

reviews

BOOKS

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The New Asian City: Three-Dimensional Fictions of Space and Urban Form. By Jini Kim Watson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. Pp. 311. ISBN 9780816675739. \$25 (pbk).
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Given the current preoccupation of western media with the economic giants China and India, this monograph from Jini Kim Watson is an important reminder of the Asian Tiger economies that used to dominate headlines but have, of late, fallen somewhat from view. Her comparative study of Seoul, Singapore and Taipei borrows the label of 'New Asian Cities' from the architectural critic Jeffrey Kipnis in order to highlight the similar historical trajectories of these three regions as they transitioned from colonial outposts to post-

colonial engines of Asian growth and development. She explores the significance of the colonial heritage in all three sites, their strategic importance during the Cold War and the subsequent economic development that rapidly reshaped the landscape, transforming these capitals into towering, urban metropolises. In doing so, she reminds us of the key role that these three urban centres continue to play within Asia as economic powerhouses and transnational sites for the expression of a twenty-first-century modernity.

Watson's book is very much in line with the current interest in Asia, the posited Asian century to come and the alternative, transnational forms of modernity that might be suggested by Asian urban environments in particular. Her work follows in the footsteps of Jane M. Jacobs' exploration of the post-

colonial city in *Edge of Empire* (1996) and Jennifer Robinson's more pointed attempts to develop postcolonial urban theory in *Ordinary Cities* (2006). Taken along with Peter G. Rowe's *East Asia Modern* (2005) and more recent books such as Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong's edited collection *Worlding Cities* (2011) or David Harvey's *Rebel Cities* (2012), *The New Asian City* suggests a more general trend towards reevaluating the ways in which modernity has traditionally been theorized with sole reference to western urban environments.

One of the shortcomings that Watson sees within current postcolonial theory is its preoccupation with an earlier historical moment of European colonialism, and consequently a disinterest in the post-independence Third World. She tries to rectify this by presenting us with a lateral comparison between three Asian regions, acknowledging their periods of European colonization but also emphasizing the perhaps even greater impact of non-European forms of colonization, such as that which resulted from the Chinese and Japanese colonial endeavours in Taiwan and Seoul. In doing so, Watson highlights the Eurocentrism that lingers within postcolonial scholarship and makes a strong case for the need to reevaluate the postcolonial theoretical field in relation to the new global political configuration emerging in the twenty-first century.

To this end, Watson admirably succeeds in introducing a range of key Singaporean, Korean and Taiwanese texts that will be new to the western reader. It becomes evident within these texts that the spatial transformation of these New Asian Cities, driven by high-speed economic development, not only created a crisis within traditional Asian society, similar to that experience of modernity in the West, but also necessitated an expeditious reimagining of national goals and character,

plus a reflection on the role of both women and the individual in the new economy. Watson demonstrates breadth and versatility in her analysis, covering not only traditional literary forms such as novels, short stories and poems, but also expanding to take into account the memoir of Lee Kuan Yew, former prime minister of Singapore, and films which played an important role in fostering national culture within these Asian cities in the 1960s–1980s.

Perhaps most significantly, Watson highlights the way in which nationalism takes a different expression through Asia's modern built environment than its former incarnation in Europe's path to modernity. Europe's transition into modernity was signalled and reinforced by the changes that could be seen in the urban environment. Walter Benjamin observed that new building materials (iron in particular) emerged in nineteenth-century Paris, accompanied by the new figure of modernity, the *flâneur*. Watson argues that in the New Asian Cities the very shift to the modern built environment has been used to justify the national project of development. She links the subsequent changes in the urban landscape to the evolution of literary form in these three locations, and shows how Korean, Taiwanese and Singaporean texts deviate from European examples in their depiction of the modern alienation of the individual. For instance, the classic European *bildungsroman* usually depicts the problems and setbacks encountered during the moral growth and education of a young individual, but makes sure to resolve these conflicts by the end of the novel, bringing the individual's development in line with the larger frameworks and expectations of culture, society and nation. However, as Watson illustrates with examples of Asian literature from the 1970s that seemingly follow the *bildungsroman* model, the individual at the end of

these novels remains at odds with the exploitative nature of the nation, finding their personal development stalled or even thwarted by the aims of the nation-state.

The main criticism to be made of this book would be of Watson's decision to limit her analysis to the three cities of Seoul, Singapore and Taipei. She acknowledges that Hong Kong is the missing New Asian City in her study and justifies its exclusion by arguing that 'although the history of Hong Kong broadly shares the same economic path as the others, it is distinct thanks to the 1997 handover from British crown colony to mainland special administrative region' (5). Hong Kong's failure to gain independence, merely transitioning from being a British to a Chinese colony, seems to place it beyond the scope of her study. But given Hong Kong's continued importance as a major financial centre within Asia, its close economic interrelationship with the other three cities (Taipei in particular), the cultural dominance it held over the entire region through its flourishing film industry in the 1960s–1990s, and its unique status as the only New Asian City to continue its colonial status as a semi-autonomous region, its exclusion from this study weakens Watson's broader claims for the New Asian City. As she traces the progression of her three cities from periods of colonial rule that artificially divided the city, to postwar urban renewal linked with national rejuvenation, and finally to the breakneck speed of economic and urban development leading to the ascension of these three cities as glittering symbols of twenty-first-century modernity, the absence of Hong Kong as a point of comparison is keenly felt. One can't help but wonder whether the addition of a city that did not conform so neatly to the progression of colony to autonomous Asian urban centre might have helped reinforce Watson's conclusion that 'the New Asian City is not so new

after all' (256). However, despite this omission, Watson's book remains a significant contribution that places the fields of postcolonialism, urban studies and Asian studies in conversation with one another. With her historical account of the twentieth-century colonial and post-independence incarnations of these New Asian Cities, Watson outlines the convergence of capitalism and colonialism as it manifests in the twenty-first-century built environment.

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People Without History: India's Muslim Ghettos. By Jeremy Seabrook and Imran Ahmed Siddiqui. London: Pluto Press, 2011. Pp. 257. ISBN 9780745331133. \$29 (pbk).

