

## EMOTION PICTURES

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*Ben Highmore*

Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*, London and New York, Verso, 2002, 484pp; £27 cloth.

Sam Rohdie, *Promised Lands: Cinema, Geography, Modernism*, London, British Film Institute, 2001, 280pp; £15.99 paper.

Both the books under review are grounded on an implicit assumption: that the designation 'film specialist' is an oxymoron. Film, these books demonstrate, is fundamentally promiscuous in its gaze, rapacious in its reach, and profligate in its productivity. It wears, as a certain song would have it, vagabond shoes. Writing about the experiential break that film entails, Walter Benjamin would famously claim: 'Our bars and city streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories seemed to close relentlessly around us. Then came film and exploded this prison-world with the dynamite of the split second, so that now we can set off calmly on journeys of adventure among its far-flung debris.'<sup>1</sup> Cinema propels the sedentary to their tourist destinations.

These books, written by two film scholars, insist on the geographical tendency of film, and in doing so they constantly rove outside the remit of traditional film scholarship. Both mix genre conventions and registers of writing (the autobiographical, the historical, critical commentary, the theoretical, and so on) while veering back and forth between different times and places. They make for an uncanny pairing: both writers talk about the death of their fathers; both give a central role to Roberto Rossellini's *Voyage in Italy* (both writers, incidentally, mention that they have walked the route through Naples that the protagonists took); both signal the importance of Pasolini; and both discuss Vermeer's *View of Delft*. While it would be imprudent to make too much of these coincidences (after all, these are writers whose reputations are partly based on their contribution to the history of Italian cinema), and while it would be foolhardy to treat these two books as representative of contemporary film studies,<sup>2</sup> there are, it strikes me, more general issues that emerge in the conjoining of these two books.

Here is not the place to write a synoptic account of film studies over the last thirty or forty years - yet without some reference to this history it would be hard to recognise these books as anything other than eccentric to the traditional filmic object. The danger is, I think, that this work *can* be seen as the product of a general abandonment of analytic specificity in the name of interdisciplinarity or 'cultural studies' (which in some quarters would be synonymous); an understanding that renders previous film studies'

1. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility' [1939], in *Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938-1940*, Cambridge, MA and London, Harvard University Press, 2003, p265.

2. A quite different idea of contemporary film studies would be gained from reading such works as Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, Cambridge, MA and London, Harvard University Press, 2002; Rachel O. Moore, *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2000; Leo Charney, *Empty Moments: Cinema, Modernity, and Drift*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1998; and Yvette Biro, *Profane Mythology: The Savage Mind of Cinema*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982.

accomplishments as so much water under the bridge. The divergent approaches within film studies are the geological seams running through these books, and the possibility of their merging into new conjunctures, ones that explode the surface antagonisms between well-established forms of attention, is partly what is at stake in these books. Accounts of the changes in approach within film studies could be written as a series of dialogic reactions: thus semiotics reacts and responds to the perceived limitations of auteur theory; psychoanalysis to the perceived lack of concern with the subjected spectator within semiotics; empirical audience research to the over-generalised subject of psychoanalysis; a focus on early cinema responding to the lack of historical perspective in previous work, and so on. Such a narrative presents a story of continual breaks and pendulum-like shifts (from the abstraction of theory to the concreteness of empiricism, back and forth, again and again) and makes it hard to see the archaeological accumulations being secreted.

The specific concentration on cinema's moment of emergence and the contested history of what counts as proto-cinematic cultural forms marks a natural assembly-point for film scholarship (both these books expend considerable energy here). Yet, while the orientation towards historical origins could be read as film studies taking refuge in scholasticism, the outcome of such investigations has had a number of liberating effects. A much needed reconsideration of the ontology and morphology of cinema has been one result, and rather than this working to shore up film studies' sense of itself, it has opened it up to more experimental forms of historical investigation. What if - film studies seemed to ask - cinema wasn't simply a narrative form, but was part of a culture of attractions and shocks, for instance?<sup>3</sup> What counts as relevant proto-cinematic material shapes the direction of film studies: in Bruno's *Atlas of Emotions* garden design is the most significant proto-cinematic cultural form; in Rohdie's *Promised Lands* it is nineteenth-century geography.

Such productive historical uncertainty has worked to reconfigure past approaches, and returned these other orientations within film studies (orientations that were fast succumbing to dogmatism) to a more enlivened and experimental state. Thus a concern with ontology might recognise a film not as something desperately in need of interpretation, but as itself a form of interpretation, the result of a sustained engagement with the world, an attempt to register something of the world in cinematic form. Thus auteurism, which at least granted the filmic text an active intelligence, gets reconfigured in these two books. Now, rather than auteurism finding an expressive system of meanings across a body of work, film texts and artworks (for instance, the films of Akerman, Antonioni, Arzner, and so on) are liberated from the demand for interpretation and become theoretical works, used for their contribution to a critical understanding of modernity. One characteristic of both these books is the surprising lack of film analysis and interpretation. And just as auteurism is reconfigured to the point of being

3. This might be one description of Tom Gunning's work; see Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectators and the Avant-Garde' in *Wide Angle*, vol. 8, nos. 3-4, 1986, pp1-14. It is of course not incidental that such historical considerations were simultaneous with a renewal of interest in the work of Walter Benjamin.

almost unrecognisable, so too are the approaches associated with semiotics and psychoanalysis. Film studies in the 1970s and 1980s pursued a concern with looking, identification, viewing positions, intertextuality and so on, with toolkits supplied, for the most part, by Lacanian psychoanalysis and structural linguistics. A reconsideration of cinematic ontology has allowed a degree of material physicality to return to these concerns. Thus spectatorship, which in the pages of *Screen* during these decades would often appear to be an entirely mentalist and disembodied affair, gets refashioned as a concern with actual bodies sitting in auditoriums. One effect of this has been a questioning of the almost exclusive reliance on visual and verbal materials; another has been the renewed concern with cinema as affective and sensual experience. Similarly, and on the back of a renewed concern with ontology, film studies has recognised more and more that cinema coincides with a whole panoply of other social and cultural technologies that would have seemed merely tangential if cinema was conceived of as a purely narrative vehicle. Thus cultural historians involved in film studies turn their attention to anthropology, or modern urban experience, or medicine, and so on. The upshot of all this is a general enlivening of film studies; there is a creativity spilling out in the new connections being made between film and other fields of culture. But, of course, it is never enough just to make connections; connectivity itself needs to become a central concern.

Giuliana Bruno's *Atlas of Emotion* is an immense book. Not only is it physically huge, spanning more than 400 large and densely packed pages; it is immense in intellectual breadth. There are complex arguments animating this sprawling account of the spatial affectivity of modern culture, and they are built up by superimposition, by layering examples that congeal to form the architecture of the book. Bruno's 'aim is to reclaim *emotion* and to argue, from the position of a film *voyageuse*, for the haptic as a feminist strategy of reading space' (p16). Her heroines are thus women in motion, even if these women are confined to the geography of home. 'Home' is a key site for this exploration in travel, but instead of seeing it as the antithesis of adventurous movement, it is problematically ingrained within the itineraries of the *voyageuse*. Nowadays, of course, the well-heeled (globally speaking) inhabit homes that exhibit a high degree of geographical porosity as words and images seep in through a number of different portals (the internet being the contemporary exemplar). This domestication of modernity (privileging home interiors over urban street scenes, gardening over trains and aircrafts) is one of the key feminist tactics employed by Bruno. It leads to a more intimate phenomenology of modernity. Thus cinema, a public space of privacy, is treated as an actual physical space, often heavily carpeted and opulent, and where the main wall (the screen) morphs into new spatial forms. What a projected moving image does to the physicality of the wall should provide one of the most vivid examples of Marx and Engels's description of modernity: 'all that is solid melts into air'.

*Atlas of Emotion* is a travelogue of intellectual history. Present day cultural materials (the work of Peter Greenaway and Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* are the topics of two chapters) are interspersed with historical material stretching from the seventeenth-century onwards. The detailing is extraordinary, as is the design of the book, and at times Bruno humorously mimics the materials she discusses: 'Let us stop to wonder at her representational "apparel" and "accoutrements"' is her way of introducing the late nineteenth-century travel lecturer Esther Lyons. One of the key sites that the book sets out from is a map made for Madeleine de Scudéry's novel of 1654 *Clélie*. The map is entitled *Carte du pays de Tendre*. The 'Countries of Tenderness' is a territory marked by the ups and downs of a lover's discourse: thus the 'Lake of Indifference' spells doom to lovers, while the villages of 'Pleasing Verses' and 'An Amorous Letter' would, no doubt, simply add to the spring in a lover's step. The fact that the artist Annette Messenger remade this map as both a map and a garden (*Le jardin du tendre*) in 1988 suggests the persistent coupling of emotional life and physical space. Yet such mapping works as an extended metaphor; it is when Bruno turns her attention to actual garden design and the aesthetics of the picturesque that such metaphors begin to embody the sense of emotional movement that is her focus.

Picturesque garden design materially links seeing, space, touch and emotion, and provides a compelling argument for treating gardens as the proto-cinematic form most relevant to cinema. To secure this argument requires treating peripatetic vision as a haptic sense. For Bruno, picturesque design techniques will literally hit or touch the eye, and thus 'the eye is epidermic; it is a skin'.

