthy interview with Godard, which I'll discuss presently, there is no editorial intervention to be seen. Neither original date of publication, nor editorial introduction accompany the essays. This is both admirable and, simultaneously, a bit unfortunate. For, while the essays certainly stand alone as a rigorous taxonomy of Canadian culture via Canadian writing, each essay is very much a product of a particular cultural moment. In the table of contents the essays parenthetically note their original date of publication. They haven't been ordered chronologically, and thus this reader is left with the desire to know why they've been arranged as such. Further, a reader not intimately acquainted with Godard's incredible and vast interests and connections might be left with the sense that she's missing part of the conversation. But, as Godard notes in the first essay of the collection, the reader's task might be similar to that of the critic's who, like Scheherazade, "speak[s] under the threat of forced closure…[in] an endless tale, the saga of the 'new new criticism' of Canadian literature" ("Structuralism/Post-Structuralism" 53).

The first section of the collection is a fascinating discussion between Kamboureli and Godard. I say discussion because while it is certainly structured like an interview, it has a discursive flow that is often absent in the question/answer structure of the interview. Kamboureli explains in her note that the interview was "designed to serve in lieu of the critical introduction" she might have written. She used the interview style to disrupt the habitual structure of critic/literary author and to allow readers the all too rare opportunity to hear the critic situate herself "in contexts that illuminate the conditions that have contributed both to the production of her own work and to the evolution of Canadian literature as a discipline" (14). Thus it is in Godard's own narrative that the reader learns about her comparative education, her insistence on studying Canadian literature at a time well before its institutionalization (which, ironically, is again at risk as Godard repeatedly points out in essays that follow), and the influence of Malcolm Ross on her educational trajectory (after winning a Canada Council doctoral award to go to the University of Toronto, Ross said to her "Get out of here!" And she did, choosing instead to study at the Université de Montréal where she could take classes in both English and French). Godard studied in Bordeaux with Robert Escarpit, co-founder of the International Association of Comparative Literature, and she taught with Hélène Cixous at the Université de Paris VIII. She

attended lectures by Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan. Upon returning to Canada she was absolutely instrumental in bringing not just the study of Canadian literature into the university system, but also crucially, the interdisciplinary, comparative study of Canadian literature into the system. This was in the 1970s. Godard's annual contract position became tenure-track in approximately 1978 (26). When asked how her comparative work and her "more intense focus on Canadian literature" enhance each other (Kamboureli 26), Godard turns to Gramsci who "notes, language—and culture, I would add—'cannot be anything but comparative,' always positioned in relation to another temporal moment or geopolitical space and so considered not in terms of identity but of relationality within vectors of power" (27). A failure to work comparatively, then, is a failure to attend to the cultural production of one's own place in a transnational space. The dialogue ends on an important and sobering note. When asked about her views on the state of affairs—institutional, interdisciplinary studies of Canada—Godard cites an astounding decline in the teaching of Canadian literature (51). Her concern is in no way pat nationalism. "The decline in focus on Canada is troubling," she explains, "since the nation continues to be a significant horizon within which to produce and study culture, when national arts and research councils accord financial support to culture within their geopolitical boundaries" (51). Though it remains unsaid, that this decline signals a kind of institutional foreclosure of the study of Canadian literature haunts not just the dialogue, but indeed the entire collection. Godard fought to make plain the importance of reading Canada's cultural production rhizomatically and interdisciplinarily. It remains the reader's task to take up her efforts.

Godard's writing is paradoxical in the most productive ways: it is stylistically dense while remaining eminently readable. The critic's voice is always present, never lost or tangled among the extensive supporting research and critical frameworks of her essays. Rather than walk the reader through the entire collection, I've chosen instead to focus the remainder of this review on the opening four essays which, while substantially different in content, work together to establish the overarching concerns and tactics Godard uses throughout her critical work. No essay is an island unto itself. She is unrelenting in her comparative work: each essay stands in relation to the others, all work individually, and as a whole, to read Canadian cultural production within vectors of power, be they language, borders, race, gender, or genre.

The opening essay of the collection, "Structuralism/Post-Structuralism: Language, Reality, and Canadian Literature" was first published in 1987, and yet in it Godard demonstrates her enviable ability to transcend her own moment of writing. The essay, which plots the evolution of theoretical criticism to its time (1987) is "organized under the sign of the future indicative" in order to demonstrate the "vitality of Canadian post-structuralist criticism which has long been invisible" (54). Using as her

springboard a paper by Stan Fogel ("Why Michel Foucault does not like Canadian Literature" 1984), Godard pinpoints but one moment where Canadian critics fail to read the field of Canadian criticism. She observes that we should be unsurprised by the "divergence in the directions of contemporary American and Canadian criticism" because "New Criticism never held sway in Canada as it did in the United States" (54). Mapping the evolution from structuralism to post-structuralism atop the English/French critical divide, Godard illustrates a palimpsestic relationship that is the Canadian "new new criticism" (55). Marking her starting point as 1974, Godard contends that a sea change in Canadian criticism occurs in this year when the annual Learneds (now the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences) became "the occasion for the first examination of the states of literary theory in Canada *and* Québec" (56 my emphasis). Here, as in virtually all her essays, Godard is working on multiple levels. By drawing attention to the difference/divide/*différance* in English and Francophone criticism, Godard underscores both the potential polyvocality of the Canadian critic and the way in which the work being done in Québec has been marginalized. Godard argues that thematic criticism, which seemed to dominate the Canadian scene, has in fact a long history of dissent and differential responses. Citing Frank Davey, Eli Mandel, Pricilla Galloway, Georges Poulet, and Linda Hutcheon alongside the Geneva School, the Yale School, Heidegger, Lévi-Strauss, Gaston Bachelard, and, yes, Derrida, Godard traces a complex and oft-unrecognized genealogy of Canadian literary criticism. If the reader were to attempt to connect the essays in this collection, in search of some meta-argument or line of inquiry, the closing lines of the first essay may serve as a guide: "If a wide net has been cast," Godard offers, "it is a web of holes held together with a string. This thread will soon be unraveled by other deconstructions of its presuppositions and by the appearance or yet new critical theories on the scene" (82).

In addition to her compendious knowledge of the Canadian cultural field, Godard is at least as well known for her work as a translator of Québec women writers and her foundational writing-as-discourse with First Nations writers. The second and third essays of the collection, "Critical Discourse in/on Québec" (1990) and " The Politics of Representation: Some Native Canadian Women Writers" (1990) work within conversant fields of representation. "Critical Discourse in/on Québec" observes that in Canada, where the "institutional limits are multiplied and fractured" by language and national borders, there is a burden of choice: the critic must ask herself "which narrative to choose…The narrative of intelligibility emanating form the École des hautes étude pratiques in Paris…Or…the new discursive practice in the form of discontinuous, delegitimating narratives which challenge the master narratives and legitimate post-structural knowledge" (84). Rather than bluntly articulating her path, Godard instead sketches another trajectory of the development of literary criticism in Canada. This time, unlike the more generalized assessment of "Structuralism/Post-

Structuralism," her overview is geographically and linguistically bounded. Citing Robert Giroux, Godard notes an inversion or reversal in critical trends that is at first glance retrograde: the "structuralist enterprise, focusing on the function of codes in the production of meaning and on cultural conventions, has given way in the 1980s under discursive subversion and deconstructive virtuosity to a focus on subjectivity" (85). French-Canadian literature, when set in the sights of critics such as Jean Éthier-Blais, is important for its mimetic powers: it "leads us to recognition of ourselves," and "describe[s] us as we are" (Éthier-Blais *Signets* 2: 20, 5). The growing interest in sociological origins of literature (Godard 86) and a focus again on *la modernité* are "additional evidence of an eternal return" in Québec criticism (86). However, these eternal returns are, perhaps, better understood as spirals for, Godard asserts, in fact "contemporary Québec Criticism is indeed poststructuralist" (88). By analyzing the hegemonic nature of discourse (Williams) Godard demonstrates that in Québec the feminist analysis, which emerged in the 1970s with the creation of *Les Têtes de pinoche* by poets Nicole Brossard, France Théoret, and others (98), has altered the way literary criticism works. "The emergence of women's writing," writes Godard, "has accomplished the proliferation of alternative structures—in publishing, diffusing, and teaching" (98). Having mapped a seemingly familiar terrain, Godard shifts the focus to lead the reader through a nuanced lesson both in Québec feminist writing and in post-structural textual analysis.

She effects a similar parallax view in ""The Politics of Representation: Some Native Canadian Women Writers." Beginning with a survey of the unprecedented public attention for First Nations culture in the spring of 1989, Godard manages both a cultural survey and a consideration of why this public attention hadn't happened before. The spring's events included the debut of Tomson Highway's (Cree) now canonical *Dry Lips Oughta Go to Kapuskasing*, work by actor Gary Farmer (Mohawk), Ojibwa writer Rebecca Bellmore's "Ihkwe-wak ka-ayamiwhat: Means Women Who are Speaking" and "Contemporary Art by Women of Native Ancestry," "Weesageechak Begins to Dance" festival celebrating First Nations plays and playwrights, and culminated with "intensive workshops in Native cultural production organized by the Committee to Reestablish the Trickster" (110). The opening pages of the essay work both as a primer in First Nations cultural production of the moment (spring 1989), and as a subtle message that First Nations cultural production is very active. The workshops, Godard explains, both "herald the emergence of Native culture as a forceful presence in the literary institution," and by "inscribing this cultural activity under the sign of *The Trickster*" it also "indexes the ambiguities of this interruption" (110). The workshops, which included "Storytelling for the Stage," "Re-establishing the Voice: Oral and Written Literature into Performance," and "The Missing Voice in Canadian Literature" signaled a challenge to institutional Canadian literature. Figuring the workshop under the sign of *The Trickster*, says Godard, "posits the word

as a process of knowing, provisional and partial, rather than as revealed knowledge itself"(110). Further, the challenge posed by First Nations cultural producers "aims to produce texts in performance that would create truth as interpretation rather than those in the Western mimetic tradition that reveal truth as pre-established knowledge" (110). Drawing on Foucault's analysis of how knowledge and power work together to allow or foreclose speech, Godard then embarks on a close reading of the work of Lee Maracle and Jeannette Armstrong in order to unpack the thorny question of who may speak for whom. What is of particular interest for Godard's set of questions is the ways in which she reads Maracle and Armstrong as "located within new instances challenging the hegemony of the dominant literary institution" (123). Maracle and Armstrong write in English, but they "take as their interlocutor the dominant tradition in a polemic which is overtly signaled within the texts" (123). Writing both within and outside, Maracle and Armstrong "self-consciously enter the fray surrounding the 'silenced' subject of racism" and in so doing have "begun to write the other, otherwise" (159). "Other," Godard pointedly reminds the reader, "form the perspective of the *dominant* discourse within which I write" (159).

This final self-conscious and deliberate reminder is yet another level on which all of Godard's essays work. Never does Godard the critic forget that, though she is a woman working in the institution, she is in a position of relative privilege. Thus her essays, which are indeed large nets widely spread, all treat the field of Canadian literature as both potential and polyvalent, and at risk of essentializing or selling out. The remaining essays, "Deterritorializing Strategies: M. NorbeSe Philip and Caucasianist Ethnographer," "Writing Between Cultures," "Notes From the Cultural Field: Canadian Literature from Identity to Commodity," "A Literature in the Making: Rewriting and the Dynamism of the Cultural Field," and "Relational Logics: Of Linguistics and Other Transactions in the Americas" all insert themselves at the axes of language and power. Here, at the crossroads, Godard rigorously surveys the cultural field. Though her focal point is always Canada, her scope is certainly the world.

Three days after I accepted the opportunity to review *Canadian Literature at the Crossroads of Language and Culture,* Barbara Godard passed away. The work of reading as an attentiveness to another and as work of mourning became all the more palpable to me. When a reader picks up this collection, what she encounters is an intrepid critic whose insights and analyses remain among the most important in Canada. What she encounters is a charge to keep working under the sign of the future indicative.

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Late Postmodernism

DANIEL WORDEN

Phillip E. Wegner. *Life Between Two Deaths, 1989-2001: U.S. Culture in the Long Nineties*. Duke University Press, 2009. 296 pp.

The "two deaths" in the title of Phillip E. Wegner's new book are the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. During the gap between these two events, Wegner finds a cluster of cultural possibilities, a flourishing of "what we might call a 'late' postmodernism that only emerges in the 1990s" (5). In *Life Between Two Deaths*, Wegner reads the 1990s as a "coherent cultural period" with an admirable critical distance, and his periodizing framework productively locates the 1990s as a transitional decade between the end of the Cold War and the emergence of our contemporary war on terror (9). As what Michael Denning describes as the "age of three worlds" wanes after 1989, theorists, writers, and filmmakers engage in productive struggles to articulate the United States' role in a post-Cold War era. In those struggles, Wegner locates both nostalgic returns to Cold War logics of containment, nationalism, and messianic violence as well as utopian visions of the coming multitude, the commons, and queer belonging. The defining conditions of the 1990s, Wegner argues, are fourfold: globalization, new communication technologies, the "counterglobalization political movement," and the "post-postmodernism" of theoretical enterprises in the 1990s, ranging from Agamben and Badiou to Butler and Jameson (33, 34). Ultimately, Wegner wants to foster an awareness of what has been lost since 9/11: not national innocence or a naïve sense of security, but instead the risk of revolutionary thinking. By returning to the 1990s as a site of possibility, Wegner hopes to find "how we might rekindle precisely the kinds of radical enthusiasms that seemed to be emerging with so much energy in days before September 11" (42).

While *Life Between Two Deaths* does use historical events to bracket off its object of analysis—the 1990s—most of the book's chapters deal with novels, critical theory, film, and television, with an emphasis on how those objects help us to imagine possible futures. Accordingly, the book's analysis focuses on how ideology and utopia are represented in cultural texts, chiefly through the operations of allegory, Fredric Jameson's favored way of linking fiction to history. Wegner's readings of cultural texts often seize upon utopian longings and political complicity, and these visions of the future and the present are often contextualized as resolutions of contemporary contradictions, like residual American nationalism in the wake of the Cold War and the imperative to dissolve national boundaries to facilitate free trade within global markets. While this often feels justified, especially when Wegner reads a massively successful film like *Independence Day* (1996) in the context of the first Gulf War and the coming "war on terror," it is less convincing that a novel like Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997) has the same generative role in culture since it is, in terms of form but also in terms of material matters like circulation, far less accessible and influential than a wildly successful Hollywood commodity. For a book concerned with form's theoretical valences, *Life Between Two Deaths* does not address more pragmatic formal qualities like circulation, modes of publicity, and material conditions of reception.

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Despite this quibble, the book practices a cultural studies methodology admirably, and Wegner adeptly reads both fiction and theory together, allowing them to inform and amend one another in productive ways. His use of Judith Butler's work on kinship, for example, informs, but is also informed by, the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003). Jameson's writings on naturalism are juxtaposed with the films *Fight Club* (1999) and *Ghost Dog* (1999), which results in a reconceptualization of naturalism in the 1990s as projecting a ressentiment that predicts the suppression of anti-globalization struggles. In opposition to Michael Denning's view that "cultural studies in now in crisis or in question . . . because its moment, the age of three worlds, is over," Wegner's book presents a series of readings that do endow cultural texts with political power (10). Wegner develops a cultural studies framework that privileges utopia and desire, and this mode of cultural studies differs from Denning's method of championing low or populist culture against elite canons. *Life Between Two Deaths* demonstrates the vitality of theoretical discourse today, especially because, in Wegner's methodology, theory and fiction both perform critical, theoretical work.

Wegner is writing within the tradition of critical theory established by Fredric Jameson, and like Jameson, he often looks back to the Frankfurt School, especially Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch, as theorists also interested in reading the dialectic of ideology and utopia in cultural artifacts. Also embedded within the book's framework of "two deaths," however, is the psychoanalytic concept of repetition. The Berlin Wall and the destruction of the World Trade Center do not just mark transitional moments for the U.S.; Wegner proposes that they have a deeper, symbolic relationship. Wegner reads DeLillo's *Underworld*, for example, as cementing the World Trade Center's role as an icon of Cold War nationalism and U.S. hegemony in a way that predicts the towers' destruction. Echoing other theorists like Jean Baudrillard and Slavoj Zizek, Wegner views 9/11 as a repetition, as an image as well as an event, and in Wegner's analysis, the fall of the twin towers forces the true recognition of the end of the Cold War: "The toppling of the World Trade Center buildings can be

understood as a form of second death, an incident that repeats an earlier fall, that of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. The first fall was a true event: unexpected, unplanned for, an encounter with a Traumatic Real" (24). Wegner tries to bridge the old theoretical gap between psychoanalysis and Marxism by fusing Lacan with dialectical materialism, yet the result of this attempt at theoretical synthesis between the inside and the outside, the subjective and the historical, ultimately results in a very schematic model of both discourse and history. Like Jameson, Wegner has a fondness for Greimas squares, yet the historical narrative in *Life Between Two Deaths* seems to be too much of a narrative—too easily contained by a beginning, middle, and end. I found myself wanting some Deleuzian or otherwise anarchic energy to disrupt the schematic elements in the periodization of the 1990s.

Building on his earlier book, *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (2002), Wegner turns to science fiction as a site for the imagination of possible futures. After two chapters on periodization that include the reading of DeLillo's *Underworld*, the book has two halves: the first, on films that do not manage to imagine a future different from the 1990s, and the second, on novels and a television series that do offer some alternative trajectory. What unites the "bad 1990s" texts, to put it crudely, is an inability to think past current modes of production except through apocalyptic events. Elaborating on Jameson's claim that "it seems easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism," Wegner finds in films like *Cape Fear* (1991), *Fight Club*, *Ghost Dog*, *Independence Day*, and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) a limit point against which their narratives flounder and, ultimately, retreat to tropes of masculine regeneration and national unity (Jameson xii). Alternately, the final two chapters are devoted to Joe Haldeman's *Forever* trilogy (1974, 1998, 1999), Octavia Butler's *Parable* novels (1993, 1998), and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. In Wegner's analysis, these texts produce both "an effective critical engagement with the present" and, in the case of *Buffy*, an imagining of a queer mode of belonging that repurposes the family structure into a kinship network consolidated through friendship rather than bloodline.

Alongside other recent books like Samuel Cohen's *After the End of History: American Fiction in the 1990s* (2009) and David Greven's *Manhood in Hollywood from Bush to Bush* (2009), Wegner's *Life Between Two Deaths* contributes to a growing body of scholarship that finds in the 1990s a coherent cultural period as well as a site of possibility, repetition, and transition. As such, it provides a theoretical and historical framework that should be generative for further work on the decade, and this is most evident in the recurring tropes that Wegner features in his analyses that could become subjects of their own studies. For example, a recurring trope in 1990s texts is revitalized masculinity. Reminiscent of the 1890s and 1950s "crises" in masculinity,

the 1990s becomes, in Wegner's analysis, a period deeply ambivalent about masculinity's utility. At once feminized by consumerism and reinvigorated by entrepreneurial energy, masculinity is a key site where films and novels work out the contradictions between Cold War militarization and New Left critique. Furthermore, there are lots of other 1990s movements that would relate to the political currents of globalization in quite different ways than those charted in *Life Between Two Deaths*. For example, Wegner does not address the importance of hip-hop and "alternative music" to mainstream popular culture, nor does he address the emergence of the "sincerity" aesthetic of Michael Chabon, Jonathan Lethem, and other writers associated with McSweeney's Quarterly Concern. It seems that these movements and styles do not advance utopian imaginings as much as a reinvigorated realism, an aesthetic that might not produce visions of the future but instead rubrics for rethinking everyday life from within neoliberalism.

In writing about a newly historical period, Wegner courts nostalgia yet never succumbs to it. Just when one expects to find, for example, a melancholic invocation of the 1999 Seattle WTO protests during a discussion of Hardt and Negri, Wegner exchanges Hardt and Negri's "mulititude" for Etienne Balibar's, which, to Wegner, foregrounds how open communication networks are a necessary condition of the Spinozist collective formation. Wegner does cite both Fredric Jameson and Bruce Robbins on the utopian promise of the welfare state, and in a section that seems a bit myopic now given the sad state of the humanities job market, he claims that Joe Haldeman's novel *Forever Peace* (1997) should remind us that the university "is one of the few places already in our world where some degree might occur of unalienated labor" (191, emphasis in original). More development of these political gestures would be welcome, especially since it is unclear how Wegner would periodize our contemporary moment. In the book, neoliberalism seems to refer to the 1990s, especially the years of the Clinton presidency and the emergence of globalization, and after the "second death" of 9/11. Neoconservatism supplants neoliberalism as the U.S. engages in the "war on terror" and codifies the new "state of exception." This sequence--from the Cold War to neoliberalism in the 1990s to neoconservatism after 2001--seems far too neat. Further, Wegner suggests that neoconservatism is facilitated by, rather than a negation of, neoliberalism. But, Life Between Two Deaths's tentative invocation of neoliberalism seems indicative of the book's ultimate persuasiveness, since it asks us to wonder if we are entering a new historical period or if we still live in shadow of the "two deaths" that ushered in the 21st century.

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Atoning, Reconciling, and Forgiving: Interdisciplinary Investigations of Justice

JILL SCOTT

Linda Radzik. Making Amends: A*tonement in Morality, Law, and Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2009. 256 pp.

Joanna R. Quinn. *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009. 313 pp.

Julie McGonegal. *Imagining Justice: The Politics of Postcolonial Forgiveness and Reconciliation*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009. 233 pp.

The three books under review in this essay are united by their concern for justice and reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict and wrongdoing, but each addresses these questions with a unique disciplinary lens. Squarely situated in the field of moral philosophy, Linda Radzik's *Making Amends: Atonement in Morality, Law, and Politics* develops a normative response to wrongdoing, providing a comprehensive model for redress. Joanna Quinn's edited volume, *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies*, takes a social sciences approach, with contributions from both political theorists and political analysts. And Julie McGonegal's *Imagining Justice: The Politics of Postcolonial Forgiveness and Reconciliation* is written from the perspective of literary and postcolonial studies. A summary and critique of some eight hundred pages from such diverse perspectives is no mean feat, but I hope to show the value of considering these questions through very different and sometimes conflicting disciplinary viewpoints.

I feel the need to come clean about my own biases. First, my own training and background is in Comparative Literature and I take a Cultural Studies approach to my own research; second, I have just completed a book on forgiveness in literature.[1] For many years now I have been deeply engaged in dialogues around forgiveness and reconciliation, and yet I find myself drawn to explore and learn more. The three books I have chosen to consider here are part of an explosion of publishing in the areas of reconciliation,

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transitional justice, and conflict resolution. What is most interesting to me is how these conversations have been greatly enriched by the diversity of scholars now working in the fields of philosophy, psychology, political science, sociology, literature, law, and art.

Atonement: Acknowledgement and Redress

In her introduction, Linda Radzik argues that scholarship on conflict resolution has been too narrowly focused on the mechanisms for reconciliation viewed from the perspective of judge or victim, and that the role of the wrongdoer has been neglected. She seeks in *Making Amends* to fill this gap by establishing what the wrongdoer can do to rectify the wrongdoing, claiming that, "wrongs can be righted and that amends can be made" (3).