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Jeremy Seabrook and Imran Ahmed Siddiqui's ethnographic study, *People without History*, explores the underside of 'Shining

India' through a spatial narrative of Calcutta's (the new name is Kolkata) poor Muslims who are predominantly Urdu-speaking. They choose Calcutta as the locus of 'the fabric of daily life in poor Muslim communities' (2) for countering the claim of the erstwhile leftist government that it was able to catapult the Muslim population to a higher standard of living compared to the insecurity felt by the Muslims in Gujarat after the state-sponsored pogrom in 2002. This study is, as the authors claim, a 'small corrective' (3) that "tells how things are with poor Muslims; their sufferings, but also their ambitions, their desire for stability and sufficiency, and their often thwarted faith in education and improvement' (8). The depiction of everyday micro-practices serves to resist the western myth that poverty contributes to religious fanaticism and terrorism among Muslims. As such, this study raises and answers the following questions: How have the poor Muslims in Calcutta fared under the benign neglect of the Marxist government that ruled the state for more than three decades? Does poverty among Muslims naturally lead to fanaticism and terrorism as claimed by some western experts? What is the role of religion in the lives of the poor and how do they engage with the secular world?

The book is organized around four Calcutta localities – Topsia, Beniapukur, Tiljala Road and Tangra. A chapter is devoted to each of these areas, followed by four short chapters that narrate stories of striking injustice meted out to individuals by the state. These localities are urban spaces in the very heart of a city where 'the rejected of rural life, the unwanted of the city' (46) live in squalor and deprivation, in a perpetual state of flux. As these spaces are undefined in terms of their specific legal status, the state acts as a

domineering landlord who allows politicians, promoters and mafia to regulate these spaces, build illegal structures, and rent them to the poor as well as raze them for making way to new structures. The impermanence of space becomes a metaphor for ephemerality of lives. As globalization continues to de-skill Muslims who have been traditionally employed in 'woodcarving, pottery, silk-weaving, embroidery and *chikan*-work, hand-made carpets, brass and metal work, tanning, leather and lock-making' (40), the people inhabiting these spaces take to the drudgery of recycling waste, manufacturing and mending shoes, butchering cattle, tanning leather, peddling drugs, pulling rickshaws, working as domestic help, and engaging in prostitution.

Despite poverty and the supposed state apathy in promoting education in the vernacular medium among the Urdu-speaking Muslim population, the study also foregrounds the effort of non-governmental organizations in setting up schools and libraries. Muslims youth, girls in particular, seek to transform their everyday lives through education and engagement with the secular world: 'The girls in the Urdu school are determined to rise above prejudice and ignorance ... to take their rightful place in the world' (195). However, engagement with the secular world does not imply abandonment of faith. Rather, Seabrook and Siddiqui's study illustrates that faith is the most important pivot that makes the dream of transformation feasible. Among the poor Muslims in Calcutta, faith thwarts the seductions of extremism and violence.

It might appear that the book merely provides a superficial account of the poverty and neglect of a crucial component of Calcutta's population. One wonders if the authors would have executed their task more effectively had they dwelt at greater length on

individual stories of deprivation. Yet the authors seem to be aware of the paradox of conducting ethnography among the urban poor in Calcutta, whose biographies are as flimsy as the spaces they inhabit: ‘Just as the slum is believed to have no history, so the poor have no biography. A few sparse details sketch out their existence, usually illustrative of their “plight”’ (119). In addition, the study would have been more engaging had the authors chosen to ground their narrative within the spatial history of the city. There exists a genuine continuity in the spatial structure of the city since colonial times in the eighteenth century. The poor who once serviced the high-income colonial town are now engaged in producing much of the city’s wealth without benefitting from this.

Seabrook and Siddiqui undertake the difficult task of retrieving the social biographies of nameless individuals – often invoked as a ‘semi-abstract entity’ by policymakers, politicians, academics and journalists – in the faceless spaces in one of India’s foremost metropolises. The significance of the book lies, however, in its ability to draw our attention to the spatial dimension of communalism. For far too long, communalism in India has been studied either as a consequence of colonial intervention and crystallization of communal identities or as a result of essential incompatibility between different communities, thereby neglecting how these identities are spatially deployed. Spatial segregation is an important strategy for marginalization of the vulnerable communities. Lately, there has been a renewed interest in the communalization of urban space following the Gujarat riots of 2002. Jeremy Seabrook and Imran Ahmed Siddiqui’s ethnographic study, though without any scholarly pretension, contributes

meaningfully to this emerging field of research.

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Darkening Mirrors: Imperial Representation in Depression-Era African American Performance. By Stephanie Leigh Batiste. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Pp. 326. ISBN 9780822349235. \$25.95 (pbk).

In *Darkening Mirrors*, performing artist and scholar Stephanie Leigh Batiste explores the ways in which black performing artists of the 1930s aesthetically and politically identified and disidentified with American imperial and colonial projects at home and abroad. Through stage and screen, Batiste locates specific and nuanced examples of the heterogeneity of black identity and the politically ambivalent nature of black cultural performance during the Depression era. In all the productions Batiste investigates, which include films, concert ballets, operettas and more, she highlights the tension between constraint and optimism and between possibility and impossibility. In other words, *Darkening Mirrors* is about the suturing of black ‘exoticism/primitivism’ and black modernism and more generally the knotty relationship between art, liberation and hegemonic consent.

Batiste’s text is comprised of a prologue, introduction, six thickly detailed chapters, and an epilogue. Throughout the book she draws on a range of quotidian afro-diasporic, postcolonial and performative approaches

and analyses in an attempt to offer a rich and grounded understanding of a variety of black performances, starting with a promotional film about Idlewild, Michigan and ending with Twentieth Century Fox's film *Stormy Weather*. For Batiste, black performance is a source of cultural power: 'Part of the experience of cultural power for these historical and stage players lies in the claim that race itself is performative, taking on race as a structure of power, and thereby assuming a hand in producing race and blackness' (7).

On the one hand, *Darkening Mirrors* explores the nexus in which imperial interpellation and imperial citation are negotiated by black performers. For example, performing what she calls 'imperial exoticism' in productions such as *Haiti* and *The 'Swing' Mikado*, Batiste argues that embodying 'the (racial) other' is a way in which black performers can make their bodies matter to the national body politic. That is, in order to be included, they – meaning black performers – must erase other bodies. Put slightly differently, the American colonial and imperial project's interpellation of black performers and the black performer's wilful citation of the imperial interpellation is clear evidence for Batiste that black capitulation to the American colonial project was not so much an inadvertent interpellation, but a strategic manoeuvre and desire to be included. Alternatively, she envisions the use of exoticism as a way in which to produce a degree of mutual intelligibility and solidarity. For her, 'exoticism proffers a kind of homogeneity' (135) which begets black globality or what she calls the 'transnational ethos of black freedom' (110).