In the garden, strolling activated an intersubjective terrain of physical connections and emotional responses. Kinetic journeys across fragmentary terrain generated kinesthetic feelings. Mobilisation, further activated by climbing towers and observatories or tarrying in rooms built in the gardens as observational sites, was a form of sensory animation. Sensational movements through the space of the garden 'animated' pictures, foregrounding the type of sensing enacted by film's own animated emotion pictures (202).

Imagine walking along a tree-lined terrace and as you turn a corner a spectacular vista presents itself: an enclosed space explodes with space and light - your eyes have been touched. But just as you are touched (via your feet, limbs and eyes), you are also touched emotionally as you see, for example, a ruined abbey nestling in the pastoral scene below. In this way space is never simply visual (however virtual it seems); it always either implies or enacts a haptic sense of space being tangible (touchable, habitable). Such forms of connectivity bring a real density to contemporary practices of 'keeping in touch' via text and picture messaging or email.

Rohdie's *Promised Lands* is a meditation on geography, film, and modernity in the style of Roland Barthes' book on photography and memory.<sup>4</sup> Personal reminiscences (often printed in italics) are interlaced with a number of impressionistic accounts of geographical and ethnographic

4. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Richard Howard (trans), London, Fontana, 1984.

projects, and a range of film texts (mainly postwar Italian cinema, but also the work of the French *nouvelle vague* and Jean Rouch). Rohdie's erudition is obvious on every page, and he has produced a complex and at times evocative book, but this is at the expense of clarity and sustained and supported argument. *Promised Lands*, according to Rohdie, 'has not been motivated by scholarly issues, something not yet known, a contribution to learning, the acquittal of a responsibility. Such motives left me cold. I have pursued the writing for no ambition, no good cause, nor duty, but for its pleasures and compulsion' (pvii). Compulsion and pleasure have resulted here in a text almost entirely free of reference, but accompanied by a forty-four-page bibliography. This decision not to sully the poetry of the text with signs of labour, to disconnect the materials of research (the bibliography) from the product of research (the text), is, to my mind, a very poor one.

The book has its beginning in Hong Kong, with Rohdie viewing a film made by the Musée Albert Kahn of Kahn's trip to China in 1909. This film was part of an ambitious project, the *Archives de la planète*, which, besides films, consists of 72,000 hand tinted photographic glass plates (*autochromes*). For Rohdie this visual archive of material from such places as Ireland, China, Japan, the French colonies in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, becomes a signal moment of modernity. Its modernity is distilled in the contradictory desire to obsessively collect what is being lost (pre-industrial cultures), while aesthetically mourning this loss, and simultaneously being responsible (or at least complicit) in the production of that loss. Starting from here the book moves in two different directions. One of the most immediate results is a revelatory sense of how Rohdie's interest in film interlinks with his own biography:

My wanderings from New York, where I was born, from a Jewish-American culture I rejected, parents I loathed, a past fictionalised and never reconciled, caused me to search for home, home never feeling like home, and not anywhere feeling like it ever. It seemed my childhood had never been, that I grew without growing up.

I invented everything, including myself. The search for home projected itself on to persons and places, films and books (23).

Personal or confessional writing like this, I guess, is supposed to anchor culture in a living, breathing world. It allows Rohdie implicitly to suggest that his life chimes with the very condition of modernity as he goes on to suggest that the modern (especially as it is articulated in film) is animated by a profound sense of mourning accompanied by a relentless, often deceptive, inventiveness. Yet such claims are also made, and made much more substantially, by Rohdie's account of the liberal-internationalism of certain forms of geography and anthropology. In *Promised Lands* the endless juxtapositions of personal writing (most often about his past loves) acts in exactly the opposite way it does in Barthes. Instead of this being the material



out of which theory is produced, *Promised Lands* seems to use personal reminiscence as a guarantee of authenticity. Rohdie knows that crosshatching these different registers (allusive reminiscence and historically informed theorising) is to court spectacular failure: he describes Pasolini's writing as 'poetry seeking to be theory and theory seeking to be poetry, neither quite one or the other', and that translation inevitably takes sides, 'turning poetry into bad theory or theory into bad poetry' (p114). Whether *Promised Lands* produces such effects will depend on the amount of interest and empathy that the reminiscences secure from the reader.

The other direction that the book pursues is more directly connected to the archive. Here Rohdie is much more successful, and the description of Kahn's project makes for fascinating reading. It allows Rohdie to consider a range of intellectual projects including the philosophy of Henri Bergson, the human geography of Paul Vidal de la Blanche and Jean Brunhes (the latter was made director of the Archives in 1912) and Marcel Griaule's anthropological expedition from Dakar to Djibouti in 1931-33. Griaule's expedition mingled looting and ethnography; it included as its secretary the dissident surrealist writer Michel Leiris. Rohdie's discussion of Leiris's reaction to being a French colonial anthropologist is excellent and one of the high points in what is a very loose and uneven assemblage of a book.

Writing in the early 1970s, in a programmatic essay that introduces his book on the painter Courbet, T.J. Clark argued that the exacting task for a social history of art (or of culture more generally), is to find ways of explaining how different registers of culture connect and interact. Clark's target is, of course, an art history steeped in the practices of connoisseurship, but his critical scorn is also, and perhaps more energetically, directed against the sort of social explanations of art that seem to merely assert the causal connectivity of cultural and social formations. Offering an example of the kind of 'invariable system of mediations' he deplores, he writes: 'Courbet is influenced by Realism which is influenced by Positivism which is the product of Capitalist Materialism. One can sprinkle as much detail on the nouns in that sentence as one likes; it is the verbs which are the matter.'<sup>5</sup> Clark's complaint is that detailing the specific forms of connectivity between the macroscopic and microscopic registers of culture are generally fudged through recourse to an asinine vocabulary of 'influence' or causality.

Contemporary cultural history (as it is evidenced by *Atlas of Emotions* and *Promised Lands*, but much else besides) does not often share Clark's project of tenaciously pursuing specific objects and practices until they divulge the contradictory articulations of their social and cultural moment. Yet Clark's worry is still a matter of concern. While cultural history may evidence endless invention in bringing different kinds of cultural and social forms into contact, the real matter is going to be explaining the way these connections operate. For Bruno, the connectivity between, say, the peripatetic visuality of the garden and the spectacle of cinema, and how this connects to the enlarged haptic experience of relating places and bodies, is

5. T.J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1973, p10.



represented as a hyphen. A hyphen is a loose conjoining that can always be broken into its constituent parts. But Bruno's hyphens become historically hardened as they amass evidence ('site-seeing', for instance, is an insistent feature of nearly all the examples that she gives). We get a sense of how motion and emotion connect, of how touch reverberates with feelings, bodies, and spaces, as this hyphenated culture is constantly detailed through different examples. Here what seems to start out either by way of phonetic similarity (sight-site) or through the double meanings of a single word ('moving', 'touching', for instance - both literal and metaphoric, physical and affective) gets clarified via historical work. Yet, and partly because of this, the specific connections remain historically contingent and sometimes tenuous, in need of more specific formulation. That a book leaves you with the feeling that there is work still to be done is no bad thing. The strength of Bruno's book is that it lays the foundations for this work. Rohdie on the other hand works by way of jump-cuts, rendering the hyphens as absences, caesuras. No doubt any explicit detailing of these hyphens would work against the poetic mission of this book. Impressive and annoying, intriguing and frustrating, Rohdie's book leaves me with a feeling of emptiness, as missing the real matter of culture.

## EMPIRE AND FORM

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*Stuart Burrows*

Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, Cambridge MA, Harvard, 2002; 256pp, £24.95 hardback.

In 1993 Amy Kaplan co-edited *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*, perhaps the most important collection of essays to appear in American literary criticism in the last ten years. The volume effected a marriage between American and postcolonial studies that has reshaped both fields and produced one of its own - hemispheric studies - which focuses on relations between north and south rather than east and west. Hemispheric studies thus both renews and revises the work of Edward Said, whose 1978 *Orientalism*, in announcing the very east-west biases the field exists to combat, may be regarded as its founding text. Kaplan's most significant contribution to the beginning of this new field can be found in her now well-known introduction to *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*, which brilliantly explored the persistent refusal of American studies to engage with the question of Empire. Imperialism, argued Kaplan, is both formative and disavowed - formative *because* disavowed - in the study of American culture, a discipline whose core belief, at least until the 1960s, lay in the existence and the virtues of American exceptionalism.

Kaplan's critique inspired a generation of literary critics, and almost ten years later has formed the basis for her new book *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Harvard 2002). Her target here is not only American studies, however, but the postcolonial model itself, one that since *Orientalism* has been predicated upon the geographic and conceptual distance between colonizer and colonized. Said's argument, Kaplan insists, proves of limited use when it comes to understanding the various manifestations of American Empire: manifest destiny, slavery, the Spanish-American War, commodity capitalism. The scope of American imperialism, she suggests, demands a wide-ranging critical practice, a practice that takes her from Mark Twain to *Citizen Kane*. The one place it doesn't take her is to texts written in other parts of the Americas, an absence that hemispheric studies has recently begun to redress in the form of comparative conferences, books, and journals. *The Anarchy of Empire* cannot really be faulted for failing to engage with traditions only now being recognised in English and American Studies Departments, and in all other respects Kaplan's new book reflects the strengths and the weaknesses of the field she helped usher into existence.

