

This article was downloaded by: [University of Illinois]

On: 1 October 2010

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 917340946]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Interventions

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713702083>

## BOOKS

Meenakshi Mukherjee; Joseph N. Clarke<sup>a</sup>; Chandani Patel<sup>b</sup>; Siân Harris<sup>c</sup>; Morris Young<sup>d</sup>; Robert Spencer<sup>e</sup>; John McLeod<sup>f</sup>; Anne Whitehead<sup>g</sup>; Leonardo A. Schiocchet<sup>h</sup>; Madia Thomson<sup>h</sup>; Jane Wilkinson<sup>i</sup>; Kaiama L. Glover<sup>j</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rice University, USA <sup>b</sup> University of Chicago, USA <sup>c</sup> Newcastle University, UK <sup>d</sup> University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA <sup>e</sup> Manchester University, UK <sup>f</sup> University of Leeds, UK <sup>g</sup> Boston University, USA <sup>h</sup> Al-Akhawayn University, Morocco <sup>i</sup> University of Naples 'L'Orientale', Italy <sup>j</sup> Columbia University, USA

Online publication date: 19 July 2010

**To cite this Article** Mukherjee, Meenakshi , Clarke, Joseph N. , Patel, Chandani , Harris, Siân , Young, Morris , Spencer, Robert , McLeod, John , Whitehead, Anne , Schiocchet, Leonardo A. , Thomson, Madia , Wilkinson, Jane and Glover, Kaiama L.(2010) 'BOOKS', Interventions, 12: 2, 304 – 330

**To link to this Article:** DOI: 10.1080/1369801X.2010.489705

**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2010.489705>

## PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# reviews

## BOOKS

.....

*The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary.* By Vijay Mishra. London: Routledge, 2007. Pp. 286. ISBN 9780415424172 £70 (hbk).

.....

Successive waves of migration dispersed some 12 million people from India to four continents of the world. Vijay Mishra's book is probably the most comprehensive study of their different subjectivities, culled meticulously from the scattered archives of their writing. Diaspora, migrancy, and hybridity are some of the much-discussed issues in postcolonial discourse on culture, but the focus so far has been mainly on the demographic shifts that happened in the last fifty years or so, after the demise of the Empire. These recent generations of migrants have been articulate and visible; several influential postcolonial critics of our time come from this milieu, and so do some outstanding novelists writing in English today. Much less attention

has been paid to the earlier generations who left India in the nineteenth century. From about 1840 onwards, shiploads of indentured coolies were transported from India to Fiji, Surinam, Mauritius, Trinidad, British Guyana and other far off plantations. Since these subaltern migrants had little skill with the written word, and not much access to the dominant language of power, postcolonial scholars have found it difficult to engage with their experiences.

Vijay Mishra's book – impressive in range and depth – rectifies that imbalance by beginning with what he calls the 'first Indian diaspora' in some detail. He looks at the earliest records of the indenture experience through first-person accounts, some of them written in Hindi, Bhojpuri, Fiji Hindi or Creole. He formulates from these texts, as well as from later imaginative reconstructions of this past by the descendants of these labourers, what he calls 'the gimit ideology'

.....

(‘girmit’, the coolie’s term for the ‘agreement’ of indenture, also becomes a short cut for a certain kind of plantation experience and a subaltern knowledge system), ‘which may be productively read as a “sign” which gives the experience of the “old” Indian indenture diaspora a theoretical template’ (22). The earliest text discussed by Mishra is by a highly unusual girmitiya, Totaram Sanadhya – a literate Brahmin who came to Fiji in 1893 and eventually went back to India after 21 years. His vivid account of barrack life in Hindi, *Bhutlen ki katha* (‘Tale of the Haunted Line’, 1894), while investing the girmit experience with materiality (exact nature of work, living conditions, food, oral traditions, songs, rituals), also introduces a spectral quality to the memory of stark deprivation which has lingered through generations. Mishra analyses several early accounts, including one by Bechu, a girmitiya with radical ideas of justice. He also looks at texts by contemporary writers like Sudesh Mishra, Raymond Pillai, Subramani and others who have written about the girmitiya experience.

An entire section (the epilogue) is devoted to one such recent text: Suramani’s novel *Dauka Puran* (‘A Subaltern’s Tale’, 2001) written in Fiji Hindi. Mishra demonstrates the subversive and carnivalesque potential of this demotic language which has never been part of high culture. The novel carries out a complicated negotiation between the local hero Fijilal (literally, ‘son of Fiji’) and one ethnographic researcher, Vidyadhar Srivasto (the echo of Naipaul’s name is not accidental). Conventions of history, epic, purana and novel get scrambled with ludic elements in a bantering local idiom. Fijilal claims: ‘That which you educated people thought was useless, which you throw out as refuse, the same I have kneaded into my *Dauka Puran*.’ This is probably the first time that a text like this has

been included in an academic study of the diaspora. Mishra argues that this 500-page novel has a larger allegorical significance in that it symbolizes the silence of the subaltern diaspora which did not speak in the language of power. Another example is a play from Mauritius – *Toufann* (1995) by Dev Virah-sawmy, written in Creole. The subtext may be Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, but the play is not a mere ‘writing back’ to Europe. The title has a double meaning – in Bhojpuri (which is also a language of Mauritius) it means ‘storm’ and in Creole it means ‘chaos’. Such texts have theoretical value in the context ‘of the failure of theories of globalization and transnationality to give intrinsic legitimacy to minority subjects’ (61).

In the second half of the book, Mishra’s treatment of the ‘new diaspora’ is equally perceptive and nuanced. Here he considers at length writers like Salman Rushdie (who gets an entire chapter), Hanif Kureishi, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, M. G. Vasanji, Jhumpa Lahiri and many more, but in the limited space of this review I choose to highlight the first part because this has so far been a neglected area in literary discourse. In fact the two halves of the book cannot be separated. If the early diaspora was the result of the abolition of slave labour, the new diaspora is linked to the movements of late capital. Mishra devotes a whole chapter to the Indian diaspora in Canada, where South Asian migrants with different histories have assembled under the ‘multicultural’ banner – those who have come via the Caribbean, those who are displaced from East Africa and those who have arrived directly from India. Mishra teases out the differences that have shaped their varying relationships with the new land.

However, the protagonist of the book is V. S. Naipaul, who bridges the old diaspora and the new, demonstrating how the girmit

ideology is not a static backdrop, but seeps into the consciousness of subsequent generations. Making use of trauma theory and referring to Cathy Caruth’s work, Mishra argues that *An Area of Darkness* carries traces of the original trauma which gets deflected to the motherland through panic and irritation. *A House for Mr. Biswas* becomes a crucial text in constructing a diasporic allegory where the idea of permanence, a space that one can claim as one’s home, becomes the major signifier. Mishra admits: ‘Without Naipaul there is no centre to this book.’

Born in Fiji in a family of early Indian migrants, educated in Sydney, Canberra and Oxford, resident of Australia with several years’ work experience in Canada, Vijay Mishra seems to be ideally situated to undertake the massive research that has gone into the making of this book. Mishra’s other enduring interests – Bollywood cinema, film music, Sanskrit poetics, Tulsidas’ *Ramcharit-manas* – all come into play here, adding layers to his theorizing of the diasporic imaginary and providing metaphoric resonance to narratives of exile and acculturation.

MEENAKSHI MUKHERJEE  
 © Meenakshi Mukherjee

.....

*Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law.* By Joseph R. Slaughter. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007. Pp. 436. ISBN 9780823228171 \$85.00 (hbk) ISBN 9780823228188 \$25.00 (pbk).

.....

Since the Bernheimer Report’s call in 1994 for a globalized comparative literature, the field has witnessed a vigorous debate about how to

shift its traditional geocultural focus from Western Europe to the other two-thirds of the world. From this perspective, Franco Moretti’s ‘distant reading’ and Gayatri Spivak’s ‘telepoesis’ in the service of distant ‘textured collectivities’ are not as dissimilar as they would have us believe. In the main, their respective programmes for reforming comparative literature’s evidentiary protocol have not encountered the hostility directed, for example, at Homi Bhabha’s ‘hybridity’ or at Jameson’s ‘national allegory’ (Aijaz Ahmad’s response comes to mind). Rather, something like befuddlement has been the common response, but this last is shaped by a rather mundane and dare I say pragmatic question: given the centrality of the monograph to one’s scholarly career, would projects enabled by distant reading and telepoesis be legible to the institutional entities that channel our advancement in the profession? I am of course plotting Joseph Slaughter’s *Human Rights Inc.* into a particular disciplinary story. But I do so not to insist on a cause and effect relationship, but rather to suggest that Slaughter’s study is symptomatic of this most recent attempt to confront the return of comparative literature’s repressed.

‘Incorporation’ (23) is one of the book’s central epistemological conceits. Slaughter’s skilful deployment of it allows him to make the history and evolution of legal person(ality) examined in the first chapter simultaneously tell the story of the theoretical and generic history of *Bildung* and the *Bildungsroman* in the second. In these opening chapters which lay out the terms of his argument, incorporation literalizes the discursive homology between the *Bildungsroman*’s generic imperative to demarginalize – incorporate – marginal persons and human rights law’s juridical imperative to include – incorporate – every person into the international rights-bearing

community. This elegant, perspicacious move allows Slaughter to torque this instance of aestheticized incorporation – namely, the *Bildungsroman* – into a travelling semiotic praxis. Thus the second chapter’s fruitful yoking of texts as chronologically distant and culturally ‘different’ as Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* and Margaret Macgoye’s *Coming to Terms* amounts to a quiet replotting of Jameson’s ‘national allegory’ as well as a modest demonstration of Moretti’s distant reading and Spivak’s telepoesis. Collapsing Goethe and Macgoye into a single chronotope might initially strike the reader as the kind of crypto-structuralist system-building that makes many guffaw in Moretti. In fact, it is an adroit recoding of the fraught tension between peripheral/subaltern *parole* (Macgoye, postcolonial nationalism) and metropolitan *langue* (Goethe, *Bildung* and the *Bildungsroman*), between form and content. As a consequence, what is usually the crippling dilemma of *agency* – arguably the point of contention in the misreadings of Spivak’s silent subaltern – becomes recalibrated as an enabling discursive structure which ‘constitute[s] and regulate[s]’ (11) *subject formation*, or to use Slaughter’s term, incorporation. From here, his argument builds outward, tracking how the (re)plotting of incorporation as law and as cultural form is deformed by the legacies of colonialism and imperialism.