On the other hand, Batiste shows how black performers envisioned black modernism as another way for black people to transcend the colour line, to confront the idea of being a 'problem' and illustrate how 'African

Americans are a national treasure and resource rather than a national problem' (254). Black modernism, much like 'imperial exoticism', becomes not countercultural during this period, but a vehicle for racial inclusion and national belonging.

What is underscored throughout the book is that black identity is far from simple and deterministic. Rather, black identity is in perpetual performance, constantly being reconfigured in accordance with certain needs and desires. Black performers, often in the same production or performance, employed both imperial and modernist tropes in order to circumvent, while simultaneously attending to, the constraints of being black in the United States. Batiste's argument is that despite the hegemonic thrust of and capitulation to the American imperial project and its policing apparatuses such as the Federal Theater Project, black resistance still took place via the techniques of appropriation and hybridization. For Batiste, black agency is somewhat ironically located in Depression-era performances of exoticism, primitivism and modernism.

The implied goal of the book is to explore the long genealogical reality of black hybridity and cosmopolitan humanism and to add to the growing corpus of literature on the heterogeneity of black identity through time and space of which Batiste succeeds. However, the book fails to go beyond identity in order to map the relations of power that existed in the past and those that exist today. The problem with a great deal of performance studies scholarship is that it fails to take stock of what is constitutive of *all* black performance. Black cultural performance has difficulty, after the promise of historical significance, of agency because it is always prefigured by the concept of blackness. The overarching failure of the book is that it is too



interested in agency at the expense of ontology, that is, the ways in which ontological limitations created by the structures of anti-blackness already delimit agency. In other words, the book is not always attentive to the processes of anti-blackness that marks every scale of black performance whether on stage, screen and/or everyday life.

Regardless of its shortcomings, what makes *Darkening Mirrors* an important contribution to postcolonial studies, performance studies and area studies is that it strengthens our empirical understanding of black performance past and present so as to better theorize both temporalities. Batiste implicitly expands our understanding of the governmentalities that structure modernist artistic discourse in the twentieth century. In the end, *Darkening Mirrors* skilfully brings together the aesthetic and national to deepen our understanding of these operations.

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The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas. By Sarah E. Johnson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. Pp. 289. ISBN 9780520271128. \$49.95 (pbk).



The title of this book, *The Fear of French Negroes*, is an oft-mentioned expression in contemporary accounts of the Haitian Revolution; the phrase draws attention both to the fears felt by blacks themselves and the implied anxiety of their oppressors (xx). With an emphasis on what the author has

termed ‘transcolonial exchange’, the book uses various case studies to examine ‘the migration of people, ideas, and practices across colonial boundaries from the 1790s to the 1840s’ (xx). On one hand, Johnson stresses the importance of seeing the ‘French Negroes’ of revolutionary Haiti as subjects and agents of their own liberation. On the other hand, she argues that the transcolonial collaborations and relations between hemispheric blacks to contest the racialized violence endemic to European imperialism and creole nation-building projects were disparate and ‘not intrinsically emancipatory or progressive’ (5).

Chapter 1 analyses the proslavery dimensions of transcolonial encounters. It provides the context to understand the master–slave dividing binary, a vital phenomenon that explains conflicting inter-Americanist visions. From this vantage point, the author explores the colonial experience between inter-island blacks by linking seminal events in colonial Cuba, Jamaica and territorial Florida with revolutionary events in Saint-Domingue. Johnson observes that transcolonial and inter-American relations and alliances were used decisively for vicious and repressive objectives. In the later part of the chapter, the author demonstrates how colonial powers (uniting across frontiers) – French, British, Spanish and North American slave-holding societies – collaborated and used warfare techniques such as canine torture (i.e. ‘bred dogs’ trained by *chasseurs*) in the circum-Caribbean to terrorize African slaves, feed upon black flesh and subdue non-white enemies.

Chapter two stresses the centrality of the Haitian presence in nineteenth-century Dominican life by focusing on visual depictions of the Haitian experience. Johnson states that the representations of revolutionary Haiti

were simultaneously salutatory, contradictory, ideological, and even ambiguous. Antislavery advocates glorified the Haitian Revolution by visually portraying the radical antislavery Haiti signified, a terrifying thing to regional slave-holding societies. Haiti's revolutionary iconographies and the news about possible after-effects of the revolution generated much 'fear of French Negroes' in the Spanish side of the island. The chapter studies three historical moments of active mobilization to unite the islands of Haiti and Santo Domingo, and the debates about the meaning of freedom that occurred during each instance. The first occurred in 1801 when Saint-Domingue was still a French colony, under the leadership of Toussaint Louverture. The second occurred in 1805 in postcolonial Haiti, under the new imperial rule of Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Finally, the last and most enduring era began in 1822 and ended in 1844, under the presidency of Jean-Pierre Boyer. These highlighted periods not only provide substantial insight into imperial politics but also shed light on the polarizing aspect of the relationship between these two neighbouring countries.

In chapter three, Johnson focuses on the disturbing smuggling activities – privateering and slave trafficking – by black figures occurring in the Gulf of Mexico, which included privateering communities in Louisiana, Texas and Florida. This chapter is particularly important and interesting, as it provides copious and detailed discussions about the active involvement of free people of colour – the Laffite brothers (Jean and Pierre Laffite) and Louis-Michel Aury – in selling African men and women into the bondage of slavery in postrevolutionary Haiti. What does this practice reveal about the nature of the Haitian Revolution and, in particular, class relations between the free people of colour and the

slave majority? First, slave trafficking and privateering by free people of colour clearly show that they did not share the same objective of 'freedom from slavery' and universal black liberty and equality with the black majority during and after the Haitian Revolution. Second, these practices undoubtedly reveal the great class conflict or divide between free people of colour and African slaves in colonial Saint-Domingue. Johnson's basic argument is well taken that 'these intrablack tensions in turn provide more evidence that transcolonial endeavors were often no more emancipatory than the imperial and national powers that gave birth to and succeeded them' (93).