One of the problems faced by critics of US imperialism, at least those in English Departments, is that so few American literary texts explicitly engage



with the discourse of American Empire. With the example of Said's celebrated reading of *Mansfield Park* before them, critics have scoured the American canon for examples of imperial entanglements, provocations, and omissions. But American versions of *Mansfield Park* have proved surprisingly rare, an American *Heart of Darkness* nowhere to be found. This absence makes itself felt in *The Anarchy of Empire*. Kaplan's chapter on Twain, for example, locates itself in the tradition of Said's contrapuntal method of reading, but her suggestion that Twain's writings on Hawaiian society in the late 1870s represent a rehearsal for *Huckleberry Finn* is unconvincing. Equally disappointing are Kaplan's readings of *The Birth of a Nation* and *Citizen Kane*, the latter of which ends with the rather weak assertion that 'It would be important to investigate further the relation between Wells's formal innovations and the imperial theme of his films.' Surely, but why, and why not here?

The relation between aesthetic form and Empire is not, however, completely absent from *The Anarchy of Empire*. In her final chapter - a useful account of Du Bois's reimagining of imperialism as the breaking down of national borders and racial boundaries - Kaplan attempts to overturn another of Said's arguments: that the formal innovations of European modernism compensate for the sense of loss and dislocation suffered by the isolated imperial centre. In contrast, Kaplan reads Du Bois's 1916 novel *Darkwater* as deploying 'modernist forms of incongruity, fragmentation, and discontinuity for the opposite effect: to collapse distances and overturn the hierarchy between metropolis and periphery.' The argument is attractive, but it leaves certain questions unanswered. By 'modernism' Kaplan obviously means both writing produced during an historical period and writing possessing a certain form: experimental, discontinuous, fragmented. But if fragmentation can be read as registering imperial melancholy in one text, and colonial resistance in another, surely both instances cannot be labelled modernist - unless, that is, we restrict the term to periodisation. Du Bois may well be using fragmentation to reverse the colonial order, but unless we engage in a dramatic rethinking of what we mean by modernist - the kind of rethinking Kaplan's impressive historical range does not allow for - it is hard to see how *Darkwater* can be labelled a modernist text.

The problem, I think, reveals the fissures that open up the moment we begin to investigate the politics of literary form, the type of inquiry which in recent years critics have been noticeably reluctant to carry out. John Carlos Rowe, one of the most distinguished Americanist critics, proposes in his recent *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism* that the only justifiable form of reading is a sociohistoric one, so as to 'follow the logic of a text without lapsing into trivial formalism or celebration of linguistic ambiguity or linguistic undecidability.' Kaplan explicitly challenges such refusals to engage with the problematics of form. Her first chapter, for example, investigates the rhetorical figures of *domestic* and *foreign* employed by the Supreme Court in their 1899 attempt to define the exact status of newly

acquired Puerto Rico. In a desperate attempt to lay claim to the spoils of 1898 while evading the opprobrium of becoming a colonial power, the Court paradoxically declared that Puerto Rico should be treated as a domestic territory for international purposes, but as a foreign power for national ones. Puerto Rico was thus deemed foreign to the United States in a domestic sense, a peculiar designation analogous to the status of domestic dependent nation accorded Native Americans in 1831. *The Anarchy of Empire* outlines the conflicting fears that led to this legalistic fiction, one that left Puerto Rico bereft of both state and national rights. As is still the case, domestic opposition to American imperialism was grounded as much upon a horror of racial mixing as upon a dislike of Empire; both camps, in Kaplan's elegant phrase, warned that America risked becoming 'foreign to itself'. It was just such a fear, she suggests, that sentimental fiction, which turns the world into a series of domestic and foreign fronts, attempts to manage. The Supreme Court's judgement unconsciously borrowed the language of this fiction, relying heavily on the mutually constitutive relation between domestic and foreign - terms that are, Kaplan reminds us, 'imbued with racialised and gendered associations of home and family, outsiders and insiders, subjects and citizens'.

Kaplan most clearly shows the poverty of an approach which eschews rhetorical reading in her chapter on the historical romances of the 1890s. Romance, not realism, dominated the earliest bestseller lists from 1895-1902, suggesting that the demarcation of the period as the age of realism may need to be revised. Critics have long dismissed popular romance as a nostalgic escape from modernity, but Kaplan deftly shows that this approach ignores the ways in which nostalgia is itself part of the workings of imperialism. 'To call these novels escapist,' she suggests, 'is to show not their avoidance of contemporary political discourse, but their reproduction of it.' The plots of these romances follow a predictable form: an American hero intervenes to save an unknown and usually unimportant small nation, laughingly declines the antiquated position of emperor or king, marries the heroine, and brings her home. In preferring commercial to colonial rule, suggests Kaplan, the hero exercises 'a less direct and more complete control over the realm he has liberated'; he makes the whole world a potential home and quells its menacing foreignness, enacting 'the US fantasy of global conquest without colonial annexation.' Albert Memmi was to call this the ultimate imperial desire: a colony rid of the colonised.

Many journalistic accounts of the Spanish-American War, Kaplan maintains, followed the script of these historical romances, 'in which a woman serves both as the damsel in distress for the hero to rescue and as the eyes of the world for which masculinity is performed.' 1898 was represented in the yellow press as a chivalrous rescue, the only problem being that the Cubans - poor, Catholic, non-white - were quickly deemed not worth rescuing. A substitute was needed, a role ultimately supplied by America itself. The Spanish-American War was presented as a theatrical spectacle, a 'splendid

little war', with top billing belonging to Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders (soon to be immortalised in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show). The battle for San Juan Hill, as Kaplan points out, was largely a stage-managed affair, and Roosevelt's account of that battle an astonishingly modern piece of spin. A repeated theme of reports from the battlefield was of the invisibility of Spanish soldiers and Cuban insurgents, and of the almost suicidal conspicuousness of the American troops. 'I ask where is the Cuban nation,' reported one journalist. 'There is no Cuba. There is no Cuban people. There are no freemen here to whom we could deliver this marvellous land.' The Iraqi people have proved equally reluctant to celebrate their own recent liberation. In the summer of 2003 the US media had to rely on the staged rescue of an American, Private Jessica Lynch, who proved a compelling - and conveniently silent - substitute for actual liberated Iraqis. The liberation of Private Lynch exemplifies the theatrical logic of American Empire, and repeats, in microcosm, one of the most revealing episodes of the war of 1898 - the mock battle of Manila. American and Spanish forces contrived to fake a battle for the Philippine capital in order to allow US forces to reach the city ahead of Filipino guerillas and thus ensure that Spanish rule would be replaced by American. The plan almost backfired when Filipino forces, reacting to the shots they heard, began firing themselves, and thus the theatre of war became real.

The episode demonstrates how little the aim of the war of 1898 had to do with toppling a corrupt Spanish empire. Instead, *The Anarchy of Empire* argues, the war fought to restore health and vigour to a country still suffering from the wounds of the Civil War. The bodily metaphor is appropriate, as the 1890s saw US power redefined as disembodied. With the closing of the frontier in 1893 contiguous territorial expansion was at an end, and American Empire became largely a matter of invisible economic and political power taking visible cultural forms. Kaplan's account challenges the simplistic if compelling narrative offered in Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's *Empire*, which demarcates contemporary globalisation (which they associate with Woodrow Wilson) from territorial imperialism (associated with Roosevelt). Far from 'materialising before our very eyes,' as Hardt and Negri's famous opening has it, Empire, Kaplan suggests, has always been with us. Territorial occupation has rarely been the preferred strategy of American Empire, which has often preferred the stealth work of culture to the visibility of military action. The work done by fiction, film, and the press in spreading American 'values', in other words, has been crucial to the work of Empire. Such an argument, of course, necessarily raises the stakes for cultural critique. *The Anarchy of Empire* acknowledges those stakes, and in its laudable attention to narrative form, offers an important alternative to the wilful know-nothingness of historicists like Rowe, whose disdain for the politics of form is ultimately self-defeating. Language, Queen Isabella is famously supposed to have said, is the perfect instrument of Empire; attention to form, Kaplan's new book reminds us, remains the best instrument we have for understanding this language.

# THINKING OF ENGLAND: SLAVERY AND SEXUALITY

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*Stephen Shapiro*

Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, 478pp; £35 cloth.

Marcus Wood's *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* is a heavy book. Not heavy just from its length, or the sombre nature of its topic, but thick with the weight of the future books that will evolve from Wood's research. Through roughly chronological readings of late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century English fictional and discursive writing, Wood analyses how 'the mental state of the white witness' of black slave bodies in pain was increasingly represented through erotically-charged codes. The book displays the extent to which perceptions of slavery saturated the contemporaneous (and later) consciousness of English writers, even as these were displaced onto other (class and gender) situations of exclusion. While one might take issue with some local readings or aspects of its larger theoretical and historical claims, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* will surely act as a future reference point for Romantic Studies for placing slavery and sexuality firmly at the heart of the period's reformed canon, and for aiding our understanding of slavery's continuing impact, beyond the point of its formal abolition.

