

BOOK REVIEWS

*MASSIMO VERDICCHIO. *Of Dissimulation: Allegory and Irony in Dante's Commedia*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Energeia, 1997. Pp.147.

*MASSIMO VERDICCHIO. *Naming Things: Aesthetics, Philosophy and History in Benedetto Croce*. Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici; Naples: Citta del Sole, 1999.

This book is most sharply defined by what it opposes: namely, theologically-motivated, presumably pious criticism of Dante. That might make a book less timely that is published decades after the moment in Dante studies to which it responds and that actually produced it. Verdicchio is no longer (or is even less) alone in taking a stance against theologizing readings of the *Commedia*. Reading the poem as *undivine* has had a certain vogue, and it is a pity that Verdicchio's work was not a part of that. Originally composed in the mid-1980s, according to the Preface, "the manuscript has been knocking on closed doors since then" (9). The work's polemical rejection of Singletonian premises may have prejudiced its reception by North American readers—to whom, nevertheless, it is in every way addressed. As a belated critique of Singleton, its anti-theological ideology is perhaps now stale, yet the exacting intelligence of its detailed readings can nevertheless contribute important revisions and new insights to this line of criticism. There is genuine rigor and coherence in the views that are developed from chapter to chapter and a number of challenging proposals for reading far-reaching significance in what appear to be only minute details.

Verdicchio's overarching project is to correct prevailing criticism by proving Dante's poem to be an exaltation of philosophy, not faith. Accordingly, he reads Lucia, patron saint of clear sight, as rational enlightenment working at the behest of Lady Philosophy—not of the Virgin Mary—to save Dante from the coils of self-deception. The "prologue in heaven" of *Inferno* II contains thus a confirmation, rather than a recantation, of the philosophical project of the *Convivio*. The "noble lady" of *Inferno* II. 94 ("Donna e gentil nel ciel che si compiange ...") who intervenes on Dante's behalf when he is lost in the dark wood is a reprise of the "gentile donna" of *Vita nuova* XXXIV, unveiled by the *Convivio* as Lady Philosophy. Thus the

reproach concerning a "pargoletta" by Beatrice in *Purgatorio* XXXI. 58 would be not an exposure of dissimulation in the *Convivio* of another woman under the guise of love for philosophy—either love constituting betrayal of Beatrice and religious truth revealed through her heavenly beauty—but a reproach for attachment to Beatrice's own fleshly self on earth that Dante should have long before abandoned in order to follow reason rather than his senses.

Verdicchio actually offers extremely provocative readings of specific conundrums that show how whole sequences could have a rather different meaning from that assigned them by the theological readings of Singleton and his followers. The "Velro" emerges as Dante's own poem, and specifically as poetic allegory—a technique for unmasking the kind of greed that drove Virgil's poem, in cahoots with imperial power, as well as Dante's own efforts in the *Convivio*. The hunting dog (*venator cams*), as which Aeneas appears in a simile leading to his final slaughter of Turnus in *Aeneid* XII, is an ironic precedent, since Virgil's heroes are exposed in Dante's poem as mystifications. One extremely telling hint of this is the line listing Camilla, Eurialus, Turnus, and Nissus (in that order) as having died for Italy (*Inferno* I. 108). Verdicchio points out how each of these figures in the *Aeneid* actually dies for greed in some form, and the placing of Turnus between the bosom buddies Eurialus and Nissus, united in all by friendship and fate, disrupts the encomiastic program according to which Turnus as a force of evil would be justly eliminated by Aeneas. Dante thereby questions Virgil's dissimulation of justice and proclaims a new poetics of allegory through which reason can find the truth beneath deceptive images. Dante's book itself, which teaches the reader to read allegorically, is the Velro contained between its felt-bordered bindings ("tra feltro e feltro"). Indeed, the reading of the Velro as a self-reference to the poem is looking more plausible now than ever and is being pursued along similar lines in current scholarship.¹

Linked with this exegesis of the Velro, and in keeping with the guiding conviction that Dante's hopes for the future and for the reform of the world are vested in allegorical poetry and reason rather than in theology and revelation, the DXV is likewise decoded as a self-reference to the poet and his poem. Adopting R. E. Kaske's proposals that D and V (or U, as in "uomo") stand for the divine and human natures combined in Christ, signalled by X, Dante would place himself in line with Christ and the expectation of his

Second Coming, anticipating through his prophetic poetry the coming divine judgment. Verdicchio points out ingeniously that the five hundred and fifteenth line of the poem refers to Dante himself being included as sixth in the company of the wise ("ch'e' si mi fecer de loro schiera, / si ch' io fui sesto tra cotanto senno," *Inferno* iV.101-102). Refusing the sorts of dissimulations that characterize the *Aeneid*, protective of the reputations of the imperial dynasty, Dante is bid to make his whole vision manifest, taking no heed for the high and mighty who will be offended by it. This is what he does more vigorously than ever in the *Paradise*, whereas in the *Convivio* he himself had rationalized and endorsed such collusion with superior power (XXX. x, 6-8).