Radzik first examines the concept of atonement in the discourses of theology, law, and philosophy, then addresses different sources of skepticism, and finally lays out her own model for making amends. Along the way, Radzik refers to specific cases of wrongdoing, from minor wrongs in personal relationships to serious crimes and historic injustices across political and religious communities. She stresses that successful correction of a wrongdoing requires a close examination of the wrongdoing, its consequences, and its symbolic effects.

According to Radzik, it is the moral obligation of the wrongdoer to take action and address the harm, even while recognizing that the past cannot be erased and that some damage is irreversible. Such responses include emotions (guilt, remorse, and shame), resolving to improve one's behaviour in the future, acknowledging the harm done and the accepting blame, apologizing, performing acts of restitution and making reparations, performing good deeds for the benefit of the victim and community, self-punishment, and voluntary submission to punishment at the hands of an authority (5).[2]

Historically, atonement has been closely tied to religious notions of redemption, salvation and liberation, but Radzik argues that secular discourses on conflict resolution can benefit from proper attention to the concept of making amends (which she uses interchangeably with atonement). Radzik's model differs in important ways from the common Christian doctrine, which provides the option of a third-party intervention, where someone else atones for one's wrongdoing: Jesus Christ atoned for human sin so that all Christians might achieve salvation (8).

Radzik outlines three principle objections to atonement: first, that it is purely theological and has no relevance for moral philosophy—the argument that what is done is done and that guilt cannot be washed away; second, that atonement is possible

but of no practical value—the wrongdoer is "othered" by his or her acts and cannot be reformed; and third, that the concept of atonement has oppressive tendencies as a form of social control that oppresses people who are already marginalized (9). Here, Radzik introduces a case study that will serve as a platform for much of her deliberations on the concept. The Magdalen asylums of Ireland were institutions where "fallen women" were sent to repent and atone for their past sins, but Radzik suggests that the Magdalen asylums ended up "institutionalizing punishment, not atonement" (17). She maintains nonetheless that this case can teach us about the danger of corruption, whereby figures of authority coerce a wrongdoer into retributive atonement. Only atonement that is taken up by the free will of the wrongdoer is genuine, writes Radzik, admitting that the close connection between atonement and suffering presents a severe obstacle to theories of atonement (19).

Having outlined the major tenets of atonement and objections to it, Radzik spends the next three chapters evaluating the three central models of atonement: 1) repayment of a *moral debt*; 2) *moral transformation* through atonement; and 3) the relationship between atonement and *reconciliation*. Of these three, Radzik defends the reconciliation model of atonement, arguing that it is superior because of its focus on *repairing relationships* for the betterment of all parties: victims, communities, and wrongdoers.

While I agree with Radzik in her privileging of the reconciliation model of atonement, I find that her criticisms of the other two models are not strong enough and that she fails to recognize the potential harm in these approaches. There are two ways of amending a moral debt, the "retributive model," whereby the wrongdoer must suffer for his or her actions, and the "restitutive model," whereby the wrongdoer compensates the victim in some way. Radzik concludes that these models are necessary but not sufficient because the retributive model elides the victim and the restitutive model fails to acknowledge the wrongdoer's role in making amends. Radzik suggests that guilt, remorse, and shame are useful emotional responses (37),[3] although she admits that apology and restitution are "*usually more effective* than the pursuit of suffering per se" (44, my emphasis). She concludes that "repentance is valuable and wrongdoers must repent, yet repentance is not sufficient for atonement" (71). Radzik's arguments in favour of repairing relationships (introducing the wordplay on atonement as *at-one-ment*) are more convincing than her skepticism around retributive approaches, and her emphasis on the elimination or annulling of a wrongdoing precludes the possibility of atonement as an on-going process.

The three final chapters of *Making Amends*—on forgiveness, restorative justice, and group atonement—bring fresh insights to debates that have not received much attention from philosophers. In her discussion of restorative justice, Radzik argues in

favour of this system because it gives a more active role to the wrongdoer, but she worries, and rightly so, that restorative justice "violates the principle of liberal neutrality" because the state finds itself in a battle over competing conceptions of what is good. For the sake of the community, Radzik writes, the state needs to remain dispassionate, concerned only about the violation of the law rather than the consequences for either the wrongdoer or the victim. In her final chapter on group wrongdoings, Radzik returns to the case of the Magdalen asylums, arguing that the current members of the church have a moral responsibility to rectify the wrongs committed by previous generations, and that the Catholic Church must find appropriate ways of making amends, be it through acknowledgement, apology, or memorials.

I have concerns about two aspects of Radzik's study: first, the emphasis on guilt and shame as part and parcel of making amends, and second the lack of context with regard to culture, history, religion, ethnicity, or gender. In my view, Radzik does not adequately acknowledge the cultural-historical specificity of Irish Catholoicism or the intersections of gender and power in her case study of the Magdalen asylums. That said, Radzik deserves credit for drawing scholarly attention to the neglect of wrongdoers in the reconciliation process. In recent decades, victims rights groups have lobbied hard for their increased presence in courtrooms and the media, and victim status has taken on a dangerous moral and rhetorical authority. Radzik's focus on atonement restores the role of wrongdoers as active agents in the process of conflict resolution.

Transforming Post-Conflict Societies: Reconciliation and Communities

We turn now from the private world of the wrongdoer to the public realm of communities. We also shift from the personal to the political. Where Radzik's study looks at a tightly controlled microcosm of damage and repair, Joanna Quinn's edited volume, *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies*, shows us a very messy picture indeed. In her introduction, she acknowledges the complexities and contradictions inherent in real-world situations, with large groups, multiple parties and often centuries of history, and seeks to mitigate the confusion by outlining various methodological frameworks and clearing up terminology. Quinn points out that the term "transitional justice," which refers to the transformation of conflict and post-conflict societies, has only been around for a decade or so, and that there is therefore little in the way of a standard body of literature. Scholars from disciplines throughout the social sciences, law, and the humanities have developed different models and various thematic foci. Quinn divides reconciliation studies into four subfields (albeit acknowledging that the lines between these are necessarily blurred): 1) memory and remembering; 2) truth and truth-telling; 3) peacebuilding and the transformation of institutions; and 4) forgiveness. Moreover, she identifies three urgent concerns for

the discipline: the problem of developing a working definition of reconciliation; the divide between process-oriented and outcomes-based models; and the distinction between individual and community-based reconciliation. Quinn acknowledges the wide variety of approaches taken in the volume, but divides them roughly into theoretical and case-based studies, some employing political-legal frameworks and others using applied analysis. All of the articles in the volume, however, address some aspect of social healing, the process by which communities are built and relationships are repaired for the mutual benefit of all parties.

Rather than treat each chapter, I will highlight a few key contributions and refer generally to others along the way, but first I'll introduce some of the theoretical models. The first part of the volume focuses on processes of reconciliation, with emphasis on *acknowledgement*, *repentance*, and *forgiveness*. Where some theologians and philosophers see forgiveness as a category unto itself that ought not to be contaminated by politics, negotiations, or conditions,[4] the authors in this volume generally take a more pragmatic approach, such as Lawrence Thomas's view of forgiveness as a dialectic relationship, where forgiveness functions like an exchange and compensates for a wrong (7). Using peace processes in Northern Ireland as a reference point, Nicholas Frayling also sees forgiveness as a means to an end, replacing the adage of "forgive and forget" with "remember and repent" (29), and stressing the importance of examining the historical record as a means to stop historical abuse and hatred. For her part, Trudy Govier emphasizes acknowledgement—admitting the wrong and recognizing the harm it caused—as a necessary first step toward achieving sustainable peace (37-38). Like Radzik, Govier argues that the perpetrator has a key role to play, and that atonement, restitution, and reparation are central to successful reconciliation.

Part two of the volume is devoted to diverse case studies, for example Morocco's Fairness and Reconciliation Commission, the Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification, and Northern Ireland's mixed-religion schools. I've chosen to look at Rosemary Nagi's "Traditional Justice and Legal Pluralism in Transitional Context: The Case of Rwanda's Gacaca Courts" in more detail because it focuses on traditional justice as a subcategory of transitional justice, and asks important questions about the intersections of indigenous custom and human rights law. Nagi points to the United Nation's warnings against imposing a universal model of justice, especially in the developing world and post-colonial societies. While human rights law and the International Criminal Court are undoubtedly important tools, there is considerable tension between internationalized concepts of truth, justice, and reconciliation and local traditions of conflict resolution. Local and customary law has come to play an increasingly important role in regions such as Sierra Leone, East Timor, and Northern Uganda, and Nagi argues in favour of legal pluralism, which she defines as "the interaction between an internationalized transitional justice based on universal

human rights and locally based transitional mechanisms based on customary law" (87). She stresses the need for a combination of global and local approaches that are "attuned to issues of legality *and* power" (87).

In post-genocide Rwanda, there were three different levels of transitional justice: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), criminal trials at the national level, and the gacaca process. Gacaca courts were established in 2001 as a response to the two major failings of "Western" justice: the time-consuming strictures of due process (with more than 120,000 people in prison, time was of the essence), and the lack of culturally sensitive approaches. With more than 12,000 courts throughout Rwanda, the gacaca system remains the main venue dedicated to justice and reconciliation.

Nagi warns, however, against romanticized notions of authentic tradition, which stereotypes African people as outside "universal" Western notions of justice, and instead endorses Bonaventura de Sousa Santos's idea of "interlegality" as a hybridization of legal orders (88). That said, Nagi also emphasizes the need for active critique of gacaca-like systems, specifically the lack of legal representation and poor accountability. She is also skeptical of the Rwandan government's position, which denies the existence of tribal categories (Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa), all the while quietly "Tutsifying" the judicial system. While gacaca has introduced respect for local cultures, there is skepticism among the international community that it can achieve the goals of truth, justice, and reconciliation, to say nothing of security and a strong rule of law. Nagi concludes by reminding her readers that, whether Western or African, global or local, the law is never neutral: "The contextual sensitivity upon which support for gacaca appears to rest cannot be abstracted from the socio-political dynamics of power either across or within normative-legal orders" (106).

Stephanus F. Du Toit's "Tensions Between Human Rights and the Politics of Reconciliation: A South African Study" picks up on similar themes. A great deal has been written about the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), but the scholarship has tended to privilege a Human Rights perspective. By broadening the approach, Du Toit provides valuable new insight into the complex tensions between justice and peace, human rights and reconciliation, victims' rights and perpetrator demands, and legal processes and extrajudicial truth-seeking mechanisms (232). There were also largely unspoken tensions between competing models: legal (amnesty for criminals in exchange for full disclosure), religious (Bishop Desmond Tutu's call to forgive), and political (reconciliation as the means to create the Rainbow Nation). All of this took place under intense media scrutiny, with the aim of exposing the truth to the wider South African population and the world.

But these are not the only competing models. Du Toit outlines five concurrent notions of human rights: 1) President Mandela's "colour-blind promise," which proposed to transcend racism and turn reconciliation into policy; 2) F.W. De Klerk's claim to cultural self-determination of the Afrikaans community, which had historically been discriminated against by the British; 3) the conundrum that religious groups such as the African Christian Democratic Party only acknowledge the human rights that coincide with Christian morality, which compromises gay rights, access to abortion, and protection for prostitutes; 4) Thabo Mbeki's new interpretation of human rights, which acknowledges the colonial history of racial oppression and emphasizes the importance of cultural and ethnic specificity; and 5) the version of human rights that takes into account poverty and class oppression as major determining factors that limit equality and human dignity.

The major contribution of Du Toit's article is to draw attention to the ambiguities and contradictions around human rights, and the roles of politics, race, religion, culture, ethnicity, and class. With the fading of the post-apartheid era, it is crucial to reevaluate the legal and moral assumptions surrounding human rights, and to add valuable new context to these frameworks.

The final essay in this volume, Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly's "Beyond Coexistence: Towards a Working Definition of Reconciliation," continues the discussion of terminology and frameworks initiated by Quinn in her introduction. The authors consider the history of reconciliation processes, which gained momentum in the 1990s when several international peace processes got under way. They define reconciliation as "developing a mutual conciliatory accommodation between antagonistic or formerly antagonistic persons or groups," the core of which "is the preparedness of people to anticipate a shared future" (287), but they stress the need for the distinction between reconciliation and forgiveness, because of the latter's association with religious practices such as confession, repentance, restitution, and redemption, which they say can undermine justice. Reconciliation, Hamber and Kelly argue, demands that the perpetrator acknowledge the wrong and make amends, where forgiveness is not necessarily dependent on such conditions. Furthermore, when reconciliation is conflated with calls to forgive and forget, there is a danger that wrongs of the past will be concealed or, worse yet, denied. Reconciliation, they say, is not a religious concept, but an expansive, complex, and difficult process of unearthing an often traumatic and violent past with the goal of peaceful coexistence.

Finally, Hamber and Kelly propose their own criteria for reconciliation:

1) Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society.

2) Acknowledging and dealing with the past.

3) Building positive relationships.

4) Significant cultural and attitudinal change.

5) Substantial social, economic, and political change.

Interviews on the subject of successful reconciliation revealed that "acknowledging and dealing with the past was, by a large margin, the aspect that respondents gave most emphasis" (299), which supports Linda Radzik's claim that atonement—including acknowledgement and redress—deserves to receive more attention in discourses on conflict resolution.

Imagination and Interpretation: Doing Justice in Literary Studies

Julie McGonegal's *Imagining Justice: The Politics of Postcolonial Forgiveness and Reconciliation* charts new territory by bringing postcolonial theory and discourses on reconciliation into dialogue with literary studies. While postcolonial approaches have been prevalent in the study of fictional narrative since the 1990s, research on forgiveness, reconciliation, and transitional justice has not been widely addressed in literary studies.[5] McGonegal begins by drawing attention to the myriad of public apologies in recent years, not least of which Canada's apology to aboriginal survivors of residential schools. This landmark step was preceded by apologies to Japanese Canadians, Italian Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians, Croatian Canadians, Chinese Canadians and Jewish Canadians, all of whom had been the victims of historical wrongs. Wole Soyinka has called this a "*fin de millénaire* fever of atonement" (x); by contrast, *Globe and Mail* writer Jeffrey Simpson bemoans the "pervasive culture of victimization," and says that we need to stop the special treatment for ethnic and religious minorities or the "victimization competition" will divide us into a "dangerously pluralistic society" (xii). McGonegal's preface speaks precisely to such paradoxes of reconciliation that Quinn's volume identifies. In recognizing the wrongs done to victims, we end up encouraging identification with victim status and the rhetorical authority it engenders. That said, even if these many apologies appear repetitive, they generate both real and symbolic meaning for the affected peoples.

McGonegal explores these questions in fictional narrative from a wide variety of cultural contexts, including Australia, Sri Lanka, Canada, and South Africa. She is at pains to demonstrate that literature is not just a tool for analysis, but that it has a vital role to play in engaging the imagination and offering creative perspectives on age-old conflicts, citing Peter Hallward's critique that postcolonial readings have tended to

be mere anecdotal props to back up complex theoretical claims. McGonegal joins Gayatri Spivak in championing the aesthetic power of literature to transform entrenched political debates, and writes: "What forgiveness and literary activity share, then, is an act of submission, an act of risk-taking insofar as one opens oneself up to the possibilities brought into existence by the fact of contact with another person" (11). McGonegal is careful, however, to point to the limits of reconciliation, saying that fiction is not an "eminent expression of forgiveness and reconciliation," but that it inspires creative thinking about conflict, draws our attention to new possibilities, and "supplements the public address of grievance and pain" (14). The other significant danger, McGonegal warns, comes from using novels—especially those written by privileged white males of postcolonial nations—as representative or authentic and as a means to elaborate a politics of reconciliation.

Perhaps the most ambitious aspect of McGonegal's study is her attempt to map out a theory of postcolonial forgiveness and reconciliation. As her starting point, she juxtaposes two giants of twentieth-century thought, Franz Fanon and Mahatma Gandhi. Where Fanon's Sartrean existentialism insists that no conciliation is possible, Ghandi's position of nonviolence is born out of a metaphysical belief in the power of "suffering love" as a means to transform politics. Without the purgatory affect of violence, warns Fanon, the colonized remains fixed in a condition of melancholy apathy. Where Gandhi views reconciliation as an ethical imperative, for Fanon it is undesirable and impossible. Nonetheless, McGonegal argues that when read in tandem, Fanon and Gandhi's thought "helps to develop a dialectics of reconciliation methodologically and conceptually attuned to the principles of community" (27).

Citing Edward Said's call for colonized groups to end the "politics of blame" and for the West to take responsibility for its past wrongdoings, McGonegal suggests that postcolonialism can function as Homi Bhabha's "third space," to "facilitate cross-cultural conversation between radically different ideologies" (29). Defining reconciliation as "the establishment of new conditions and interactions—conditions centred on the ideals of negotiation, collaboration, and reciprocity" (33), McGonegal argues that practices of reconciliation can constitute alternatives to modern conceptualizations of justice (34). She is careful to add, however, that justice must be included within reconciliation and that these notions of justice must not be based solely on Western models. Furthermore, this reconciliation can operate in the ambiguous space "between the singular and the universal, as moving dialectically between the subjective and the social" (38).

McGonegal moves from ambiguity to paradox in the work of Jacques Derrida, who maintains that pure forgiveness must be free of conditions, that it cannot have an agenda or be conflated with atonement. That said, Derrida admits that he is torn

"between a 'hyperbolic' ethical vision of forgiveness, pure forgiveness, and the reality of a society at work in pragmatic processes of reconciliation" (qtd. in McGonegal 43). McGonegal finds inspiration in Derrida's claim that it is in the negotiation between these two poles that "responsible political action and decision-making occur" (43), but supplements this position by invoking Kristeva's definition of forgiveness as an interpretation that avoids rational reconstructions of wrongdoing and thereby opens up the possibility of moving beyond both the wrong and the blame and hatred it engenders.

Finally, McGonegal brings Kelly Oliver's concept of social forgiveness into conversation with Derrida and Kristeva, praising her for recognizing that "social forgiveness is not a question of forgiving unforgivable crimes but of forging the deprivation of agency that renders forgiveness impossible" (49). McGonegal suggests that for Oliver, forgiveness is not about individual wrongdoings, but rather it entails forgiving the transgression that is singularity and individuality, and that it is about "restoring the definitive feature of subjectivity—forgiveness—to the victims" (49). McGonegal adopts Oliver's vision that forgiveness functions as a product of intersubjectivity and collectivity.

This concept of intersubjective/collective forgiveness is the key to McGonegal's postcolonial forgiveness because it "necessitates discarding our prejudices against forgiveness as inward, private, belonging to the cult of feeling, and thus non-political and inapplicable to collective aims or identity" (50). The brilliance of her claim here is that she not only marries postcolonial aims to those of reconciliation, but also disarms the critique that forgiveness applies only to individual or interpersonal situations. Further, McGonegal likens this collective, intersubjective forgiveness to the cultural specificity of *ubuntu*, the African ethics of interdependent humanity espoused by Bishop Desmond Tutu as the core value of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Each of the four subsequent chapters functions as a case study to explore a different aspect of reconciliation and forgiveness, mapping competing notions of justice onto a literary text. David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1993), which treats the historic wrongs suffered by Australia's Aborigines, serves as a platform to explore the problematic nature of politics that represses or elides the difference of the other. This chapter demonstrates the necessity of culturally sensitive approaches to reconciliation, especially where indigenous peoples are concerned, and the dangers of embarking on such a project without the crucial phases of acknowledgement and atonement stressed by both Quinn and Radzik. Despite its sobering perspective, McGonegal concludes that Malouf's novel nonetheless constitutes "a refusal to give up on the task of radically transforming racial relations in Australia" (20).

Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (1999) presents similarly recalcitrant ethnic strife. If nothing else, Ondaatje exposes the senseless loss wrought by the endless cycle of violence and thus presents a damning critique of both the parties involved in the conflict and international policy makers, the United Nations, human rights organizations, and the United States. Like Quinn, McGonegal demonstrates that culturally appropriate means are crucial to the outcomes of peace interventions. Ondaatje questions the assumptions around principles of legal judgment and prosecution as well as the dogmatic insistence upon retribution on all sides. McGonegal locates in *Anil's Ghost* an ethics of caring for the other, established through the novel's archeological excavation of fragments and remains, both physical and emotional, that "constitute powerful forms of resistance, recomposition, and reflection" (21).

With Joy Kagawa's *Obasan* (1981), McGonegal pursues the important connection between forgiveness and remembrance. While forgetfulness, amnesia, and repression might be convenient for Canadians wishing to distance themselves from an embarrassing national past, the novel demonstrates that forgiveness necessitates a renarration of past injustices. McGonegal points to Obasan as an example of the real-world implications of fiction—the novel's exposure of the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II raised consciousness among survivors, transformed public perceptions of this injustice, and may have influenced the Canadian government's decision in 1988 to offer an official apology and pay reparations to individuals affected by this historic wrongdoing.

McGonegal's final example, J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), exposes the shortcomings and contradictions of truth-telling and confessional discourses in South Africa's national reconciliation project. Written in part as a response to naïve Western enthusiasm for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Coetzee's tale of sexual harassment and white middle-class guilt weighs the potential dangers and benefits of confessional rituals, but more importantly the novel grapples with complex power relations of forgiveness. McGonegal demonstrates the ways in which *Disgrace* asks important questions about how pressure to forgive further marginalizes the oppressed by placing the burden of reconciliation on their shoulders. The white woman who is the victim of sexual harassment acts as a foil for the masses of black South Africans who were asked by their own leaders and by the international community to forgive before proper measures had been taken to recognize and redress the wrongdoing. Again here, Radzik's and Quinn's concern for acknowledgement and making amends come to mind. We are confronted yet again by the paradox that the victim can either have too much power to grant or deny forgiveness, identifying with the rhetorical authority gained through suffering and oppression, or victims can end up internalizing their marginalized position, succumbing to coercive pressures for blanket forgiveness from the very people who were responsible for their oppression and suffering. Mc-

Gonegal's task as a critic is to demonstrate how literary works can provide a means to explore the balanced approach, what she optimistically calls "forgiveness without power" (22).

McGonegal provides lucid discussion of theoretical models and fictional works, weaving disparate discourses into coherent arguments with ease. I can find little to quibble with in this fine study, but I do wonder about the unique focus on contemporary literary works (with the exception of Kagawa's *Obasan*, all examples are taken from the 1990s), the paucity of formal analysis of texts, and the fact that McGonegal treats Australia's Aborigines but says little of Canada's indigenous peoples. That said, *Imagining Justice* is groundbreaking in its focus on bringing together the fields of postcolonialism, theories of conflict resolution, and literary studies.

In conclusion, I observe that, taken together, the three books under review mark a turning point in reconciliation studies. The fact that Radzik, Quinn, and McGonegal each explore a subset of the discipline—atonement, transitional justice, and postcolonial reconciliation—is a sign that the field of conflict resolution is beginning to mature. These are not introductory works, but rather they ask nuanced questions about the mechanisms and methodologies of reconciliation, and collectively raise the level of scholarship by reflecting upon, questioning, and supplementing the values, assumptions, and arguments already in place.