The book makes two central arguments. Interrogating the discursive and visual rhetoric of responses to suffering, Wood argues that a range of publicists described slavery in ways that drew the emotional focus away from the object of social injustice and projected it back onto the viewer. Wood casts a suspicious eye on evangelical abolitionists' investment in decrying black pain, which he sees as part of 'a propaganda movement justif[ying] white expansion into Africa, and the simultaneous demonisation of the ex-slave colonies in the Caribbean'. Following recent work on the construction of whiteness (by, for example, David Roediger and Noel Ignatiev),<sup>1</sup> Wood details how labouring-class activists, such as Cobbett, undermined the potential for a cross-racial subaltern solidarity by using the trope of the debased slave as a negative example in order to cement workers into a nascent national identity. If plebeians chanted that 'Britons never, never shall be slaves', the point was less to draw solidarity with coerced Africans than to establish the terms of a difference wherein proletarians could justify their inclusion within a nativist imaginary.

Wood's second, more innovative and controversial claim is that the sentimental representation of African pain in visual images became increasingly pornographic during the transitional period between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and that henceforth slavery became a

1. See David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, London, Verso, 1991; Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, London, Routledge, 1996.

constitutive feature of the Western erotic imagination, as seen within modern bondage and S/M cultures. Wood's larger goal here, to use a title from one of his earlier publications, is to excavate 'blind memory' - the ways in which the historical legacy of Atlantic slavery is both submerged and recalled in the modern imagination. The implication is that in order to move beyond the legacy of racist domination, we will need to extricate ourselves from the apparatus of our own sexual fantasies. For many, this conclusion will rub against the grain by appearing overly 'sex-negative' and gloomy about sexuality's potential intercourse with liberation strategies, a verdict reinforced by Wood's decision to rely on anti-pornography activists like Mackinnon and Dworkin for his working definition of pornography.

Wood recognizes the presence of critical alternatives, such as the new pornography studies represented by historians of the eighteenth century like Lynn Hunt and Robert Darnton, and Laura Kipnis's work on contemporary pornography.<sup>2</sup> Hunt and Darnton claim that the eighteenth century saw the invention of pornography as a feature of politically transgressive bourgeois possessive individualism, which used the obscene as an available language to inculcate the regal-aristocratic regime of authority based on caste blood-lineage. Enlightenment period pornography acted as a field for class struggle. As the middle-class was titillated over secret histories of the *ancien régime* court's sexual peccadilloes, their literary voyeurism allowed a pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie to abandon deference to traditional elites while also using erotic sensation to illustrate the property rights of every subject over their feeling. Kipnis uses Bakhtin to argue that by the late twentieth-century, the tactic of class-inspired pornography was taken up by labouring-class consumers of smut for their own symbolic ambush of bourgeois civility. After criticising Hunt's elision of slavery, and bypassing Kipnis, Wood invokes Dworkin and Mackinnon's definitions of pornography as visually performative - to see is to rape - and as essentially sado-masochistic in motivation.

By following the anti-pornography line rather than Hunt's or Kipnis's, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* limits its own trajectory in three ways. Firstly, the polyvalent possibilities of sexuality as a medium for contested class experiences are circumvented to deliver readings that often result in schematised evaluations. Two narrative strategies tend to be presented: a sentimentalist approach which is condemned for its self-aggrandising appropriation of suffering, and an approach loosely called the 'economic', which forgoes emotional displays (Austen's circumspect irony is applauded) in favour of outlining the Atlantic coerced-transportation-and-plantation complex. What the Hunt-Kipnis side of the debate might have provided is the notion of pornography as a language, mediating a social history of domestic class confrontations and internal debates about cultural styles within the Victorian bourgeoisie. Wood's argument that evangelical abolitionists reconfigured early modern martyrology into sentimental displays of the viewer's empathetic suffering is convincing. But if images of early modern

2. Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993; Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, London, Harper Collins, 1996; Laura Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, New York, Grove, 1996.

3. Thomas Bender (ed), *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992.

carnal ecstasy through pain become transformed into the sexual desire within modern fetishism, the historically intervening figuration of the eroticised black body mediates a social action that goes beyond simply facilitating the rise of a romantic aesthetics. The pornography of slavery dialectically inverts the pornography of aristocracy. For the former, black embodiment provides the target for a displaced revenge fantasy by the middle-class about its own historical trauma of being considered worthless in the system of feudal seigneurship. The bourgeoisie's resentment at being badly used finds therapeutic release in racial pornography that allows for middle-class abjection to be displaced onto the black body. The middle-class then productively uses sexually-charged images of slavery as a tactic to divide the lower classes. David Brion Davis, influenced by Eric Williams, argues that abolitionists deployed humanist sentiment in order to speed the onset of industrial wage-slavery.<sup>3</sup> Horrific images of slavery were similarly shaded as pornographic. Negrophobia hereby becomes a means of instantiating codes of morality among a nineteenth-century labouring-class, who - enabled, perhaps, by new technologies of contraception and abortion, and by proletarian resistance movements - might otherwise have made an unruly connection between anti-bourgeois resistance and intimate cross-racial solidarity. Racism, moral reform, and exploitation converge to help contain labouring-class revolt. Because Wood's readings tend not to interrogate middle-class hegemony, he lets slip the chance to provide a new narrative of stratification in the nineteenth century.

Secondly, as chapter titles like 'John Newton, William Cowper and Compulsive Confession', and 'Harriet Martineau, Fixing Slavery and Slavery as a Fix' invoke a contemporary lexicon of addiction, Wood implies that the soul of racism lies within agentless sexual perversion and pleasure found through bad objects: that is to say, fetishism. Here Wood marks his distance from Foucault-informed sexuality studies which argue that the historical implantation of genitalised desire, as the mark of authentic intrinsic personhood, was an innovation of the nineteenth century. While eighteenth-century writers acknowledged the presence of sexual passion, the period's cultural-dominant view was that sexuality was not preeminent among the body's sensual passions. Sexual interests had to be regulated to ensure the homeostasis of civil society, but not necessarily investigated for whatever truths they could reveal about the self. Wild erotic desires were not a mark of identity, or an aspect that needed to be hidden as a delegitimising indicator of perversity. Because *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* presupposes a transhistorical idea of sexuality (again, a legacy of the anti-pornography critics), it leaves tantalisingly unexamined the historical relation of slavery to the creation of the unconscious as a basic category shaping sexuality. In her recent work on eighteenth-century dream diaries, Mechal Sobel notes the convergence between the sudden rise of racialised figures in the sleep-vision of both whites and blacks and a hermeneutic shift away from conceptualising dreams as prophecies (the communicative medium for an

external divine) in favour of a discourse of a “hidden” self.<sup>4</sup> Sobel suggests that slavery was a causal factor in the production of modern psychiatry and its object of dynamic erotic drives. In this light, the notion of a sexual fetish decontextualised from history itself operates as an intellectual fetish - an idea divorced from material relations.

A third effect of the anti-porn definition is that its own subterranean prejudices remain residual within later uses of these arguments. One of Wood’s recurring targets is the poststructuralist-inflected strand of postcolonial criticism, which he feels has deployed an array of discursive neologisms to sugar-coat the brutal acts of slavery, and blunt what ought to be our rightful indignation. Yet at times, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* risks falling prey to a phenomenon that Wendy Brown has noted in relation to Mackinnon’s prose: that the denunciation of the violence of pornography often avails itself of pornographic conventions by feverishly inviting the reader, once more, to envisage the marks of degradation upon the female body.<sup>5</sup> This dilemma reappears as *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* highlights black insurrectionary violence, exemplified in moments of the Haitian Revolution, as a fitting antidote to publicists’ enactment of a false empathy with the plight of enslaved Africans. Yet, by seeming to idealise black violence, Wood oddly reinscribes white masochism in ways that do not completely break out of the antimony that is the object of his study. Likewise, there is a tendency for Wood’s descriptions of pornography in general to end by concentrating on the images’ homoerotic connotations. The logic suggests that if pornography is racism, then illustrations of male same-sex desire present the ultimate case of white domination. Because Wood frequently follows his analysis of eighteenth-century artifacts and performances with a jump-cut to contemporary subject matter, the reader is left assuming that modern gay male sexuality is the congealed residue of Negrophobia. Certainly one of the early targets of queer theorists such as Craig Owens and Judith Butler was the routine conflation of male-male sexuality and misogyny by anti-pornography feminists. Wood’s narrative typology suggests that this older debate has now taken a different form.

A similar concern arises near the study’s conclusion, when Wood puts pressure on Marx’s definition of the commodity fetish to align it with a more psychoanalytic one. Wood’s adept reading describes how representations of Robinson Crusoe’s encounter with Friday are saturated with sexual meaning, and an almost hyperbolic need for Crusoe to bind his body in ways that both prevent his flesh touching the non-white body and fantasmically provide a surrogate skin-sensation. Describing Crusoe’s fabrication of his clothes, Wood recognises that they lack exchange value because they exist outside of the market. Wood then says that because Crusoe ‘has created them with the input of various amounts of his own human labour ... they have the aura of the Marxist commodity fetish, although for Crusoe alone’ (425). Wood continues by claiming that



4. Mechal Sobel, *Teach Me Dreams: The Search for Self in the Revolutionary Era*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002.