Chapter three examines two ‘dissensual’ (181) *Bildungsroman*, Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* and Tununa Mercado’s *In a State of Memory*, for the ways in which incorporation is altered by a deformed democratic state apparatus. Slaughter argues that Ondaatje and Mercado ‘invert the affirmative rights claim of the idealist genre . . . in [their] exploration of alternatives to the traditional human rights model of human sociality and personality that exist below and beyond the

nation-state . . . and the democratic operations of its public sphere” (197). Chapter four’s analysis of two contemporary first-person postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, Tsitsi Dangar-embga’s *Nervous Conditions* and Christopher Hopes’ *Separate Development*, shows how the novels textualize a new shift in human rights law to an ‘econometricized discourse . . . of the right to *Bildung*” (212) and self-determination which ‘posits a citizen-subject who is to become personally responsible for the tropological force of the law – for guaranteeing the common sense and “rightness” of the human rights tautologies’ (227). I think readers troubled by the fetishization of Amartya Sen and other post-contemporary, postcolonial native informants will find Slaughter’s replotting of *formal, generic* incorporation as an *internal*, neo-Kantian imperative to develop(ment) very refreshing. His term for this is the ‘implicated reader’ and he finds an exemplary instance of this in *Nervous Conditions*’ ambiguous resolution to Tambu’s story of development. The lack of resolution presses the reader to confront their assumptions and expectations from the textualized life of an African woman.

Chapter five unusually treats a single novel, Calixthe Beyala’s *Loukoum: The ‘Little Prince’ of Bellville*. Here, Slaughter deftly works chapter four’s examination of self-sponsorship (as subject formation) against the solipsistic Calibanic nostalgia we know as ‘agency’ and toward something akin to Stuart Hall’s reconceptualization of hegemony. ‘The commercialization of the traditional social work of the novel of incorporation’, he writes, ‘converts the *Bildungsroman* into a *Clef a Roman*: an author’s generic key to the lettered [international] city that . . . offers an international allegory because they allegorize the literary, industrial generic constraints that prescrip-

tive reading programs comes with a novel about a protagonist’s attempts to gain admission into a society of readers” (308). *Clefs a Roman*, to my way of thinking, is an astute and timely theoretical recoding of Jameson’s national allegory and Spivak’s silent subaltern.

Thankfully, Slaughter’s theoretical perspicacity prevents the book from falling into a high-minded moralism or an empiricism which assembles texts according to the human rights violations that they depict. But I wonder about the cost of Slaughter’s particular embodiment of interdisciplinary rigour. Terms and definitions cross into and out of legal theory, philosophy and literary studies with a single-minded determination that chokes the clarity out of sentences and crowds out the literary critical histories around some of the novels. Arjun Appadurai turned transnational studies away from center-periphery models so that we might see other circuits of cultural transmission. Alice Walker’s womanist, matrilineal gardens are also Tambu’s; Babamukuru’s benign authoritarianism has conceptual links with Walker’s Afro-gothic Mister. We might have learned a great deal from thinking with Slaughter about how and why the United States and its racial histories almost never make an appearance in critiques of human rights discourse. Additionally, I wonder if the book’s epistemo-centrism inadvertently turns imaginative discourse and literary criticism into a proxy for the institutional imperative to teach for globalization that we have all heard much about from our deans and the like. To my ear, these calls for a rejuvenated, twenty-first century humanities seek to provide students with the tools to be good *managers* of the subjectivities which incite and are incited by globalization. This is roughly where Slaughter leaves us in

chapter five. I wonder, though, if this is where he ought to have begun.

JOSEPH N. CLARKE  
 RICE UNIVERSITY, USA  
 © Joseph N. Clarke

.....

*Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World, 1780–1870*. By Tim Watson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. 263. ISBN 9780521876261 \$99.00 (hbk).

.....

Tracing the way in which the British West Indian colonies came to occupy a powerful place in the British historical imagination by the 1860s, Tim Watson presents inconsistent accounts of the nineteenth-century Caribbean in his book *Caribbean Culture and British Fiction in the Atlantic World*. These inconsistencies are a result of the constant shift between realism and romance, and these unstable accounts demonstrate the tensions between Britain and her West Indian colonies. The imperial archives themselves blur the distinctions between history and fiction, and between romance and realism, because while they display administrative realism on the surface, upon closer examination they are seen to follow a romantic mode of writing. Just as Britain and the West Indies were mutually constitutive, so too were the genres of romance and realism. Watson’s book proposes that attempts to narrate the Caribbean from within a realist mode, based on plausibility and reason, often turned into romantic narratives employing melodrama and the sentimental. As examples, Watson points to Benjamin Moseley’s *Treatise on Tropical Diseases* (1803) and *Treatise on Sugar* (1800), two scientific accounts that are interrupted by discussions of the power of the

moon and tales of the Jamaican outlaw Three-Fingered Jack, respectively. Watson sees the reverse also taking place, that is that romance also presents certain realities of everyday Caribbean life, as found in *Hamel, the Obeah Man* (1827), an anonymously published novel which he attributes, through both research and speculation, to Charles White Williams. It is Watson's argument that we must often turn to imperial romance to understand Caribbean cultural life because these works often made protagonists out of rebels and religious leaders, such as in *Hamel*.

Although the history of the Caribbean continually turns it into a place of historical romance, Watson works against this notion by recovering stories and experiences of 'specific people in a specific time and place' (4). With extreme attention to detail and through a myriad of resources – such as pamphlets, newspapers, colonial documents, trial transcripts and missionary correspondence – Watson strings together a new history, one that acknowledges real experiences of ordinary Caribbean peoples as they seek to establish a place within the empire.

Seeking to disrupt the conventional notion that the Caribbean colonies during the nineteenth century were peripheral and becoming more so, Watson places his work within the critical trajectory that has been pushing the Caribbean from margin to centre. He therefore places his book within the trajectory spearheaded by Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said's readings of *Jane Eyre* and *Mansfield Park*. Reminding readers that even the foundational novel of English realism, *Robinson Crusoe*, is a Caribbean story, Watson illustrates that the Caribbean is the source of realism and imperial capitalism. Through his reading of this novel, as well as of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and George Eliot's *Felix Holt*, Watson argues for the Caribbean's

prominent place in the development of English realism, rescuing the region from its marginal status in the discourse of nineteenth-century literary history.

Watson also focuses on the centrality of subaltern religious life and provides an analysis of syncretic African-Caribbean versions of Christianity to demonstrate that the figures of the dangerous obeah man or woman and the respectable churchgoer were often the same. Through an examination of the life of Samuel Ringgold Ward, an African-American minister who ends as an independent Baptist pastor in eastern Jamaica in the 1850s and 1860s, Watson illustrates that although Ward's support for the suppression of the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 has been detrimental to his place in history, he also championed the interests of smallholders and peasant farmers in Jamaica. The black preacher, then, is a composite figure through whom Watson says we can celebrate Caribbean, and black Atlantic, culture. However, because romantic heroes of this type often become lost heroes, said to exist in a non-modern and far-away world, Watson claims that it is only in a realist mode that we can write the cultural histories of the Caribbean, Britain and the United States, paying attention to both the similarities and differences that join and separate them. Establishing a narrative that joins and destabilizes the disciplines of history and literary criticism, Watson attempts to provide such a realist account of a nineteenth-century Atlantic world.

Although Watson demonstrates Britain's dependence on her West Indian colonies often for both content and the development of literary styles, his account runs into some problems precisely because of the ambitious goals he sets out to achieve. Some of these strands become difficult for him to weave together into a coherent analysis. By seeking

to trace fluctuations in literary styles, the contributions of individual religious and political figures to Caribbean life, the emergence of a black internationalism, and to develop a sense of syncretic religious and medicinal practices, his narrative at times loses focus in the details of each of these arguments. Watson does, however, take heed of Dipesh Chakrabarty's advice in *Provincializing Europe* by treading cautiously, as he presents the concurrent writing styles and cultural practices among Britons and West Indians in order to avoid falling into the trap of romanticizing the alternative histories he uncovers. And although some may argue against his reliance on imperial archives, he makes a commendable effort to read them against the grain and fill in some of the historical gaps that have hitherto been ignored.

CHANDANI PATEL  
 UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, USA  
 © Chandani Patel

.....

*Dangerous Brown Men: Exploiting Sex, Violence and Feminism in the War on Terror.* By Gargi Bhattacharyya. London: Zed Books, 2008. Pp. 170. ISBN 978184277879 £15.99 (pbk).

.....

Gargi Bhattacharyya's latest book offers a fiercely articulate assessment of the political and cultural vocabulary for the justification of the War on Terror, and seeks to expose how completely it has been saturated with a disturbingly sexualized brand of racism. From the outset, *Dangerous Brown Men* is characterized by a sense of urgency: this is not a historical discussion about what happened then, but an active discussion about what is happening now. The pithy introduction clari-

fies the terms and scope of the argument to follow. Bhattacharyya reads the war as a 'cultural project' as well as a military campaign, and notes that 'like all cultural alliances, it can exist only through constant reaffirmation of key myths and narratives' (9). Therefore, Bhattacharyya's aim is not to refute or to deconstruct the ways in which gender, feminism, sexuality and Islam have all been strategically represented within the rhetoric of the war, but rather to consider how 'these emanations can help us to understand the reconfiguration of global relations in our time' (16).