If there is a trend, I would say it is the attention to the dangers of hasty reconciliation and the potential damage to victims, thus the strong focus on the conditions for reconciliation: acknowledgement, apology, confession, restitution, reparation, and other forms of redress. Another central concern is the call for culturally appropriate mechanisms of reconciliation, not to pit indigenous forms of justice against international human rights discourses but rather to foster fruitful dialogue between traditional and Western forms of justice. Further themes are the omnipresence of paradox, the recognition that reconciliation never happens outside of power structures and politics, and the importance of narrative and fiction as means to mediate trauma and imagine creative alternatives to entrenched conflict. There has been an explosion of scholarly writing on forgiveness and reconciliation, and there is no doubt that these studies contribute in important ways to these debates, but that the conversation needs to continue, for as Thich Nhat Hanh has said, "the practice of peace and reconciliation is one of the most vital and artistic of human actions" (47).[6]

Notes

[1] Jill Scott. *A Poetics of Forgiveness: Cultural Responses to Loss and Wrongdoing*. New York: Palgrave, 2010.

[2] It is interesting to note that this list is similar to the kinds of conditions placed on normative forgiveness (see Charles Griswold's *Forgiveness: A Philosopical Exploration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). While atonement is subsumed as a subset of forgiveness for Griswold, Radzik gives it priority over other features.

[3] See Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's "Remorse, Forgiveness, and Rehumanization: Stories from South Africa." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 42.1 (2002): 7–32.

[4] See for example Jacques Derrida's "On Forgiveness." *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. London: Routledge, 2001.

[5] While the South African TRC elicited a number of important conversations around transitional justice in relation to literary studies (see Rosemary Jolly's *Cultured Violence: Narrative, Social Suffering and Engendering Violence in Contemporary South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010)), there has been little direct treatment of literary representations of forgiveness or theorizing of forgiveness through literature.

[6] Thich Nhat Hanh. *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*. Toronto: Bantam, 1992.

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From Virtuality to Actuality: The Power, Wealth and Ambivalence of Video Games

LISA DUSENBERRY

Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter. *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. University of Minnesota Press, 2009. 320 pp.

Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter's *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* deftly merges a critique of Empire and its practices with the social and historical context of video games and the gaming industry. Refusing to cast video games as either a fully imperialist force or an immediately liberating technology for social change, the watchword of *Games of Empire* is ambivalence. Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter argue that "while games tend to a reactionary imperial *content*, as militarized, marketized, entertainment commodities, they also tend to a radical, multitudinous *form*, as collaborative, constructive, experimental digital productions" (228, emphasis original). Written in three sections, the text examines video games as commodities (including their relationship to labor practices and global markets), as narratives capable of reinforcing and disrupting social systems (including militaristic, racial and class-based narratives) and, finally, as *multitude (*possibly radical forms that have the capacity to change social structures and remake social practices).

Games of Empire is an engaging account of the history of influences behind video games; it focuses on the cultural context surrounding the gaming industry, exploring the relationships among video games and globalization, intellectual property, class stratification, military force and activism. The book does an excellent job of combining Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's theories of Empire, biopower, immaterial labor and multitude with pertinent examples from video game culture. The combination of theory and industry examples makes the more complex Marxist theories accessible to a novice reader. All the usual suspects are represented here: Electronic Arts (EA), Take-Two Interactive, the Xbox, military crossover games (*Full Spectrum Warrior*), *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) and *Grand Theft Auto* (*GTA*). But while the subjects may be familiar, the analysis focuses not on the effect on the individual player or on rehashing the ludology versus narratology debate so common in game studies, but on showing the links between gaming practices and their respective socio-cultural moments, as they are shaped in the form and content of video games. Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter skillfully reconnect video games (hardware and software) to conditions of labor and production, social practices and legal struggles. Beyond that, it also provides a detailed analysis of the political and social underpinning of video games, which is often overlooked in debates over violence and media effects. At its core, the book is an intriguing investigation of both the relentless imperial manifestations of video games *and* their capacity for social change.

The text's first section develops Hardt and Negri's definition of immaterial labor as a framework for discussing the labor practices of EA and the kinds of subjectivities that Microsoft's Xbox generate. *Games of Empire* is more interested in the immaterial labor of video games as an example of the new "technological, affective, and communicational work" that is being produced (in contrast to material labor, which focuses on production of material objects). The gaming industry has transformed labor into "playbor," capitalizing on the innovations of players to enhance industry products (25-27). Working from examples like *Spacewar!* (1962), *Doom* (1993), *John Madden Football/Madden NFL, Quake* (1996), *EverQuest* (1999), *Halo* (2001), *The Sims* (2002), and *Star Wars Galaxies* (2003), *Games of Empire* gives a history of video games that often involves subversive workers creating unsanctioned games only to find those games (and their labor) appropriated by global capital. As games become international commodities, the rhetoric of "work as play" is used to efface the grueling labor practices that rule the game production cycle (with both material and immaterial labor). Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter make the case that gaming companies like EA are not just following a path of globalization and U.S. imperial domination; rather, they are participating in a type of cognitive capitalism that exports U.S. products and ideology for maximum profit, but also modifies products to fit local interests to secure sales in foreign markets. Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter adopt the rhetoric of "glocalization" to describe the efforts of game companies to adapt their products to the economies and player-base of each market they enter. For example, for *FIFA Online*, piracy in Korea made selling the game software an unsuccessful business model, so EA partnered with a local studio to give the game away, marketing purchasable game enhancements and add-ons instead (52); similarly, recognizing a difference in player skill and internet accessibility, EA added a functionality to *Battlefield Heroes* that would allow casual gamers to be matched with other amateur players in order to encourage new players to enter the market (52). These practices, also common to other multinational corporations, have the effect of acknowledging regional or national differences while still creating homogenized groupings that benefit corporate interests (51).

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Software developers are not Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter's only concern; they also examine video game hardware, especially Microsoft's Xbox. They argue that it is not just the "machine design or game theme but also the social contexts of plays [sic]" (82) that are indicative of Empire. The book describes how controller design and corporate branding participate in controlling, assigning and reinforcing the players' subjectivities as gamers. While the book is critical of these mechanically-produced subjectivities and of the practices of the game industry in general, it is careful to acknowledge the ways these hegemonic subject positions (i.e. the hyper-masculine, hard-core gamer) are resisted by creators and players. Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter skirt the debates over the moral, physical and media effects of games in favor of evaluating the production cycle of and rhetoric behind games and their imperial and revolutionary capacities. By choosing to reframe their discussion of games apart from popular arguments in the field, the authors are able to unpack the complex relationship of pleasure, production and power that subtends these discourses.

The second section of *Games of Empire* investigates the intersection of the virtual and the actual. Through a discussion of the military history of video games, the racial and financial ramifications of Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) games and the cynical portrayal of urban environments in *GTA*, the authors paint an incisive picture of how video game technology is controlled, how video games are involved in global wage-labor conflicts and how video games often reaffirm capitalist ideology despite seeming to critique it. They demonstrate how military training games like *Full Spectrum Warrior* (*FSW*) are adapted to civilian games. These military-civilian crossovers serve to acclimate players to "the perpetual conflict of the war on terror" (99): "In American living rooms…the armed vision of *Full Spectrum Warrior* and its ilk contributes to the culture shock necessary on the homeland to banalize the global violence of primitive accumulation" (118).

FSW strives to be painfully racially diverse in the ethnic makeup of its military unit, while at the same time instilling a monolithic and negatively racialized view of the enemy. The messages war games send about race and nationality help to establish the book's argument about biopower, which is further developed in a discussion of the disconnect between virtual behaviors in *WoW* and the actual material conditions of the "gold farmer" game laborers/displaced Chinese peasant farmers. *Games of Empire* scrutinizes Blizzard's MMO *WoW* because it provides an example of both in-game conflict over the status of Western and Chinese players and out-of-game class stratification that supports the in-game economy:

> Here the intersection of Blizzard's digital biopower with the material biopower of Chinese capitalism snaps into sharp focus. When Blizzard polices the digital realm of Azeroth (a kingdom created from the commercial enclosure of cyberspace) for virtual gold farmers, the offenders it seeks are likely to be actual peasant farmers who have left or been thrown off their fields by Chinese capitalism's enclosures, abandoning an impoverished and ecologically devastated countryside for its cyber-connected cities (145).

Games of Empire argues that a full understanding of *WoW* and the practices it fosters is not possible without thinking through the transformation of Chinese media, consumption and labor, three factors provide the context for the debate about gold farming and its ramifications for the very real (virtual) economy that *WoW* operates. *WoW* is a game of Empire not only because of its commodification and its stark racialization of its community (Alliance versus Horde), but also because it refuses to question the exploitation of laborers and players.

On the surface, the *GTA* games seem to address issues of race and class relations the book's other example games avoid. They depict a broken and corrupt system in a dystopian and highly racially-divided space. However, as *Games of Empire* argues, *GTA*'s cynicism simply recreates the system of exploitation rather than enabling a space to interrogate it. *GTA* puts the brutality of Empire on display, but does not, in the end, allow for any (playable) social reorganization. Overall, the book's second section reveals how video games continually reconstruct imperial forms of labor and social practices both virtually and in actuality.

But *Games of Empire* does not leave the reader with a pessimistic view of video games as a simple tool of Empire; its third and final section looks at video games' (primarily untapped) potential to become "games of multitude." Games of multitude have the capacity to change the structures and practices they support by generating new subjectivities, by providing circuits of opposition to global capital and exploitation and, most importantly for the authors, by allowing designers and players to not only "resist Empire but also to develop, protect, and propose alternatives" (188). The final section returns to earlier discussions of *FSW* and *WoW*, positioning these games alongside independent games to argue that even as games are utilized for corporate interests they also allow for unsanctioned player self-organization and can be appropriated by activists and players to benefit anti-Empire movements. *Games of Empire* outlines six compelling video game capacities that mark games as serving the multitude: "Counterplay, dissonant development, tactical games, polity simulators, self-organized worlds, and software commons are six interweaving paths of social activity remaking *ludic* practices" (211, emphasis original). By remaking play in ways that actively challenges current social practices, Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter contend that video games might fulfill their capacity to present alternative social systems and enact change. In its refusal to herald video games as an instantaneous route of social change, the book succeeds in convincing the reader that "[a]ll games of Empire are,

it bears repeating, also games of multitude, shot through, in the midst of banal ideological conventionality, with social experimentation and techno-political potential" (228).

Games of Empire follows a persuasive logical sequence, first defining, modifying and defending the economic theory at hand, then showing how the theory relates to the (im)material practices of developing video games and the main sectors invested in video game production, then illustrating the effects on laborers, creators and players alike and, finally, making a case for why video games are an increasingly important object of study. Although the array of terms and theories marshaled in the process occasionally obscures the connections and overarching arguments between chapters, the book lucidly accomplishes its goal. It provides depth to debates over violence, exploitation, economic, political, and ideological subtexts in video games and offers a multifaceted view of games' cultural context. While it covers an expansive range of complex concepts, *Games of Empire*'s most convincing evidence is its storytelling; the fascinating accounts of the companies and players whose conflicts over what games are and what games could be aptly demonstrate economic imperatives in action. But perhaps the book's best quality is its accessibility to both the experienced and novice scholar in multiple fields; fluidly combining Marxist theories, game studies and socio-cultural history, Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter's volume is one that media and cultural studies scholars should surely add to their reading lists.

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A Long Chinese Century?

PETER HITCHCOCK

Giovanni Arrighi. *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century*. Verso, 2007. 420 pp.

This is a brave and provocative book by a writer who gave us some of the most brilliant critiques of geopolitics and geoeconomics of recent years. Arrighi described his projects as comparative historical-sociology which in terms of the works themselves is another way of thinking the world system as such (in contradistinction to the methodologies and conclusions of Wallerstein and Brenner). The contours of his approach were formed initially by his experience of working in Southern Africa in the 1960s where specific formations of capitalist development under the racist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa taught Arrighi that simple models of proletarianization were insufficient to explain the contradictory relations at modernity's edge. When Arrighi worked in Tanzania another lesson was learned, which was that decolonization through national liberation did not inexorably lead to socialist delinking. This degree of skepticism about normative leftist socio-economic critique continued in Arrighi's participation in the Gramsci-inspired project of *autonomia* that galvanized worker organization in Italy in the 1970s. While the role of Gramsci would eventually diminish in the movement (particularly in its transformation into the multitude of Hardt and Negri), for Arrighi the committed agenda of the organic intellectual would never leave his subsequent research even if the emphasis fell increasingly more on intellectual rather than organic in that formulation.

True to his close and productive re-reading of the Marxist tradition, Arrighi's *Geometry of Imperialism* (1978) took on the standard Leninist critique in part by questioning one of Lenin's key sources for his position, the work of liberal economist J.A.Hobson. The point was not to negate Lenin's inspiration so much as recast it by an adherence to the Gramscian concept of hegemony. The latter, for Arrighi, has proved much more fruitful in understanding the peculiarities of, for instance, the American empire of the twentieth century. Arrighi is best known for *The Long Twentieth Century*, a book that combines his formidable gift for historical detail with a capacity to unravel the complex sinews of economic relations. Adapting Braudel's *longue durée* framework and his attention to the importance of city states, Arrighi also develops Braudel's concern for the connections between financialization and the

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decline of hegemons in the world system. The effect of this telescopic temporality is to reveal deep structures in state formation that stretch our understanding of the twentieth century to include inter-state relations over a five hundred year period. These cycles of state formation and decline are not identical of course, but Arrighi displays the value of discerning a similar pattern formation in their constellation, one which extends to the decline of the United States as a hegemonic power in the current era. The role of finance capital is key and, as Arrighi has admitted, this tends to overshadow the intervention of labor in the capital/state nexus (although labor's pertinence can be registered in much of Arrighi's other work). In many respects, the appearance of *Adam Smith in Beijing* continues the work of *The Long Twentieth Century* (and to an extent, the book he wrote with Beverly, *Chaos and Governance* as well as the co-edited collection *The Resurgence of East Asia*) and, with its subtitle, "lineages of the twenty-first century," looks to meld *longue durée* with futurity.

While identifying the rise of China as a global power is certainly not new, Arrighi attempts to articulate the difference in China's increasingly hegemonic status by bringing alternative measures of modernity and modernization to the fore, including, as the title suggests, a novel reading of Adam Smith. The book is dedicated to Andre Gunder Frank and readers will not only recognize a characteristic world systems analysis but also an augmentation of Frank's own exploration of counter-Eurocentric critique in *ReOrient* (1998). The following is the basic problem Arrighi seeks to explore: is the resurgence of China a reconnection with the principles of its economic prowess before the rise of Europe or is its integration a basic extension of the nostrums of globalization in which cheap and unorganized labor is simply one more business opportunity? The easy answer is to say "both;" but while this would acknowledge China's earlier history as the world's richest economy, it would also tend to favor its present situation as an effect of Western neo-liberal tenacity and a closing-off of powerful alternative possibilities. Arrighi uses Smith as a lever to push back against the latter tendency while simultaneously invoking key Asian political economists like Hayami Akira and Kaoru Sugihara.

The reliance on Smith would seem counter-intuitive since he is most often read to endorse the kind of free-for-all associated with de-regulated markets of at least the last thirty years. Surely Marx, one of Smith's fiercest critics, could provide a more circumspect understanding of capitalism's Asian expansion? First, of course, as Arrighi underlines, Smith did not argue that markets should operate irrespective of or beyond considerations of the state for the distribution of public good (the state, not the market, provides the "invisible hand"). In fact, *The Wealth of Nations* is precisely about the ability of the state to harness the market as a means of sustenance for the state and its prerogatives (the wealth of nations is a measure of market/state synergy, not unbridled markets). Second, Marx's sense of capitalist globalization is awkwardly

flatist," Arrighi maintains, in a kind of Thomas Friedman manner. Certainly, as the *Communist Manifesto* mentions, some of those "Chinese walls" have been torn down by capitalist imperatives, but this is a caricature of market logics (like the Asiatic Mode of Production), rather than a nuanced understanding of practical exigency. The reliance on Smith permits Arrighi to maintain a crucial distinction between market practices and capital accumulation proper while also allowing Arrighi to provide a historical explanation for economic divergence *and* a contemporary convergence seen in China's explosive growth since 1978 and from 1992 in particular.

Now it has to be said that Arrighi is not endorsing Smith's analysis as the key to reading twenty-first century economic lineages, nor is he simply dismissing a basic Marxist critique of Chinese capital accumulation, as if the production of Chinese billionaires was merely a socialist aberration. His thesis, eloquently expressed in the introduction, is that the combination of the failure of the Project for a New American Century with China's increasing economic prominence makes Smith's vision for an equalization of East and West, a "commonwealth of civilizations," more rather than less possible. Obviously, this reading of Smith flies in the face of the free-marketeers of globalization, just as the interpretation of a market with non-capitalist characteristics is counter-intuitive for most, but the power of the book is that the conceptual daring is largely a consequence of careful reading and nuanced working assumptions. A third factor and possibility, market turbulence and global chaos, also hovers in the background and, given Arrighi's understanding of the role of financialization in the decline of hegemons, perhaps this could have received greater attention, especially in his conclusions. On the whole, however, this is an impressive leftist analysis of China in the world system that will reward further reflection in the years to come.

Arrighi organizes his critique into four interlinked sections. The first part examines the case for re-reading Adam Smith as a key to unlocking the enigma of contemporary Chinese capitalism through a history of a market society that survived by not being very capitalistic at all, at least in terms of conventional "development" models. The second part takes on Robert Brenner's analysis of the "persistent stagnation" of the global economy between 1973-93 and the topic of global economic turbulence (also drawn from Brenner). Arrighi's reading of Brenner is substantiated by comparing periods of turbulence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which allows Arrighi to track the declining fortunes of a global hegemon (the U.S.) against the contrasting dynamism of China. The third section continues the discussion of hegemony and the misguided attempt of PNAC (Project for a New American Century) to revive it (elsewhere Arrighi has called this "great power suicide"). The conceptual framework here borrows heavily from Arrighi's earlier works, especially *The Long Twentieth Century* but also from ideas developed in the book on chaos and governance. The final section considers the "New Asian Age" both on its own terms, and in terms of its meaning

for European and North American developmental limits. Arrighi ends the book with a short exegesis of the Beijing Consensus and its implications for global politics and economics. Although some chapters drift considerably from the original thesis, the argument overall presents a compelling case for seeing the "ascent of China" as a radical alternative to the Euramerican axis.

Arrighi hones his interpretation of China's market society as a version of Smith's thoughts on natural economic development. Prior to the tumult of the twentieth century, China's economic apparatus had encouraged market equilibrium by using labor reserves more than technological advantages. Food production surpluses were stored rather than shipped via international trade and this obviously helped maintain social order in times of shortage (the state redistributed such surpluses as a matter of course). Calling this an "industrious revolution" (the term is borrowed from Hayama Akira's analysis of Tokugawa, Japan via Kaoru Sugihara and the debate over the Great Divergence), Arrighi underlines the specific advantages of economic activity based on a broad skill set and social mores less prone to narrow specialization (of the kind, by contrast, Marx discerns in European industrialization). Until the Opium Wars, China was the East Asian hub of an interstate system focused on minimizing territorial acquisition and the destabilizing effects of competition ill-suited to what Smith meant by national wealth. Such critique stands as a challenge to any theory based on a single world system (like Andre Gunder Frank's), or economic logic that claims a global status by default. The point is less that Smith remains in Beijing, as it were, but more that the genealogy of this regional system remains enough to confound analyses bent on reading China's economic resurgence as primarily or simply an extension of Western industrial capitalist models of modernization.

I have less trouble with the difference of Arrighi's approach from Frank's grand scheme, or indeed the detailed way he distances himself from Brenner's understanding of global turbulence, than I do reconciling the history of industriousness with the actual interpellation of China for capitalism in the present, irrespective of the modernization at stake. For all of Arrighi's laudable appeals to economic hybridization in China's contemporary economic organization, the argument tends to caricature the economic decisions of the foreign companies (some 600,000) currently operating joint ventures on the mainland. On the one hand, it clearly matters that prevailing assumptions about China's growth are challenged and reconceptualized; on the other, much of what passes for benign trade in China's export-driven economy has done very well out of reductionism, stereotyping, and accumulating capital the good old fashioned way. Some of the keys to foreign business interest in China are obvious: the recognition of a massive, educated and under-employed work force, comparatively very low wages, port infrastructure, unorganized labor, state authoritarianism, minimal environmental protection and tacit support of corruption. If these are "instruments of Southern emancipation" (384), the boards of Wal-Mart and GM are their biggest advocates. By 2005 the PRC claimed that 70% of their exports were foreign invested (Western experts calculate this at about 58%) and it has been estimated that 40% of China's GDP is foreign owned (standard metrics of GDP do not exclude proceeds that find their way onto the balance sheets of foreign corporations). In other words, one can quite easily accept or ignore the principles of industriousness and divergence in play and make a bundle from the Chinese miracle. If Smith's "natural path" to national wealth has been vindicated, it nevertheless betrays some fairly obstinate symptoms of crass and "unnatural" capital accumulation. Just as contemporary Marxist critique can be hamstrung by the abstract protocols Marx devised in part from a reading of Victorian capitalism, so one must be wary of any Smithian Marxism grounded on a template of eighteenth century non-capitalist market activity. Arrighi is absolutely right to read China as breaking the lock of Western industrial capitalism as *longue durée*, but contemporary China is also a *pharmakon* of capitalism, poisoning *and* preserving its constitutive economic laws.

One knot in the history of capitalism Arrighi addresses is the difference in its formations according to whether or not individual states develop along capitalist class interests. From the evidence Arrighi arrays, we do not see yet a bourgeois class structured in dominance in the PRC. Certainly, changes to property laws and the tenuous lid placed upon independent labor self organization have favored embourgeoisfication, just as the benefits of cadre status and the power of *guanxi* (connections) have encouraged an elite social strata relatively free to enjoy the benefits of other people's surplus value. Yet, whereas a strong state has the power to shape institutional infrastructure according to capitalist interests, the Chinese state also maintains the capacity to redistribute wealth above the claims of capitalism per se. We tend to associate inconsistencies between the state and class hegemony with democracy (in the United States the evocative term employed is often "checks and balances"), but in China it now takes the form of a dialectical enigma, as if capitalism has the right to everything, except to supplant the power of the Communist Party itself. Because historically China's imperial designs have been primarily limited to border wars and acquisitions, and the tributary system and interstate trade have minimized trade advantage through belligerence, Arrighi calls China's return to the world stage "a peaceful ascent," particularly in comparison to European aggression. As he acknowledges, this does not mean China eschews military options: it will increasingly seek to protect its vital sea lanes and it is hard to envisage a resolution of the Taiwan issue with a handshake (although among the business communities of both entities there has been a great deal of handshaking for some time). Nobody calls the Communist Party communist anymore, yet the dialectical contradiction between its historical mandate and the will to power of a class in formation cannot be sustained indefinitely (we might term this a high level ideological trap, as a complement to Elvin's celebrated equilibrium trap

that Arrighi invokes). And, one should note, China's ascent began not only with a war against Japan, but also with a devastating civil conflagration.