In chapter four the author investigates the dialogues and interconnectedness that took place between members of mobile Black Atlantic communities with specific attention to the transcolonial nature of performative culture and various performative genres via rhythm, instrumentation and movement; special attention is given to anonymous female creative artists in the context of festive plantation traditions. Johnson traces these inter-island performance aesthetics and inter-American connections and collaborations between the Saint-Dominguan performative community and other (Anglophone and Hispanophone) Caribbean nations. She argues that Saint-Domingue was the centre of cultural diffusion of traditions that can be found in Jamaica, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Martinique, and that inter-island migration was an important step in 'the development and dispersal of these performance traditions' (123).

The focus on the linguistic diversity of these black communities in the Atlantic world helps to understand better their hybrid and heterogeneous character. It is from this vantage point that the author remarks: 'As people



moved in transcolonial circuits, it provided a mechanism of communication that counteracted linguistic isolation' (123). Despite the linguistic difference and barrier, these African migrants established contacts through gesture, dance and musical rhythms. These non-textual and embodied practices helped cultivate a transcolonial intellectual public sphere in the Black Atlantic and establish transnational cooperation and strategic alliances between inter-island blacks.

In the final chapter, Johnson carefully studies the development of a transcolonial black print culture with respect to three black presses – the *Colored American* based in New York, 1837–41; the *Revue des Colonies* based in Martinique/Paris, 1834–42; and *L'Union* based in Haiti, 1837–9 – established by free blacks. The emergence of the black press in the Americas served as 'a channel of communication for the interchange of thought' (158) in the nineteenth century in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. Johnson observes that this literary movement (1) symbolizes a politics of possibility, (2) attempts to forge a political and cultural project of transcolonial collaboration, (3) promotes a politics of unity transculturally and (4) an ethics of inclusionary participation. Furthermore, Johnson contends that the activist work of black journalists played a pivotal role in 'elaborating a transcolonial American consciousness in the public spheres' (158), as well as in advocating a project of regional abolition.

The implications of this chapter are numerous. First, black intellectuals used the technology of black print culture to establish inter-American contact and collaboration between people of African ancestry and to address critical issues pertaining to blacks in Saint-Domingue, Martinique, Brazil, Jamaica, etc. Second, the black press also served as a

medium to define a regional Afro-American identity (racial, cultural and political) that depended on black collaboration at a time when writers and readers were living in extremely hostile environments (160). Third, these periodical campaigns promoted an African American diasporic literacy project. Fourth, black newspapers and periodicals aggressively affirmed the international significance of the Haitian Revolution and the accomplishments of African blacks in order to orchestrate a Caribbean confederation.

In sum, *The Fear of French Negroes* is a stunningly well-written and researched book. Brilliantly, the author has underscored neglected but important geographical origins and dimensions in the formation of what scholars have called the Black Atlantic. This literary-cultural-intellectual history persuasively demonstrates the centrality of the Haitian Revolution in the making of black modernity as well as in the project of transcolonial and transcultural black politics and collaboration.

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Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity. By Mahmood Mamdani. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780674050525. \$29.95 (hbk).



One of the issues that have most consistently bedeviled post-colonial Africa is violent conflict along lines of ethnic and national difference. Glossed as 'tribalism' by foreign observers and explained as ancient animosities by lazy analysts, these conflicts can be seen

in the lingering civil wars in western Sudan and eastern D. R. Congo, ethnicized party politics in nations such as Kenya and the perilous position of transnational migrants, such as Zimbabweans in South Africa. Are these conflicts truly the modern expression of long-standing blood feuds, the result of misguided or malicious colonial policies, or the product of post-colonial politics and ethnicized clientelism? Mahmood Mamdani argues that while ethnicity and conflicts between ethnic groups preceded the imposition of colonial rule in Africa, ethnic identity and ethnic conflict as we know them today are a product of the colonial state and of its efforts to define its subject populations in terms of the irreducible unit of tribe. By determining divisions of race and tribe, colonial powers – and in this text Mamdani focuses on the British Empire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – also defined who was a native, to be considered indigenous to a particular area, granted corporate ownership of the land and governed by customary rather than civil law. Only the most aggressively nationalistic regimes of the post-colonial period were able to break down this absolutism and produce a national community.

Mamdani is a bold and stimulating thinker who brings a wealth of knowledge to the study of colonial and post-colonial politics. *Define and Rule* is based upon a series of three lectures he presented in 2008 at Harvard University's W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research. (Video of the lectures can currently be accessed on the Institute's website: <http://www.dubois.fas.harvard.edu/about-us>.) In this slim and attractive volume, Mamdani revisits some of the major themes of his pathbreaking study of the relationship between colonial and post-colonial governance in Africa, *Citizen and Subject* (1996), as

well as the questions of the violent legacy of colonial racial ideology for Rwanda and Burundi in his subsequent volume, *When Victims Become Killers* (2001).

In relation to those earlier works, here Mamdani expands his historical frame both spatially and temporally to consider the transformation of British colonial rule in the aftermath of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny in India towards the system known as indirect rule. Colonial reformers, such as the legal theorist Henry Maine, concluded that these violent demonstrations were the result of British colonialism's overly aggressive efforts to assimilate the people they ruled, resulting in a lashing out by people unmoored by their encounter with modernity. Establishing a system of law based upon local custom, he believed, would slow the process of change and promote political stability, allowing colonial subjects time to adapt. The practice of identifying custom, however, not only cemented previously malleable systems of governance and justice, but also fixed identity in relation to custom. The colonial census sorted people into tribes and the patchwork of customary authority cemented those, perhaps novel, identities through practice. Mamdani reflects on the case of the Sudan, the subject of his 2009 book, and contrasts the politically unifying potential of the anticolonial and multiethnic Mahdist movement with the localized forms of identity and administration promoted by the British in which natives were separated from non-natives and semi-nomadic and nomadic peoples given increasingly attenuated claims to belonging. The fruits of these divisions can be seen in the tragedy of contemporary Darfur. In his final section, Mamdani turns to models for post-colonial correctives to this colonial legacy. He pays homage to the work of a number of pioneering Nigerian historians,

particularly the late Yusuf Bala Usman, whose work questioned the meaning of precolonial ethnicity and raised possibilities for reimagining post-colonial identity. He also lauds Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere for his work as a nation-builder, which Mamdani links to the paucity of ethnic violence in post-colonial mainland Tanzania, though he also acknowledges that this achievement came at the cost of Nyerere's commitment to both democracy and social justice.