The opening chapter, 'The Misuse of Feminism in Foreign Policy', might even be better called 'The Misuse of Feminisms', as Bhattacharyya never assumes she is dealing with a monolithic entity. Instead, she acknowledges the full range and variety of feminist thought and activism, and the conflicting agendas of different factions: 'the commonality of an apparently shared identity is not enough to build sustainable political alliances' (33). A vivid picture emerges of how the many contradictions that exist within the feminist movement have been exploited, until it has become possible for feminism to be widely portrayed as incompatible with anti-war politics. The chapter not only exposes the origins of this false polarity, but also warns of its role in perpetuating the cultural mythology that the war was 'designed to defend and/or rescue women' (45).

The iconography of this myth is examined further in the second chapter, 'Bodies, Fears and Rights', which initially focuses on the importance of the female body to the justification of the war: 'What can women wear? Where can they go? How freely can they move?' (40). Bhattacharyya considers the visual impact of Afghan women appearing unveiled and analyses this in the context of



conflicting notions about female autonomy. The chapter expands into a discussion of the representations of motherhood that have arisen during the war – in particular, the association of ‘bad’ mothering with radicalization and suicide bombing – before moving on to the representation of the male body in the rhetoric of war. Bodies from both sides are examined, from the dehumanized ranks of shackled prisoners in Guantánamo Bay, to the ‘ugly playfulness’ (69) of young Coalition soldiers, acting out their masculinity via video clips and web feeds.

Chapter three, ‘State Racism and Muslim Men as a Racialized Threat’, develops upon the theme of dehumanization and considers how Muslim men have been increasingly marginalized through a combination of racist mythologies and everyday security practices. Bhattacharyya draws brief but illuminating connections between this process and the militarized policing of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, identifying a set of key characteristics by which the due processes of law can be curtailed. Further comparisons are established between the racist propaganda targeted at Jewish men in Nazi Germany and the increasingly racist cultural perception of Muslim men in the twenty-first century: ‘They too are portrayed as . . . enmeshed in an alien culture that inhabits the secret places of an unsuspecting host society’ (89). The comparison could have backfired, but Bhattacharyya deploys it with sensitivity and skill.

That sensitivity is at work again in chapter four, ‘Sexuality in Torture’, as Bhattacharyya describes the atrocities of torture and war rape without once resorting to the sensationalistic or titillating treatment which is frequently accorded to discussion of these crimes. Increasingly in this chapter, Bhattacharyya turns to the statements made by former inmates of Abu Ghraib, and in doing so, she provides the

most chillingly effective evidence possible to support her view that ‘sexual violations are woven into narratives of cultural disrespect and racism’ (105). Finally, in the resonant concluding section ‘The Spectacle of Violence’, the focus shifts from the images that have been circulated to the nature of their consumption, and implicates the global public in perpetuating this cycle of misinformation: ‘We understand the enormity of the horror but are divided from the kind of understanding that explains or enables action’ (136).

*Dangerous Brown Men* is a concise and compellingly argued text, and the tightness of the writing creates a sense of pace and pressure that is especially apt for the subject matter at hand. However, such succinctness does carry occasional drawbacks. In her introduction, Bhattacharyya touches upon the ‘implication that backward cultures remain entrapped in uncontrollable and excessive homophobia in contrast to our tolerance within careful confines’ (6). While the innate hypocrisy of this implication is clearly underlined, it would have been fascinating to see the limitations of those ‘careful confines’ unpacked and dissected further. And I must admit to being disappointed that Bhattacharyya chose not to comment further in regards to the individual perpetrators of the torture at Abu Ghraib and their subsequent media portrayal. Still, such minor issues notwithstanding, *Dangerous Brown Men* proved an illuminating and thought-provoking text. Bhattacharyya deftly guides the reader through a complex web of cultural politics and does not shy away from exposing unpalatable truths: ‘We are supposed to feel protected, but I can’t help thinking that we are also supposed to feel afraid’ (133). It is a text that asks difficult, challenging questions and provides no easy answers; rather, the reader is repeatedly confronted with a sense

of their personal complicity as a consumer in global media. Therefore, this is far from being a comfortable book to read, and nor is it an easy one. But it is brave, it is timely, and it deserves to become an important point of reference in an essential debate.

SIÂN HARRIS  
 NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY, UK  
 © Siân Harris

.....

*Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity.* By J. Kēhaulani Kauanui. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. Pp. xvi, 241. ISBN 9780822340584 \$79.95 (hbk) ISBN 9780822340799 \$22.95 (pbk).

.....

As the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement has developed over the last thirty years through the rise of political activism, the revival and thriving of Hawaiian language and cultural education, and a steady stream of creative arts, there has been a simultaneous rise in the scholarly and critical work that seeks to identify and analyse the history and social, cultural and political practices of Native Hawaiians through a native lens. A generation of native scholars – including Lilikalā Kame’elehiwa, Jonathan Kay Kama-kawiwo’ole Osorio and Noenoe K. Silva – has grown up with an awareness of and immersion in the sovereignty movement and has undertaken projects that theorize and unpack the experiences of Native Hawaiians. *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* by J. Kēhaulani Kauanui is the latest example of critical work that reexamines the historical record on Hawai’i’s relationship to the United States, focusing in particular on the period when Hawai’i

became a US territory and subsequently US state. The key issue examined by Kauanui is the particular way Native Hawaiian identity was established by blood quantum through the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), first passed by Congress in 1921 and reaffirmed when Hawai’i became a state in 1959. Under the HHCA a Native Hawaiian is someone with ‘at least one-half blood quantum of individuals inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778’ (2).

The central work that Kauanui does in *Hawaiian Blood* is to challenge the ‘blood logic’ that has defined who is Native Hawaiian (Kanaka Maoli) and the consequences of this legal definition for Kanaka Maoli in terms of benefits promised by the HHCA but often unfulfilled, questions of self-determination, and ultimately the imagining of themselves as a people. Beginning with a discussion about native conceptions of identity based on genealogy and kinship, Kauanui provides a foundation for understanding how the colonial imposition of a blood quantum rule denies Kanaka Maoli identity by resituating them within western discourses of race and property rights that do not take into account Hawaiian epistemologies. As Kauanui argues, ‘genealogies are impossible to quantify because they are about status and relationships, not arbitrary blood measurements’ (40) and such classifications serve ‘as an erasure of indigenous multiplicity’ (40) by not accepting Hawaiian understandings and practices of identification.

While the establishment of the blood quantum system has often been characterized as an administrative tool (i.e. a means to determine HHCA benefits eligibility), Kauanui tells a compelling story that raises questions about the intentions and motives behind defining identity this way. In particular, she examines how key players such as territorial senator John H. Wise and territorial delegate Jonah

Kalaniana'ole Kuhio, both Kanaka Maoli themselves, worked for Native rehabilitation and the protection of Native entitlement to lands by invoking the 'American social obligation to long-suffering Hawaiians' (73). According to Kauanui, Wise and Kuhio often had to triangulate their goals against the interests of multiple parties, including those in the US Congress with strong anti-Asian sentiment (this at a time when legal restrictions were in place against the immigration and naturalization of Asians), white American plantation owners in Hawai'i who wanted access to land as well as Asian immigrant labour, and the Kanaka Maoli themselves who were becoming increasingly dispossessed of their native lands by the growth of plantation economics and settler populations. The debates about blood quantum are fascinating and Kauanui's analysis makes clear just how arbitrary the 50 per cent rule is given that at one point an ancestry of 1/32 Hawaiian was under consideration in determining who would count as Native Hawaiian. Given the competing interests that Wise and Kuhio had to negotiate, it's not surprising that major concessions were made to maintain some version of rehabilitation and entitlement.

In examining the practical and ideological consequences of designating the 50 per cent blood quantum, Kauanui demonstrates the long-term effects that continue to reinforce Kanaka Maoli dispossession, including the results of *Rice v. Cayetano* and the potential aid or harm of federal recognition of Hawaiians as an indigenous people. At issue in *Rice v. Cayetano*, a case argued before the US Supreme Court that challenged the constitutionality of elections for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), was whether the State of Hawai'i's system of excluding non-Native Hawaiians from voting in elections for OHA, an agency established to oversee the administration of

HHCA benefits, was constitutional because of its ostensible use of race to determine voter eligibility. The US Supreme Court ruled the Hawaiian-only elections unconstitutional and yet, Kauanui points out, this was partly the case because of the US-imposed definition of Native Hawaiian by the 50 per cent blood quantum. Recognizing Native Hawaiians as akin to Native American tribal nations raises its own set of problematic questions since it continues to define Native Hawaiians within US national discourse and logic (and in some versions maintaining the definition of Native Hawaiian established by the HHCA) rather than treating Native Hawaiians as a dispossessed people of a sovereign state (as identified by international law and by United Nations policies on self-determination).

The argument that Kauanui makes in *Hawaiian Blood* is complex but compelling, showing through her careful readings of the historical record that questions of identity are often rhetorical rather than material, as different parties argue for specific constructions of identity. However, what Kauanui makes clear is that claims on or assignment of native identity certainly do have material consequences, especially when this can determine the future of a people.

MORRIS YOUNG

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, MADISON, USA

© Morris Young

.....

*Music at the Limits: Three Decades of Essays and Articles on Music.* By Edward W. Said. London: Bloomsbury, 2009. Pp 325. ISBN 9780747598749 £9.99 (pbk).