If the unevenness of capitalism is a given, in China it has assumed some remarkable and perhaps unique undulations. When I walked past the Rolls Royce dealership in Beijing, I was reminded that the "spirit of ecstasy's" busiest market used to be Hong Kong. As commentators have remarked, long before the fifty year deal on the "one country, two systems" approach to Hong Kong is up, the Mainland's key cities will have topped its capitalist sheen. Hong Kong is an interesting problem for the lineages Arrighi elaborates. As part of the post-war "capitalist archipelago" (that includes Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea), it was not only the final resting place of British colonialism but remains an abstract space of "disappearance," to borrow from Ackbar Abbas. Its colonial repertoire has been summarily and justifiably quashed but its function as a capital spigot, particularly from overseas Chinese, has both a real and imagined after-life. While it is no longer a transit point for "coolie" labor, the logic of such practices persist in the way its capital outlays proletarianize Mainland peasants, and hierarchize immigrant labor (the use, for instance, of Filipino women as servants, *amah* or *feiyung*). Shanghai may sublate the colonial desires of European machination but all of its mirrored glass and concrete profusion obstinately reminds one of the "positive non-interventionism" of the free-trade zone to the south. Thus, even as it is true that the European/East Asian divergence differentiates the Chinese market, in Hong Kong the specter of consanguinity has existed in the Chinese imaginary for quite some time and it is not easily exorcized by the invocation of a market economy that appears to eschew accumulation by dispossession.

The place of Mao and Maoism also complicates this picture. Arrighi, drawing to some extent on the insights of Wang Hui, positions Deng Xiaoping's Four Modernizations as a program that both repudiates the Cultural Revolution and maintains a dialogue with the socialist tradition in China, in which Mao's articulation of the revolution remains pivotal. Mao's Marxism differs crucially from that of Marx and Lenin in that it sees the peasantry as a primary force for progressive social and economic change. Representing the largest migration in human history, the 200 million Chinese peasants who, since 1978, have moved off the land to swell the population of Chinese cities (while creating 600 new ones along the way) have been the engine of economic expansion, raising living standards across the nation while intensifying the de-industrialization of the West. If they were not exactly a reserve army of labor, they are now certainly the world's most active one. As Arrighi correctly notes, before 1978 Mao's policies had rapidly improved agricultural output which in turn aided basic everyday life. The revolution provided a substantial social safety net plus land reforms and regional integration. Sharp increases in literacy and longevity among the peasantry clearly offset the strife of the republican years and those of the late Qing

before them. Subsequently, Dengism sought to reconnect with those gains over and above the chaos unleashed by the Cultural Revolution and the calamity of the Great Leap Forward (positive elements of the Cultural Revolution also facilitated this reform, but that is another story).

In addition to Mao's privileging of the peasantry, Arrighi suggests that another critical contribution of Mao's was the concept of the "mass line" in which the Party both taught and learned from its peasant base. Certainly Deng maintained the Communist Party's vanguard status but here Arrighi's argument comes close to tautology—Mao's CCP proferred the mass line and since Deng became the leader of the CCP, Maoism was produced in his image. Deng, purged as a "capitalist roader" in the Cultural Revolution (which strongly evoked the mass line), saw the ideological struggles of the Cold War years as a Maoist dead end and, if he began the reforms by tackling the limits of the agricultural models developed under Mao rather than unleashing the labor power of urban workers, this was in part an acknowledgment of the requirements of capital input (and the memory of the pseudo-industrialism of the "Great Leap," including its disastrous food for weapons program). The effect of the under-reading of Mao in the actual transition to the Four Modernizations is highly evocative of a false synthesis, the unity of opposites that Mao himself purged from his dialectics. As Mao put it, thinking of the posited unity of the KMT and the CCP, "there is nothing which cannot be severed."

To the extent that Arrighi's book eschews a detailed exegesis of the economic practices of China, 1949-1978, it participates in the awkward amnesia that befalls Western commentary on how a communist party came to foster the accumulation models of Apple and Carrefour. In addition, while acknowledging the increasing and intense incidents of Chinese labor protests, Arrighi resists sustained analysis of the movements in play, particularly the difficulties of organizing simultaneously against capitalism and the Communist Party. China weathered the recent global financial crisis not only by restraining its banks in the derivative markets but by aiming its stimulus package squarely at massive labor-absorbing infrastructural projects, a recognition that the claims of labor must be immediately and rapidly assuaged (some estimates suggest China needs a GDP growth of 8% just to absorb new workers coming onto the market). This is not simply a continuation of Maoist doctrine, but a crisis driven by the alignment of the Communist Party with the real contradictions of the global economic order. True, an argument can be made that capitalism is playing China's game at the risk of fomenting an enlightened socialist order. But then if China steps out of the mass (produced) line, global capitalism might play some of its other ideological cards, including "democracy." At that moment another lineage, of a class structured in dominance through the state, may re-enter the discourse of reading the market in China. Until then, Arrighi's provocative and pointed understanding of

Adam Smith in Beijing stands as a deeply impressive legacy.

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Urban Revolution and the 'Chinese Century'

LESLIE SKLAIR

Thomas Campanella. *The Concrete Dragon: China's Urban Revolution and What it Means for the World*. Princeton Architectural Press, 2008. 336 pp.

Xiangming Chen. *Shanghai Rising: State Power and Local Transformations in a Global Megacity*. University of Minnesota Press, 2009. 280 pp.

> Since the 1980s, China has built more skyscrapers; more office buildings; more shopping malls and hotels; more housing estates and gated communities; more highways, bridges, subways, and tunnels; more public parks, playgrounds, squares, and plazas; more golf courses and resorts and theme parks than any other nation on earth—indeed, than probably all other nations combined (Campanella 14).

These words, from the Introduction of Thomas Campanella's brilliant book, decisively set the scene for what can truly be described as the world-historical phenomenon of how the Chinese authorities working closely with local and transnational entrepreneurs of various types have stormed into the twenty-first century. This clearly has formidable implications for what is widely predicted to become the 'Chinese century'. Campanella begins his story in the Pearl River Delta, around the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SSEZ), where Deng Xiaoping famously delivered his speech encouraging the acquisition of wealth and the flowering of a new consumer society, prompting a radical shift of policy from the Maoist austerity that had characterized the People's Republic in the decades since 1949. Deng issued his historic free market call in January 1992 from the first skyscraper in Shenzhen, the International Foreign Trade Center (opened in 1985), which was the tallest building in China at the time. Two significant facts about this can be conceptualized as the structural foundations of what was to follow over the next twenty years. First, the IFTC had been built by the Army Engineer Corps, transferred to the SSEZ after finishing their reconstruction work from the Tangshan earthquake of 1976. And second, the building had been modeled on Gordon Wu's Hopewell Centre in Hong Kong, a 'building type rapidly replicated throughout China' in the 1980s and thereafter (ibid 36). It was from there that the Canton-Shenzhen Expressway (built by a company founded by the Princeton-educated Wu and inspired by the New Jersey

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company founded by the Princeton-educated Wu and inspired by the New Jersey turnpike) began the transformation of the Pearl River Delta into a global economic hub. Campanella argues (in one of his few forays into theorization), with a nod to Manuel Castells, that this was not the traditional BosWash corridor metropolis, but a new type of integrated global space of flows. The impact of these political and infrastructural changes on the Pearl River Delta, spreading out like ever-increasing ripples in ever-multiplying ponds throughout urban China into more or less all corners of the global economy, is quite spectacular.

Campanella provides a wealth of detail on Shanghai, Beijing and other globalizing cities in China to support his central theme. In each case, he is mindful of the need to address issues of agency (members of urban growth coalitions of various types), as well as economic and political structures (the different ways in which institutional arrangements were modified and/or transformed to accommodate the new policies and commercial opportunities). Framing all these momentous changes is not only the so-called open door policy which kick-started the process with the economic processing zones in the 1980s, but crucially what I have elsewhere conceptualized as the culture-ideology of consumerism, that characterizes both capitalist globalization and market socialism in China over recent decades (Sklair 2002). Campanella's book is certainly the best available account of the material foundations on which the culture-ideology of consumerism in China rests.

While many of the factions in the Chinese leadership often justify their apparently capitalistic policies in terms of "market socialism with Chinese characteristics," Campanella provides ample evidence to demonstrate exactly how important "opening up to the outside world" has been in the process of transforming China's cities. In the case of Shanghai, he focuses on the deliberate use of iconic architecture to validate the claims of the urban boosters that the city today (termed the Paris of the Orient in the 1930s) can rightfully reclaim its status, lost during the Maoist years, as a global city. "Entering the lobby of the Expo Center [Shanghai Urban Planning Exposition Center] a visitor is greeted by a monumental gilded sculpture of the city's iconic buildings, a kind of architectural gilded calf that slowly rotates on a pedestal, flooded worshipfully with lights" (ibid 57; see also Krupar 2008). As most urbanists and many architects know, the Pudong district across the river from the Bund, led the way in the 1990s, driven by the entrepreneurial mayor Zhu Rongji. What is less well-known is that he and his team brought in French consultants, notably Joseph Belmont, a key figure in the *grands projets* in Paris. The Pearl TV tower, the first iconic structure in Pudong, was dubbed the Eiffel Tower of Shanghai. A more recent and as yet incomplete development is the One City Nine Towns project around Shanghai which seems to make a virtue or at least a selling point of colonial urban design (ibid 88-91).

Similarly informative and lively chapters follow on Beijing, a city manufactured over the centuries and redesigned after 1949, first along Soviet lines, then by Maoist planners whose projects resulted in the destruction of city walls and the narrow lanes of the *hutongs*. Thus, much of the old city was taken over by government buildings (see Broudehoux 2002). The Olympics in Beijing (2008) brought a new wave of building, restoration, destruction and relocation (the firm of Albert Speer Jr. has been involved in the vast Olympic Green project as well as in Shanghai). Like Shanghai, the urban growth coalition in Beijing has learned the lesson of the importance of iconic architecture for global city credentials (see Sklair 2006). Three buildings stand out in this regard, all built by Western starchitect firms in joint ventures with Chinese firms. First and second, the Olympic stadium (Bird's Nest by Herzog and de Meuron) and the Aquatics Centre (PTW and Arup), and third, Rem Koolhaas's CCTV building of which Campanella opines: "[i]f any of Beijing's new signature buildings has potential to become a city icon, this is it" (136). Despite the opposition of architectural and cultural elites, this already appears to be happening.

Campanella does not duck the highly contentious issue of who benefits and who suffers from all this urban destruction and reconstruction. The winners are the new entrepreneurial elites, inside and outside the communist party hierarchy and the yuppies who have rapidly adjusted to the new lifestyle choices available to those with sufficient disposable income, with a good contingent of cultural elites in their ranks. The losers are those whose lives are blighted, in some cases totally destroyed by the *chai*: the dreaded sign of 'demolition' that has displaced hundreds of thousands of people to enrich corrupt developers and officials. A major consequence of this urban revolution and accompanying changes in the rural sector has been the largest increases in migration and urbanization in human history as changes in residential regulation permitted peasants to flock to the cities.

The book concludes with three chapters providing much evidence for the culture-ideology of consumerism thesis. The first, on "Suburbanization and the Mechanics of Sprawl," argues that the spatial forms of the communist-era *danwei* (work unit) system themselves reproduce courtyard housing, the ancestral form of Chinese urbanism. While the consumerist revolution has created some US-style gated communities in China, much more common are gated estates of up-market apartment buildings, denser and more urban than those found in the US or Europe. Most have English names and lifestyle symbolism, though there are also many local references, for example the Commune by the Great Wall project of the Beijing design firm SOHO China, unveiled at the Venice Biennale in 2004 and not a million miles in design from the Case Study Program houses in California of the 1940s. It is unclear whether the 'Commune' reference is ironic, given that the Case Study Program was originally intended as low cost housing but the remaining houses are now mostly

highly sought expensive commodities. Commune by the Great Wall houses are certainly not intended for the low cost market. The next chapter, "Driving the Capitalist Road," demonstrates that China is now the fastest-growing and will soon be the biggest automobile market and producer in the world, and that it already has the most infrastructure of any country in the world. Automobile culture has swiftly followed the material infrastructure with Wal-Mart, KFC, B&Q et al. all active in Chinese car-borne retail commerce. The final chapter, "Theme Parks and the Landscapes of Consumption," shows how every desire of capitalist consumerism is catered for; for example, the ski resort recently created in Beijing, a joint venture of a Canadian refrigeration firm and the architecture department at Tsinghua University. No doubt, in these times of economic crisis for the universities all over the world, other seats of learning might wish to investigate similar commercial ventures. Heritage theme parks have been very popular in China for decades and their popularity shows no sign of waning as new entrants to the market reach higher and higher levels of spectacle. The Pearl River Delta led the way with Splendid China, Folk Culture Villages, and Window of the World in Shenzhen, and the South China Mall in nearby Dongguan (the 'First Super-mega Theme Shopping Park of China') replete with its own *Arc de Triomphe*, Caribbean, Italian, and Egyptian quarters – the biggest in the world, but not for long. The Xintiandi (New Heaven and Earth) shopping district in Shanghai, opened in 2001 and now reproduced all over China, has achieved the status of a mimetic icon, with enough Chinese gentrified relics to please the tourists and trendy venues to please the locals (and/or *vice versa*). In addition, 'new historic districts' are being built from scratch, as in Dalian, with its own huge Bavarian castle for *feng shui*! Unlikely as this might sound, there is a picture facing p. 270 that seems to prove it.

Campanella revisits theory in a brief Epilogue on the theme of "China Reinvents the City." He argues that there are six defining characteristics of the new Chinese cityscape. These are speed, originating in the remarkable architectural phenomenon labeled Shenzhen tempo (see Chung et al. 2001); scale (everything has to be big); spectacle (dazzle and awe); sprawl (China, though enormous, is land hungry, due to vast swathes of inhospitable terrain in the west); class segregation (hundreds of millions of migrant workers); and sustainability (a long tradition in China and seriously pursued despite the contradictions of the present administration). All these characteristics, with the exception of the last, are well supported in the book, but they do not constitute a fully articulated theory of the new urbanism in China, nor do they substantiate the thesis that China is truly re-inventing the city. Nevertheless, without this book, it will not be possible to fully articulate such a theory, and this is what makes this book remarkable.

Compared with Campanella, Xiangming Chen's edited volume is a much more modest venture, suffering from the common problems of edited volumes (uneven focus, varying levels of analysis, and strict relevance). But there are some redeeming features. The editor, in his Preface and Introduction, cites the frequency of terms like 'hot' and 'sizzling' used to describe Shanghai to illustrate the thesis that it is a "timely urban laboratory for understanding how local transformations occur in global or globalizing cities as a combined function of global impact and state power" (Chen xx). While he does highlight the role of transnational corporations and foreign direct investment in these processes, few of the other contributors expand on this and there is little recognition of the impact of specific foreign actors and institutions.

The book is divided into two rather unequal parts. Part I, on "Global Cities West and East," is opened by Saskia Sassen, with a essay whose contents will be familiar to all those who know her work on the global city and while there is very little on Shanghai as such, she does offer a useful list of hypotheses to assess the extent to which Shanghai is a global city. This challenge, unfortunately, is not picked up in any systematic fashion in the rest of the book. Chapter 2, by Ann Markusen and Pingkang Yu, analyzes the relationship between high-tech activity and urban economic development in the United States but, again, the implications for Shanghai are explored only very briefly in general terms. Chapter 3 on aerotropolis development by John Kasarda comes across as more urban boosterism predicated on expensive airports rather than cool scholarly analysis, totally ignoring the ecological consequences of having consumer goods flown in on a daily basis to stock the shelves in the effort to make Shanghai "China's True Gateway City." Chapters 4 and 5 pose the questions: can Shanghai learn from Singapore (K.C. Ho) and/or Hong Kong (Tai-lok Lui and Stephen Chiu)? These are both informative essays and start to engage with issues that are the topic of Part Two, "Globalization and the Local Transformation of Shanghai." The five chapters in this second section range widely, covering local governance, the Telecom sector, community (re)building, and local consumption of global brands. None of these chapters really gets to grips with the more analytic issues raised by the editor in his introduction (Chen also contributes to the last two chapters and writes a concluding chapter) and by Sassen or for that matter with many of the issues raised by Campanella, a possible exception being chapter 9 on community (re)building, by Hanlong Lu, Yuan Ren and Xiangmin Chen which does engage briefly with the development of the Shanghai shopping and entertainment district, *Xintiandi*.

On the whole, the focus of this edited volume is fuzzy rather than sharp and while several of the chapters do illuminate the phenomenon of 'Shanghai Rising', the book as a whole does not seem to me to justify the large claims by the editor in his concluding chapter of having achieved integrated and theoretical understanding. What is, however, undeniable is that there is something very important happening in China, particularly but not exclusively in its major cities, and that this may well have fundamental consequences for the rest of the world.

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How to Save the World: A Politics of the People

MATHIAS NILGES

Enrique Dussel. *Twenty Theses on Politics.* Duke University Press, 2008. 184 pp.

At the center of Enrique Dussel's *Twenty Theses on Politics* stand a series of basic yet monumental questions. What is power? What is politics? Can power be held? Can it be taken? Can it be exercised? If so, how? What is the relationship between power and the people, power and politics, politics and the people? Dussel's twenty theses are best read not as answers to these questions, but rather as propositions, or strategies for producing answers to such questions in the first place. Theses 1 through 10 propose a rethinking of the big questions the book addresses through a series of preliminary reflections on the interpretive and conceptual choices we tend to make when approaching questions of politics or power. Why is it that we often think of power as a negative thing? What if we thought of power as something positive? That is, what if we assumed that power does not simply equal domination, but instead that it is inherently a positive force? How would such a first step allow us to rethink categories such as "the people," "politics," "the state," "political institutions" and "democracy" in productive and innovative ways that additionally gesture toward the particular determinations of the present? Theses 11 through 20 contain guidelines for a practical implementation of a carefully developed methodological framework for rethinking political philosophy in the current conjuncture.

Before examining Dussel's lines of argumentation, however, a note on the book's general project seems necessary. To facilitate the generous reading Dussel's book deserves, we need to take seriously the genre within which he operates. Throughout the text, Dussel compares the structural logic of politics to the architectural logic of a house, stressing that politics is best looked at as a totality consisting of a series of interconnected systems (a gesture toward the influence of Systems Theory on Dussel's logic) or fields (a gesture toward the importance of Bourdieu's work for Dussel's methodology). Thinking about *Twenty Theses* in a similar way helps us appreciate the admirable project of Dussel's rich little book. It is not intended to provide us with a polished political or philosophical program; rather, through a series of provocative and thoughtful propositions, it presents us with the structural logic and theoretical blueprints of the architectural masterpiece of his *oeuvre*: a three-volume examination

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of political philosophy from the perspective of liberation philosophy. Volume one of his trilogy was published in 2007 as *Política de la liberación: Historia mundial y crítica* and volume two in 2009 as *Política de la liberación: Arquitectónica.*

Dussel begins by drawing a link between two re-defined concepts: "will" and "power." Against Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Heidegger, Dussel defines will as a positive force that constitutes the human being ontogenetically as a subject and phylogenetically as an always-collective entity. Will, in this sense, becomes the originary tendency of human beings arising from the desire to avoid death—as the "will-to-live." Power, wrested from its assigned function in the tradition ranging from Machiavelli and Hobbes to Lenin, Weber and others, stands for Dussel as the consequence of this will-to-live, as a network of structural potentiality that determines and is concretely actualized by the political field as a totality. As such, power or *potentia* is always an aspect of the people and, Dussel reasons, can therefore never actually be taken—it can only be held (by the people). The payoff of such a redefinition is that it is not power that is called into question when examining instances of oppression and domination. Instead, the measure of the success or failure of political action becomes the degree to which power is either successfully exercised or "corrupted." The general index of the corruption of power is the measure of what Dussel calls its "fetishization:" its use for individual interests and projects that are not directed at or growing out of the community itself. Examples of such individual interests include not only those of dictators, but also of elites, tribes and even classes, indicating that the category of "the people" as the generator of the political importantly means "all people." The community (of all human beings), Dussel stresses, is the only subject of power. It is the community that transforms *potentia* (power "in-itself") into *potestas* (power as actualized and institutionalized via concrete political channels emerging from the community). Dussel describes this transformation as a process of "delegation": an instance of constituent power producing a heterogeneous network of systems of participatory democracy that give rise to diverse political fields. It is these political fields that actualize the diverse desires of the political community. Within such a system, the ideal operation for Dussel is the particular function of a singularity in the name of and guided by the universality of the community and its deliberative principles.

Dussel's central project, driven by a distinct sense of historical urgency, is to produce a political philosophy aimed at a critique of the "prevailing system" and at the generation of a political program aiding political victims who are oppressed, repressed, excluded and murdered by what Dussel calls the "dirty wars of recent history." In the context of this project, the need to rethink concepts like "the state" takes on particular significance. Recently, Bruce Robbins has asked us to reevaluate the state by looking at both (and by reducing it to neither) its potential to deliver orange juice (protection and support) and Agent Orange (oppression, violence and domination). Dussel poses

the question at an even more basic and arguably more rigorous level to illustrate how a rethinking of power and political action can lead us to a more differentiated understanding of the function of political institutions. Furthermore, Dussel situates his own understanding of these concepts clearly and convincingly in the context of a still vibrant debate surrounding concepts of the state, sovereignty, subjectivity and political action. Rejecting the "perpetual war" argument that runs from Hobbes through Schmitt and Foucault to Hardt and Negri and Agamben, Dussel redefines his terms in a way that opens up our understanding of the political possibility of power and the state in connection to ethical, participatory democracy and political action. In short, rather than assuming that civilization and social contracts are fundamentally characterized by conflict and contradiction, Dussel assumes a much more harmonious originary condition determining the relation between self, society and world to which we can appeal when judging instances of "fetishization."

The ability to judge an instance of exercising power, therefore, rest upon a form of normativity that takes concrete form in political institutions that emerge from the democratic networks created by the desires of the people. A reformulation of Laclau's concept of "universal equivalence," Dussel's version of progressive (that is, uncorrupted) politics is born out of "analogical hegemons," strategic unifications of all political struggles in a specific situation. Political action gestating in such a hegemon in turn depends upon Dussel's revised definition of "the people." Pointing in the direction of Negri's rejection of the concept of "the people" yet opposing his conception of the multitude, Dussel defines "the people" as a (not quite Gramscian) hegemonic social bloc that appears in specific historical situations and under certain structural pressures. Precisely what it takes to produce this event is not entirely clear. Yet, according to Dussel, certain historical situations give rise to a collective form of political action based on a form of consciousness that arises from an analogical hegemon of all demands. The political actor who emerges in this situation and who implements the analogical hegemon politically is the people. The people, in other words, is in Dussel's model a heterogeneous bloc that is formed by and exercises political power via networks of participatory democracy, initially resembling Spinoza and Negri's constituent power, yet always reproducing Dussel's own variation on the idea of total or absolute democracy. Ethics becomes here both the genesis of political action and the only thing safeguarding the idea of progress, and it is at this point that Dussel's logical determinations begin to appear forced and unpersuasive. The guarantor of liberatory political action, for Dussel, is the idea of "vocation": the universal calling that politicizes the individual in the first place and urges her to act politically. Yet, there are of course always things like capitalism that introduce "bad" desires and corrupt the individual actor, at which point the only defense against non-progressive or liberatory politics is a variation on the vocation argument. A sense of "subjective obligation" produces happiness in those who act correctly. In turn, Dussel is left

no other recourse than scolding bad actors for doing the wrong thing. Affect-laden passages that begin with exclamations such as "cursed be those who…!" therefore, logically constitute rather underdeveloped instances of Kantian judgment. It is here that the horizon of political praxis is reduced to a naively subjective, even moralizing accounting.