5. Wendy Brown, ‘The Mirror of Pornography’, in *States of Injury*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, pp77-95.

Marx's idealising picture of the self-sufficient Crusoe shuts a lot out: aesthetics and sex are placed firmly outside the limits of this discussion, and the slavery relationship with Friday is not considered ... Marx only wants to think about Crusoe in isolation, and consequently ignores the majority of the text and the many approaches to slavery and the labour it contains. Yet Marx's theory can be applied. What emerges is a text that combines a reconstitution of body parts and clothing in a bondage relationship. After Friday's arrival, Crusoe's costume emerges as both commodity and sexual fetish.

I hope it's not simply pedantic to point out how this misrepresentation of Marx's argument matters for a larger historiographic debate. Marx, of course, was not interested in Crusoe at all; the example appears in *Capital* only so that he can critique Adam Smith's myth of the autonomous marketplace. The fiction of Crusoe on the island is akin to imagining an escape from language or cultural influence: it's an impossibility, since the objects Crusoe thinks it is necessary to construct are those preconditioned by the standards of European civility. In any case, since Marx's definition of the commodity is something made to satisfy the use needs of another, Crusoe's constructions are personal *objects*, not commodities. Crusoe perfectly understands the labour value congealed in these objects; since he has made them himself, he has no need to fetishise their production. Marx goes on to discuss feudal labour, which he sees as analogous to slavery since the human body is both a commodity-producing agent and a commodity itself, something exchangeable. Neither vassalage nor slavery speaks directly to capitalism, which is distinctive as a social system not by its use of (racial) domination, but by the exploitation derived from the commodification of human worth through the labour market. Capitalism exists from the moment labour becomes labour-power as it is mediated through the equivalence of the money-form. This point is crucial to our ability to distinguish pre- or weakly-capitalist (in other words mercantile) slave trades that have existed for centuries, if not millennia, from the particularly capitalist mode involved in Atlantic slavery, which places the trade in human commodities (slaves) within a matrix defined by the trade in commodified human labour (the wage relations of the transporting sailors, the workers involved in the textile finishing of cotton or the secondary food processing of sugar cane). The periodising features are important, since without them we lose the historical specificity (and crime) of Atlantic black slavery. If the non-capitalist Crusoe has a pornographic relation to Friday, then to what degree are the obscene representations of slavery a feature of all coerced labour, rather than a cultural phenomenon that becomes salient with the rise to power of the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century? An imprecise use of Marx leaves the door open to arguments that contemporary bondage culture has more to do with the continuing impact





of postfeudalism, in which Atlantic slavery was an occasional, but not constitutive moment.

Wood's study provides abundant material evidence to counter this argument. Chapter by chapter, his interpretive sophistication and thorough command of the research archive facilitate his claim. How could it not be the case that certain modes of 'sexuality', like sado-masochism, emanate from the blind memory of slavery, given the pivotal role of Atlantic slavery in the development of Western capitalism and its modes of subjectivity? The insinuation that 'sex' is to blame here, as a kind of social dysfunction, too readily excludes sexuality's progressive deployment within a post-bourgeois politics.

## THE GAINS OF LOSS

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*Desirée Henderson*

David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, (eds), *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (with an Afterword by Judith Butler), Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2003, 488pp; £39.95 hardcover, £16.95 paperback.

In 1997 I attended a conference organised around the theme 'Life and Death'. By far the majority of the presentations were focused on death; more than one person was heard to remark that apparently there was more to be said about death than about life. This claim appears to hold true for recent scholarship in cultural studies. Within the past few years, numerous books have been published on death, mourning, trauma, ghosts, grief, and loss. Of note are Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (Columbia University Press, 1996); Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Russ Castronovo's *Necro-Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Duke University Press, 2001); and Anne Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race* (Oxford University Press, 2001). These works inaugurate a theoretically rigorous body of scholarship dedicated to investigating the meaning of death, particularly in North American culture. The events of September 11 2001 caused many scholars to turn to the topic with new urgency, and conversations have already begun on the role of loss in the formation of American nationalism and imperialism. It is easy to predict that the topic of death will not be quickly exhausted.

It is in this climate that David L. Eng and David Kazanjian have produced *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, a collection of essays on the many permutations of loss. Eng and Kazanjian define 'loss' broadly as 'discourses and practices of mourning, melancholia, nostalgia, sadness, trauma, and depression' (2) and thus are able to bring together scholars from a variety of disciplines, nationalities, and perspectives. The result is an interdisciplinary account of loss that significantly widens the conversation beyond the United States. Essays are on topics as diverse as the reburial of a Thai icon, the Irish famine, and Cuban expatriate literature. All the essays share a commitment to the necessity of constructing what Eng and Kazanjian term a 'politics of mourning' that transforms the experience of loss into an opportunity for creation and empowerment.

The most valuable work in the collection is Eng and Kazanjian's co-authored introduction, which acts as an introduction to the emerging field of study as well. As the editors state, an analysis of loss is by its very nature

‘counterintuitive’, because it resists viewing loss as simply a moment of conclusion or absence and instead views it as a moment of origin and presence. Eng and Kazanjian write: ‘a politics of mourning ... might be active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary’ (2). This list of dichotomies demonstrates how Eng and Kazanjian want to shift loss from the realm of sentiment or private emotion into the realm of public action, in order to recover its political potential. However, this requires redefining loss or mourning as something more akin to melancholia. The articles in *Loss* are in agreement upon the need to rewrite Freud’s famous formulation of loss in ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ (1917), where he contrasts the healthy experience of grief and mourning with its pathological counterpart: melancholia. Eng, Kazanjian, and the contributors to *Loss* repeatedly challenge the view that the melancholic refusal to give up on the object of loss is unhealthy or abnormal, and instead characterise this attention to the past as a productive engagement with history: ‘This engagement generates sites for memory and history, for the rewriting of the past as well as reimagining the future’ (4). Eng and Kazanjian structure their introduction around this rethinking of melancholia, as they trace the meaning of loss in Western intellectual history through the ancient, medieval and Renaissance eras.

The priority that is given to the question of Freud’s definition of melancholia foregrounds the theoretical investment of *Loss*. Although the essays encompass various subjects and time periods, they share a concentrated archive of theoretical work. In addition to Freud’s ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, *Loss* owes an important intellectual debt to Walter Benjamin’s ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ (1940). The authors repeatedly utilise Benjamin’s concept of historical materialism as a backdrop against which to theorise the problems and promises of memory and memorial. There are several other repeat appearances of intellectual forerunners, specifically Hegel’s analysis of *Antigone*, Derrida’s recent writings on loss (*Specters of Marx*, *Cinders*), and Judith Butler’s rereading of melancholia in *The Psychic Life of Power*. The fact that certain key texts and intellectual figures appear over and over again in the collection suggests a confluence of critical thought. In many ways, it seems as if these essays could only have been produced at this moment as, perhaps, a natural outgrowth of contemporary psychoanalytic and poststructuralist theory.

Yet, if the essays in *Loss* are enabled by the recent history of literary and cultural criticism, they are also weakened by their reliance upon it. The danger of this singular archive is to render loss abstract and universal rather than historically and culturally specific. The paucity of references to works of historical and anthropological scholarship on death, mourning and memory discounts the important contributions of scholars like Philippe Ariès and Mary Douglas, as well as more recent work such as Peter Haman’s edited collection *Symbolic Loss: the Ambiguity of Mourning and Memory at*

*Century's End* (University Press of Virginia, 2000), or Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey's *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (Berg, 2001). This scholarship is crucial to understanding how mourning rituals evolve over time, how the meaning of death differs according to religious and cultural traditions, or why certain practices gain significance in times of trauma. In addition, although the mourning/melancholia question is important and well-answered by the authors in *Loss*, the application of Freud's essay to such varied moments as African-American fiction, the experience of Vietnamese immigrants, and German installation art has the tendency to erase the vast historical and cultural differences between them. The sense of coherence that *Loss* gains through the recurring conversations about dominant theoretical problems and texts threatens to overrun the diversity of its subject matter.

That said, the pleasure and insight to be derived from the essays in this collection is to be found precisely in their variety. Two that stand out are those formed as dialogues between the editors and another collaborator. Kazanjian's conversation with Marc Nichanian about the meaning of the term 'Catastrophe' in speaking of the Armenian genocide of the late nineteenth century conveys the importance and value of the work of *Loss*. The conversation, particularly as paired with Nichanian's more traditional analytical essay on the Armenian Catastrophe, is a nuanced attempt to come to terms with an experience of loss that stands at the boundaries of representation - silenced, denied and unmourned. The form of their exchange (conducted via email) allows the reader to witness their struggle to sort through the language and meaning of genocide, and it is a refreshing change from the conventionally theoretical discourse of the other essays.