.....

These essays and reviews, composed between the early 1980s and his death in 2003, are the product of Edward Said's lifelong involvement

with classical music. The subject may be unfamiliar to many of his readers, but the critical intelligence at work here is instantly recognizable. Indeed, these reflections amount to compelling demonstrations of Said's key concepts. Many of his ideas were musically inspired. Contrapuntal analysis, for example, which recommends that metropolitan theories and artworks be studied in relation to other cultures, traditions and perspectives, is modelled on the overlapping voice parts and melodic lines of musical counterpoint. Similarly, Said's fascination with the idea of late style originated in Theodor Adorno's work on third-period Beethoven. More significantly, this volume helps us appreciate that his stress on the importance of criticism and on the critic's need to display independence, inventiveness and catholicity were reliant all along on Said's distinctive understanding of musical performance. He was himself an accomplished pianist and, as we know already, a consummate critic. And Said's own critical performance must have been affected by his interest in the techniques of exceptional pianists such as Alfred Brendel, Wilhelm Kempff and Maurizio Pollini, and especially by his lasting obsession with the eccentricity and almost preternatural virtuosity of the Canadian pianist Glen Gould. On several occasions Said acclaims Gould's disarming flair for self-projection, his penchant for flouting the expectations of his listeners, and his ability, by virtue of his associative mind and amazing digital skill, to rejuvenate familiar works. Pollini's great virtue, according to Said, is that his career communicates a sense of growth and purpose as well as a coherent vision. For him, playing the piano is not a service occupation or a matter of executing a score faithfully and reverentially, but of translating, interpreting and exploring the repertory as well as permitting audiences to hear

the music in intriguing new ways. Pianists, like critics, 'ought to alienate and distance the public' (20), to compel concentration and analysis, enhance awareness and sharpen perception.

In short, these essays constitute an object lesson in the practice of criticism. Scrupulously sensitive at all times to the music's details and complexities, Said reminds one of the Schlegel sisters' brother Tibby in Forster's *Howards End*: listening attentively to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with the full score open on his knee, missing nothing. Although a critical idiom and a set of standards for evaluation emerge during the course of Said's career as a critic of music, there is nonetheless something subjective and idiosyncratic in his judgements. Said's praise is hardly ever unqualified and his verdicts are sometimes scathing. He has a quite vituperative dislike of Verdi for example, and can hardly bring himself to say a kind word about New York's Metropolitan Opera. He bemoans the 'intellectual cowardice of most contemporary musicians' (69) as well as, with more justice, unadventurous repertoires, most cultured people's depressing ignorance of the technical vocabulary essential to musical knowledge, and the odious cult of genius in music marketing. Alas, Said's tone is often cranky and even sour. The Vienna Philharmonic's performance of Richard Strauss's *Elektra* at the Carnegie Hall in 1991, he writes, 'did to operatic style what Operation Desert Storm did to Iraq' (122). But at least this contumacy is to be preferred to the musical commentariat who behave like sports commentators going into raptures and slapping the extremities of their limbs together in awed and largely uncomprehending approval of the antics of some flashy prodigy or another workmanlike rendition of a boringly familiar piece by Chopin or Vivaldi.

Said's style is like that of Joseph Conrad, which he set out to analyse in his very first book: overstuffed with adjectives and adverbs. No doubt this is something to do with the inherent difficulty of writing about music, the least referential and therefore the most indeterminate of art forms. Music, Said writes in an intriguing appendix that sets out a plan for an unwritten book on Bach and Beethoven, is the most expressive of arts as well as 'the most esoteric and difficult to discuss' (307). It is as if every time the critic is called upon to discuss music he must invent from scratch a language and a set of criteria for interpretation and evaluation. Music's indeterminacy is partly to blame for this; so too is the almost total absence until recently, as well as to this day in journalistic discussion of music, of any really concerted effort to analyse classical music politically or sociologically as well as aesthetically. Music journalists prefer to measure performances against a yardstick of 'authenticity'. Beethoven, for example, is usually discussed as if he were some freakish genius unaffected by his context, as if the *Eroica* and *Fidelio* had nothing to do with the French Revolution and the style of the late piano sonatas was unrelated to the composer's disillusionment with Napoleon. Adorno is the great exception here and his presence is ubiquitous in Said's book. Adorno's critical sensitivity to the complex relationship between music and society, to the extent that he could hear a lament for the poor and the disinherited in the disorderly reprise of Mahler's Ninth and a prophecy of totalitarianism in the rigorous technical organization of twelve-tone serialism, is Said's model. The illuminating essay on the reception of Wagner in Israel, for example, sheds light on what Said elsewhere calls the 'worldliness' of works of art, their composition within specific contexts, as well as their capacity to 'travel', the way

they unfold new layers of meaning when performed in different places and periods. The censorious preoccupation with Wagner's anti-Semitism is reductive, Said argues. Not only is it deaf to the varied interpretations and adaptations to which Wagner's music, like anyone else's, is susceptible, the fixation with Nazism and anti-Semitism has, unfortunately, muffled the violence done to Said's Palestinian compatriots since 1948.

In several of these pieces Said rehearses his conviction that musical composition and performance, because by definition they involve creative thought and energy, possess an intrinsically political force. This is partly what is meant by 'elaboration', as Said defined it in his book *Musical Elaborations*: the inventive processes by which composers achieve expression, musicians perform and articulate scores, and audiences interpret imaginatively the sounds that enter their ears. Bach is the obvious example. Such was Bach's aural and dextral facility, Said argues in a review of Christoph Wolff's comprehensive biography, that his music is able to explore and elaborate melodic lines in extraordinarily inventive and almost inexhaustible polyphonic variations. Notwithstanding his ostentatious piety and the obsequious epistles to his patrons, the exceptional virtuosity of Bach's music is also an assertion of humanity's creative force, one that contests the authority of both divine and secular power. This is what makes Bach's music hubristic and almost blasphemous. All of Said's writing is compelled by this sublime, transcendent and perhaps even demonic quality in musical virtuosity. It is a quality audible in Beethoven's late quartets where the intense power of expression destabilizes the conventional forms. 'To the Christian whose supreme law is obedience', writes Paul Henry Lang of the *Missa Solemnis* in his classic *Music in Western Civilization*, 'the Beethovenian attitude

seems repellent, for submission is preceded in him by a struggle with doubts; faith is gained through a Faustian trial.' Adorno writes in his book on Beethoven that the affirmative essence of music 'does not lie, as with other arts, in its specific content, or even in whether or not its form operates in terms of harmony. It lies merely in the fact that it is *a voice lifted up*, that it is music at all.' To wring from silence the expressive eloquence of sound is itself a kind of victory. All music for Lang and Adorno and also, I am suggesting, for Said is an avowal of human resourcefulness and creativity, a voice lifted up in argument with the stentorian accents of power: in Gerard Manley Hopkins' words, 'A warfare of lips in truth/Battling with God'.

Because it provides novel interpretations and connections, this collection is also an implicit protest against the kind of extreme specialization that bedevils both academia and musical education. The latter is restricted to a very small circle of people indeed, as Said's friend the Israeli conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim remarks in his perceptive foreword. To lament this state of affairs is not the same thing as saying that the critic should be involved in constructing all-encompassing systems. To the contrary, an important element of critical performance is its unavoidably fragmentary quality. Throughout his work Said took aim at the overbearing power of systems that are deaf to marginal voices and the finer details of human need: imperial power of course, but also Stalinism and neoliberalism, as well as the unwittingly systematic tenets of the various postmodernisms. Said's work, like Adorno's, is essayistic in the best sense: discursive, informal and alert to the requirements of particular problems and topics. The appropriate form for criticism, as Said argues, is therefore the essay. 'The essay, like the recital, is occasional, re-crea-

tive, and personal' (22). Criticism is not a frontal assault but a series of guerrilla raids on a superior adversary. Its immediate aim is not to bring its opponent down but to demonstrate his weakness. No performance or essay is ever definitive, of course; their purpose is to encourage further efforts. What these essays are about, then, is not just music but also criticism and by implication the need to rescue them both from the mind-deadening seductions of nationalist passion, religious enthusiasm, and, explored more thoroughly here than almost anywhere else in Said's voluminous writings, capitalism. Curiously, capitalism is barely mentioned in Said's work on Orientalism, where he passes over the relationship between imperialism and capitalism's thirst for new markets, raw materials and exploitable labour. Here, however, Said proves himself a true disciple of the Frankfurt School in his abhorrence of the distracting power of mass culture, of the market's deadening effect on critical sensibility and artistic originality, and of the hackneyed, backward-looking repertoires demanded by consumers and corporate sponsors. 'Before the theological caprices of commodities, the consumers become temple slaves', according to Adorno in his celebrated essay 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', to which Said refers several times. Regressive listeners behave like children, Adorno says, demanding their favourite dish over and over again. They want nothing better than for the performance to sound like the recording they have at home.

Said defends listening against regression, music against its commodification, and criticism from its transformation into puffery and gossip. He therefore commends provocative and intelligent interpretations of the classics in addition to arresting new works like John Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer*. He praises

to the skies those few performers who offend consciously against the protocols of the recital and pays tribute to ambitious efforts to stage unusual works, such as the New York City Opera's production of *The Life and Times of Malcolm X* and the Santa Fe Opera's production of Richard Strauss's *Die ägyptische Helena*, which offers for a mezzo-soprano what sounds like the challenging part of the all-knowing Mussel, whom Said describes as 'a sort of resident prophetic shellfish' (32)! Above all, Said's task, as he sees it, is to show his readers how to engage with serious music rather than just consume it. He is like the gadfly Socrates rousing the sluggish Athenians with frequent stings. These exemplary essays are above all a series of virtuosic performances: by turns startling and illuminating, contentious and eccentric, sometimes galling and exasperating, but, crucially, never dull or complaisant.