Mamdani's considerable strengths as a theorist of comparative politics are on display here, but so too are his weaknesses. He once again engages here in what historian Frederick Cooper (2008: 172) has called the 'fallacy of the leapfrogging legacy', in which Mamdani identifies a structural aspect of colonial rule and then describes a corresponding quality of post-colonial politics and allows a dotted line to connect them, without real attention to the twists and turns of the historical processes in between. He does not engage with Africans' use of the framework of customary authority to challenge or mitigate indirect rule, nor with the question of whether there are good reasons for post-colonial Africans to want to maintain local forms of sovereignty, rather than ceding all to the nation-state. Given the time that has passed since the publication of *Citizen and Subject*, it is also a bit disappointing that Mamdani does not engage with either the criticisms of his historical approach or other models for understanding the relationship between colonial rule and post-colonial governance, such as those of Jeffrey Herbst (2000) or Achilles Mbembe (2001).

Still, while readers would be advised to apply a variety of caveats to Mamdani's often-sweeping statements, he has once again

challenged us to think critically and creatively about the legacies of colonial rule and the categories through which we understand post-colonial citizenship.

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Untouchable Fictions: Literary Realism and the Crisis of Caste. By Toral Jatin Gajarawala. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013. Pp. 258. ISBN 9780823245253. \$24 (pbk).

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Toral Gajarawala's book *Untouchable Fictions* is a refreshing intervention in dalit studies. Critical readings, particularly in English, have so far sought to locate dalit literary discourse as a 'post-Mandal' identity assertion by the dalit community that reproduced its experiential reality in a register hitherto considered unliterary.¹ The focus invariably remained on 'language' or the 'lived experience' of such writings. A close reading of

‘texts’ further undermined dalit aesthetics and the specificities of such a cultural production. Gajarawala’s book addresses the long-felt need for a sustained theorization on Hindi dalit fiction and traces its literary trajectory.

The book is divided into five chapters and explores the tenability of literary realism as reflected in contemporary Hindi dalit fiction. It locates Hindi dalit fiction as a revisionist critique of progressive writings in Hindi, notably Premchand’s, and traces the formulation of a distinctly dalit realism in terms of form, narration and use of language. The book also offers an extensive reading of Indian English fiction and its handling of the caste question.

The book’s central premise works towards locating dalit literature as a critique of received social realism as reflected in Progressive, Indian Anglophone and European literature. It argues for an elucidation of a distinct dalit realism that revises and subverts earlier realistic representations of history, space/locale, person/structure. Drawing upon notions of realism as espoused by György Lukács and Fredric Jameson, the book lays out a postcolonial theorization of Hindi dalit literature, and in particular, its autobiography and fiction.

Gajarawala examines Premchand’s *Godaan* (1936) and *Kafan* (1936) at length to foreground the ‘rhetoric of sympathy’ that seeks to co-opt the reader to empathize with the condition of the untouchable. Contemporary dalit critics find Premchand’s reformist, empathetic discourse as primarily Gandhian, casteist narratives. Sympathetic discourse, central to realism as employed by Progressive writers, is shown to be prioritizing the nationalist project over the question of confronting the caste question. Premchand, Gajarawala argues, takes up the caste question in his

fiction but tends to defer it through a compromised ‘narrative space’. It is worth pointing out, however, that Premchand never claimed to offer an experiential reality. He presented a social critique and his intention was indeed reformist. Literature, Premchand believed, mirrored its age and he offered a criticism of his contemporary social structure. The dalit critique of Premchand’s fiction was part of its revisionist reading of canonized literature but boomeranged to a volatile hyper-resentment culminating in the burning of his novel *Rangbhumi* in 2004. In a way, Gajarawala’s argument is not putting forth fresh insights on the question of Premchand’s ideology or his notion of realism or his representation of the untouchables in his work. What is striking indeed is her sustained drawing upon literary criticism emanating from Anglophone academia on Premchand. True to its postcolonial grounding, the book banks rather heavily on scholarship on Hindi literature in the English language.

In its mapping of a genealogy of dalit literature, the book looks up Indian modernist Anglophone fiction and juxtaposes its universalism to dalit realist, particularist documentation of dalit labour. Gajarawala’s critique of Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935) brings out the dissonance between a scavenger’s labour and a poeticized representation of the scavenger protagonist Bakha as though he could be located outside his caste identity. Dalit fiction, on the other hand, focuses self-consciously on the particularities of caste labour to deploy new analytical tools.

The book proceeds to examine *Anchalik Sahitya* in Hindi as a possible model for dalit fiction. *Anchalik Sahitya* or, regional literature, with its emphasis on rural realism positioned the village as a site of recovering a lost tradition, often located in folk legends and

songs. Phaniswarnath Renu's celebrated novel, *Maila Anchal* (1954), is critically examined by Gajarawala to indicate the significant difference between the romanticized village, steeped in nostalgia and ethnographic spectacle of folk culture (often invariably, a subaltern one) as found in *Anchalik Sahitya* and the stark, socially stratified, dehumanizing, oppressive village as depicted in dalit *sahitya*. Mohandas Naimishraya's story *Apna Gaav* (Our Village) presents the dalit community's decision to resist upper-caste hegemony and oppression through an exodus. It is a serious indictment of the exotic village, idealized and invested with nostalgia in regional literature.

In chapter four the book examines astutely 'the contemporary evasion of caste in which Indian Anglophone fiction participates' (130) with a rigorous critiquing of Aravind Adiga's novel, *The White Tiger* (2008). This section is Gajarawala's most incisive, insightful critique on the dalit question and its literary representation. Tracing the avoidance of caste in Indian English novels from the 1930s to the present, Gajarawala lays bare the almost conspiratorial silence on the caste identity of the characters, in particular, the poor and labouring class. It thus presents a class division wrenched out of its caste hinges. The opacity towards caste and gender in Adiga's novel depoliticizes the narrative space even as it endeavours to represent a class critique of contemporary Indian society caught between caste complicity and corruption. Gajarawala's critique of Adiga's novel stands out as the most original, engaging and persuasive section in the entire book. Unlike the chapters on Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand or Renu that offered a critique of earlier readings, her reading of the Indian English novel by Adiga and others is impassioned and engaging in its

tone and insightfulness. She ably deconstructs the secular posture of the Indian novel in English. Its recurring and overt concern with the communal question through its engagement with the Partition that defers and subsumes the caste stratification of Indian society continues the literary tradition of valorizing the Gandhian over Ambedkarite discourse in the literary domain.