Yet, it is not just the deterioration of critical rigor that troubles this portion of Dussel's book. The idea of a subjective obligation or analogical hegemon also leads Dussel on a slippery slope that begins with the categorical imperative, moves through an ethics of deliberative democracy and ends with an ideologically suspect defense of alienation and repression in the name of deliberative democracy. Assertions of the flexibility of blocs and the deliberative and participatory basis for the formation of analogical hegemons barely hide the re-emergence of a distinct line of argumentation. Dussel runs into an old problem, namely that of the conflict between individual and collective desires. When moving through the logical steps that lead us from individual will to the collective desires of a political community and ultimately to political action through democratic institutions, Dussel begins to make "small" concessions. For instance, he admits that the political community cannot permanently act as a collective political entity because it needs to delegate power. In this process, as well as in the process of forming an analogical hegemon, the individual needs to accept certain sacrifices. At the very least, at the moment at which Dussel likens the necessity of curbing individual desires for the sake of delegating power and structuring political action efficiently to the division of labor, we begin to wonder: haven't we been here before? Of course, Dussel is too skilled a theorist to miss the moments where he returns to the approximate territory of Freudian logic (and its political manifestations). Yet the ease (or lack of rigor) with which he dismisses such logical connections is troubling. His account of normativity, delegation and hegemony is not repressive, he argues, because individual concessions and models of efficient governmentality are based on heterogeneity and, most importantly, because ethics evidently allows him to dismiss the problem of structural repression: it is not repression and alienation arising from structural determinism, because the model is based on "subjective obligation" and vocation. According to Dussel, happiness in response to the normativity produced out of the structural, political implementation of the categorical imperative is symptomatic of progressive politics.

While it is difficult to generate positive affect out of such a formulation, the main problem here is of a structural nature. In his attempt to fuse politics and ethics in a manner the produces an institutional, normative component to an ethical vocation, Dussel accomplishes virtually the opposite. What begins with a variation on the idea of singularity (via Negri's interpretation of Marx) ends in a complete ontologization of politics: a rather problematic operation, especially if a part of one's project is to

produce an idea of political action that is based on a structural critique of the current conjuncture. This problem mainly emerges at the moments in which Dussel transitions with great difficulty from one theoretical register to another, unable to create a harmonic logical effect. His account of fetishization, for example, is rooted in Marx's description of the commodity fetish and its connected fetishistic inversion that underlies the process of reification. So, it is not just the ontologization of the political process that is the problem here. Instead, it is the sudden switch from structural analysis to the proposition of ethical and at times even affective solutions to political problems, that fail to persuade. Saying that Dussel works out the issue of politics and power on the level of ontology itself is certainly not a surprising insight into his work. What we are getting from him is a politics of the people—in every sense of the concept. What we are not getting, however, and this is the crux of the matter, is the structural analysis of the material problems of the present socioeconomic regime within which Dussel locates his political project. By limiting his structural definitions to a weakened version of ethics transposed onto the level of individual political choices, Dussel leaves fundamental political contradictions intact and unquestioned.

To be sure, Dussel frequently indicates the need to keep working through some of the main problems of his model. For example, Dussel is quite aware that integration of excluded subjects will not necessarily produce progressive results on its own. What is needed instead is the participation of excluded subjects as equals in a new political movement and structural order. Yet, while it is precisely here that Dussel gestures toward the necessity to resolve contradictions via dialectical sublation in order to be able to define progressive politics as collective action generating structural innovation, his ultimate unwillingness to commit to the dialectic and return to an ethical definition of normativity draws back all potential for "the New" into the a-historical vaguerie of a structure based on vocation. Moreover, Dussel defines liberation praxis as that exercise of power which produces history (structural innovation) through negative struggles. Unfortunately, it is this kind of negativity that could produce true sublation, which disappears in unspecific formulations of ethical universals, and, hence, Dussel closes off his logical universe as often as he opens it up in interesting and important ways. As a result, throughout the book we cannot help but miss the concrete temporality and dynamism of dialectical critique and are unable to shake the impression of a sense of logical stasis or even ahistoricity. There is ultimately nothing inherently historically specific about Dussel's definition of the massive terms with which he otherwise so rigorously grapples, which, again, clashes with the distinct sense of historical urgency regarding political action emerging from the need to address the defining political problems of our time that underlies the book's principal project. For instance, while we must be sympathetic to the intended project of this book, Dussel's move toward a politics of networks and diversity in the absence of a proper account of the function these concepts assume in neoliberalism is more dan-

gerous than helpful and is in fact counterproductive to Dussel's overall project. While indicating the connection between material history and the social, Dussel's persistent unproductive separation of Kantian and Hegelian traditions makes it impossible to produce convincing accounts of and solutions to material and structural determinisms that influence and disrupt the political field directly. As a result, Dussel is sadly not able to produce what would truly be needed at this moment, namely those productive fusions of theoretical traditions that add new momentum to the study of contemporary politics that are so impressively exemplified by Kojin Karatani.

The strongest points of his project emerge when Dussel fully commits to what is fundamentally a neo-Kantian theoretical framework. In these moments, Dussel arrives at an account of an interesting fusion of ethics, politics and the logic of networks emerging from considerations of the effect of neoliberal decentralization. Dussel's politics is Kantianism with a twist (yet, not necessarily a new twist). Rejecting what he considers to be Kant's inability to produce political normativity from ethical principles, Dussel attempts to link ethics and politics more tightly and practically by insisting on the interconnection of particular political praxis and universal ethical determinisms. Ethics provides us with universally normative principles, which are subsumed by political normativity. Political action, if not corrupted or fetishized, is an expression of the power of the people guided by universal ethical principles that shape the forms and aims of political struggles. This formulation, Dussel argues, endows Kantianism with necessary normativity, while avoiding Habermasian formalism or regressions into Machiavellian proceduralism. Dussel is at his weakest when he probes the borders of neo-Kantian ethical accounts of politics, community and political action as a way of exploring the territory of material and structural processes. Yet, the true value of this notable book is Dussel's skillful and generous attempt to situate his work in the context of a vibrant and complex theoretical field. Even if I disagree with his theses, the book nevertheless provided me with a series of "but wait a minute" moments that set up a process of productively rethinking my own lines of argumentation.

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Identifying Universal Particularities

DAVID LAWRIMORE

John Michael. *Identity and the Failure of America: From Thomas Jefferson to the War on Terror*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 320 pp.

At its heart, John Michael's *Identity and the Failure of America: From Thomas Jefferson to the War on Terror* is about the conflict between a national identity that promises justice to all and the various identities that have experienced America's failure to make good on that promise. Though sometimes venturing into 20th century literature and global culture, *Identity and the Failure of America* mostly focuses on race and gender in 19th century American canonical, and canon-revisionist, novels, essays and speeches. By viewing these discursive acts as instances that either unwittingly commit or attempt to rectify America's failures of justice, Michael works toward a conception of identity that is both universal and mindful of difference.

To define the parameters of his analysis, Michael divides American identity into two distinct senses: the abstract universal and the corporeal particular. The abstract universal is generally understood as the discourse based on appeals to an inclusive and just lawfulness. Careful to avoid the pitfalls of classifying it in terms of the nationalism of Postwar American Studies on the one hand, and the "indifference to difference" generally to attributed to "post-identity" scholars such as Walter Benn Michaels, Ross Posnock and Philip Fisher on the other, Michael explains his universal identity as a cosmopolitan set of principles that have been a part of the United States' intellectual history since the Enlightenment. Much of his work here is in the vein of Kwame Anthony Appiah's writings on cosmopolitanism, ethics and identity. In contrast, the corporeal particular involves "identities involving race and ethnicity or class and gender, borne by peoples who have met injustices and suffered discrimination" (3). Within the field of American Studies, this sense of identity is evident in the multicultural or pluralist critiques of Hortense Spillers, Dana Nelson, Russ Castronovo and others. What sets Michael's book apart, however, is not its consideration of both sides of American identity—though such an acknowledgement is becoming increasingly rare in American Studies—but its focus on the interplay between America's universal principles and the particular identities.

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The text begins with an exploration of Thomas Jefferson's obsession with race, an obsession, Michael argues, that is still present in America. That Jefferson, the embodiment of the universal ideals of liberal equality and republican benevolence, owned slaves is a contradiction that has vexed Americans for over two centuries. However, Michael is interested in how this contradiction influenced Jefferson's views on race. In a biographical reading of Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Michael explains that Jefferson is terrified by the failure of American virtue. As such, Jefferson refuses to recognize the extent to which he and his state depend on enslaved Africans and that slavery violates their most basic principles and compromised their benevolent promise; doing so would "make the nature of his own and his nation's fears and failings clear" (57). Jefferson's consideration of race is, in this sense, characterized by a subliminal pathos and a blindness akin to Du Bois's veil of ignorance: he is blind to himself as the origin of violence, and, by projecting inadequacy on those to whom the violence is committed, blind to the slaves' true identity. Only by acknowledging this failure and exploring the interplay between abstract cosmopolitan principles and particular identities, Michael argues, can there be any progress. Michael's discussion of Frederick Douglass best elaborates the workings of this relationship.

Though the slave may have been made into a man at the end of 1845's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Michael shows how, ten years later in *My Bondage, My Freedom*, Douglass realizes that he can never forget that he was once a slave. Instead, as a public figure, Douglass must maneuver between the cosmopolitan ideal and the particularities of race. On the one hand, as a public intellectual, Douglass claims a sort of universality that transcends race. On the other hand, "he himself embodies the particularities expressed by the injustices perpetrated on the black bodies by a slave system" (208). His scars mark the wounds of a particular identity and the limit of the cosmopolitan universality. Ultimately, this interaction is where Michael's theory becomes praxis, and it is to his credit that, by dwelling in contradiction and failure instead of abstracting them away, his book often forgoes intellectual removal, opting instead for pragmatism.

Michael explores the concrete implication of his theory by recasting the failed interactions of universal and particular identity as failures of justice. Though identity and justice are generally considered to be antithetical—the liberal tradition, for instance, requires that justice dissolve all particularities to enact universal and equitable lawfulness—,when considering the reality of everyday life, identity works to ground justice in the actual occurrences. Instead of ignoring identity, justice, in fact, asks the subject to both ignore her own identity, as well as imagine herself in the position of the other. It requires each subject to ask: "what would this proposition or situation look like to me if I were, for example, poor or rich, white or black, or male or female, because those demarcate some of the situations of identity and exclusion requiring judgment" (18). Imaginary identification with particular identities is, therefore, crucial to justice in much the same way that it is a requirement for literature; both require an imaginative placing of oneself in the embodied place of the other. *Identity and the Failure of America* investigates this "power of sympathy" most fully in the chapter on Lydia Marie Child. Her *A Romance and the Republic*, an exploration of the complexities of deceit, misrecognition and misidentification of the self and of others that existed in the antebellum South is, according to Michael, a rare book that "offers one of the most compelling and one of the truest—in an importantly ideal sense—visions of American identity ever produced" (128). More importantly, *A Romance and the Republic* is ruled by a logic in which "anyone may find him- or herself in the place of the oppressed and … [therefore] justice is not an abstract or abstruse concept … [but] an existential requirement in the ethical life of a republic" (135). In Child's universe, the only means of confronting this reality is through a cosmopolitan identification with the Other, and each character's success or failure is contingent on their ability to identify with those who have met injustice, as well as their willingness to explore and celebrate these identifications.

Although Child is able to construct a national identity based on the comingling of passionate principles and sympathetic identification, in the end *A Romance of the Republic* is just that, a romance. Exploring the various ways 19th century and contemporary writers identified with the slave revolts of John Brown and Nat Turner, Michael suggests that perhaps the only way to enact real-world change may be through violent means. Here, Michael compares Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* and William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner.* Stowe's treatment of *Dred*, the titular character is based on Nat Turner, is "a creation of remarkable depth, power, and achievement, a triumph of identification that leads the reader far beyond the simple comforts of self-reflective sympathy to contemplate a dangerous encounter with one justly enraged by the injustices he suffers" (152). Appropriating the republic's values of justice, *Dred* represents the terrifying truth that, in a slave state, there is "a perpetual state of war in which the master, by essentially violent means, attempts to subjugate the slave," and therefore violence against the master is justified (147). Unlike Stowe, who is willing to forgo "feeling right" to fully understand her characterization, Styron refuses to confront his fear of just violence. If identification depends "on who is telling the story and on his or her willingness to entertain identifications that may reflect poorly on his or her own identity," Styron fails to recognize that it is not his place to "feel right" as he attempts to identify with Turner (163). Michael argues that *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, its subsequent stormy reception, and Styron's inability to understand his own failure ultimately represent the treacherous nature of cross-racial identification.

In what is perhaps the book's most intriguing chapter, Michael considers Ralph Wal-

do Emerson's activism—not altogether unfamiliar territory for Michael whose work in this topic began with 1988's *Emerson and Skepticism: The Cipher of the World*. For Emerson, as for Child, national identity depends not on blood or geography but on principle, and, as such, these principles are not—as many of Emerson's critics have claimed—an abstraction away from reality, but a system created to understand America's failure. Without access to interpretations rooted in principled feeling beyond the empirically perceptible, Michael argues, "no justice and no amelioration of society are possible" (122). Emerson, well aware that he lacks both political authority and personal experience with oppression, knows that he can only address a heterogeneous and conflicted public as a concerned citizen. In this sense, the only rhetorical power available to him rests upon the nation's putative belief in its universal principles. In a slave state, however, where injustice is part of everyday life, the nation's principles have been violated and ultimately perverted so that any appeal to these principles is questionable. Understanding this situation is, for Michael, essential to understanding Emerson's precarious role as a public intellectual, and for reassessing Emerson's perceived failings, including his elitism, his reliance on aesthetics and his transcendent idealism. Ultimately, what is generally understood as Emerson's failures is, in actuality, the failure of the nation to adhere to its own principles.

Though it is never as fully developed as the failures of identity and justice, the failure of American masculinity is something that Michael remains mindful of throughout his book. He addresses this issue most explicitly in his discussion of *Moby Dick*, reading the character of Captain Ahab as representative of the paradox of American masculinity. Though his autonomy, desire for dominance, and rejection of sentiment embodies the normative masculinity of the antebellum period, Ahab's true power resides in his ability to manipulate the crew. While masculinity of this sort claims autonomy, in actuality it depends on a "prosthetic relationship to the world" for whatever power it can realize (87). Michael continues this meditation in his reading of Child's *Hobomok*. The antithesis of Ahab, Hobomok is the "poster boy for male masochism—understood as self-abnegation and the renunciation of sadistic patterns of patriarchal power" (107). However utopian this new masculinity may be, it is divested of any power to resist opposition or demand justice and is therefore unable to enact any sort of social reform in a world of violent subjugation. Douglass's conflicted cosmopolitan identity returns as the bookend to Michael's masculinity narrative. Though Douglass shares the utopian vision of Child, he realizes that competitiveness and aggressiveness may be the necessary means to progress toward that goal. Acknowledging that vigor and virility is a requirement for all growing societies, "Douglass tries to maintain a difficult balance between struggle and conquest on the one hand and respect and reciprocity on the other" (219). As such, Douglass represents the small space between monomania of Ahab and the submission of Hobomok wherein American masculinity can serve as the catalyst for positive reform.

Utilizing the schema developed throughout the text, Michael concludes by reimagining America's antebellum failures as the modern, global failures of the "War on Terror." Though ultimately an unsatisfying attempt to contemporize his work, the section does point toward a new way of understanding the conflict between Western neoconservative ideology and Arab identities. Many Westerners, unwilling to "honestly consider that their own failures to be just and to eschew unnecessary violence have bred the violence of Iraqi resistance," exhibit the same blindness today as Jefferson at the turn of the 19th century (241). When viewing our current situation in this light, it becomes clear that the failures of antebellum America are our own, and perhaps that is why facing the failure of America is all the more necessary.

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The Language of the Back

LIAM MITCHELL

David Wills. *Dorsality: Thinking Back through Technology and Politics*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 280 pp.

In *Dorsality*, David Wills offers a linguistic reading of the technological, a technological reading of the linguistic, and a re-conception of the human on the basis of this relationship. Because Wills is a translator and former friend of Jacques Derrida, the appearance of deconstructive influences in the book's methodology is unsurprising. [1] That said, *Dorsality* is by no means an attempt at simply mimicking Derrida's work or extending deconstruction further into the realm of technology. Although there is a line of filiation and a sophisticated engagement with a variety of contemporary deconstructionists (e.g. Eduardo Cadava, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, Avital Ronell, Bernard Stiegler) evident in the text, there is also a tenor to the argument that is entirely Wills' own. Wills' thesis on the dorsal turn is important for two reasons: first, it advances detailed readings of a broad range of figures in continental philosophy and literature that tell an innovative story about technology and language, and second, it achieves an ethically and politically significant reorientation in perspective from a familiar *facial* orientation that unconsciously delimits possibilities to a *spinal* one that opens them up.

The key turn in *Dorsality* is the one which moves "back" to language, articulating it "as primary technological system" (14). Although the originality and force of Wills' argument rests on this description of language, I would be hard pressed to offer an exploration or a critique of it before explaining the foundational argument of the first chapter. Here, Wills begins by implicitly acknowledging the thesis on originary technicity according to which the human and the technological are originarily intertwined, and then introducing a complication: the "human" is always turning, and this is a "technological" fact. By this, Wills means that the technological is to be understood in non-linear terms more akin to the play of language than the imaginary rules of some simple mechanism. The linguistic and the technological are similarly twisted, and we exemplify this torsion in our forward movement--a movement that is also always lateral. The dorsal turn--the movement from the back, out of sight--is the means by which the human and the technological supplement one another.

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This interpretation accomplishes four things. First, given the dorsal turn, we know that we cannot move forward without also turning to the side and from the back: we turn as we step, constantly correcting our bearing. This unsettles any prioritization of the biological over the technological, and helps us "[make] the case for an originary biotechnology" (and for any sort of posthumanism) (6). Wills here acknowledges the importance of biotechnology, bioethics and biopolitics, but does so while noting the significance of its discursive or rhetorical framing. This is something that he will emphasize time and again. Second, thinking in terms of the dorsal turn constitutes a resistance to the concept of technology as the material instrument of linear progress. If we can maintain "the dorsal chance, the dorsal as the chance of what cannot be *fore*seen" (7), we can avoid the progressivist assumptions of instrumental action. Moreover, dorsal thinking can change our conception of technology to one which "exceeds" the conditions of its production. Third, in corporeal terms, the dorsal turn involves the consideration and privileging of the spine. The work of André Leroi-Gourhan, referenced by Derrida and Stiegler, privileges the frontal visual field, and makes technology and language mere aspects of that field, but we are regularly surprised by that which comes from the back–by that which cannot be fore*seen*. The work of Leroi-Gourhan and his successors should thus be reconsidered in the peculiar "light" of the back.

Fourth, and perhaps most significantly, the dorsal turn suggests that operations of reversibility are a property of technology. In "machine" technology, spatial reversals are at work: the piston, for instance, is indifferent to the direction in which the wheel turns. In "human" technology, however, this directional indifference is a function of time: repetition and memory complicate our assumptions about time's linearity (9). At the minimum, this means that any understanding of technology must account for its unpredictability. Wills insists that this temporally grounded claim has political, ethical, and sexual implications. For instance, in the chapters on Carl Schmitt and Friedrich Nietzsche, Wills argues that a dorsal conception of technology makes a politics of "dissidence" and "controversion" possible, while the failure to count unpredictability among the chief characteristics of technology can lead to "protofascism" (209). The dorsal turn makes an ethics that accounts for "the machine in the human" possible, too: by closing off the field of vision and focusing instead on what happens from the back, Wills hopes to develop an ethics that would be adequate to the sort of biotechnology mentioned above that operates non-mechanistically, unpredictably. Finally, in this non-visual context, the dorsal turn makes the back a site of sexual sensitivity: touching it "implies an erotic relation, a version of sexuality …. which implies before all else a coupling with otherness" (11-12).

Having established the political, ethical, and sexual stakes of the argument, Wills turns to language as technological system. He is informed here by a serious criti-

cism of the first two volumes of Stiegler's *Technics and Time* series (1998, 2009), of which he is otherwise appreciative. He argues that Stiegler's appropriation of Leroi-Gourhan, his subsequent focus on technical minutiae, and his thesis on the "disorientation" wrought by modern technology are misguided. Because Stiegler fails to take adequate account of the technological aspect of language and the linguistic aspect of technology, he ends up with a work that is less profound than it might otherwise be (Wills, "Techn*e*ology of the Discourse of Speed"). From this point of departure, Wills argues for an accounting of the "tropological speed of language … a conception of language and its rhetorical turns as high technology or technology of information" *(Dorsality*, 15). This bring Wills to what he identifies as the thesis underlying the entire text:

> in order to elaborate an ethics, politics, or sexuality informed by technology, one cannot simply presume a language more or less adequate to the conceptual framework being developed; rather, one must seek to technologize language, or forms of discourse themselves (14).

Stiegler's originary technicity misses what, for Wills, is the essential Derridean point: technology and humanity supplement one another in a linguistic context, but language is itself a technology of the human. Neither technology, humanity nor language come "first," and any analysis of technology must therefore be "tropological"--not mechanistic (14).

The rest of the text is dedicated to exploring this thesis. Wills approaches the task from a number of different angles, undertaking dorsal readings of Homer, the Marquis de Sade, Arthur Rimbaud, Sigmund Freud, James Joyce and Hermann Broch, among others. One of the great virtues of *Dorsality* is that these readings are not isolated case studies: both within and between chapters, the readings connect. For instance, in the second chapter, Wills recapitulates Stiegler's thesis concerning Heidegger--that the connection of being to time can only be understood if we take account of technology, and that Heidegger's earlier, "technological" work should therefore be read in terms of his later, "linguistic" work and vice versa--and, accepting it, undertakes a sort of reversible reading of Heidegger's later work. The poetic language on which Heidegger's reflective thinking is modeled thus comes to be "purely technological," denatured "even as it purports to revert to the animal" (31). Technology is then similarly re-conceived in terms of language.

Wills extends this principle of reversibility into a technological interpretation of Louis Althusser's concept of interpellation. Drawing on Judith Butler, Wills argues that hailings, usually understood in linguistic terms, should instead be understood in terms of power and technology. Upon being hailed, the subject turns back into

itself, and hence into subjectivation. But while subjectivation is an inevitable process, its results are far from certain. Because hailings are tele-technological ("no hailing operates without a delay or distancing"), they can be misrecognized: "because of that irreducible effect of distancing and delay, there is no telecommunication that *simply* arrives at its man" (39). In Wills' hands, Althusser becomes a theorist of technology.

Wills moves smoothly from Althusser's version of interpellation into that of Emmanuel Levinas': interpellation as "the role of language in the 'immediateness' of the face-to-face" (42). Just as the results of political hailing cannot be perfectly predicted, so too is the ethical relation far from symmetrical; it is not a relationship between two equals, but between myself and another situated at a transcendent height: "[t]he Other doesn't appear in front of me, facing me, so much as turn or incline itself toward me, summoning me as responsible from outside my consciousness or perception" (45). Wills therefore advances an interpretation that situates the Other not face-to-face, but face-to-back. The chapter culminates in a brilliant reading of the second section of *Totality and Infinity* (1969) in light of *Otherwise than Being* (1998), where Wills finds technology--coded linguistically--in the heart of the ethical relation. If the body is to be held up as an interiority which is distinct from any exteriority, then it must be read as a type of house. For Levinas, the house is a privileged tool: it is the condition of possibility of human activity, and it engenders a distinction of the personal inside from the alterior outside which is at the same time the means of passage between interior and exterior. Describing the house from the simultaneous standpoints of technology, tropology, and initiator of the ethical relation, Wills makes a technological reading of Levinas' ethics convincing.