ROBERT SPENCER  
MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY, UK  
© Robert Spencer

.....

*Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. By Ann Laura Stoler. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. Pp. xiii, 314. ISBN 9780691015774 \$22.95 (pbk).

.....

While postcolonial studies has subjected 'the postcolonial' and 'postcolonialism' to persistent interrogation, the same degree of critical attention has arguably not been maintained towards 'the colonial'. As Ann Laura Stoler points out, too many scholars assume that colonialism perfectly expressed the European pursuit of rationality, governance, coherence and order. 'Much of colonial studies', she

argues, 'has worked from the shared assumption that the mastery of reason, rationality, and the inflated claims made for Enlightenment principles have been at the political foundation of colonial regimes and should be at the center of critical histories of them' (57). But as *Along the Archival Grain* testifies with both verve and fascination, a sustained and sensitive engagement with colonialism's archives reveals a much messier sense of the colonial and exposes the shifting uncertainties, emotions and inconsistencies which characterized the often calamitous pursuit of colonial endeavours. For Stoler, archives are irregular repositories of incoherence and inconsistency, where we may witness the pursuit of colonial endeavours usually and endlessly riven by tension, ambiguity, indecision and doubt. In her words, archival materials are rarely legible 'repositories of state power', but shape instead 'unquiet movements in a field of force' that betray 'restless realignments and readjustments and people and the beliefs to which they were tethered' (32–3).

Stoler's aim is to trace such realignments in the context of the nineteenth-century Dutch Indies, revealing in the process (and via one of her many delightful metaphors) that the archive is not tidy and seamless but is best thought of as 'granular' (53) – coarse and uneven rather than orderly and neat. It is towards the archive's rough surfaces and mottled textures, its fleeting moments of illumination and dark shadows, that she points our attention. In Stoler's writing the archive comes alive, possessing its own peculiar 'pulse' (another recurring metaphor) and refusing to lie inert. It is not a source of knowledge but a subject of enquiry, characterized by epistemic uncertainties and anxious labour of those whose lives it seems to document. Many students of colonialism, it is argued, have yet to learn how to recognize

and read its granular qualities; this book attempts to show the way.

Given the focus on the epistemological uncertainty of the archive and the attention to history's uncertainties and flux, it is not surprising that *Along the Archival Grain* builds its conceptualization of the archives of the Netherlands Indies with recourse to some high-powered thinking indebted to the cultural turn in ethnography, philosophy and critical theory – although Stoler's attention to tracing the cross-currents of historical occurrences with meticulous attention to their material traces involves her in doing something much more sophisticated than cheerfully declaring the ambivalence of colonial discourses. There is history at stake here, after all. Her accounts of events in nineteenth-century Batavia and the Dutch East Indies certainly expose both the matter and the limits of debates about colonialism's functioning at the time; yet the archival documents she pursues are uncovered precisely to challenge the ossification of a history of either officiousness or dissent.

Stoler's historical examples are both fascinating and choice, and include an anti-government protest meeting at Batavia's Harmonie Club on 22 May 1848; the troubled attempts to establish artisanal educational establishments to solve the problem of the colonial-born, often mixed-race *Inlandsche Kinderen*; and the murder of a Dutch planter's family on 17 October 1876. Stoler's pursuit of this latter example is particularly fascinating. In juxtaposing a personal letter about the affair by Frans Carl Valck, *Assistent Resident* on Sumatra's East Coast, with prevailing accounts of the murders, Stoler lays bare the competing political and discursive contexts in which the realities of plantation life could be imagined at the time. Valck's career (and brief appearance in the archive) seems to have been cut short by

his unconventional view that the attack was in response to the planter's mistreatment of local workers. In pursuing his fortunes, Stoler shows how Valck's attempt to understand what had happened was itself confined by the vocabularies of governance of the time, which could not capture or explain neatly the contingencies of historical praxis. There was a significant slippage between the language and protocols of governance and the lived realities which such language attempted to anticipate and explain. Valck's frustration and despair found in his personal letter to a friend reveal the struggle he faced to phrase what had happened within the received notions of 'common sense' and index how difficult he knew it would be to challenge the prevailing view of events which admonished the planters for their shoddy treatment of the workers. Hence, Stoler invites us to try to understand Valck's attempt to understand the vicissitudes of his time, unravelling not only the sense of colonialism's coherence but also any certitude we might wish to invest in the clarity or certainty of our reading of these (and indeed any) materials over history's shoulder.

Valck appears again in the book's best chapter, concerning the correspondence he engaged in with his daughter, from whom he was often separated due to his peripatetic life in the Netherlands Indies. Stoler fixes on two important elements of Valck's life. First, Valck was a rather ordinary, unexceptional man who slips in and out of the archive and whose textual traces offer a vernacular vision of ordinary history in a 'minor key'. Second, Valck's correspondence opens up to us his emotional life and invites us to recalibrate our sense of the archive as an important emotional repository where one encounters the myriad dispositions of those bound up in colonial endeavours – again, for Stoler, scholars have



too quickly neglected thinking about the status of the emotional amid the archival traces of the past. Indeed, Stoler's writing on the significance of disposition is an especially valuable part of her book's intellectual contribution. As she puts it, one should not accept critical approaches to colonialism that assume 'flat interiorities commonly attributed to those with whom we do *not* sympathize, politically or otherwise', and she calls instead for a reading of colonial personages that rejects 'the smug sense that colonial sensibilities are a given and we can now quickly move on to the complexities and more subtle, troubled dispositions of the postcolonial present' (238). If we really wish to read historically, we must quickly get beyond making quick moralizing (and profoundly ahistorical) judgements about those bound by colonialism's past and recognize instead the emotional complexity of personhood which applies as much then as it does today. The range of emotional possibilities, sensibilities and vocabularies found in the archive engender their own distinct mottling effect and further challenge assumptions about colonialism as always an unproblematic expression of rationality. 'Rather than underscoring distinctions between the intimacies of empire and its public face', writes Stoler, 'such letters address alternative senses of timing and distance, of expectation and exigency' (278). It is interesting that she briefly proposes literary figures as currently best equipped to track the interiorities of those who know from within the emotional tenor of colonialism's agents – her examples are Marguerite Duras, Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee. Compared to such figures, she argues, ethnographers and social historians have failed to describe the vital realms of psychic and affective space. Indeed, in foregrounding the historical significance of emotional discourse to the interpretation of the archive,

Stoler's work reminds all scholars that the realms of passion, affect and sensibility – historically produced and embedded, of course – are not solely the remit for those who work primarily in the arts or cultural studies.

*Along the Archival Grain* is an ambitious book, to be sure, and predominantly a successful one. Ultimately, Stoler's aim is to furnish us with what she calls 'hermeneutic humility', regarding critically not just what we choose to read in the archive but the very act of reading itself. Throughout her work she deals with different constituencies of materials with remarkable dexterity, from the minutiae of archival documents to complex matters of philosophical interpretation – quotations from Nietzsche, De Certeau, Derrida, Sartre and others pepper the text and underpin the sophisticated and intellectually rich negotiation of reading practices she attempts. A key to the book's success is Stoler's written style, especially her eye for a creative metaphor to capture the ideas she pursues. In using ideas such as watermarks and photographic negatives as figurative representations of the different kinds of knowledge to be discerned in the archive, Stoler creates a vivid and inspiring narrative that engages the imagination as much as it does the intellect – something which is still all-too infrequent in academic writing. That said, at times the book seems more preoccupied with the diacritical debate than the historical marrow at its heart, and on one or two occasions there is the danger that Stoler's lyrical approach becomes just a little too whimsical. But these are risks well worth taking, given the overall achievement of *Along the Archival Grain*. Scholars of Dutch colonialism will naturally need to read it, but its significance and appeal will matter to nearly everyone working in postcolonial studies and provide an important retort to those 'students

of colonialism’ (in Stoler’s stern phrase) who treat the colonial as an unproblematic term or a given.

JOHN MCLEOD  
 UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS, UK  
 © John McLeod

.....

*Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization.* By Michael Rothberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. Pp. 408. ISBN 9780804762175 \$70 (hbk) ISBN 9780804762182 \$24.95 (pbk).

.....

One of the central difficulties confronting scholars in the field of memory studies is how to think across different, though related, histories of violence without reverting to a competitive model. Michael Rothberg takes this problem as his starting point and makes a decisive intervention by positing ‘multidirectional memory’ as a conceptual framework within which group histories converge and inform each other in often surprising ways. Central to Rothberg’s analysis is the memory of the Holocaust, particularly as it has been shaped and articulated in postwar France, and his study makes clear that Holocaust memory has from the outset been intimately tied to anticolonial struggles and civil-rights discourse. If recent critiques of memory studies have argued that the Holocaust has occupied too dominant a position (again reverting to a competitive logic), Rothberg demonstrates that this is based on a misreading of the archive. His study puts into play a number of lesser-known texts by prominent Holocaust, civil-rights and anticolonial writers, to build up a compelling case for a continuous postwar history of comparative forms of memory. In so doing, Rothberg in turn

disturbs or complicates the demarcation of Holocaust studies, African-American studies and postcolonial studies as distinct fields, when they are all concerned with separate but interrelated legacies of violence.