Gajarawala's study of Ajay Navariya's story *Patkatha* (2004), Naimishraya's autobiography *Apne-Apne Pinjare* (1995) and Itwari Hazari's *I was an Outcaste: The Autobiography of an Untouchable in India* (1957) brilliantly marshals the elision of Partition in dalit texts as an instance of 'denying it any historical singularity' (179) in the context of age-old oppression and structured deprivations of dalit community. She also locates Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan* (1997) as offering a corrective to strategies of reading the dalit question and its relation to history, nation and postcolonial 'concerns'. The reception of Indian English novels and dalit texts abroad stands embedded in essentialist and particularist abstractions, respectively. Gajarawala's negotiation of the two marks a significant mapping of continuities and differences between the two canons. Her repeated reference to the Indian English novel as Anglophone is rather unfashionable in contemporary Indian publications. The book, in its epilogue, forcefully argues that dalit texts, in foregrounding the social periphery, formulate a distinct form of realism 'that can only be referred to as a dalit realism' (203). This has long since been recognized, asserted and by now, assimilated in dalit studies in India across languages. Dalit critics and writers in Tamil, for instance, have, in the past two decades, successfully argued for a distinct dalit aesthetic and modes of

narrations and forms. ‘Dalit realism’ is a literary commonplace in Hindi, Tamil and Marathi dalit literary criticism. It is self-consciously revisionist and interrogative of the mainstream canon.

Gajarawala’s reading of Hindi dalit literature, while reckoning with the gendering of caste protest in dalit texts, would have substantiated its insights most gainfully if a reading of Kausalya Baisantri’s autobiographical narrative *Dohra Abhishaap* (1999) had been undertaken. Baisantri’s sharp, feminist critique of dalit family and her recording of Ambedkarite public speeches and their solidarity with the dalit woman question in the pre-Independence period merit inclusion in Gajarawala’s formulation of ‘dalit realism’. Baisantri’s discourse and the notoriously misogynist, violent counter-discourse by Dr Dharamvir and others cannot be pushed under the carpet however embarrassing and dissonant such a context might be to the caste question.

The interplay of canonical texts and contemporary writings in English as well as in Hindi as enunciated by Gajarawala is an enabling reading strategy for dalit literary discourse and if fused with Ambedkarite discourse it would truly turn empowering for dalits and dalit studies.

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Notes

1. In the 1990s there was large-scale agitation in India led by (mainly middle-class) students against government quotas for university places and public sector jobs that were reserved for ‘Backward Castes’, Tribals and other deprived groups in Indian society. This system of affirmative action had been recommended by the Mandal Commission, hence the term ‘post-Mandal’.

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Creating Postcolonial Literature: African Writers and British Publishers. By Caroline Davis. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. 255. ISBN 9780230369368. £50 (hbk).

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What is African literature? Who writes Africa and who reads? Which institutions, actors and agents shape the image of Africa in this work? These questions have become commonplace refrains in studies of African literature, a body of writing widely characterized by the chasm between its subject matter and its location of production and dissemination. In *Creating Postcolonial Literature*, Caroline Davis addresses these vexed issues of cultural ownership, authenticity and power through a meticulously researched account of Oxford University Press’s short-lived Three Crowns series (1962–76). By focusing on what she terms a ‘largely forgotten series of postcolonial literature’ (1), Davis both provides considerable insight into one of the earliest examples of African literary publishing by a British press and draws a series of conclusions about the broader politics of postcolonial publishing. The study joins a recent series of works which seek to explore what Davis terms the ‘sociology of the text’ (4) in the formation, promotion and dissemination of postcolonial writing. In line with these other studies, Davis seeks to examine the emergence of African literature, as a market category, through a cultural materialist perspective that draws heavily on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Much of Davis’s argument rests on problematizing Bourdieu’s proposed split between cultural and economic capital, two supposedly incompatible systems for evaluating the worth of the literary text. As Davis argues, in the realm of African literary publishing these

two seemingly opposed measures of value coexist in a highly ambivalent relationship of patronage, profit and cross-subsidisation at the local, national and international levels. Because of this complex and often ambivalent interdependence, there arrives a contradictory situation felt more broadly in postcolonial publishing, one in which the veneer of metropolitan, literary value remains subject to the more pragmatic demands of a localized market strategy, opening a chasm between reading public and audience in the circulation of African literature.

Creating Postcolonial Literature is split into two sections, the first of which traces OUP's history in Africa and the second of which focuses on the genesis and subsequent downfall of the Three Crowns series, in particular. Throughout, the study features a number of case studies of high-profile authors and publications, illustrating what Davis terms 'the negotiations between African authors and their publishers, and the influence of transnational cultural and economic relations on the constitution of their literature' (7), an unevenly loaded circuit of creation, production, marketing and consumption. Section one opens by outlining OUP's vision for its African branches. As Davis notes, through cooperation with government agencies in the creation of exam books and supplementary readers, OUP's 'commercial empire' (19) on the continent generated much-needed profit to maintain its more respectable literary activities in London. Chapters two, three and four focus on West Africa, East Africa and South Africa, respectively, drawing out the local histories which drove OUP's quest for profit and respectability in each area, leading to its relative prosperity across different parts of the continent. In each case, the press's adaptability in managing fast-changing political circumstances in the independence era led

directly to its economic success. At the same time, this economic success paradoxically constricted the flexibility of literary production in each region, confining publishing to an increasingly narrow set of educational interests. As the example of South Africa illustrates, where OUP's profit-making endeavour was driven largely by its collusion with the apartheid government, the veiling of these market-oriented motives, moreover, played an essential part in the press's continued global success, allowing a notion of liberal respectability to occlude its commercial interests in the public sphere.