The other dialogue is between Eng and Shinee Han on the topic of racial melancholia. As mentioned, rethinking Freudian melancholia is a central aspect of the recent rise in scholarship on loss, particularly as it sheds light upon the process of gender identity formation (evident in Judith Butler's work). Eng and Han contribute to a new area of criticism, which likewise employs the concept of melancholia, but in order to rethink the formation of racialised identities. The authors argue that assimilation can be interpreted as a melancholic structure of identity: 'To the extent that ideals of whiteness for Asian Americans (and other groups of colour) remain unattainable, processes of assimilation are suspended, conflicted and unresolved. The irresolution of this process places the concept of assimilation within a melancholic framework' (345). Han's background in psychotherapy adds an important element of immediacy to the conversation, as it becomes clear how this abstract concept can be seen to play out in the lives of her patients. Moreover, Eng and Han emphasise that racial melancholia is neither a pathological nor a hopeless experience, and that it may instead be seen as an opportunity for the formation of communal and political identities.

Finally, special note should be given to the three essays on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission by Mark Sanders, David Johnson, and Yvette Christiansë. Eng and Kazanjian acknowledge that the Truth Commission takes a position of importance by virtue of its ubiquity within the collection that some may see as unusual (6). This is particularly true given the complete absence of the Holocaust, and the relative marginality of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (addressed in only two essays). The Holocaust and HIV/AIDS have certainly gained popular attention as the two most horrific episodes of collective loss in recent history. Yet, by foregrounding the Truth Commission, the editors of this collection are able to emphasise a moment of hope. What is remarkable about the Truth Commission, as the essays demonstrate, is that it represents an attempt to acknowledge and heal loss, rather than perpetrate or deny it. And while the essays in *Loss* remind us repeatedly that mourning can be complicated, problematic and often unsuccessful, it remains the surest step towards achieving the politics of memory and recovery necessitated by the experience of loss.

## TRANSFORMING POLITICS

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*Susannah Radstone*

Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (The Clarendon Lectures in English 2001), Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, 264pp; £19.99 cloth.

In this enthralling, wide-ranging and detailed study, Marina Warner traces, in the words of the dust jacket, the history of 'the four dominant metamorphic processes' as they have shaped literature and conceptions of the self in the West, and as they themselves have been shaped by encounters with other cultures, most specifically those of the colonial past. Apart from a helpful, contextualising introduction and a thought-provoking epilogue that engages with some contemporary literature, including the works of Philip Pullman, *Fantastic Metamorphoses* comprises a chapter on mutating as a whole, and three chapters each devoted to a discrete metamorphic mode: hatching, splitting and doubling.

Warner's starting point is Ovid, whose fifteen-book *Metamorphoses* sets out a philosophy of cyclical 'generation, emergence, decay and re-emergence' (1). In the poem's vision, Warner explains, 'metamorphosis is the principle of organic vitality, as well as the pulse in the body of art' (2). In Ovid's mythology, the soul moves from body to body, while bodies themselves continually change shape. It is these twin themes of soul migration and bodily transformation (17) that Warner takes up and traces through - as they themselves have emerged, metamorphosed and re-emerged throughout the ensuing history of Western literature and culture. That the concept of metamorphosis has permeated Western literature and its conceptions and figurations of the self is amply demonstrated by Warner's ensuing chapters. Yet, as she goes on to point out in an aside of breath-taking brevity and curtness, the concept of metamorphosis 'runs counter to notions of unique, individual integrity of identity in the Judeo-Christian tradition' (2). With such sleight of hand, Warner all but demolishes those assumptions concerning modernity's - and particularly late nineteenth century modernity's - 'undoing' of the Western, unitary self, and proffers, instead, a thesis which, *inter alia*, proposes that the supposed unitariness of that self has persistently been counterposed, in myth, fairy tale and literature, with the more fluid and labile subject traced by the shape-shiftings and transformations figured by metamorphoses. In the chapters which follow, Warner offers further startling, unheralded and even truncated insights, before inviting her readers to return to and share with her the book's central, passionate

and obvious delight in the many fascinations and revelations of her material.

In answer to a question she poses concerning the cultural ebb and flow of interest in metamorphosis, which, as her study reveals, emerges onto the cultural stage with renewed emphasis at particular historical moments, Warner responds that 'tales of metamorphosis often arose in spaces (temporal, geographical, and mental) that were cross-roads, cross-cultural zones, points of interchange on the intricate connective tissue of communications between cultures' (17). Tales of metamorphosis and metamorphoses of form and theme, that is to say, refigure - condense and displace - actually occurring metamorphoses of various kinds. Moreover, geographical and cultural metamorphoses, for instance, those that occur with the encounter between colonised and coloniser, constitute moments of crisis - as well as, for the coloniser at least, moments of fascination and allure. In Ovid, Warner's introduction points out, 'metamorphosis often breaks out in moments of crisis, as expression of intense passion ...' (16) - and as this study goes on to demonstrate, this is borne out in the history of the literature of metamorphosis.

Warner's discussion of Bosch's triptych of paintings *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1504) which, she notes herself, 'dazzlingly condenses' her themes, will have to stand here for the myriad examples of metamorphic texts discussed in this volume. The discussion begins in the Prado, as readers are invited to eavesdrop on guides' commentaries on Bosch's work. 'As they drifted by,' Warner reports, 'the word "moralizing" echoed again and again, in variants from several languages around the world.' It is this knee-jerk association that Warner's analysis seeks to dismantle.

Having acknowledged that 'Bosch is dangerous territory' (44), Warner goes on to suggest that the many pleasures depicted in the work, '[f]ar from being split by the irrational and wayward operations of fantasy ... could be firmly spliced within a historical and cultural set of events'. Thus, with characteristic aplomb, Warner substitutes for the universalisms and abstractions found in much psychoanalytic criticism a reading rooted in history, culture and the material. Again, with humour and verve, Warner goes on to point out that 'the feasting and play in the painting involves above all weird acts with fruit: this is a vegetarian party, even a fruitarians' bacchanal ... involving ... berries, cherries, strawberries' (44). This is, she goes on to argue, a deathless utopia that echoes Ovid's vital world of soul migration and transformation. *The Garden of Earthly Delights* celebrates the 'feasting and play' depicted in the Classical 'Golden Age', but "revised" in response to 'the first reports coming out of the New World at the end of the fifteenth century' (62).

Warner substantiates her claim concerning the painting's evocation of the New World by reference to the writings of Peter Martyr, a reader of Ramón Pané's *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians*, circulated at

the end of the fifteenth century, and the first document describing the people of the Caribbean. The metamorphosis Warner traces has Martyr reading Pané 'through the cultural filter of the classical myths' (62), and Bosch responding to these tales by revisioning the tropes of Christian art as it encountered 'an Other world, one that offered startling challenges to ideas of identity and psychological continuity' (44). For all its playfulness, Warner's brilliant description of the painting, taking in its play with visuality and eyes, and its juxtaposition of the relative perspectives of microcosm and macrocosm, locates it firmly within that cultural coalescence that was the first encounter with the New World, and suggests that the 'positive shadow' shed by that encounter can be seen falling across this very European work of 'high art'.

Much in *Fantastic Metamorphoses* startles, amazes and draws one up short, but perhaps most radical of all is the book's thesis that the Western self's vicissitudes, as they can be tracked in literature, have - certainly since the emergence of colonialism and its troubles - been shaped to no small extent by the pleasurable, fascinating and anxiety-provoking encounter with the colonised other. Aside from its more obvious interest for scholars of colonialism, the history of art, literature and classics, and the visual studies disciplines (her final chapter demonstrates nineteenth-century literature's recurring associations of the double with new technologies of visual representation), this book is also of significance, then, for psychoanalytic studies of culture and subjectivity. Warner's survey of the history of literary figurations of the non-unitary self, together with her peremptory dismissal of the ahistoricism of analyses that see texts as split by 'the irrational and wayward operations of fantasy' (44), challenges the casual 'automatism' of psychoanalysis, and throws down a gauntlet to those of us struggling to pursue a psychoanalytic cultural studies that does more than just assert its attentiveness to questions of history, culture and power.

What is truly fascinating and refreshing about her central thesis is its engagement with the complex cultural metamorphoses that followed from and were prompted by cross-cultural encounters - metamorphoses that are not (as would be the case in a less nuanced and perhaps more politically correct work) simply damned, but evoked and savoured in all their richness and detail. At the same time, Warner does not forget the atrocities that constituted colonialism: '[T]he encounter with the Americas seems to me one of the most transformative experiences of history, and not only on the original peoples there, whose lives were utterly altered - and in so many ways shattered and destroyed' (19). Nor does she forget to remind her readers - pithily, acerbically, even - of the underlying power relations that subtended these metamorphoses, and of the annihilations and destruction wreaked upon the colonised by the colonisers. But this is not a book *about* the crises of the colonised so much as it is about cultural transformations wrought by and within cross-cultural encounters,





and the ways in which the 'stuff' of those encounters might, by the colonisers, be made to speak of their treacherous enterprise: 'The imperial enterprise,' writes Warner, 'was an incubus, and recognized the lineaments of its work in the zombie; loss of soul was a precondition - and a consequence of slavery, and not only for its first victims. The zombie,' she suggests further, 'is not simply a product of a different psychological approach to mental illness; it is a literary expression of political clashes and their effects' (25).