The first part of *Multidirectional Memory* returns to the earliest textual responses to the Nazi genocide, published at the beginning of the 1950s, and demonstrates that texts of this period were strongly marked by a multidirectional encounter between memories of genocide, colonialism and slavery. Rothberg reads Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) in dialogue with Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) and argues that while both writers open up the possibility for multidirectional thinking, they are also limited by their own very different perspectives: Arendt remains caught within colonial presuppositions, while Césaire’s thinking is constrained by communist ideology. What Rothberg uncovers more broadly in this section, however, is the question of how the ‘Holocaust’ was thought before the term was consolidated as we recognize it today; he challenges the predominant view that a collective Holocaust memory originated in the early 1960s, showing that in the decade before this a fluid conceptual vocabulary was emerging to articulate relations across legacies of violence.

From Arendt and Césaire, Rothberg recuperates a complex and suggestive temporal vocabulary for thinking through relations between histories, which is based on movement forward and backward: ‘reverse shocks’ and ‘boomerang effects’. The second part of *Multidirectional Memory* recovers an equally important spatial vocabulary by considering the ghetto as a site of historical convergence. Bringing together W. E. B. Du Bois’s ‘The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto’ (1952) and André Schwarz-Bart’s *A Woman Named*

*Solitude* (1972), Rothberg draws out the conceptual implications of the ghetto as a space that can hold together intersecting histories of violence. By considering these lesser-known texts, Rothberg also demonstrates that writers such as Du Bois and Schwarz-Bart can be too easily segregated within disciplinary boundaries (African-American and Holocaust studies, respectively), by a selective reading of their *oeuvres* which fails to do justice to the fluidity of their identification. Rothberg constructs the ghetto in this section as a spatial site of dense associations at which various ruinous histories can meet, and this is exemplified in Caryl Phillips' *The Nature of Blood* (1997). Rothberg's reading of Phillips is to my knowledge original, arguing that he contends Schwarz-Bart's more totalizing view of history creates the ghetto as a point of both contact and discontinuity between multiple histories of violence.

In Holocaust and memory studies it has been a truism that the televised Eichmann trial of 1961 had a central influence in consolidating the emergence of what we now know as the Holocaust. If the first half of Rothberg's monograph is dedicated to recovering a multidirectional mode of thinking in the first decade after the war, the second half seeks to reorient Holocaust studies by showing the point of its emergence to also be a key moment of decolonization. Rothberg convincingly argues in the third part of his study that in 1961 Paris formed a site of productive encounter between the memory of genocide and colonial legacies, in particular the question of Algeria. He recuperates from the archive two little-known texts from 1961, Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's film *Chronicle of a Summer* and Charlotte Delbo's *Les Belles lettres*, both of which suggest complex memory dynamics between the Holocaust and the

Algerian War. Torture employed by the French army during the Algerian conflict gives rise in both texts to an intersection of histories based on the logic that France was to the Algerians as the Nazi occupiers had been to France. Rothberg's discussion destabilizes the canonical position of the Eichmann trial in accounts of Holocaust memory, providing an alternative account in which the associations of torture and resistance produce a discursive context through which the Algerian War and Nazi atrocities are inextricably linked. He also crucially repositions the emergence of the Holocaust witness, which is for him not exclusively connected to the survivors who testified at the Eichmann trial, but derives its impetus equally from the intense struggles of decolonization and the ongoing efforts of leftist intellectuals and activists to bring the truth of colonial violence into the public domain.

If the first half of *Multidirectional Memory* concludes by situating the ghetto as a spatial site at which memories of violence converge or coagulate with particular intensity, the second half ends by positioning the brutal state repression of Algerian demonstrators in Paris on 17 October 1961 as a particularly densely associated temporal nexus. Links between 17 October and the Holocaust have predominantly been associated with the trial of Maurice Papon in 1997–8, but Rothberg contends – through reading a newspaper article by Marguerite Duras published in November 1961 and William Gardner Smith's novel *The Stone Face* (1963) – that the convergence was there from the outset. As Rothberg observes, what he finds happening in 1961 is not the erasure of one set of memories (17 October) by another (the Holocaust), but rather 'the production of a new memory of the Holocaust and the establishment of links between the Holocaust and anti-Algerian violence that, in turn, will

later help to produce a new memory of October 17' (229). What is crucially missing from these early parallels between the two events, however, is the history of French collaboration in the Second World War; the resonance with Algeria depended on memories of the French resistance and of the Nazi occupiers as torturers.

Rothberg's final chapter accordingly charts the afterlife of 17 October, which he identifies as 'truly multidirectional' in its convergence not only with the Holocaust but also with the contemporary 'war on terror' (229). He contends that the transmission of the memory of 17 October across generations provides a point of entry not only for more disparate historical encounters but also for questions of complicity. The Papon trial generated an intense interest in the period of Vichy and Nazi occupation. A central focus was the complicity of the French state in the deportation of French Jews, and in particular the expulsion from France of larger numbers of Jews (including children) than the Germans had originally requested. Unsurprisingly, Rothberg's key text for examining the afterlife of 17 October is Michael Haneke's film *Cache* (2005). In a reading which is innovative in its focus on the figure of the child, Rothberg argues that the 'hidden' memory of the film, the forced removal of the child Majid from Georges's childhood family home, recalls the discourse in the Papon trial around the forced expulsion of French Jews, including children. The film's reference to the use of torture in the 'war on terror' also opens up the memory of 17 October to other, more contemporary histories of violence.

Rothberg's study is published in the prestigious 'Cultural Memory in the Present' series, and will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on memory studies and related fields. The concept of multidirectional memory is evidently

resonant for the postwar French context which Rothberg takes as his focus, but a crucial question, as he acknowledges in his epilogue, is how it will address or be challenged by other overlapping legacies of violence. He briefly considers the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and legacies of indigenous genocide. Beyond this, it would provide an interesting starting point for an alternative mode of linking the Holocaust with decolonization, namely through the 1947 Partition of India; and it might usefully frame discussions of transitional justice, which are inherently concerned with negotiating conflicting histories of violence. For me, another central strength of Rothberg's monograph is the questions it raises around canonicity and disciplinary boundaries. If a multidirectional approach can open up new perspectives on writers such as Duras, Delbo, Schwarz-Bart and Du Bois, and rescue from the archive such a rich range of little-known texts, it is to be hoped that *Multidirectional Memory* will inspire further recuperation of 'forgotten' works, and accompanying reassessments of the political entanglements of writers' positions (and positionings).

ANNE WHITEHEAD  
 NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY, UK  
 © Anne Whitehead

.....  
*The Making of a Human Bomb: An Ethnography of Palestinian Resistance.* By Nasser Abufarha. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. Pp. 288. ISBN 9780822344285 \$84.95 (hbk) ISBN 9780822344391 \$23.95 (pbk).  
 .....

In Palestine, 'Death is about living, not dying' (3). For Nasser Abufarha, this is a Palestinian cultural premise dynamically constructed in

response to the ontological conditions Palestinians have been subjected to throughout the last century, as a consequence of their contact with Jewish settlers in Palestine. This premise gained remarkable salience after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the First Intifada (1987–93), and especially after the failure of the Oslo peace process and the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000–4). The focus of the book is the ‘human bomb’ phenomenon in Palestine from the Palestinian point of view, and its main conclusion is that Palestinians are motivated to engage in such acts of violence as a form of overcoming the weight of their oppressive conditions.

According to Abufarha there are nine basic ways to categorize the literature on suicide bombings: global context; political motivations; psychological and socioeconomic motivations; economic motivations; philosophical perspectives; state strategies; Palestinian intellectuals; origins and political goals of suicide bombings; and anthropological and sociological contributions. He claims that specialists in these fields (with the exception of anthropologists, I presume) have not factored culture into their analyses, and that his own cultural analysis takes all of these themes into consideration. Yet, substantive references to other anthropologists working with Palestinians are minimal throughout the book, with some rare and incidental inclusions.

That said, between his own experience growing up in Jenin and the scope and competence of his field research methods, his ‘historical ethnography of martyrdom in Palestine’ (22), focused on the ‘perpetrators and the ways in which the performance of violence is constructed, motivated, and mediated’ (4), is among the most important contributions to the understanding of violence in Palestine.

Key to Abufarha’s theoretical frame is Neil Whitehead’s conceptualization of history ver-

sus historicities and violence as ‘cultural performance’. Abufarha seeks to add to this framework ‘an explanation of how the performance is integrated into material political processes’ (219). Also, Whitehead’s historical model influenced Abufarha’s to ‘examine the generative processes that are constantly forming and transforming current cultural ideas, formations and representations’ (231). For him, the discourse of martyrdom in Palestine ‘generates a poetics rich in sensory meanings and political goals that provide a system of motivation’ (138). This poetics can be defined as ‘the process of constructing meaning over time’ (71), causing cultural representations of the experience of other subjects to merge with personal experiences ‘as the individual becomes socially integrated’ to the ‘cultural dynamic where this cultural discourse takes place’ (233). In this way, a poetics of resistance is itself the system producing the motivation for martyrdom.

Yet, although he presents his model as a ‘multi-tiered ethnography examining the acts of the human bomb and ideas about the act in different cultural spheres and publics within the Palestinian society’ (16), in fact his researched universe seems to be comprised only by those who believe the martyrdom operations are poetic expressions of their own personal identities as potential martyrs and as an efficacious strategy. Even if most Jenin inhabitants do believe this, his model makes the ‘poetics of martyrdom’ appear to be an inescapable frame through which all Palestinians understand violence in the Occupied Territories. Thus he presents the construction of a specific cultural discourse as an ineluctable ontology.

In spite of a tendency to over-generalization, the book makes an exceptional contribution to our understanding of martyrdom operations. The author’s focus on the cultural

discourse of martyrdom allows the reader to understand the self-sacrificial ‘system of motivations’ for such acts; an understanding missing in English terms such as ‘human bomb’ or ‘suicide bombings’.