The connections established in the second chapter between Heidegger, Althusser, and Levinas extend immediately into the third chapter, which begins with domesticity. Lacking the space to give an account of the work done here on Homer, Joyce, and Broch, I will note only that the transition between these chapters is not only smooth but also eminently productive. Wills employs Derrida's concept of the Odyssean paradigm to disrupt the presumptions that the traveler sometimes makes about the homogeneity of the domestic and the heterogeneity of the foreign, and he does so on the basis of the previous analysis of interiority and exteriority. Moreover, he extends this dorsal logic--one which is finally moving through the ocean itself--into explicitly political territory, offering a "technotropological" critique of "the sense of home as national identity, … a founding fiction whose attempt at literality--drawing the line, defining the border--is problematized by its own rhetorical excess" (81). When that criticism reappears two chapters later in the reading of Schmitt, it bears the extra weight of this layered understanding.

I might use these last words to note my minor criticisms of the text--its relatively

shallow reading of Heidegger's notion of *Gestell*, for instance, or its overly tangential (though hilarious) critical evisceration of Suzanne Bernard, or the sometimes cryptic style of the final, ostensibly "political" chapter--but these would be small complaints about an otherwise inspiring work. *Dorsality* aims to enact its thesis--not just to represent a concept or describe a figure, but to perform a turn that is politically, ethically, and sexually significant with every turn of the page (16). This is an ambitious goal, and Wills should be commended for trying to meet it.

Notes

[1] Derrida dedicated *Monolingualism of the Other* (1998) to Wills.

[2] The brilliant sarcasm of the pages devoted to Bernard--"argrégeé de l'université, docteur ès lettres, paragon of excellence of French literary scholarship and editor of the Garnier edition of my graduate school days"--is hardly something to complain about, anyway.

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Resistance in the Affirmative

DANA C. MOUNT

David Jefferess. P*ostcolonial Resistance: Culture, Liberation, and Transformation*. University of Toronto Press, 2008. 224 pp.

In his first book, *Postcolonial Resistance: Culture, Liberation, and Transformation*, David Jefferess surveys the meaning of resistance in postcolonialism and attempts to develop a working definition of the term which, while still narrow enough to be effective, can lend itself broadly against interlocking systems of oppression. This project is necessary, he rightly argues, for while "resistance" is a common referent in postcolonial thought, it has not been fully theorized (3). Further, Jefferess states that the popular conceptions of resistance that do circulate in postcolonial thought are inadequate and unsuited to the task of transformation. Resistance in Bhabha, for example, is overly reliant on colonial subjects to reflect the failure of the colonial system through processes of subversion (7). As for Fanon, his idea of resistance is based on a Manichean notion of power which leads to the demand for violence (5). Jefferess does, however, admire and echo Fanon's vision of liberation as an assertion of humanity (49). Jefferess invites postcolonial theorists and critics alike to re-imagine the concept of resistance as something akin to liberation.

Although Jefferess does not deny the power of resistance through negation, he is more interested in "forms of social and cultural 'resistance' that are performed as an animation of an alternative to the direct and structural violence of colonialism rather than merely a refusal or manipulation of, or protest against, colonial power" (21). He calls for a concept of resistance which accounts "for the way in which other forms of domination and exploitation (patriarchy, capitalism, caste, etc.) are interrelated with colonial power" (180). Jefferess turns to Gandhian thought and the idea of reconciliation in South Africa as examples of "alternative narratives of resistance" that offer the promise of liberation without reverting to a fundamentally flawed oppositional politics (144). To explore these examples, he deliberately combines literary studies with the study of non-literary political and social writing and action.

Jefferess engages at length with the question of whether, as critics say, "postcolonial theory has seemingly reduced colonialism to a cultural project" and shifted away from material concerns (57). Jefferess intervenes at the point of tension between literary postcolonial scholars and non-literary ones. It is a tension that those working in postcolonial studies are familiar with: despite the purported interdisciplinarity of the field at this moment, social scientists and cultural theorists often object to what they perceive to be a prejudice towards literary studies in the field. At the heart of this critique is an anxiety about failing to address the on-the-ground, daily lived experiences of material inequalities such as hunger, poverty and dispossession. Instead of succumbing to one position over another, however, Jefferess chooses both.

In an epigraph to his book Jefferess draws on the words of Ben Okri to articulate this position: "[s]tories are the secret reservoir of values: change the stories individuals and nations live by and tell themselves, and you change the individuals and nations." As an example of this type of synergy between the story, the self, and the nation, Jefferess' book provides a persuasive model. His literary analysis is not meant merely to illuminate the examples from the more "political" work that he studies, although at times his reading of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is, as he admits, little more than a review of Gandhian thought as manifested in the early Indian village novel. By contrast, his work on Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* does an excellent job of dealing simultaneously with politics, theory, criticism and literature in a productive manner. Jefferess works towards this equilibrium in the belief that "the discourse of colonialism and its material structures enable one another" (28).

Although the book is divided into four chapters, the first two dealing with the theorization of resistance in the works of Fanon, Bhabha and Said, and the final two focused specifically on the case studies of Indian independence and post-apartheid South Africa, it is perhaps more useful here to read across the chapters rather than within them. In the first chapter, Jefferess' explorations of Gandhi's early career in South Africa and his lifework in India serve as an excellent introduction to Gandhian thought framed within a postcolonial context and furthermore confirm Jefferess' later claim that Gandhi has been underserviced and underrepresented by postcolonial studies (98). Later, in chapter three that Jefferess, while addressing the work of Partha Chatterjee and Ashis Nandy, argues

> for the way in which what Gandhi called his 'experiments with truth' and particularly concepts of *swaraj* ('self-government'), *sardoya* ('the welfare of all'), ahimsa ('nonviolence'), and *satyagraha* ('truth-force'), which guided and were the subject of those experiments – provide insight into ways in which resistance can be imagined and articulated alternatively to the dominant theories of resistance within postcolonial studies (96).

It is these "alternative narratives of resistance" (140) that Jefferess is most concerned with in this book. Jefferess highlights the way Gandhi's vision of *swaraj*, for example, differs from Nehru's dominant, statist vision of a competitive, independent India

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insofar as it targets modernity and capitalism alongside the history and legacy of colonialism.

That said, however, Jefferess is quick to note that Gandhi is not focused on these structures of power so much as he is on the subjects of power; in Gandhi, he writes, "power is theorized at the level of the experience of oppression" (123). Jefferess' careful dual emphasis on recognizing oppression, while at the same time forwarding a Foucauldian concept of power and the subject is a strong attempt to overcome the poststructuralist bind that risks paralyzing resistance in postcolonial studies. Gandhi's *ahimsa* (non-violence) is the suitable solution to this bind because, by focusing on non-violence, it circumvents the oppositional posturing that reduces resistance to a form of negation. Jefferess concludes that "*ahimsa* constitutes not simply an alternative to the physical 'battle' of war but the ideological and discursive assumptions that construct battle as a means of achieving liberation" (121).

Likewise, in the idea of reconciliation, Jefferess finds the potential to go beyond the metaphor of resistance as battle. If, as he writes, the "apartheid imagination" is limited by its roots in oppositional politics, then it follows that any notion of resistance as struggle against an identifiable, locatable opponent forecloses the possibility of creating a genuinely different cultural, social and political future. He refers to Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* and its inability to imagine outside the master/slave dynamic as an example of these limitations. Similarly, concerning the Truth and Reconciliation Commission project, Jefferess argues that although at an official level the proceedings more or less preserved, and in some senses strictly enforced this binary of victim/oppressor, through the process of post-TRC dialogue at the level of community groups, the concept of reconciliation eventually came to mean more (147). Jefferess traces the ways in which by focusing on the idea of reconciliation, resistance was transformed into something beyond "*opposition* to apartheid" and towards "the *production* of a non-racial, democratic, participatory, and just South Africa" (147). It is in this way, Jefferess argues, that "reconciliation functions as that 'great leap' from resistance to liberation" (141).

In his conclusion, Jefferess offers a new idea that he hopes will help orient his work towards something more affirmative. He focuses on the idea and practice of love as a way to enact the vision of interdependence and connectivity that he stressed in his explorations of *ahimsa* and reconciliation. In this move, Jefferess consciously places his work in conversation with one of the more optimistic trends in the humanities. When bell hooks wrote about love through feminism, she was seeking to articulate something similar to Jefferess—a way to stress commonality and to eschew separatism. There is a tradition of alluding to this politics of love in postcolonial writing as well, as Jefferess demonstrates with reference to Spivak, Fanon, Gilroy and Sandoval. In explaining his arrival at the concept, he writes that "the idea of love may be one way of contending with that disjunctive, and seemingly indescribable 'how' and 'somehow' that Spivak and Said identify, a caesura in postcolonial thought" (184). He hopes that love can figure as the mechanism that connects a "politics of resistance with a dream of liberation" (184).

Again, Jefferess is trying to emphasize not only the idea of resistance in the traditional sense of saying "no," but also as a way of saying "yes." Jefferess forwards the idea of a form of resistance that imagines a *freedom* to rather than a *freedom from*. My only critique of this turn in Jefferess' argument is that this concept appears belatedly in the course of the book. Mirroring his own musings on the invocation of "resistance" in postcolonial studies, it feels as if "love" is a common referent that never gets fully theorized. Of course, this is not as much a fault of *Postcolonial Resistance* as it is an opening for future work.

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Queering the Problem

TERRY GOLDIE

Jasbir K. Puar. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke University Press, 2007. 368 pp.

The intention of this book is obvious and quite simple. *Terrorist Assemblages* confronts the American tendency post-9/11 to see terrorists under every bed and often in every bed. Jasbir Puar attacks the racist underpinnings of counter-terrorism, the heteronormativity of American "ethnic" groups who try to assert that they are not terrorists, and the homonormativity of gay and lesbian groups who try to assert that they are just as proudly American as anyone else who hates terrorists.

The intention is simple and yet the book itself is extremely complex. One reason for this is suggested by the title. The idea of the assemblage comes from Deleuze. Arguably, the politics of the book are more informed by Foucault's theories of power and knowledge, but the mode of the book is Deleuzian. A good example is the following section of the preface:

> The strategy of encouraging subjects of study to appear in all their queernesses, rather than primarily to queer the subjects of study, provides a subject-driven temporality in tandem with a method-driven temporality. Playing on this difference, between the subject being queered and queerness already existing within the subject (and thus dissipating the subject as such), allows for both the temporality of being (ontological essence of the subject) and the temporality of always-becoming (continual ontological emergence, a Deleuzian *becoming without being*) (xxiv).

Many queer theorists are enamored of Deleuze. They enjoy the constant indeterminacy, the determinate inconstancy. As in my last sentence, it leads to an incessant wordplay, a devotion to rhetorical flourish. Note that in the quotation above there are queernesses and things are being queered but there are no queers, much less homosexuals. Deleuzian analyses disintegrate oppression because they destabilize the identities that justify oppression but they also disintegrate identities that provide psychic support. Could anyone use Deleuze to justify a statement such as "I am gay"?

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Of course in Puar there is no acceptance of such a simple identity. She instead dismisses those who find comfort in it. She disdainfully notes at the beginning of the book that gay pride is now accepted as a part of life by even the most conservative of American writers. She says "the resounding silence of national and mainstream LGBTIQ organizations" on Abu Ghraib resulted because they are "currently obsessed by the gay marriage agenda"(96). Many such organizations just said that Abu Ghraib was not a gay issue, but Puar assumes that gay=queer=opposed to the hegemony of the American state. If sexual diversities are not inherently progressivist then there is something wrong with them.

The dismissals in this book are legion, often in a tone such as that with which she confronts "the self-proclaimed political left." In opposition she asks:

> What is at stake in defusing queer liberal binaries of assimilation and transgression, secularity and religiosity? If we are to resist resistance, reading against these binaries to foreground a broader array of power affiliations and disaffiliations that are often rife with contradiction should not provide ammunition to chastise, but rather generate greater room for self-reflection, autocritique, and making mistakes (24).

The desire to resist resistance is a typical Deleuzian tangle. The call for autocritique implies the kind of navel-gazing that has always plagued the unaligned left. But of course, it is all too seldom one's own navel that is being critiqued but rather that alarmingly unthinking belly-button on the leftist next to you. I don't want to be unfair, but in this book Puar seems more self-satisfied than self-reflective.

There are certainly ways in which she has a right to be satisfied. This is an extraordinarily intelligent and well-researched book. She makes splendid use of other thinkers in the field, particularly Sara Ahmed. One of the latter's observations that Puar explores is the way in which the assurance of the openness of liberal democracy and the closedness of theocracies deny that many experience exactly the opposite. Thus, the theocrat wishes to live openly in a society that does not require him or her to hide from state-sanctioned sin, while the liberal democrat believes that openness requires, if not secularity, at least the acceptance of behaviour that offends religions.

Puar offers an extensive consideration of the Texas sodomy ruling. She sees the self-congratulatory gay response as part of homonormativity and notes that few have commented on the fact that Lawrence was white and Garner African-American. She turns to Marion Riggs and others for African-American responses to claims about black homophobia. In the end Puar concludes, "sodomy is and always has been perceived as a 'racialized act,' and in the United States it has been adjudicated as such.

By racialized act, I mean that the act itself is already read through the raciality of the actors even as it accords raciality to those actors" (132). She justifies this claim by referring to studies that show "differentials of class, age and race as well as migrant sociability in public and private space…shape the policing that leads to sodomy and public morals arrests" (132). Well, yes. But this is true of criminal prosecution in general. One might add that any victimless crime that can take place in privacy is unlikely to be prosecuted. Criminal surveillance tends to note only those "criminals" who are compelled to perform much of their life in public. This does not make sodomy a particularly racialized act any more than any other act that the state perceives to be a crime. Crime is racialized as poverty is racialized.

Puar's easy opposition to all aspects of the hegemonic order is unlikely to increase readers' agreement with Puar's book and often will offend those who otherwise might be convinced. Thus she dismisses "public and governmental rage" at the sexual torture at Abu Ghraib because there was no rage "at the slow starvation of millions due to UN sanctions…" (79). Am I just too much of a liberal if I say that this distinction seems to me inevitable? Puar is certainly correct in assuming that the homophobia of the American administration is visible in both the homophobic torture at Abu Ghraib and the apologies that claimed that Muslims are particularly offended by homosexuality. But what does it say about culture that makes homophobia an inevitable tool of the military? Is this just American power or rather homophobic vandalism asserted by the powerless working class, here operating as the military? Puar doesn't like the adulation of Mathew Shepard as "the quintessential poster boy" (46), but she doesn't mention the role that class played in the murder of this college kid. The values Puar displays as a queer anti-racist might seem inevitably leftist, but they seldom offer more than a feint towards class.

I doubt that there is anyone reading this who disagrees with Puar. She is attacking the things that need to be attacked and supporting those who are wrongly being attacked. If I might introduce a personal note, she is pursuing the same argument I have been presenting for the last few years, in a series of lectures on the uncomfortable connection between "Western" gay cultures and Islamophobia. As both of us note, it seems to be all too easy for gay groups to claim anti-racist philosophies and yet flirt with racism in assertions of pro-Americanism or attacks on Islamic homophobia.

But why Islam? Why not fundamentalist Christians, why not those Orthodox rabbis who have spit venom at gay rights? One answer is simple: there are few, if any, states that are considered to be Jewish or Christian that have punitive legislation against homosexuals. Various Islamic states have exactly this. But the more complex explanation is in a sense homonormative. In other words, every time gay culture can find a way in which its purpose is the same as the hegemonic culture, it gains power.

Thus if the United States has become an Islamophobic state—and I would argue that under George W. Bush it was exactly that—then it is in the interests of "the gay community" to target those aspects of homophobia that might be associated with Islam.

But what if one takes a progressivist approach and suggests that religious homophobia is a pre-modern view that changes as more liberal attitudes triumph? Thus those gay Muslims who can accommodate their sexuality within a certain view of their religion will become the norm, in the same way that gay Christians can now see homophobic Christian states as part of the past. That presumably would be the end of the gay justification of Islamophobia.

Perhaps. There is another aspect of this, however, that has to do with individual psychology and the particular psychology of the United States. The first part is that any person tends to accept the local more than the foreign, even when the local is antagonistic. The particular American version is a part of American exceptionalism. More than other nations, the United States looks at itself as unique and accommodates anything that can be labeled American in a way that refuses to accommodate anything that seems inherently outside. Thus the strangeness of the southern American Christians who test their faith by handling poisonous snakes is yet American. Buying toothpaste in Tehran is not American. That last observation is just one inkling, however, that in the end there is no answer. If all must wait until Islam is as American as apple pie or until every imam performs gay marriages, then there will be a long wait.

So it is tempting to come back to Puar's explanations: Islamophobia is just another version of American white racism. Puar argues that the "gay community" is just a part of that white racism. Every aspect of the various angers reflects heteronormativity, whether it is white gays waving flags of patriotism or racialized minorities exhibiting the family values of all good Americans.

These explanations, however, avoid many of the more troubling questions. First, what if Islamophobia in 2010 includes many who are not white? Puar's book mentions anti-Muslim acts performed by an African-American soldier and a Hispanic man, but offers no suggestion of why they fit white racism. When the latter killed a Sikh man he said "I'm an American." Does this mean he was trying to be a white Anglo-American, that he was making up for some perceived Hispanic deficiency? Or might it mean that Islamophobia has become a marker of Americanism that is beyond race? One need not watch much television to perceive a rainbow of Americans who find comfort in hating Muslims.

And what about religion? Somehow, Puar can devote 250 pages to attacking Islamophobia with almost no consideration of Islam as a religion. She mentions the asser-

tions that Islam is homophobic, but rather than exploring this possibility she just attacks the racism of those who assert it. When she introduces a gay Arab voice it is not to discuss the more liberal versions of Islam, but rather to attack the way Abu Ghraib was both homophobic and anti-Arab. She seems to accept Joseph Massad's definition of the "Gay International" (57), an American-led gay liberation movement void of sensitivity to other cultures. Massad, and presumably Puar, believes homosexuals in Arab countries have found ways to function under the radar, but when the "Gay International" makes great noise about Arab homophobia, it just causes trouble for Arab homosexuals. This might be the case, but does this mean that the need for gay liberation is not international? If a person of Arab ancestry who lives in the United States can write about Arab issues elsewhere, why can a gay person not write about gay issues? Do race, geography and religion inevitably trump sexual orientation?

But of course in Puar, there is little concern for sexual orientation as everyone and everything is being queered, as in this comment on the way Sikhs have been drawn into Islamophobia:

> As a figure that deeply troubles the nation's security, the turbaned body can be most fruitfully rearticulated, not solely as a body encased in tradition and backwardness, attempting to endow itself with modernity, nor as a dissident queer body, but as an assemblage, a move I make to both expand the expectations and assumptions of queer reading practices (descriptive and prescriptive) and to unsettle the longstanding theorizations of heteronormative frames of reference for the nation and the female body as the primary or sole bearer of cultural honor and respect (174).

I can see why this assemblage contributes to her own theorizations, but I find little here that will help anyone who experiences the effects of both homophobia and Islamophobia.

I mentioned above that Puar's research is amazing. Her secondary sources marshal a myriad of relevant resources, from the obvious, such as Rey Chow and Michael Warner, to grad student art projects. For her primary targets, such as *Lawrence v. Texas* or the way the 9/11 furor has affected Sikhs, her research extends through government records and a variety of popular media. Much of this doesn't appear in the body of her text, but the notes are extensive and fascinating.

I just wish more of that fascination appeared in the book. I think the argument of the book is too strong, but that might just be me the old white guy reacting. Still, any such blanket dismissal of American racism and Islamophobia seems especially simplistic in the Obama era. If his attempts to reach out to Islamic countries and the simple fact of his black body in the "highest office" change things, then Puar is out of date. If, as I must admit my cynical self fears, the result of the Obama earthquake turns out to be the same old United States, then Puar's analysis needs more awareness of the slippages in race, class and sexual orientation.

In this book I find less awareness of slippages and more Deleuzian slipperiness. Puar is very aware that people have died and that people are being oppressed. The notes provide detail after detail of how that works. But I fear all of her Deleuzian ideas will do nothing to change that.

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Popular Culture in the Classroom

CHRISTINE BOLD

Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, *Popular Culture: A User's Guide.* 2nd Edition. Nelson Education, 2010. 398 pp.

Use this book! The second edition of Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman's *Popular Culture: A User's Guide* traverses a vast range of popular culture—its slippery definitions, its history as a field of study, the stakes in its production and consumption, its relevance to the construction of the body, community, space, globalization—with specificity, nuance and lucidity. As a textbook, one of its core aims is to increase students' critical agency in their relationships to popular culture. Especially as we're back on the treadmill of rising class sizes and diminishing resources, it also represents very welcome support for instructors.

One of the smartest moves of a very smart book is how it negotiates the potential student-teacher divide in this field in order to flush out critical and ideological principles. As O'Brien and Szeman put it:

> For students, what often proves most illuminating (or, for some, simply irritating) about taking a course in cultural studies is its revelation of the connection between popular culture and power. For teachers, one of the insights that proves most strangely elusive—one that they often need to be reminded of by students—is that popular culture is about pleasure. Figuring out what happens at the intersection of those forces of power and pleasure is perhaps the principal value of studying popular culture (24).

The power-pleasure axis recurs throughout the book, nuancing its analysis of popular representation, production and consumption. Shopping, for example, is discussed as a site both of individual desire, pleasure and agency and of structural restrictions and corporate manipulation, ultimately a practice that is "neither wholly empowering nor wholly disempowering" (175).

The book clearly results from considerable pedagogical experience. Without explicitly saying so, and without a hint of condescension, O'Brien and Szeman anticipate and discourage some tendencies—such as generalization, presentism, purism, and theoretical obscurantism—which can dog discussions of popular culture in and beyond the classroom.Their commitment to historicizing takes several forms. The work is, literally, book-ended with history: multiple timelines—tracing theory, popular culture and sports, politics and society, and making modern life, from 1750 to 2008—printed in the front and back endpapers. They repeatedly demonstrate that categories (including "high" and "low" culture) and concepts (such as identity and race) make meaning in historically specific ways and that what may seem quintessentially contemporary—globalization and media convergence, for example—trails a long history. Their vast range of examples from film, television, music, cartoons and newspapers are embedded in mini-histories of mass media, Hollywood and market segmentation. And they pepper the text with case studies which connect local and global, current and historical practices.

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While the book includes many Canadian examples in its global range of cultural and theoretical references, the case studies are most forcefully oriented towards Canadian perspectives. One case study begins with the 2002 incident in which a Hamilton, Ontario man and his son were charged for violating a municipal bylaw by playing touch football and hockey on the street. In considering what this case suggests about the politics of recreation and public space, as well as the tension between communal and corporate forms of "the popular," the authors trace connections back to the 1830s' Enclosure Acts in the U.K., the industrial revolution, the emergence of working-class consciousness, the "rational recreation" movement, and long-standing struggles over work and leisure in capitalist societies. Later, in considering the role of popular culture in forming community and exclusion, they move from the popular television series set in California, *The O.C.*, to the Canadian television series set in Saskatchewan, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, to the real-life case of Hérouxville, Québec, whose town council prepared a code of conduct for immigrants, and back to The *O.C.* With these examples which are local and familiar in different ways, the authors deftly guide students through the contribution of representation to identity politics and imagined communities. The book ends with a thought-provoking case study of Canada's defence of cultural sovereignty as illustration of how globalization shapes "the notion of culture as a whole" (345).