The suggestiveness and, I would say, the ambiguity of this passage beg questions: could this passage be read as an *apologia* on behalf of the coloniser, whose culture, Warner posits, borrowed from the myths and religions of the colonised and read them through its own cultural lens in order, in a sense, to attest its own violence? Warner explains that she wishes to complicate that version of history (and psychoanalysis, and philosophy) which focuses only on the horror elicited by the Other, and to replace that narrative with an acknowledgement of the 'positive shadow' cast by the culture of the colonised:

... the new and the strange do not always shock; they can lure, they can delight. The Other in history has exercised a huge power of attraction, not repulsion, and overturning the metaphors of shock, alarm, terror and recoil that trammel critical discussion of this inaugural confrontation of modernity can change the way memory-work reckons up the balance of the past. The change in itself can then stretch and deepen the language of pleasure (20).

Yet this is a passage that leaves me a little uneasy, for an appreciation of the West's pleasure in, as well as fear of, the Other may constitute a re-balancing of the past of the coloniser - but hardly of the colonised. Warner suggests that she wants to follow Gilroy's call for a redrafting of history 'that moves away from a model of clashing oppositions to one of coalescence - turbulent, disgraceful, riven with inequalities, of course, but nevertheless mutual in the sense that those who are done to also do ...' (20). But *Fantastic Metamorphoses* does not engage with the 'doing' of those that were done to, only with mutations in Western culture consequent on *its* encounter with the Other. This, supposedly, is a cultural 'doing' by the colonised culture of a more attenuated kind. But is it? Passages such as those quoted above open up ambiguities and themselves *remain* ambiguous, in ways that are at once fruitful and a little frustrating. In the end, the book's politics are perhaps too nuanced to be done justice to by their slightly sketchy elaboration. This is, perhaps, a book which is itself open to more than one interpretation.

Though I might have wished, then, for a version of *Fantastic Metamorphoses* that gave more space to analysis, and a more detailed and lengthier exposition of the highly charged asides, almost, in which Warner



delivers her central thesis concerning colonisation and its relation to metamorphoses, this would be to wish for a different book by a different author: for who else could flit so lightly and yet so incisively from paintings of 'Leda and the Swan' to zombies and butterflies, dioramas and Ovidian myths, Jean Rhys, James Hogg and Lewis Carroll? And who else could demonstrate, all the while, that this plethora of 'fantastic' material has sprung from cultural coalescences that, born out of the material reality of colonialism, have shaped literary metamorphoses and their ways of telling the self?

## REALITY MAKEOVER

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*A. R. Biressi*

Sam Brenton and Reuben Cohen, *Shooting People: Adventures in Reality TV*, Verso, London, 2003, 184pp; £12 hardback.

Reality TV is now a transnational and multimillion-pound industry. It creates 'event television' whose novelty lies in its hybrid formats and its deployment of real people and unscripted storylines. Although reality programming is frequently trivial and innocuous, there are times when it has deliberately chosen to expose its contestants' genuine physical or psychological distress. For example, following 11 September 2001 the US *Big Brother* chose to inform one housemate live on air that her cousin was missing. Packing the evening schedules since the late 1990s, reality programming has had continuously to push back the boundaries of the representation of the real - real life and real emotions - in order to sustain its domination of the marketplace. Consequently, the recent inclusion of such dubious reality spectacles as extended public starvation (David Blaine in *Above the Below*), live Russian roulette (*Derren Brown Plays Russian Roulette*) and near death from hypothermia (*Chasing Chris Ryan*) has raised the bar of acceptable representation. In this context, the need for serious politicised engagement with the ethics and practice of reality TV becomes ever more pressing.

Sam Brenton and Reuben Cohen's book *Shooting People* takes on just such a task. It begins with the 1997 story of Sinisa Savija, who committed suicide following his eviction from the Swedish reality programme *Expedition Robinson*. Savija instinctively knew that reality challenge shows are not simply light-hearted entertainment but public popularity contests that expose and potentially humiliate their subjects, and that he - a Bosnian refugee who was never going to fit in seamlessly with the other participants - had been publicly exposed as a loser. Savija's story, although an extreme example, demonstrates the uncomfortable and questionable terrain on which reality game shows, in particular, operate. It has been suggested that reality TV has nothing to do with reality and everything to do with TV. This is only partially true; for as this book argues, real people have become the fodder of an industry erroneously regarded as harmless.

Chapter 1 begins by signalling the ways in which reality TV, as the ratings event of the new century, has become the ground upon which cultural values are being disputed. The liberal intelligentsia have fought an increasingly rearguard action against TV's 'dumbing down', with Germaine Greer lamenting its new shiny barbarism and Salman Rushdie condemning the

‘unashamed self-display of the talentless’. Although far from elitist themselves, Brenton and Cohen pursue the argument that reality TV is a degradation of the documentary form and the values that underpin it. Consequently, Chapter 2 tracks the antecedents of reality TV, exploring the development of the ‘discourse of sobriety’ that was to occupy the high ground of documentary film and TV production up until the late 1980s. It points to the gaps between documentary pioneer John Grierson’s politicised ideal to inspire ‘tougher ways of thought and feeling’ in the people, and the generalised perception that - for the majority - documentaries reeked of ‘dust and boredom’. Despite this inability to engage mass audiences, the Griersonian ethos became embedded in the public service culture of British broadcasting, which dedicated itself to education and information above all else. Other documentary approaches, inflected through American ‘direct cinema’ and French ‘*cinéma-vérité*’, came on board later and presaged the intensively observational and less didactic popular factual programming of the 1980s such as ‘docusoaps’. These series, the first documentaries on British TV to break out of the ghetto of minority interest programming, privileged the private over the public sphere, the personal over the political, the ordinary person over the expert, and the confessional mode over the informative. As such they dovetailed neatly with the ubiquitous discourses of therapy culture already evident in daytime talk shows, video diaries and tabloid celebrity exposés, and anticipated the intimate and observational forms of reality game shows such as *Big Brother* and *Survivor*. For these authors an emphasis on trivia and emotionalism inaugurated a decline in industry standards for documentary programming. Although these new style programmes revived the industry, for some the cost was too high.

Chapter 3 looks at the format wars that ensued in the wake of the success of new formats such as *Big Brother* and *Survivor*. It locates reality TV within a ‘postdocumentary culture’; a radically altered cultural and economic setting which includes the erosion of distinctions between the public and the private sphere, documentary and entertainment. Here the authors cover new ground in the debates about reality programming by stressing the economic power and reach of the reality industry and by exploring the disputes about intellectual copyright and syndication. Media corporations have found their influence reinforced by the success of these formats. Indeed the economic impact of these shows on other countries is such that the producers of the American *Survivor* were able to request a no-fly zone over the island on which they were filming. The capacity to export formats and adapt them to the culture of their host countries and to win large audiences across national borders has rendered reality TV the very model of global success. Their commercial achievement is also rooted in their timely appearance at a moment when the spread and popular uptake of new audio-visual technologies mean that more schedules need filling, and filling at the lowest possible cost.

But the authors argue that while the financial cost to producers is

moderate, the emotional cost to reality TV subjects can be unreasonable. The second half of the book examines more closely the programmes in which contestants take part; considering how the highly contrived conditions of reality 'gameworlds' exert psychological pressure by manipulating social interaction. They begin by recalling the notorious Stanford Prison Experiment of 1971, in which volunteers, allocated the roles of guards and prisoners, quickly succumbed to the strain of such pressurised, controlled conditions. The Stanford project, along with other social experiments, influenced the design of reality programming - most explicitly, of course, in the form of the BBC's reality programme *The Experiment* (which convened its own ethics panel chaired by MP Lembik Opik). The contestants of these shows are ostensibly supported by an infrastructure of expertise, in the form of preliminary screening through psychometric tests, interviews with psychiatrists, observation by psychologists, expert debriefing and so on. The argument here is that these experts operate superficially, lending a gloss of social value and respectability to the show, and - ultimately - that they are simply developing their careers as media dons with little regard to ethics.

The irony is that despite this exhibition of care towards contestants, many of these shows choose to exert psychological pressure and physical fear. Shows such as *The Chair* and *The Chamber* (titles which recall modes of capital punishment), *Fear Factor* and *Survivor* demand that subjects face circles of fire, crocodiles and snakes and undergo endurance tests including managing with very little food or standing in the baking sun. As such they suggest that satires such as *Series 7: the Contender* in which reality contestants kill each other for the prize are increasingly proximate to contemporary entertainment. *Shooting People* takes this issue seriously, dismantling the legal notion of 'informed consent' and the therapeutic support that sustains and legitimises these formats.

Overall, this is a useful, albeit highly sceptical and one-sided intervention into current debates about the ethics and practices of the reality TV industry. Its attention to these areas is a valuable supplement to the prevailing focus in academic studies on reality programmes as a populist and popular format. In looking to the future, the book's conclusion points to the growing generic confusion of media and politics in which political campaigning, military communications and reportage are becoming more entertainment-led and increasingly incorporated into new hybrid reality formats. It suggests that public sphere issues, which require serious media attention, will begin to receive the reality TV makeover, denuding them of meaning and disarming citizens of the understanding they need to make informed decisions. This is certainly one of the more troubling directions of new reality programming, and a sign that more work will be needed in this area.

## BOOKNOTES

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John Schad (ed), *Writing the Bodies of Christ: The Church from Carlyle to Derrida*, Ashgate, Aldershot and Burlington, 2001, 180pp; £37.50 hardback .