As Abufarha shows, the *fidai* – the one who sacrifices himself – became the icon of the Palestinian resistance, after the Battle of al-Karamah in 1969 when Palestinians went to battle with the intent to fight until death. The Palestinian ‘*amaliyyat fida’iyyeh* (self-sacrifice operations) became the main form of resistance, and the *fidai’yn* (plural of *fidai*) were celebrated as *shuhada* (martyrs; singular, *shahid*). Self-sacrifice underwent another major meaning transformation in 1994 when Hamas, in protest against the Oslo peace process, launched the first ‘*amalyyah istishhadyyah* (martyrdom operation). In 1995 Islamic Jihad also engaged in popularly supported martyrdom operations, and throughout the Al-Aqsa Intifada these were intensified. Finally, in 2002, martyrdom operations were also adopted by secularist resistance groups.

For Abufarha, the *fidai* notion of sacrifice is more secular, while *istishhad* (martyrdom) is more ‘Islamic’. The person who dies carrying out the duty of jihad is a *shahid* and his or her reward is paradise. But for Palestinians, *shahid* is also anyone who dies fighting in defence of Palestine, like the *fidai’yn*, as well as non-combatant victims of the conflict – including innocent schoolchildren. As opposed to *shahid*, Hamas coined the term *istishhadi* to be used for those who carry out ‘martyrdom operations’. Before Hamas’ invention, the term *istishhadi* was not found in the Arabic dictionary, nor was it an Islamic concept. While *shahid* implies victimization, *istishhadi* emphasizes active heroism. It ‘contains more life’. Hence, the slogan that death is about living.

Given the disappointment with the Palestinian Authority’s political leadership, today *istishhad* is the most common term used for ‘acts of sacrifice’ by ‘Islamic, secular, and Marxist groups alike’ (8). But Abufarha does not show the nuances of how the concept is understood by Christian or secular subjects engaging in the martyrdom operations; this is another consequence of his totalizing view of martyrdom as an ineluctable ontology in Palestine.

LEONARDO A. SCHIOCCHET  
 BOSTON UNIVERSITY, USA  
 © Leonardo A. Schiocchet

.....  
*Ethnicity, Inc.* By John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. Pp. 234. ISBN 9780226114729 \$19.00 (pbk).

.....

With the World Cup soccer games approaching, much of the world has focused attention on South Africa. Its history of conflict and migration as well as its constantly changing sociopolitical organization have been the subject of many a documentary and news broadcast, making ethnically particular terms like ‘Zulu’ and ‘Khoisan’ part of the common language of the viewing public. The terms themselves are not entirely free of baggage, however. They convey a certain idea of people and places that form part of a complex process of naming and identification, denial and affirmation. How this process works – its purpose, goals and implications – are the subject of John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff’s *Ethnicity, Inc.*, which, as the name suggests, is a study in the management of ethnicity.

The book consists of seven chapters, the first of which provides examples of the basic theme: ethnicity or ethnic identity has become a money-making enterprise in which authenticity and belonging are the goods bought and sold. One discovers in chapter four that as a member of an established ethnic group, one can invest in the ideas and products of group identity. One chooses a product, like a rug, and markets under the group name, Hopi (61). In other cases, like that of the Cahuilla Mission Indians and its only known living member in the early 1990s, Maryann Martin, one can actually reestablish a once-lost 'tribe' and earn income on the basis of ethnic descent; her bloodline alone gave her access to land and money in the expensive state of California (69–70). The idea of ethnicity as a psycho-social construct based on an individual's similarity to other members of a given community is expanded to the group as a whole, where it is asserted and reified as part of a process of commodification of group ideas and production. In other words, the product of an individual Hopi, a rug, can sell to an outsider, a non-Hopi, as an example of authentic Hopi production, thereby reinforcing the Hopi sense of who they are and what they produce. The circularity of the system becomes much clearer in chapter five, where one sees how the marketing of intellectual property, the medical uses of a cactus known to the San, can help ease (or further complicate) the existence of a more disparate ethnic group and how the incorporation of the Bafokeng as Bafokeng, Inc. allowed its members to market its own cultural products as well as invest internationally. As the authors tell us, the incorporation of group identity serves as a way of assuring 'a sense of collective cultural being, to suture the gap between the communal and the corporate, and

to find ways of giving itself "thicker" more tangible . . . content' (114).

The implications are enormous, as one sees in chapter six when the authors apply the basic theme – the marketing of group identity – to the national and religious, where it has always played an essential role in maintaining group existence. The process of 'nation-branding' – that is, using the country name with a logo on goods produced in the country – is just another form of marketing group identity, in this case for a global market. South African diamonds known for their quality become worthy of identification and specification as such. For the religious, the authors give the interesting example of a 1970s lawsuit in which the Pakistani *ulema* claimed that the Ahmadis, a group deemed heretical, did not have the right to use what they called the 'signs of Islam'. They could not use the word *masjid* for their houses of prayer and could not perform other rites of the religion. These, the *ulema* asserted, 'belonged solely to "proper" Muslims', which the Ahmadis, they claimed, were not (136). While the *ulema* won the first suit, they did not and could not win the second, which the Ahmadis presented to the Lahore High Court. The case is important as, at least on the surface, it seems a twentieth-century Muslim example of the heresy trials of medieval Europe, which, because of the historical period, was not tenable. The assertion of certain practices as particular to proper Muslims did not work (136). Not until the 1990s, when a similar case was presented to the Pakistani Supreme Court, a national body, did most of the justices agree. Again, however, timing and political expediency determined how the justices thought about the idea.

*Ethnicity, Inc.* is an interesting study of what at first seems an obvious proposition: in order to survive in a modern market economy, small groups, ethnic or otherwise, with few

other resources, choose to market themselves and their ideas. How they do so, however, depends on the nature and size of the group. As mentioned above, the somewhat disparate San populations could market intellectual property in an attempt to save their group and generate income for their often poorer communities, whereas the strength of the established Bafokeng name made it possible for them to market themselves and invest globally – both small groups within a nation-state that also needs to market itself. Assuring group existence as people migrate and leave the group is, however, by no means obvious. The modern world system thrives on a cash economy and competition. One needs a good product. Those with little else but the group name face challenges that those in traditional industry and manufacturing do not. Their product, ethnic identity, is difficult to understand and often exists as a function of those who claim it. A bad representative can ruin everything. John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff have done a great service in reminding us not to overlook the obvious.

MADIA THOMSON  
 AL-AKHAWAYN UNIVERSITY, MOROCCO  
 © Madia Thomson

.....

*On the Sacred in African Literature: Old Gods and New Worlds.* By Mark Mathuray. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Pp. 216. ISBN 9780230577558 \$75.00 (hbk).

.....

In the last decade, attention to ‘the sacred’ has come increasingly to the fore in postcolonial studies, making it possible to speak of a ‘paradigm shift’. Hitherto approached indirectly through categories such as ‘myth’, ‘ritual’, ‘traditional religion’ or even ‘traditional

culture’, or studies of the history of the missions or of syncretic religions, the sacred is now confronted directly as concept, term and theoretical and critical field. In their introduction to ‘The Sacred’, the last part of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin’s revised and expanded edition of *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (2006), the editors recall how ‘Eurocentric stress on the secular has been part of the exported baggage of colonization, so that the European-educated elites of these societies . . . , even those strongest in their anti-colonialism, took for granted the need to ‘reform’ their cultures by providing rational readings of their oldest cultural modes.’ As Duncan Brown suggests in a special issue of the South African journal *Current Writing* devoted to ‘Religion and Spirituality in a Postcolonial Context’ (2008), the ‘turn to the spiritual’ is now redressing the imbalance between the ‘unmediated secularism’ of most postcolonial theoretical engagements with religious or spiritual topics and the ‘lived realities of identification and belief’ of the inhabitants of the postcolony. Encouraged also by postcolonial readings of authors such as Giorgio Agamben, a richer and far more nuanced vision is already in place. ‘Post-colonialism and the Post-secular: Sacred and Secular Transactions’, the title of Griffiths’ plenary lecture at a recent postcolonial studies conference in Bergamo, may be taken as a sign of the times.

The sacred has already figured in other postcolonial studies with sections devoted to African culture, as for example the Africa section of Scott and Simpson-Housley’s *Mapping the Sacred: Religion, Geography and Postcolonial Literature* (2001). Mathuray’s volume is however the first book devoted solely to representations of the sacred in African literature. Its intention is to extend the scope of previous regionally based studies



of myth and ritual (such as Ato Quayson's *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing*, 1997, or Richard K. Priebe's *Myth, Realism and the West African Writer*, 1988) by addressing a wider geographical and literary setting, and at the same time to diversify and complicate the 'animistic' theoretical underpinning of Caroline Rooney's continent-wide analysis, *African Literature, Animism and Politics* (2000).

Although Mathuray is careful not to present *On the Sacred* as another continent-wide study, his project is ambitiously general in scope, since he seeks 'to provide a framework for the analysis of the sacred in Anglophone African cultural production' (14). About two thirds of his analysis focus on single works by Nigerian authors, however, and while his discussion of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's first novel, *The River Between*, fits in easily with his studies of works by Achebe, Soyinka and Okri, the final chapter on J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* seems somewhat at odds with the rest of the volume: it is hardly sufficient to assert that 'Achebe and Soyinka have common literary and thematic interests with the white South African writer' (168) without providing a far more detailed and problematic discussion. At the same time, the Coetzee chapter in no way represents the complexity and variety of South African engagements with the sacred and that find expression in the literatures of the country. To provide the framework Mathuray proposes, he should surely have addressed a greater number and variety of authors, texts, countries and manifestations of 'the sacred'. This, however, would have impoverished the in-depth analysis of single texts, in which the author is particularly competent.