The second section of the monograph turns to Three Crowns in particular, with chapters outlining its inception, the accumulation of its list and its editing procedures, finishing with two extended case studies examining the publishing of Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard. While Three Crowns began with the idealistic aim of promoting the development of African literary writing, as Davis illustrates, throughout its run the series was increasingly made subject to the demands of metropolitan control, with evaluations imposed through a 'London-centred editorial policy' (103) which fostered asymmetrical relationships among local bureaux, African writers and the metropolitan publisher. Relying on judgements based on a universalized aesthetic consecrated in London, the body of work produced by Three Crowns remained limited by barriers of nationality, class and gender in increasingly interventionist ways, driving the production of a certain globally authenticated notion of African literature in its circulation. This, in turn, created a contradiction at the heart of the series, 'endeavour [ing] to "universalize" the literature for an Anglo-American market, [while remaining] at variance with the distribution strategy used for the books, which targeted them

predominantly at the African market' (141). Instigated by the tensions created by this divided strategy and the imperative to profit at all literary costs, the collapse of the series marked a retreat from African literature, as an enterprise, and demonstrated the ultimate marginality of African culture in a world literary market (106).

Creating Postcolonial Literature makes a valuable contribution to both African and postcolonial literary studies for its careful and nuanced exploration of a too-often neglected example of early Europhone publishing from the continent. Throughout its course, Davis identifies numerous continuities and discrepancies from previous studies of postcolonial publishing, enabling the study to illustrate deftly the creation and persistence of a hierarchical system of literary relations. The study is particularly insightful in its consistent and in-depth use of archival sources, demonstrating the complexity which negotiating African literatures has entailed in its early years, both between African writers and British publishers, as the title of the study supposes, but also among editorial staff themselves. At the same time, this focus on the sociological results in a study which is often repetitive in its refrain and occasionally neglects the textual aspects of the series and larger questions surrounding literary value in African literatures more broadly. In particular, Davis's study does little to unpack the universalized aesthetics which she critiques, drawing instead on binary oppositions between symbolic and economic value, local and metropolitan engagements and cultural and market interests, all of which might be better served through textual engagement. Despite these shortcomings, however, this study proves to be a significant entry into the emerging field of postcolonial book history, with clear implications for how we

conceptualize the consecration of literary value in world literatures.

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Reading New India: Post-Millennial Indian Fiction in English. By E. Dawson Varughese. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. Pp. 189. ISBN 1441181741. £19.99 (pbk).
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Indian literature in English has been persistently categorized, studied and analysed according to the critical agendas of postcolonialism; it has been read as representative of and emanating from a country recovering from the legacies of imperial rule, and regarded as appropriating the colonial language in a gesture of continued struggle and entanglement. E. Dawson Varughese, however, writes the first book-length reading of twenty-first-century Indian genre fiction and refuses to attribute the cultural and artistic merits of the works to a politics or aesthetics commonly associated with postcolonial literatures. Building on the theoretical work set out in her recent *Beyond the Postcolonial: World Englishes Literature* (2012), she embarks upon the categorization of literature of 'New India', which, she argues, begins to move away from the defining 'tropes and guises' of postcolonial literature (152).

Drawing upon Elleke Boehmer's definition of postcolonial literature as 'generally defined as that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship', as 'writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives' (*Colonial and*

Postcolonial Literature, 2005, p. 3), Dawson Varughese suggests that rather than interrogating colonial relationships, the narratives under her purview ‘talk directly of, and to New India’ (152). Rejecting the postcolonial as an apposite framework for interpretation, Dawson Varughese’s approach instead encompasses a sociology of literature alongside literary stylistics. It is somewhat ironic that the author distinguishes her approach from postcolonial studies yet enlists two of its key strategies: a situated analysis of texts to take into account context, and an attention to literary aesthetics and stylistics. What is (deliberately) absent from her methodology is a framework or ideological agenda. Her suspicions of postcolonial studies are rooted in an approbation towards bringing a pre-determined agenda to bear upon texts which seems to suggest, somewhat naively, that literary criticism could ever be an objective or scientific and unequivocal pursuit. This unabashedly apolitical stance is, she suggests, ‘more transparent’, though her justification for employing stylistics by virtue of their offering ‘the non-insistence of reading a literary text for the “ideas” it encompasses’ sets up what is sometimes a frustratingly uncritical account of the novels in question (20). The work does, however, map out new and evolving trends in Indian literature, thoroughly – and somewhat empirically – enumerating novels that have defined or pushed at the boundaries of their respective genres.

Following an introduction that outlines the changing conceptions of ‘Indianness’ since independence – taking in canonical authors, evolutions and difficulties encountered by Indian writing in English, and the social, cultural and economic trends presented by ‘New India’ – the book is arranged into chapters according to genre, sustaining a sensitivity to ‘themes of young India, middle-

classness and questions of caste and religious identity’ throughout (145). Its genre-defining work peaks in a chapter on ‘Fantasy and epic narrative’, which carefully articulates problems raised by defining fiction that engages with ancient Bharat as fantasy. Dawson Varughese contests the ‘impossibility’ of ancient Bharat that would be necessary to term as fantasy works such as Ashwin Sanghi’s *Chanakya’s Chant* (2010) or Nilanjan P. Choudhury’s *Bali and the Ocean of Milk* (2011). Challenging the western academy’s hegemony over definitions and designations of genre, Dawson Varughese insists that it is necessary to take readership into account. While shape-shifters, hybrid creatures and figures of ‘extraordinary strength or ability’ easily fit the categories of fantasy fiction for a western readership, she argues that at the other end of the interpretational spectrum we could read the novels as history, depending on the knowledge of and belief in (in terms of spiritual truth) Hindu epics (126). This radically revises the categories for genre definition, prioritizing reception and shared heritage as means of classifying a text.

The enticing yet often-pernicious effects of globalization are captured in chapters on ‘Urban scapes’ and the service-provider economy encountered by a ‘Young India’ that is increasingly fractured in terms of time, place and identity, as call-centre workers effectively live according to US or UK time zones. A chapter entitled ‘Chick lit to crick lit’ observes the new independence of women in post-millennial chick-lit, in which female protagonists have greater decision-making capacities than their fictional forebears. It evidences the multiplicity and diversity of female worlds and reassesses marital orthodoxies before jumping to a discussion of what the author has branded ‘crick lit’; its connection to the foregoing discussion appears purely phonetic.

Dawson Varughese builds upon Anuja Chauhan’s account of cricket as the ‘Great Indian Disease’ to portray the viral and infectious nature of both the sport and surrounding media and marketing hype. The remaining chapters chart the evolving genres of ‘Crime writing’ and ‘Graphic novels’, examining the particular histories, geographies and cultures that they render on their pages in constructions of an ‘Indianness’ that repeatedly returns to violence and fear based on the apprehension of difference.