Editing a book requires strong nerves. How will the contributors fit together? To what extent can they be prodded by the editor in the direction of the chosen topic? How much dialogue should be initiated with contributors during the writing process? And, when the manuscripts finally arrive, how may an editor tactfully initiate desirable modifications without ruffling proprietorial feathers? Balancing these concerns is not easy. The more contributors you have, the more chance of broad coverage you achieve. By the same token, the more contributors you have, the more risk you run of producing a curate's egg.

How many of these dilemmas did John Schad experience? Quite a few, I suspect. Nevertheless, his achievement in drawing together such disparate essays is considerable. Schad's vision for the book is outlined in a skillful introduction, which sets out the basis for its titular pluralisation of the body of Christ. The only singular body of Christ is that of the historical Jesus of the incarnation, whose flesh and DNA (as with any human being) contains the imprint of his uniqueness. (Yet even this body is recuperated after death into triadic origins in Trinitarian formulations, an extension not much discussed in this volume.) In other contexts, Christ's body comes to denote, variously, the Eucharist, the bodies of those in pain or, in Pauline theology, the corpus of believers. It is this latter meaning upon which the volume focuses. Hence, as Schad explains: 'When it comes to the body of Christ the volume will always see double at least, if only because the church is itself a multiple or fragmented body' (1).

Further, the volume aims to mediate that fractured identity through selected bodies of writing which have engaged with it, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (the time, it is argued, when the church began to 'vanish into print' (3), when *ecclesia* ceded to *écriture*). Unsurprisingly, Derrida looms large in the volume (notably in Schad's own stimulating essay on 'Joycing Derrida, Churching Derrida'). There are sustained considerations of Eliot (by Terence R. Wright and by Martin Warner), of Tennyson (Julian Wolfreys) and a very accessible analysis of Kristeva (by Luke Ferretter).

This is a book, which I found responded best to a spurt-and-browse reading technique. The essays vary enormously in tone and quality. They contain worthy writing, agreeably provocative writing, and downright self-indulgent writing. They also vary in the extent to which they truly engage

with the notion of the Christic body. Kevin Mills takes the brief seriously in his Darwin-based essay. Were I tempted to cherry-pick (which I am), I would point to the wonderful use made by Schad of Laurotti Tommaso's painting *The Triumph of Christianity, or the Exaltation of the Faith* (the Church Triumphant is notably absent from the book's three sub-divisions, which are entitled 'The Church Militant', 'The Church (In)visible', and 'The Church Subjective'); the essay by Willy Maley on Engels's 'On the History of Early Christianity', which gets the book off to a rattling start; and Slavoj Žižek's essay, 'Christ's Breaking of the "Great Chain of Being"'. This is a brief but brilliant engagement with that nagging paradox: *why* did Christ's body have to be a ransom for human misdemeanour? In a volume in which the postmodernist mantras of 'disruption', 'resistance', and 'subversion' can occasionally induce dyspepsia, this essay *insists* with its why-questions: *why* could not a loving God simply forgive us directly? *Why* should an all-powerful God feel the need to impress humans with the sacrifice of his son? Žižek's exploration of how that 'chain of crime and punishment/retribution' is broken by Christ's 'readiness to self-erasure' is for me the high point of this volume.

By the end, you have to take off your biretta to Schad. Just as the reader is wondering what to make of such diversity, Schad anticipates the thought, and turns it to advantage: 'We have seen, for example, the church as an hippopotamus, a panopticon, a telephone exchange, a pharmacy, a fold in the mist, a secret, a crowd, and even cloth. The lesson is that on the page, in the mind of the writer, the church can become almost anything' (177). But then *ecclesia*, despite propaganda, has always been a pretty raggle-taggle company; the barque of Peter has never been truly ship-shape.

Mary Bryden

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (The Wellek Library Lectures Series), New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, 140pp; £16.00 cloth.

Spivak calls her latest book 'the last gasp of a dying discipline' (xii). Comparative literature, she argues, needs to reinvent itself in critical alliance with area studies and with cultural and postcolonial studies. In the process, comparative literature will shed its Eurocentrism and will become truly interdisciplinary, while area studies will transform its socio-political agenda (a function of its cold war lineage) by crossing borders to the humanities. Both fields will benefit from the insights of postcolonial studies, while the field of postcolonial studies will shed its arid immersion in identity politics.

For Spivak, both comparative literature and cultural/ethnic studies are examples of 'an unexamined politics of collectivity' (28). Three chapters, 'Crossing Borders', 'Collectivities', and 'Planetarity', structure her observations, the titles giving an indication of her concerns. Instead of

nationalist or class-based collectivities, she calls for more unexpected ones which undo the binaries of coloniser/colonised, tradition/modernity, or male/female. In the process she calls on the work of Jacques Derrida, Maryse Conde, Virginia Woolf, Tayeb Salih, Mahasweta Devi, J.M. Coetzee, and Gertrude Stein, among others, in the attempt to present planetarity as a counter to globalisation. Where globalisation imposes sameness, planetarity, Spivak contends, will enable alterity. Believing that 'to be human is to be intended toward the other' (73), she urges us to track such planetarity in order to render our home *unheimlich* or uncanny.

Spivak's characteristically oblique prose is again in evidence here. She revealingly admits that 'I will do my best to explain, but I am hampered by the fact that I am not out to demystify' (26-7). Instead of offering a blueprint for a new comparative literature, she wishes to create an itinerary. In this manifesto, Spivak displays humility as an amateur activist, but confidence in her authority as 'the literary critic who sees in imagination an instrument for giving in, without guarantees, to the teleopoietic gaze of others' (45). 'Warning texts' - a phrase that recurs here - equally describes the texts she uses and her own. She explains the difficulty of her approach when she contends that 'the project of translating culture within the politics of identity is not a quick fix' (89). Therefore literary studies must take the 'figure' as its guide (71). The meaning of the figure is undecidable, but we must try to read its indecipherability without literalising it. J.M. Coetzee's refusal to assign meaning or voice to the 'other' in his fiction is a good example of the undecidability of the figure. In the interests of keeping this task difficult, she calls on Derrida's technique of teleopoiesis, 'to affect the distant in a *poiesis* - an imaginative making - ... and thus ... reverse its value' (31). She illustrates this technique by reading Tayib Salih and Mahasweta Devi's fictions as 'transgressive readings' of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. She attempts to link such literary tasks to an activist agenda, such as that of the group *Médecins Sans Frontières*. It is only when these distinct projects work together that planetarity can emerge to fulfill Spivak's utopian vision.

*Yogita Goyal*

Mark Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*, Durham NC, Duke University Press, 2002, 272pp; £15.50 paperback.

In the mid-1990s, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission heard testimony from thousands of people who were brutalized under apartheid, as victims, perpetrators, or both. The officers of the Commission emphasized that their widest ambition was to show how the myriad cruelties of the apartheid system, both atrocious and banal, entered and shaped the lives of all South Africans, even those who would declare that ignorance made them immune. By its own admission, and to its regret, the



Commission failed to persuade many white South Africans that decades of studied disinterest made them quiet but indispensable accomplices of the apartheid regime. In *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*, Mark Sanders's subject is the nature of complicity, or human 'folded-together-ness (*com-plic-ity*)' (5), and its relation both to the silence and inaction of disavowal and to the acknowledgement of moral responsibility that compels an individual to intercede on behalf of another 'whose otherness is scripted by racism'.

The Afrikaans word 'apartheid' means 'apartness', and as a political system absolute racial separation was its aim. Sanders opens his agile and wide-ranging study by arguing that every South African intellectual who defended or challenged apartness was continually confronted by the demands and limits of his or her own 'complicity' - the 'essential human joinedness' (1) which creates affiliations beyond the rigid racial and cultural categories of apartheid ideology, but that also insists upon the shared humanity of aggressor and victim. To be silent in the face of injustice is one kind of complicity, he contends; to assume responsibility for injustices done to someone else, to speak out and act against a violence that does not threaten one's own immediate safety, is another kind, rooted in the ethical imperative of 'folded-together-ness'. In his introduction Sanders proposes Émile Zola's 'J'accuse' (1898) as a signal instance of such 'responsibility-in-complicity': with the letter that Zola sent to the president of France in defence of Alfred Dreyfus - the Jewish officer falsely accused and convicted of treason - Zola as a citizen of France denounced the anti-Semitism carried out 'in [his] name', but 'without simply distancing [himself] from the deed' (4). Using the Dreyfus affair, Sanders maps the ways in which European intellectuals such as Karl Jaspers, Antonio Gramsci and Jacques Derrida have understood the 'intellectual as a figure of responsibility-in-complicity' (8), before turning to the South African writers and political theorists whose work helped either to develop or to dismantle the apartheid system.

With care and grace, *Complicities* examines a remarkable number of literary and theoretical works spanning over a century of South African intellectual history. Sanders begins with Olive Schreiner's colonial classic *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), and concludes with the complex form of advocacy carried out by the African women who testified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Complicities* is invaluable for more reasons than I have space to enumerate - though I cannot fail to mention the many translations into English from N.P. van Wyk Louw's influential essays on the Afrikaner intellectual - but perhaps most of all for the exemplary spirit of responsibility-in-complicity in which Sanders undertakes his own intellectual work.

Alice Brittan