*On the Sacred* is divided into two parts: 'Directions' ('Realizing the Sacred: Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*'); 'Dramatizing the

Sacred: Wole Soyinka's "The Fourth Stage" and *Kongi's Harvest*'; 'Politicizing the Sacred: Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*'; and 'Indirections' ('Sacred Realism: Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*'; 'The Stalled Sublime: J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*'). Although its exploration of the sacred is intended to operate simultaneously on two levels, focusing both on 'the local and the specific content and contexts of the works discussed' and on 'the theoretical and philosophical elaborations of the idea of the sacred', the book's two-part division signals a distinction. While 'Directions' foregrounds 'the more materially-minded aspects' [*sic*] (14), 'Indirections' privileges the theoretical (also broached in the introduction and conclusion).

The author's readings of individual works are often extremely stimulating, despite the decision to concentrate on texts that have been widely studied in the past, especially where – as announced in his introduction – he interrogates 'the tension between power and authority' central to the texts examined 'by refracting that tension through the prism of the sacred' (14). Some of the readings suffer, however, from the limited number of works that are explored. Although Mathuray's discussion of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's dialogue with 'old gods and new worlds' (but also new gods and old worlds) in *The River Between* is excellent, it would have been interesting to view Ngugi's engagement with 'sacred' issues, images and figures – particularly Gikuyu, Judaeo-Christian and Mau Mau prophet figures – also in some of his later works (as well as early works such as *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and several of his essays).

Moreover, as the volume is not intended as a collection of separate essays, I also felt the need for more linkage between the different chapters. The parallels and differences

between Soyinka’s presentation of the Dictator-charismatic saviour-prophet figure in *Kongi’s Harvest* and Ngugi’s characterization of the leader-figure in *The River Between* could have been made explicit. This would probably have led to a consideration not only of gods, kings and rituals in traditional culture and society – usefully delineated with the help of studies published in *Africa’s Ogun: Old Word and New*, edited by Sandra T. Barnes and Paula Girshick Ben-Amos (1989) – but of their redeployment by modern West African leaders, applying to the Soyinka chapter the same approach that is so successfully adopted in relation to Ngugi. For the same reason, a clearer indication in the introduction of the issues at stake – both theoretical and historical – would have added to the value of the book, particularly as regards the implications of some of its terminology. After acknowledging that ‘Terms such as myth, ritual, magic, religion and the traditional have had long histories in various disciplines and their meanings are still contested today’, Mathuray adds that as he lacks ‘the space to get into the arguments about each of these terms ... I choose those definitions, with some expediency, that fit well both with the object of the study and my approach’. Some, however, are questionable, as in the case of his rather tautological definition of tradition: ‘I use “the traditional”, in a traditional sense, to designate the pre-colonial although not always necessarily the pre-modern’ (16–17). Finally, a flaw that is probably to be attributed to over-hasty editing is the presence of some irritating typos and clumsy writing, and of occasional discrepancies between textual references and bibliographical entries.

Despite these caveats, Mathuray’s volume represents a welcome contribution to a new and challenging area of postcolonial and

cultural studies; it will undoubtedly be a point of reference for other scholars.

JANE WILKINSON

UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES ‘L’ORIENTALE’, ITALY

© Jane Wilkinson

.....

*Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature*. By Chris Bongie. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009. Pp. 416. ISBN 9781846311420 £25 (pbk).

.....

Chris Bongie poses one fundamental question in *Friends and Enemies* – that of ‘where literature might stand in relation to a repoliticized postcolonial studies’ (111). It is a question to which he returns over and over again, from what seems like every possible perspective; it is the point of departure from which he proposes an incredible breadth of both materialist and aesthetic investigations.

In an often self-referential study that folds in, on and over itself spirally at every pass, Bongie evokes issues raised subterraneously in his masterful *Islands and Exiles*, bringing them to the surface and fleshing them out fully here. The charged signifiers of this latest title provide the frame within which he challenges the viability of the inclusion-oriented ethics of postcolonial (and) franco-phone (and) cultural studies in the face of the necessarily exclusive and excluding exigencies of revolutionary politics. Bongie asks, in other words, how and if it is possible, or indeed ethical, for postcolonial writers and theorists to value relativism and diversity in contexts that demand political binarism – that call for choosing between friends and enemies (between us and them!) and then acting on those choices. He argues that for the post-colonial writer, theorist or otherwise ‘resisting

liberal' (135) to ignore or unthinkingly distance him or herself from the political in the mistaken belief that the postcolonial is inherently politicized, is both insufficient and irresponsible.

There is more than a hint of confrontation in these enquiries and assertions. That each chapter of *Friends and Enemies* is prefaced by what Bongie labels an 'IncurSION' is telling. So many aggressive entrances into the issues at hand, these incursions lay out the critical – that is, fault-finding and disapproving – parameters of his subsequent reflections. It is Bongie's unabashed intention to address the 'foundational bias of postcolonial studies' (281), the marginalizing and elitist tendencies of its theorists, and its too-easy recuperation by dominant discourses. The result is a veritable who's-who of the discipline that challenges the work of many of the most prominent theorists in the field(s) of francophone (and) postcolonial studies. Giving the impression of having read almost everything that has ever been written by almost everyone (his non-engagement with the 2007 'Pour une littérature-monde en français' manifesto is one of the few notable omissions), Bongie treats seminal theorists at once roughly and with great care. That is, his practice of – his gift for – scrupulously close reading reveals both the significant contributions of these scholars and the numerous occasions where they tellingly contradict themselves at different stages of their careers or in different contexts. His reflections verge at times on the quarrelsome – indeed, it is not terribly difficult to show how the writings of just about any liberal intellectual can come off as overblown or naively abstract. That said, Bongie's points are generally very well taken, inasmuch as they identify critical – that is, analytical and theoretical – lacunae that reveal a great deal about the limit(ation)s of theory in a globaliz-

ing world where practical intervention is increasingly in order. Ultimately, what Bongie laments in *Friends and Enemies* are broad disciplinary inadequacies – 'the tragic failure of cultural studies' (259), the 'failed relation' of francophone (and) postcolonial studies 'to the disruptive imperatives of a truly egalitarian politics' (75), and the failure of liberal postcolonial theorists (like Gayatri Spivak, Paul Gilroy, David Scott or Françoise Lionnet) whom he admires 'to produce any fully satisfying response to the sceptical question[s]' (162) posed by radical thinkers (like Peter Hallward, Slavoj Žižek, or Robert Young) whom he admires perhaps a bit more: questions such as whether the postcolonial might eventually find its way back to the political commitment of its anticolonial past.

Central to such interrogations is what Bongie refers to as the 'compromising position of the scribe'; 'the necessarily bad, and always muddled, faith' (365) of postcolonial writers who, while claiming independence from the mundaneness of the political, are inevitably (in)directly complicit with institutional discourses of power. Putting texts from the early nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries into constructive dialogue with one another, Bongie investigates the 'uncanny resemblance' (222) of such 'great writers' as René Depestre, Derek Walcott, Maryse Condé, and Edouard Glissant to 'mere scribes' (199) – from Haitian King Henry Christophe's personal secretary Baron de Vastey to Martinican abolitionist Cyrille Bissette to contemporary Guadeloupean novelist Tony Delsham. Positing the existence of 'scribal rituals' that co-opt all writers, Bongie argues convincingly for the importance of attending to 'other voices' (199). Enriching and enriched by the work of Graham Huggan, Richard Watts and James English, among others whose work addresses the commodification of the postcolonial, Bon-

gie looks at the market-generated productions of francophone writers – the branding and rarefying of certain authors to the exclusion of those who belong more perceptibly to ‘the sullied world of the politician and the publicist’ (266). Bongie goes so far as to question whether the elitist marginalization of these latter voices by literary scholars, himself included, might not in fact be to do real political harm – to participate in ‘an obnoxiously hierarchical mode of thinking that helps prevent social justice from flowering on the face of the earth’ (312).

Such provocative enquiries undergird every analysis in *Friends and Enemies* and lead Bongie through a number of very thoroughly articulated, if largely unresolved, critical debates. Each of the book’s three sections presents current arguments and counter-arguments among more and less public intellectuals as the theoretical terrain onto which Bongie introduces his own, ‘third way’ perspective – an entirely other interpretative path that engages with but offers no compromise between entrenched oppositional paradigms. The concluding chapter on Glissant’s largely decried post-political turn toward an aesthetics-based affirmation of non-conflictual Relation and dramatic disengagement from revolutionary politics is a particularly striking example of Bongie’s methodological approach. Rather than condemn, as many have done, Glissant’s recent investment in a ‘utopian poetics’ (338), or dismiss the later

Glissant as less relevant to the present and future of postcolonial politics, Bongie suggests that both critics and apologists confront the uncomfortable truth that Glissant’s turn implies: that Foucault and Fanon are simply not compatible; that the very notion of a ‘cultural politics’ is perhaps an oxymoron; and that such truths might in fact be value-neutral.

In the end, Bongie remains ‘of two minds’ (365) with respect to Glissant in particular and to the possibility of an intersection between poetics and politics in general. He admits to having taken somewhat of a ‘middling approach’ (365) to the issues he presents, which is ironic given the undeniably laudable but on occasion rather unforgiving standards to which he holds many of the scholars whose writings he so productively scrutinizes. But in his conclusion(s), as throughout the impressive collection of overlapping critical explorations that makes up *Friends and Enemies*, Bongie leaves room for continued discussion. His queries are not rhetorical. He calls upon theorists to reflect seriously on the questions he poses, and makes clear that he is ever-ready to challenge all responses. *Friends and Enemies* is Bongie’s invitation to postcolonial (and) francophone scholars to think harder, and maybe even to consider taking sides.

KAIAMA L. GLOVER  
 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, USA  
 © Kaiama L. Glover