In their specificity, O'Brien and Szeman are topical but never glib or simplistic. They draw on wikis, blogs, and recent interviews with Catholic and Protestant children from Northern Ireland. They discuss the evolution of copyright and the resistant practice of copylefting; the rise of netizen-ship (that is, digital forms of belonging), locavores (adherents to the local food movement), and runaway films (productions intended for distribution in one country but filmed in another country). They eschew "the rosy haze of nostalgia" (38) in comparing preindustrial folk culture to contemporary commercial forms and "a tidy linear narrative" (249) in moving from national to post-national or diasporic identities. In exploring oppositional cultural

practices—from culture jamming to punk music to body-modification—they note that any challenge to social norms "cannot avoid negotiating them" (212). Generally, their position is anti-purist: "we shouldn't demand purity of aims or authenticity of intent from subcultures and countercultures—in the contemporary world, it is best to imagine that everything is already contaminated, and go from there" (267).

Into all of this they introduce an impressive range of theoretical frameworks, not as an inert menu of approaches, but in the form of particular theorists whose thinking is integrated into discussions of popular culture practices. Laura Mulvey on visual pleasure, Stuart Hall on encoding/decoding, and Michel Foucault's theories of discourse all figure in the chapter on representation and the construction of social reality (Foucault's work on power/knowledge and the history of sexuality appears in the chapter on identity). The thinking of Henri Lefebvre and Guy Debord is part of the discussion of the spaces and places of popular culture. The authors' handling of these approaches is both lucid and judicious, as they weigh the usefulness and limitations of various schools of thought. The chapter on the production of popular culture, for example, rehearses the Frankfurt School analysis of the culture industry, illuminating its powerful critique of popular culture in producing and managing the social order while refusing its totalizing conclusions and its potential to close off critical analysis; the authors conclude that "popular culture is a messy and unwieldy object that can't be explained by reference to a single explanatory model" (126). In the chapter on the consuming life, they introduce Thorstein Veblen and Pierre Bourdieu, commenting that we need not take either "as being totally correct about consumption in order to find a great deal that is useful in their descriptions of the symbolic meaning of consumption" (168). This judicious engagement is salutary, especially in a text which could well provide junior students' first encounter with theorists.

A series of "suggested activities" (which could issue in oral or written exercises) brings this vast network of theories, examples, and debates home to students, asking them to reflect on their own practices, attitudes and knowledges. Especially in the first two-thirds of the book, these activities are inventively construed to echo and extend the material under discussion. In the wake of the story of the walkman, students are asked to identify contemporary cultural products which invent, rather than respond to, a social need. After a discussion of the theories of Karl Marx and Louis Althusser, students are asked to consider how educational institutions work to interpellate them into particular social roles. The activity which targets students' own shopping patterns is situated within larger theories of consumption and histories of consumer culture, a position which encourages connections among the personal, the ideological and the historical. Other activities target students' attitudes to file-sharing, their relationship to coffee culture, their thoughts on the contemporary segregation of cultural activities, the role of news media in creating consensus, the identities by which

they define themselves, and how their sense of identity and community is shaped by digital technologies.

Other strategies which aim to support student learning include the highlighting of key concepts (from aesthetics to vertical integration) which are linked to a glossary (composed by research assistants Nicholas Holm, Carolyn Veldstra, and Tim Walters). "Close ups"—pithy summaries of key concepts, theories, and movements—address, among other topics, capitalism, cultural studies, ideology, hegemony, semiotics, moral panic, realism, instrumental rationality, consumption and 9/11, the consumer confidence index, corporations, disability, nations and nationalism, "Refus Global," malls and public space, and the Zapatistas and the internet.

Having taught with the first edition of this book, I can attest that students at many levels—from junior undergraduates to graduate students—seemed to find it lucid and enabling, especially for the many ways in which it helped them to explore popular culture as "a shifting and contested arena of power" (51). The new edition is even better, including more material on digital culture, a new chapter on spaces and places of popular culture and expanded, updated case studies and readings.

As an instructor, I welcome the book's resources, tools and, above all, its invitation to informed dialogue. O'Brien and Szeman become participants in the classroom debate which they encourage with their open-ended questions and conversational tone, sustained through the most complex material. The online supplementary material for instructors follows through on this promise of dialogue: it includes a sample 12-week course outline accompanied by reflections on its efficacy by graduate teaching assistants and a commentary by the authors which is bracingly frank about the challenges involved in teaching this subject. Using this book does mean committing to difficult questions which the authors regularly put on the table: the complicities and power relations of the classroom, the economic and social inequities of capitalism, the privileges and exclusion which popular culture can promote and resist, all of which touch all classroom participants. They insist that "we all need to attend to the injustices created by the spaces and places of the contemporary world" (318).

But O'Brien and Szeman are also opponents of "political stasis" (181) or critical paralysis. Their aim is to support critical debate about the use of popular forms, and to model how action can issue from spirited reflection and communal creation. In this, their book is a tour de force—practically, pedagogically, theoretically, and politically.

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America's Primitive Turn: Capital and the "War on Terror" in Post-9/11 America

JAAFAR AKSIKAS

Paul Smith. *Primitive America: The Ideology of Capitalist Democracy*. University of Minnesota Press, 2007. 176 pp.

The field of contemporary cultural studies, especially with its importation into the American academy, often assumes a scepticism toward the uses of Marxist political economy and of Marxist approaches to culture, including more robust, non-reductive Marxist approaches and models, where cultural phenomena and cultural forms are understood within the context of their social totality—economic, political, and cultural. Paul Smith is one of the very few cultural studies scholars writing today who does not share this scepticism in the least and the result, in the case of his latest book Primitive America, is a provocative, original, and unorthodox critique of contemporary American capital and culture.

Primitive America is divided into two parts. The first part interrogates the very notion of the primitive and deals with issues such as the history of primitive accumulation, commodity fetishism, the narcissistic inflection of the American subject, and the production of extreme Americanism. The second part seeks to delineate some of the symptoms of the primitive at the current conjuncture and deals with, among other things, the state of the law in relation to the Constitution, human rights, and the nature of US imperialism. For the purposes of this brief review, I will only deal with some of these issues, paying particular attention to Smith's analysis of US imperialism today.

In this brief intervention, Smith seeks to make sense of the seemingly unprecedented and 'peculiar' reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in America. For him, this rather extreme reaction has always been latent in the cultural habits and practices of the American republic and its conditions of possibility can be located in the 'constitutive' dialectic and contradiction between the progressive, dynamic, and modern elements

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in the culture on the one hand, and its reactionary, archaic, and primitive elements, on the other. Borrowing from anthropology and from Claude Lévi-Strauss in particular, Smith presents this as a dialectic between the "hot" and "cold", between the 'primitive' and the progressive elements in American society and culture, where the hot refers to "the dynamic and progressive aspects of a society dedicated to growth and productivity, marked by mobility, invention, innovation, and optimism—in short a super-charged modernity" and the cold refers to the "rigid social forms and archaic beliefs, fundamentalism(s) of all kinds, racism, xenophobia, anti-intellectualism, cultural atavism, and ignorance—in short, the primitive" (xi). However, it is important to realize, Smith adds, that the hot and cold forces are not equally empowered or enabled; and that what America is experiencing at the current historical conjuncture is "the renewed ascendancy of the primitive" itself" (xi), "a new and improved brand of extreme Americanism" (2).

But while Smith sees this structural contradiction between the hot and cold, between the progressive and primitive, between the super-modern and fundamentalist as constitutive of the whole culture and its subjects and seeks to "contemplate that contradiction as it is played out in the structure of this exceptional culture" (xi), he also insists that this dialectic is itself fundamentally driven and authorized by America's almost complete and unquestioned devotion to the processes of commodification and capital accumulation.

Smith's attempt to examine the dialectic of subject and structure remains a necessary task for understanding contemporary American culture, and one of the merits of *Primitive America* lies in its insistence on the need to ground any analysis of the constitution and production of subjects and subjectivities in the very conditions of global capitalism itself. Smith writes:

> One of the fundamental building blocks of America's extreme capitalism is what I have called elsewhere, and will discuss a little later, the "subject of value"—a subject whose belief in and acceptance of the principle of equality is required, even in the face of contradictory empirical evidence. This subject of value in capitalism operates from the base of a self-interested rationality, is convinced of the existence and efficacy of equality, and accepts the principle of private property in all realms of social and cultural life (11).

Smith's discussion of subjectivity draws heavily on his earlier work, namely *Millennial Dreams*, and for those familiar with that work, there is actually little new here.

What I find most interesting in this intervention, however, is Smith's original and insightful take on the 9/11 terrorist attacks and his claims about imperialism and

globalization today, with reference to the work of Samir Amin and Michel Aglietta. Smith acknowledges that 9/11 is inescapable (both as a fact of life and object of study), but he also insists that *Primitive America* is not (I think Smith means *is not just*) about 9/11, nor does it debate the rights and wrongs of the Bush administration's response to the attacks. While it is true that the issues that Smith addresses here are broader than the actions, policies and ideologies of the Bush administrations, and while the book has more to say about the violence that the 9/11 attacks provoked and about "the long war" on terror, it also provides a unique take on the attacks themselves. For Smith, the 9/11 attacks are best understood as a protest against globalization and global capitalism, a protest that derives not "from envy or covetousness, or from a generalized lack of intelligence or understanding, or from any irreconcilable cultural difference or antagonism, and still less from any condition of pure evil," but rather "from a sense of injustice, a sense of being ignored, marginalized, disenfranchized, and undifferentiated" (7) and from America's inability to live up to its ideals and to the image it presents of itself in the rest of the world.

Perhaps the most interesting section of the book is Smith's analysis of imperialism. In a fully post-modern, globalized world, and until very recently, there has always seemed to be a certain general agreement, a certain implicit consensus—especially among people on the right—about the anachronism and futility of continuing to talk about empire and imperialism. It looked like—in a manner rather typical and characteristic of postmodernism—talk of imperialism was underplayed, downplayed, and even displaced by something new, with what the older Bush called "a new world order," and with what came to be known as "globalization." The central premise of such "post-modern consensus" (and Smith blames the Marxist left for its complicity in this) is that empire and imperialism are categories of nineteenth-century European conditions, and are no longer relevant to our situation today. Even when people addressed contemporary imperialisms directly (and those who dared were few), they were treated as "residual, alien" elements of a past that is no longer with us, no longer part of the "brave new world" we inhabit. Writing in the mid-1990s, one American observer notes:

> Of the various notions about imperialism circulating today in the United States, the dominant one is that it no longer exists. Imperialism is not recognized as a legitimate concept, certainly not in regard to the United States. One may speak of "Soviet imperialism" or "nineteenth-century British imperialism" but not of US imperialism. A graduate student in political science at most universities in this country would not be granted the opportunity to research US imperialism on the grounds that such an undertaking would not be scholarly (Parenti 2-3).

He goes on to say that, "In this country people who talk of US imperialism are usu-

ally judged to be mouthing ideological blather" (3).

And yet, and in the midst of all these moves and movements to repress a concept, and with it, history itself, we have begun in the last few years (especially after the 9/11 attacks) to witness phenomena of a very different order, phenomena that suggest the return to and the re-establishment of "empire" and "imperialism" as legitimate theoretical and historical categories, rather than their wholesale liquidation. Moreover, imperialism has become a widespread topic of public discussion, not only among the left that has historically developed critiques of it, but among the neo-conservatives who are now in the business of appropriating it and legitimizing it.

While the hijacking and appropriation of the word imperialism by the right might seem surprising, there are in fact several reasons why this is happening now, Smith argues, and "the more generally unapologetic rhetoric and brazen confidence of the neoconservative ideologues gathered in the Bush administrations" is only one of these. More importantly, Smith blames the left, and the Marxist left in particular, for abandoning the critique of imperialism altogether, as if the latter "were a dead letter" and points out that "Marxist theories of imperialism appeared exhausted or dormant, and little work has been done to revivify them" in the light of contemporary Marxism's self-consuming preoccupation with dependency theory and the post-colonial situation (58).

For Smith, the first step towards renewing Marxist theories of imperialism is to trace the connection between imperialism and globalization and to take seriously the idea that globalization has probably been nothing other than "the continuation of imperialism by other means" (59). This requires at the very least the rejection of the idea that globalization represents a complete rupture with previous forms of capitalist relations and the insistence—along with Samir Amin—that globalization constitutes "an ideological discourse used to legitimize the strategies of the imperialist capital and dominates the current phase" and that "the form of globalization depends...on the class struggle" (60).

A few years ago, a book appeared which has reopened the debate over empire and imperialism with such renewed passion and such undeniable power that even Smith's short reflection on imperialism can hardly avoid trying to come to terms with it. The book to which I refer is *Empire* by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. The central thesis of Hardt and Negri in *Empire* is that imperialism as we knew it has reached its end because it is a specifically early modern device for the exploitation of human labour, and that today capital does not need imperialism to reproduce itself. The authors go even further to suggest that imperialism, which was very useful to the expansion of capital for more than four centuries, has actually now become an obstacle for global capitalism. Smith looks at the book's central claims and concludes—rightly—that "the American response to the vicious antiglobalization protest that we now refer to as 9/11 has arguably given the lie to the kinds of claims that Hardt and Negri make at the beginning of their book, where they italicize the proposition that "[t]he United States does not, and indeed no nation-state can today, form the centre of an imperialist project. Imperialism is over" (61).

What Hardt and Negri also fail to see is that the move from imperialism to their new "Empire" leaves the basic structure of the wage relation untouched, and it is this fundamental structure that the interstate imperialist system seeks to impose across the globe. Smith concludes that:

[T]oday's capitalism is thus an interstate political mechanism for the general extension of capital's wage relation across a global space, and it seems less and less like a classic colonial enterprise. In that sense, the opportunistic subjugation of Iraq is no doubt a *symptom* of imperialist desire, or more exactly a demonstration of it. But the desire and the actuality of imperialism in the twenty-first century is best understood as something larger than any individual action of the United States, in Iraq or elsewhere. Indeed, the notion of "American imperialism" is almost pleonastic, since the United States, as a central player in this system for the expansion of capitalist production, is always already imperialist by dint of the nature of that system (66).

Smith takes Johan Huizinga's claim that "every political or cultural question in America is [also necessarily] an economic one" very seriously, and thus departs from mainstream media and intellectual discussions and debates that tend to have a narrow, reductive view of the economic, where the latter is reduced to the technical realm of economic management, without any consideration of its relationship to the processes of politics and culture. Even the oppositional liberal discourses that have tried to come to terms with the attacks of 9/11 and their aftermath are unable to deal with America's absolute devotion to capitalism and to the regime of capital accumulation that drives the whole society and culture.

In the concluding chapter of the book, Smith reads Judith Butler's recent book *Precarious Life: The Power and Mourning of Violence* as symptomatic of the kind of liberal critiques that remain at the level of ideology and subjectivity, and are unable to investigate the material conditions that produce these very ideologies and subjects. Butler, for example, has very little to say "about American imperialism, or media power, or any of the material factors that inflect contemporary ideologies…[or] about any *material* form of subjectivity (120). And nor does the American liberal critique, which, for Smith, among other things, ignores history and political economy (even when it claims to engage them) and suffers from a crippling "creeping universalism"

that assumes that everyone shares the same (in this case American) assumptions and perceptions. Smith's critique of Butler is not unrelated to the critique he develops earlier in the book of Christopher Lash's work (and of much work in cultural studies): the concentration on the epiphenomenal features of culture and subjectivity and invoking "capitalism," if at all, only as an afterthought. What this kind of work fails to acknowledge, according to Smith, is that any robust understanding of culture and subjectivity requires, in the words of Eric Fromm, "exact knowledge of the economic, social, and political situation" (27).

The originality of *Primitive America*—despite its rather schematic nature—lies in its ability to not only take the political-economic (and with it the cultural) seriously, but also to make the connections between the production of meanings and subjectivities and the production of commodities, as well as examine the processes of determination amongst and between different levels of production. Smith rejects the notion of autonomy (relative or not), and insists that cultural phenomena, far from being autonomous, are caught in what he calls in *Millennial Dreams*: "a logic of totality (a totality considered, of course, in all of its contradictions)" (2). According to this logic, the significance of social phenomena—be they ideological, political, economic, or cultural—cannot be properly assessed outside a dialectical understanding of its place in society as a whole. In this way, whatever seems unprecedented and unique about the American response to 9/11 becomes more or less understandable in the light of what Smith calls "the fundamental structuring of that [American] culture—with all its reigning ideologies and mythographies—in its primitive devotion to the processes of capital" (124). Contemporary cultural studies, with its almost one-dimensional focus on critical interpretation, has marginalized the place and role of political economy and, more specifically, Marxism. Smith's *Primitive America* offers a timely reminder that a more robust and useful cultural studies needs to pay more attention to both.

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The Object in Question

JOHANNA SKIBSRUD

Michael Fried. *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*. Yale University Press, 2008. 410 pp.

Michael Fried's *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* begins with an epigraph: "Each answer remains in force as an answer only as long as it is rooted in questioning" (1). Fried's latest book, published in 2008, is deeply rooted in such questioning, and no one opening the book for the first time should expect any easy or direct answers. Instead, Fried offers an unabashed return to the ground of the questioning upon which his (self-proclaimed) "infamous" 1967 essay, "Art and Objecthood" (*Why Photography* 2), was based; a return, that is, to the enduring lure, and force, of the question of the nature of art—and why it matters at all.

The epigraph is taken from Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art," and in large part the "questioning" fundamental to Heidegger's text—that of the complex relationship between artist and art object, between *world* and *thing*— conditions Fried's considerations of the photograph just as it did in "Art and Objecthood." Though there is a distinctly liberating sense that Fried has, in turning his critical attention to photography, moved past the rigid dichotomies that "Art and Objecthood" "infamously" introduced (the medium *itself*, as we shall see, necessarily complicating those dichotomies), the essay remain central to Fried's current argument. The question, therefore, of "why photography matters" to Fried at this stage in his career must necessarily be considered from the vantage of his earlier essay.

Launching decades-worth of debate, Fried's "Art and Objecthood" criticized minimalist art (which he often refers to as "literalist") for being "ideological," claiming that its project, in being "theatrical"—requiring, that is, that the art object, in order to *be* art at all, "*include the beholder,*" and that the object itself obtain a sort of "*stage* presence" (829)—is in direct opposition to the project of modernism and, moreover, results in nothing more than "a plea for a new genre of theatre," which Fried reads, provocatively, as the very "negation of art" (838). The modernist project, instead, is to "defeat or suspend" the objecthood of the work of art rather than to highlight it (837). Interestingly, however, Fried posited that *cinema* was in fact the one art that "by its very nature (the total absorption, that is, by which its status as art object is subsumed into the work itself) escapes theatre entirely" (843). This early theorization already anticipates the unique position—at a crossroads between a cinematic absorption and the theatricality of its literal objecthood—of art photography, and it is at precisely this crossroads that Fried picks up. "It is hardly surprising," he writes, "... that I have been deeply interested in the new photography, which I see as having reopened a range of questions and issues—a problematic of beholding—that appeared to have been closed, for all I knew permanently" (*Why Photography* 2). New art photography has offered Fried the ideal medium in which the debate between theatricality and absorption can, forty years later, be meaningfully resumed.

The photograph, writes Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, "is flat, platitudinous in the true sense of the word, that is what I must acknowledge" (106). It is, indeed, the photograph's literal "platitude" that provides Barthes, and now Fried, a surface upon which to ground their most difficult questioning. Barthes' own consideration of the photograph came after years of resistance to the medium, and his approach—a dual concern for the photograph's objecthood, and its resistance to that objecthood—was in no small part influenced by a very personal, emotional desire to "suspend" the objecthood of the photograph in order that he might "finally reach"—through the image of his recently deceased mother at a young age in the famous "Winter Garden photograph"—her very "*being*" (65-66). Speaking of the "air" of this photograph, he remarks that it was "given as an act of grace" (109); Fried picks up on this. "'Art and Objecthood,'" he reminds us, "notoriously ends with the sentence: 'Presentness is Grace.' Is it possible that the essential, all but ineffable qualities that Barthes and I believed we found respectively in certain photographs and certain abstract paintings and sculptures are at bottom the same?" (*Why Photograpy* 1). Fried's "volte face"—his sudden, passionate, engagement with the work of such key contemporary photographers as Jeff Wall, Thomas Demand, Rineke Dijkstra, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Struth, Cindy Sherman, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Candida Höfer, and Bernd and Hilla Becher, after allegedly putting aside a nearly-completed study of Caravaggio (Lane)—certainly recalls Barthes' sudden, personal, approach to the photograph in *Camera Lucida*. And, like *Camera Lucida*, it is Fried's exploration and elaboration of those "ineffable qualities" of the photograph (his own intellectual and emotional response to the work he's examining) that constitute the book's true strength and render its title unexpectedly apt.

As with *Camera Lucida*, an attempt to tease from the text a single, coherent argument, would—rather than failing— be seriously beside the point. Fried's book, instead, demonstrates that it is precisely because of the force, range and variety of our responses to photography that it matters. Where Fried falters is when he attempts to nail the "ineffable qualities" of his own responses too closely to the strict framework of his previous argument, which the ideas themselves seem to have outgrown. This is not to say, however, that the debate between absorption and theatricality has not been

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gainfully "reopened"; if anything, the points at which Fried's analyses fail to convincingly cohere—where they trouble the boundary that Fried still hopes to articulate between "art" and "non-art"—only add to the value of the work as a whole. That is, rather than laying anything to rest with this book, Fried generously promises to stir further debate as well as increasingly complicated questions, which, with any luck, we will be asking for years.

"I have always liked photography, and in a low-key way I was always interested in it" (*Why Photography* 1), Fried unassumingly begins. His introduction traces his developing interest in the medium, acknowledging the influence of friends (notably Canadian photographer Jeff Wall, whose work provides a valuable touchstone for Fried throughout the text) as well as a range of philosophical and theoretical influences. Texts by Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Hegel, Barthes, Stanley Cavell and Robert Pippin are, Fried remarks, "vital" to his project for the reason that in recent years art photography has "found itself compelled to do a certain amount of what I think of as ontological work, and because the writings of those particular philosophers have proved indispensable to my effort to make clear exactly what this has involved" (3-4). Fried demonstrates this claim convincingly in a remarkable chapter on the work of James Weller, Bernd and Hilla Becher and Jeff Wall, titled "'Good' Versus 'Bad' Objecthood." Here, Fried explores Hegel's distinction between "true" or "genuine" infinity and "bad" or "spurious" infinity (324), elaborating on what is at stake in the question of "objecthood," namely: "how to specify the finitude or determinateness of (more simply) the individuality of objects in a way that does not simply contrast all the characteristics that a particular object allegedly possesses with all other possible characteristics that it does not" (324). This is Hegel's "spurious infinite"; the true infinite, by contrast, is defined by Hegel as the "consummated return" of a thing "into self, the relation of itself to itself" (qtd in *Why Photography* 324). The "true" infinite, therefore, is in essence Fried's own definition of antitheatricality.