What the book sometimes lacks is the ability to create broad arguments or detail the strategies of the emerging genres that it identifies, tending instead to list common features of the novels without convincing analysis. However, this is to a certain extent accounted for through the author’s own recognition that time is required to see how these new genres develop. Furthermore, the research is necessarily and self-confessedly limited through its focus on Indian literature *in English*, and it is beyond the scope of the book to make more than passing reference to the concurrent rise in publishing in other Indian languages post-millennium.

Nevertheless, this book marks important new interventions into the classification of contemporary Indian literature as moving away from a postcolonial paradigm that axiomatically centralizes the impact of British colonization as the defining Indian legacy. The strengths of the work undoubtedly lie in its ability to identify and delineate new and evolving trends in literature backed up by detailed close readings of selected novels. Furthermore, though the preface envisions the readership as predominantly Indian, a glossary of terms, a timeline, and author biographies open it up to a wider readership, and it will undoubtedly prove to be a useful

resource for countless students of contemporary Indian literature.

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Perceiving Pain in African Literature. By Zoe Norridge. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. 239. ISBN 9780230367425. £50 (hbk).

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Perceiving Pain in African Literature maintains that the literary text is particularly adept at exploring the meanings of pain ‘through the nuances of sensation, particularities of emotion and shades of experience that constitute the individual’s perspective’ (99). In this comparative study Zoe Norridge offers close readings of selected novels, memoirs and testimonies representing different regions of Africa and identifies key themes in the discussion of literary pain narratives (20). For this purpose, the author has developed a highly interdisciplinary framework based on her own readings in human rights, African literatures, trauma studies, medical history and the ethics of representation. While acknowledging the importance of Elaine Scarry’s work for trauma studies, Norridge takes a critical stance towards her approach, claiming that the much-cited unrepresentability of suffering has little resonance with the texts she examined (7). Other major influences include writings by Susan Sontag and postcolonial theorists such as Achille Mbembe, Mahmood Mamdani and Ato Quayson.

The book begins with an in-depth-analysis of Yvonne Vera’s *The Stone Virgins* (2002),

which traces the story of two sisters living in Rhodesia in the post-liberation period characterized by violent conflict between government forces and dissident ZIPRA soldiers. Whereas one of the sisters, Thenjiwe, is killed by a dissident soldier, her sister Nonceba is violently raped and mutilated. In what is certainly one of the strongest chapters in her book, Norridge offers a multifaceted close reading of this central wounding episode to illustrate how the structure of the story with its free-floating words and imagery, its inconsistencies in chronology, and its complicated linguistic reinsertions might reflect 'a real person in pain's quest to make sense of their own story's confusions' (33) without offering a simple narrative solution or a return to the integrity of before (59).

Departing from the observation that pain is a recurring theme in South African literature, a body of writing characterized by the omnipresence of the body and its meaning within a racist system, in another chapter Norridge shows how the literary blurring of the boundaries between minds and bodies in pain functions as a form of resistance to the ideology of racial discrimination under apartheid. In her discussion of novels by Bessie Head and J. M. Coetzee, Norridge points out that even though both authors choose different strategies (i.e. 'hyper-connection' in Head vs. 'narrative gaps' in Coetzee), they both refuse the sovereignty of one experience over another. Indeed, as Norridge points out, physical and emotional pains are so intertwined in the two texts under examination that this calls into question any possible distinction between the fields of pain and suffering (22).

The complex relationship between cultural meanings of pain, defined as 'a social group's shared understandings of the causes and importance of pain, which in turn affect

socially acceptable behavior in response to suffering' (101) and individual pain experiences is at the core of Norridge's discussion of female genital excision in Francophone African writing. She argues that both male and female writers of different generations have created literary protagonists who eventually negotiate or completely question the cultural meanings of pain associated with such practices. Accordingly, this often happens as part of a 'passage' (i.e. a change in circumstances, such as fleeing to Europe or interacting with other women), which results in various forms of personal reinvention (117), including reconstructive surgery to experience a 'normal' sex life, as happens to be the case in Mamadou Samb's *Ouly la fille de l'aveugle* (*Only the Blind Man's Daughter*, 1995).

How might it be possible to address personal pain when so many have died? It is this question which guides the discussion of the genocide in Rwanda. In her analysis of books such as Yolande Mukagasana's *La mort ne veut pas de moi* (*Death Does Not Want Me*, 1997) and Boris Diop's *Murambi, le livre des ossements* (*Murambi, The Book of Bones*, 2000), Norridge identifies 'the need to individuate the experience of this conflict' as an important line of inquiry. She suggests that the authors have chosen to privilege individual experiences of suffering, but emphasizes that they do not offer explicit accounts of pain. While pain is articulated as being present, it is left unexplored. Instead, the writers employ a variety of narrative strategies to highlight the personal, such as stressing the sensory (e.g. experiences of sound and smell), to convey an idea of what pain might mean for a particular individual in a particular situation while not reducing pain to its physical reality (146).

In addition to the issues just outlined, there are several recurring themes, the most important one being Norridge's critical thinking about appropriations of pain. The author suggests that the production and distribution of pain narratives 'is made possible, in the current global economy, by a fascination with ... pain experiences' (124) and may result in symbolic pain meanings which silence other voices and obscure complex realities in favour of abstractions (124). These are important considerations which build on work previously done by scholars like Wendy Brown and Sara Ahmed who have examined the relation between the wound and identity as well as the role of symbolic currencies attributed to pain narratives. Norridge furthermore suggests that the question be asked whether and to what extent the writers exercise control over the representation, interpretation and dissemination of their stories (190). While these are not new questions, Norridge takes them further by examining how aesthetic strategies frame and contain narratives in certain manners and how they eventually affect literature's approach to pain (191). An

example is her discussion of Aminatta Forna's *Memory of Love* (2010), which employs internal monologues and spaces of silence and which, according to Norridge, uses the phenomenon of 'phantom limb pain' to make a strong case for the uncontainability of pain (195–6).

Zoe Norridge's impressive study will resonate most with those who appreciate narratological analysis informed by an original synthesis of contextual readings in history, culture and politics and who want to see this combined with a strong ethical agenda. In fact, the author's commitment extends far beyond an analysis of pain narratives, as she repeatedly tackles the question of what might constitute 'narrative empathy' (83) and how literary critics should relate to it. For me, this is the most important contribution of this insightful and engaging book.

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