If at times Fried's philosophical references seem scant or sweeping, and if the analyses of the work itself retains at times a bit *too much* of its "ineffable" quality (for example, in the distinction that Fried attempts to draw between the "absorption" of the Rineke Dijkstra's portraits and Diane Arbus's "theatricality"; it is difficult to grasp the point at which Fried's critical formulation departs from subjective reaction and personal taste), the combination of the two never seems forced. Indeed, what is alive in this work is a genuine belief in the importance of the questions that photography raises in the realm of both philosophy and art—and here the two are demonstrated convincingly as being inextricably intertwined. Fried has said, in an interview with Guy Lane:

Everyone understands what the Bechers did for all those decades…There are very useful accounts of it: they would drive to these different places; they would wait for the sky to be a certain kind of grey light; they would build a specific kind of scaffolding, because they would always photograph from a certain height. They wanted this; they wanted that. They then put together these typologies in various ways…and, that's it. But the question, for me is 'OK, they did that…and why is that important?' Or 'What is the further, deep significance of that?'…My book is relentless in trying to give an account of these different projects, as I see it. I may be wrong in every single case – I have no guarantee that I'm right. But at least I've tried, again and again, to develop interpretive critical accounts of what I take these people to be trying to do (2).

"The image of the progress to infinity is the *straight line*," writes Hegel in *The Encyclopedia of Logic*, "...the image of the true infinity, bent back on itself, becomes the circle, the lines which has reached itself, which is closed and wholly present, without beginning and end" (qtd in *Why Photography* 324). This formulation not only helps to further articulate what Fried conceives of as the atemporality of anti-theatrical ("authentic") art, but also describes the process that Fried has laid out for himself from the beginning: to remain rooted in "questioning." In 1967 Fried had concluded "Art and Objecthood" with the reminder that, though the essay could certainly be construed as "an attack on certain artists (and critics)," what was necessary, and true to his investigation, was "the desire to distinguish between...the authentic art of our time, and other work." Where "authentic art," Fried argued, manifests itself in "*presentness*," inauthentic art fails to do so; this presentness – he "notoriously" concludes – "is grace" (845).

Forty years later, it is this same presentness that Fried perceives and explores in what would have seemed then the unlikely medium of contemporary art photography. Necessarily expanding—and sometimes inadvertently troubling—many of the restrictions imposed by his previous thinking, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* nevertheless returns us to the question of art itself, of the "essential all but ineffable qualities" that constitute the *presentness* of a work, which (in the tradition of Barthes, effectively and importantly continued by Fried) offers itself to us sometimes, as "an act of grace" (109).

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Can Melancholia Speak?: On Maps for the Modern Subject

RICKY VARGHESE

Jonathan Flatley. *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism*. Harvard University Press, 2008. 272 pp.

How might we articulate a potential relationship between political subjectivity and aesthetic practice? In his compelling and incisive study, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism*, Jonathan Flatley sets out to describe precisely that tenuous and delicate interaction between politics and aesthetics, and between subjectivity and praxis. Furthermore, Flatley attempts to stage a purposive meeting between two otherwise disparate fields, namely psychoanalytic theory and affect studies, with the hope that such an encounter might better serve us in our quest to understand the modern subject. I use the word "purposive" here quite intentionally to underscore that within his project, Flatley shows us how a close reading of psychoanalytic theory by way of Freud does not require us to abstract affect from how we think of the psychic life of subjectivity.

To start with, I must state my initial skepticism. As someone deeply interested and, at times, invested in the corpus of psychoanalytic theory, I arrive at the study of affect, and its use within the space of literary criticism with something of an analyst's doubt. Let me explain myself here. Psychoanalysis, the study of that mysterious site of the unconscious, rendering itself as the possibility for "working out"—this "working out" is of great importance here—historic and subjective trauma does not often sit well against and/or alongside the study of seemingly visible, noticeable, observable affect, per se. Analytically speaking, trauma—the confrontation with the apparent Real—renders itself to be inexpressible even in the best of times. This perceived impossibility to represent trauma—in either word or image—seems to struggle against the desire for a kind of "realism" that affect claims to make possible. Flatley's intriguing study not only assuaged my initial doubts about the bringing together of psychoanalysis and affect studies, but allowed me to gain greater clarity into the potential of bringing together these fields such that we

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might respond to historical trauma, subject formation, subjugation, and oppression in more nuanced and rigorous ways. *Affective Mapping* is structured and spaced out along five chapters, preceded by an introduction, within which Flatley immediately states his project's ambition, and an essential—I will explain why shortly—glossary of terms, which will then come up within the chapters to follow. As Flatley states in his introduction, "the writing of this book originated in [his] desire to explain something that seemed simultaneously self-evident and poorly understood…not all melancholias are depressing" (1). It is this conflicting simultaneity of the thesis he claims—between being both self-evident and poorly understood—that Flatley attempts to explicate upon within his work that centers on the contested terrain of the experience of melancholia. By splitting melancholia into two, namely those that tend toward being depressive and those that have an affirming capacity attached to them, Flatley's project takes on the task of studying quite closely the affect of melancholia, assuming that there is something both subjectively and politically fecund about the presumably affirmative forms of melancholia.

While such attempts at categorizing might offer much room for debate, and while it might be of political and/or theoretical interest to think about melancholia as either being depressive or affirmative, I was unsure as to how Flatley came to this space of what he claims to be an apparent split. Furthermore, I was drawn to wonder what precisely might delineate melancholia into something, let us for the time being call it an experience, that is either affirmative or depressive. By extension, it bequeathed me to ask as to why something under the banner of being a depressive melancholia might not be in and of itself as productive or as generative as an affirmative sort of melancholia. My concern with this splitting, or rather, the articulation that such a split might actually exist lies within the problem of Flatley not exactly outlining, within his text, at least in my reading of it, a clear distinction between the two, or any such guideline for this delineation. What makes one sort of melancholia, affectually speaking, affirmative and thereby productive politically, whilst rendering other forms of melancholia as depressive and antithetical to the possibility of politics, seems to me, to be a central question left unaddressed.

Setting aside the difficulty of understanding what this distinction—between affirmation and depression—might look like, and assuming that we follow Flatley's lead into thinking of something that might be understood as an affirmative melancholia, then what he suggests is that a channeling of this sort of melancholia into aesthetic practice—such as writing, as done by the writers he examines—enables a more nuanced reading of how modernity has determined subjectivity. If, as Flatley suggests (and I agree wholeheartedly with him on this point), we come to understand the modern subject through her/his intrinsic alienation, through her/his "self-estrangement" (6) from her/himself, then understanding the historical potency of the modern subject's melancholic position might render the subject as politically-charged, precisely through an examination of this moment of self-estrangement. My push, however, in furthering our consideration of melancholia would be to ask what might be the distinction, if any, between this self-estrangement and something akin to the enactment of self-reflection.

Earlier, I mentioned an essential glossary of terms that precedes the five chapters of the book (and immediately follows the Introduction). I found this glossary an interesting attempt to offer up definitions to a series of deeply debated terms of reference. The terms outlined here—which will then make appearances throughout Flatley's theorizing—are affect, emotion, mood, and structure of feeling. This attempt at a glossary is revelatory in a sense because it provides us with much to consider in how we enter into reading Flatley's study of melancholia and its relationship to subjectivity and the practice of aesthetics. The bringing together of politics and aesthetics, being a central concern for him, is enacted by looking closely at how he describes melancholia, as resulting from the modern subject's self-estrangement from her/himself, as either affect, emotion, mood, and/or a structure of feeling. These terms of references allow us to think through how he explains a subject might come to understand her/himself within the context of a politicized sense of her/his position within history. The contribution made by Flatley in furthering our understanding of these terms, within the context of the debates that surround such exercises in definition, is quite important to note, especially since this also adds to the struggle in bringing psychoanalysis and affect studies together.

The first chapter opens up with a detailed outline of the history of the study of melancholia. This serves adequately as both review and overview. For those of us familiar with this history, names such as Klibansky, Burton, Ficino, Goethe and Baudelaire resonate quite well; while for those for whom the study of melancholia is an altogether new endeavor, Flatley's historical trajectory serves as a well-thought out primer that energizes the eager reader to take the arc into her/his own direction of study. This historical outlining of the study of melancholia is centered upon the notion that modernity's experience—perhaps, *the* fundamental experience of modernity—is founded upon, or rather inscribed within, a subject's experience of loss. As Flatley describes modernity, "the very origin of the word…from *modernus*, meaning 'now' or 'of today' implies a problematic sense of anteriority, the sense that the past is lost and gone" (28). Within such a context, the hope is to explain how the subject understands, comes to terms with, and identifies with this loss within the context of her/his historical position. Since loss and melancholia have herein been linked temporally, as an experience between the past and the present, Flatley's historicizing of the study of melancholia then leads him to read through (and quite closely, might I add) Freud's work on mourning and melancholia.

As an astute reader of Freud, what follows in this chapter is Flatley's brilliant and detailed description of key concepts that inform psychoanalytic theory. More specifically, he describes aspects of psychoanalytic theory related to the experiences of loss, attachment, tranference, introjection, projection, and identification; all of which have their parts to play in Freud's own understanding of melancholia. It gives the reader a way to enter into psychoanalytic theory without having to be heavily informed by it. This is a practice at which Flatley excels: the insightful ability to both read through and break down concepts in an incredibly accessible and persuasive manner. The attention given to Freud, here, as Flatley notes himself, is "[to offer] a kind of baseline paradigm for a modernist theory of melancholia, which will serve…as a point of reference" (43). In doing so, he is able to then tie Freudian melancholia to the theory of history conceived of by Walter Benjamin, where melancholia is designated the role of methodology. As methodological process, Flatley contends that melancholia "might allow one to gain access to the historical origin of one's suffering, and indeed to the logic of historicity itself" (65).

Flatley arrives at this "logic of historicity", through the use of "melancholia as method" (64), within the space of his second chapter, wherein he conceptualizes the affective map, which in turn becomes the medium by which subjectivity is tied to its political realization. Utilizing Frederic Jameson's well-worn notion of the "cognitive map," wherein "one requires a cognitive map of social space for a sense of agency in the world" (77), Flatley explains his exercise of "affective mapping," "to indicate the affective aspects of maps that guide us through…our spatial environments'"(77). As he goes on to explain, such an "affective map is neither fixed nor stable" (78). An affective map is, for him, a cumulative and recuperative exercise in trying to understand how structures of feeling and affective moods determine political subjectivity within spatial environments. This, in turn, is expected to facilitate the formation and articulation of what Flatley believes to be "agential collectives" (82). In what is quite a radical move, precisely because, here again, he brings together psychoanalysis and the study of affect, Flatley attempts to extrapolate on how such an agential collective comes to be through Adorno's description of "aesthetic comportment…[as the] place where one…makes contact with an other, based on shared affective experience" (83). For him, "affect is the shuttle on which history makes its way into the aesthetic" (81). He goes onto describe how this takes place within the context of his close readings of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, W. E. B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk*, and Andrei Platonov's *Chevengur*, in the subsequent three chapters of his book.

In chapter three, James' *The Turn of the Screw* becomes a textual space in which affectivity is described as the exercise of "reading into" (87) the narrative. Taking his cue from the logic of transference described by Freud, Flatley interprets affect as the site through which he "reads into" James' narrative. He, then, takes this exercise further by "reading into" the central character of the governess in the story, whose "reading into" other characters in the narrative and how they perceive her, continues to enact the mapping practice that Flatley states is central to his understanding of how James historicizes subjectivity. Chapter four sees Flatley carrying out a detailed study of Du Bois' seminal text in order to underpin the affect that lies beneath the experience of "double consciousness." Double consciousness explained by Flatley as the "desire to be like someone [and] the desire to replace and thus destroy that person" (124) becomes the affective bind in which Du Bois finds his subjectivity locked within his own understanding of himself within the history of America. In the final chapter, chapter five, affectivity under the sign of Russian socialism is described within the site of the formation of communal bonds through friendships, specifically male friendships, becomes the way in which a collective melancholia might mean something akin to the possibility of forming an agential collective.

Herein, I want to conclude this review on two notes of interest. Firstly, while Flatley himself, admits to the idea that "the texts [he chose] are by no means the only ones [he] might have written about" (8), I would have liked to have seen a more intricate explanation as to his specific choice of texts beyond all of them being texts written at either the end of the 19th century or at the beginning of the 20th century. The absence of a clear explanation leads to open concerns about how these texts might be, if in any way, connected to one another, beyond the affective, albeit divergent, impulses embedded within them. A sustained feminist critique of the choice of texts made by Flatley would perhaps argue that he, at times, privileges a masculine form of melancholia, wherein transcendence seems to be the affective output in the final analysis.

Finally, I want to turn my attention to the first part of the title of my review, *Can Melancholia Speak?*. Flatley's compelling study of the affective terrain upon which subjectivity is inscribed reminded me of another inscription, where the body itself became a political text. In reading Flatley's work, I was affectively reminded of the last part of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's brilliant essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, wherein she describes the political suicide of Bhuvaneshwari Bhaduri. I was compelled, then, to ask as to what might happen if we were to think of subaltern or other-ed subjectivity alongside inscriptions of historicity made through and about the subject's self-estrangement from her/himself. Can, in that vein, the subject's melancholia speak? And, if so, what, then, is it saying to us? And who is this "us"? A tenuous affective collective in and of itself that hears its voice amidst the clamor of history's echoes?

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National Ghosts and Global Literature

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Vilashini Cooppan. *Worlds Within: National Narratives and Global Connections in Postcolonial Writing*. Stanford University Press, 2009. 322 pp.

"National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach," wrote Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1827, thus coining a term that has gained renewed currency in literary studies today (qtd in Damrosch 1). Today, the resurgence of world or global literature amidst the broader experience of globalization at the turn of the twenty-first century continues to be viewed as coterminous with the end of the nation or, conversely, the beginning of post-nationalism. But what notion of time is at stake in viewing history as the approach of one epoch signaling the end of another? What concept of world is meant in world literature? Vilashini Cooppan's *Worlds Within: National Narratives and Global Connections in Postcolonial Writing* addresses these questions and challenges the treatment of the nation and globe as mutually exclusive. A complex and compelling work, Worlds Within challenges its readers to rethink prevailing logics of space and time that inform the production of literary history. Offering an account of the history of the postcolonial novel, Cooppan sees the nation not as a concept made irrelevant by globality, but a constantly mutating form that persists through and alongside the global.

Interrogating the logics of space and time implicit in the narrative of globalization and post-nationalism, Cooppan proposes a rethinking of the ontology of nation. Rather than viewing the nation simply as a sociopolitical entity that has been distended by forces of global capital, *Worlds Within* draws from psychoanalysis and deconstruction, and treats the nation both as a psychic object and structure of desire. "Nations," Cooppan argues, "are fantasmatic objects knotted together by ambivalent forces of desire, identification, memory, and forgetting, even as they simultaneously move within, across, and beyond a series of spatial and temporal borders (us/them, territory/flow, present/past, life/death)" (xvii). Citing Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis' definition, the fantasmatic is a structure or schema for the subject that governs aspects of the unconscious life to produce fantasies, dreams, repetition compulsions and other forms of imaginary life. Con

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stituting the liminal space of the psyche, the fantasmatic is a zone of indeterminacy that consists of multiple temporalities in that it perpetually reaches to the past to facilitate the process of becoming subject. The workings of desire reveal a more complex temporality at work in the narrative of nation that complicates a view of history that would treat nationalism and globalization as simply one era succeeding another.

In focusing on the psychic terrain of postcoloniality, Cooppan views the fantasmatic as the site where narratives of nation, longing and belonging are made. Psychoanalytic plots of fantasy, mourning and melancholia are thus seen as particular modes of movement—that is moving within, across and beyond psychic spaces as well as time—that serve as schemas to read narratives of exile, migration, trauma and dispossession. As Cooppan writes:

> All national subjects live their nationalism in the mode of loss for all must contend with the difficult process of identifying with something that is not entirely there, that exists in the present yet recedes into the deep past of national history, and that seems to promise future inclusion but constantly works by present exclusion (32).

However, Cooppan's thinking of the nation as fantasmatic and of narratives of national identification through psychoanalytic modes of movement is less interested in elaborating the *contents* or a universal narrative of the nation than it is in tracking the mutating *form* of the nation without presuming a linear teleological understanding of history. Hence, she supplements psychoanalysis with Jacques Derrida's notion of spectrality in order to articulate a mode of being that is both present and absent, located in the now and the not yet, on the inside yet outside. Spectrality designates a mode of being—what Derrida calls a hauntology—that is always open to the other, a capacity to affect and be affected, a condition that renders it at once vulnerable to iterability or alterity. With the emphasis on form, Cooppan applies a spectral method in analyzing genre and narrative, arguing that a mutual haunting of nation and globe can be detected in the history of the postcolonial novel.

It should be noted that Cooppan's appropriation of spectrality goes against Derrida's insistence that the nation cannot be considered spectral because it is an ontopology, "the territorialized discourse of place rendered synonymous with being," a bounded entity that constitutes itself by excising its Other (17). She cites Pheng Cheah's critique of Derrida in *Spectral Nationality*, who argues that the nation, particularly its postcolonial forms, is arguably the example *par excellence* of spectrality of our time given that its existence is simultaneously threatened and reinvigorated by an uneven capitalist world system. Although similar to Cheah's, Cooppan's argument pursues a different direction, foregrounding instead the psychic life of the nation. Significantly,

this produces an account of the nation that is not determined solely by flows of global capital and that is able to think through the nonlinear, entanglements of time in psychic life alongside the forward-driven movement of history. In doing so, Cooppan challenges the dominant focus on the *bildungsroman* in studies of postcolonial literature, which often corresponds to thinking the novel simply as a form originating in the West and disseminated to the rest, a historical narrative that corresponds with the linear plot of the rise of the nation in Europe, its subsequent spread elsewhere and demise following the onslaught of globalization. Guided by the ethical impulse to recognize the postcolonial Other on its own terms, Cooppan looks for patterns of recursivity and non-linear modes of time expressed in literary form to trouble the temporal logic that locates nationalism and globalization as sequential processes.

Cooppan begins with a reading of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Widely read as a critique of the postcolonial national project of India and its communalist tendencies, Rushdie's novel, with its playful admixture of multiple English and Indian languages, is often viewed as exemplary of a cosmopolitan form. Cooppan, however, argues that its denouncement of the nation as deathly and deadly is simultaneously an expression of a desire for an "ideal India," made apparent by the novel's persistent return to memory as a site of conjuring the nation in the wake of state-sanctioned violence. Cooppan takes the recurring return to a national past despite *Midnight's Children's* "aggressively global form" as a model to analyze the relationship between Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and its subsequent postcolonial transculturations in the works of Chinua Achebe, V. S. Naipaul and David Dabydeen (53). Using Freud's theory of the fetish as a masterplot, Cooppan reads Conrad's obsession with racial difference as a disavowal of the imperial nation's civilizing mission and logic of progressivism. More significantly, she diagnoses a similar fetishistic structure at work in the constant return to *Heart of Darkness* in postcolonial fiction, not one that merely replays a tragic past in derivative fashion, but that repeats it with a difference. The result is an "uncanny effect," the recuperation of a colonial text to write a past that opens itself to the yet unfinished story of the postcolonial nation (96).

The consideration of W. E. B. Du Bois in Chapter Three, especially in light of the nearly century-long period that his work spans, implicitly frames the United States as both a postcolonial and an imperial nation. In this chapter, Cooppan tracks an allegorical mode persisting throughout Du Bois' long writing career, from his famous essays to his lesser known novels. Engaging the work of Walter Benjamin, Paul de Man, and Frederic Jameson, Cooppan elaborates allegory as a form that expresses spectrality. "Allegory," she writes, "marks the presence of a kind of time in which the past outlives itself, a time that demands the subject return to the past as it surges into, and becomes contemporaneous with, the present" (117). To crudely summarize a complex and theoretically inspired reading of Du Bois, Cooppan's attention to form

and the psychic plots of fantasy, melancholia and mourning produces an understanding of the relationship between nation and race, and race and gender that complicates the *bildung* arc of evolutionary progress that structures prevailing narratives of and beyond nation. Moreover, the trajectory of Du Bois' thinking on race suggests an understanding of the nation-globe relation as inter-implicated rather than antithetical, a point that crystallizes in his later works of historical fiction. For Du Bois, Cooppan argues, the novel form is a means of resolving the tensions of national-global politics, exploiting the allegorical form of the historical novel to stage memory as the condition of holding on to, yet simultaneously moving on from the past.

Similarly, Chapter Four, a study of the changing temporal logic throughout Frantz Fanon's oeuvre, picks up where Du Bois ends—the anticipation of third world decolonization and the significance he hoped it would have for African Americans—and clearly shows us that the onslaught of neocolonialism on the decolonizing world renders the post- in postcolonial as perpetually nascent. Placing Fanon in conversation with Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, Cooppan argues that the former's work is a model of fantasmatic nationalism, one that incorporates the globe within the nation, restoring cosmopolitanism to nationalism albeit in a melancholic form—a reading that brings new relevance to Fanon's work in the contemporary moment of globalization. In Chapter Five, Cooppan argues that Fanon's ghostly form lives on in the works of post-independence African novels, namely the works of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Assia Djebar, Tsitisi Dangarembga, and J. M. Coetzee, among others, presenting the novel form as exemplary in capturing the multi-temporal, multi-sited, heteroglossic experience of postcoloniality. Whether straining against the constraints of national representation, recalling histories knotted in the bodies of the nation's racialized and gendered subjects or yearning for a nation that is otherwise to the neocolonial enterprise inherited from a dismantled empire, the novels constitute an archive that exceeds history even as it attempts to imagine another possible future for the nation.

This model of a fantasmatic nation form is contrasted with a reading of Severo Sarduy's *Cobra*, a novel mourning the loss of nation through parody and gender queer performance. Its national politics are decidedly different from those of Fanon. Sarduy's novel not only departs from Fanon's belief in the emancipatory promise of the nation; its staging of gender-crossing also troubles the implicit gendering of nation as female in Du Bois and Fanon's works. *Cobra* serves as an interesting turn in the trajectory of Cooppan's argument insofar as it poses the question as to whether loss is necessarily the same as lack, and whether the Lacanian psychoanalysis with which it engages is at all translatable to Latin America. Grappling with this persistent question of meaning-making, Cooppan concludes that the seemingly oppositional national and global frames that guide literary analysis essentially boil down to a question of relationality between nation and globe, of how the two mutually constitute yet also

deconstruct one another and how the distinction between them opens up a productive space for contemplating postcoloniality.

Cooppan's book demonstrates that psychoanalytic theory remains a vital tool in discerning the multiple and entangled temporalities at work in the history of postcoloniality. Ever attentive to its colonial roots and imperial impulses, Cooppan's use of psychoanalysis guards against pathologizing racialized, gendered and queer postcolonial subjects as suffering from a psychic malaise. Instead, treating psychoanalysis as a means of detecting and inhabiting particular literary forms, Cooppan offers a novel look at the novel, her refreshing readings of familiar texts in unfamiliar contexts itself produces an uncanny effect that she also finds at work in the texts she reads. Put another way, Cooppan's spectral reading demonstrates a new method of literary analysis: while attentive to the histories that haunt a text, this analysis is also attuned to new and unexpected ways that the text responds to ghosts from its past.

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