In *Purgatorio* XXI and XXII, according to Verdicchio, Dante pursues his thesis concerning Virgil's greed. In fact, Juvenal's VIIth satire, lines 66-71, characterizes Virgil as comfortable and perhaps compromised with political power, whereas Statius is represented as the proverbial starving poet (lines 83-88). This interjects a certain irony into Virgil's allusion to Juvenal as his companion in Limbo. By insisting on ironies at Virgil's expense, Verdicchio constructs an interesting subplot concerning avarice in these cantos. But to make this the main thrust of the encounter with Statius is to ignore how irony and comedy serve purposes of throwing into relief the miracle of Christian prophetic revelation being inspired and transmitted by pagan poetry. Verdicchio is so intent on proving that Dante wants to ridicule anything theological that he does not see how comedy and irony are utilized within the interpretive poetics of the prophetic poem—they do not undermine revelation but are its necessary means. Theologically-grounded criticism of the poem is not undermined but stands to be enriched by Verdicchio's very pointed reminders of Dante's exposures of human weaknesses and corruption, including even greed and fraud or misleading propaganda.

Verdicchio finds confirmation for his conclusions in the poetics of *Paradise*. Even the saving of Rifeus "reiterates once more Dante's irony with respect to Virgil and the *Aeneid*." Virgil can only bemoan the tragic death of the one just character in his poem. Like Turnus, Ripheus is an instance of "biased justice that Virgil himself deplored but had to dissimulate for the greater glory of Rome and the Empire" (134). This sort of distortion of truth motivated by politics and personal greed is what Dante is intent on correcting by his use of irony in his "commedia," where "comedy" is supposed to be antithetical to and incompatible with "divine."

Verdicchio helps us recover a rationalist credo that does animate Dante in his discovery of the secular world. But the antagonism of this new

1 See Papka, Claudia Ratazzi. "'Tra feltro e feltro': Dante's Cartaceous Apocalypse." *Dante Studies* CXVII (1999): 35-44.

secularism towards theology belongs to our modern unbelief. The relation between secular reason and theological revelation is not experienced by Dante as fraught by tension. Reason can be for Dante a further, and indeed a revolutionary realization of theological revelation. Verdicchio thus corrects the impression given by Singleton and Freccero, and large sectors of American Dante criticism under their sway, that Dante had to reject philosophy in order to embrace Christian faith. But he himself is the child of a dichotomy between secular and religious culture. In the view of this reviewer, Dante's significance in cultural history is largely due to his standing outside and before this cataclysmic split, with all its consequences for modern culture. Attempting to claim the *Commedia* as *fitter divine* or undivine is our battle, not Dante's. Dante did not have to reject faith for philosophy any more than he rejected philosophy for faith. The *Convivio* affirms rather than what we see by reason only obscurely we see by faith perfectly ("vedemolo per fede perfettamente, e per ragione lo vedemo con ombra d'oscuritade," II. viii).

Resistance to Dante's theological synthesis of secular culture actually has a long history in Dante criticism, one that has been particularly strong in Italy—which may be a reason why Verdicchio has taken his mission resolutely to North America. Especially significant was the attempt of Benedetto Croce to separate the poetic, essentially lyric inspiration of the work from the theological structure in which it had been encased, and which is deplored as a deadening encroachment. Verdicchio's critical approach to Dante is illuminated by his second book, which takes as its object Croce's philosophical and critical *oeuvre*: *Naming Things: Aesthetics, Philosophy and History in Benedetto Croce*, published by the Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici (Naples: Citta del Sole, 1999). Croce's famous endeavor to separate poetry and "non-poetry" in the *Commedia* is not altogether foreign to Verdicchio's study of Dante, though, as the latter book makes clear, any "Return to Croce," by Croce's own directives would have to involve, in Hegelian manner, a negation and sublation commensurate with our different historical situation. It is never by slavishly imitating a thinker that one remains faithful to his legacy. This is both the pretext for dispensing with Dante's theology and the rationale for reviving Croce's aesthetics today. These are choices that history cannot dictate; nevertheless, they are possible and motivated only in the midst of history and its circumstances and crises.

Something of the dichotomizing approach of Croce in his endeavor to separate poetry and "non-poetry" is the limitation of Verdicchio's study of Dante. (WILLIAM FRANKE, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY)

*JEAN LE GUENNEC. *Raison et Deraison dans le Recit Fantastique au XIXeme Siecle*. Pans, Budapest & Torino: L'Harmattan, 2003. Pp. 318.

Central to Jean Le Guennec's *Raison et Deraison dans le Recit Fantastique au XIXeme Siecle* is not just the inherently paradoxical nature of the fantastical genre, which stages supernatural and irrational phenomena within an otherwise realistic framework; nor just that of the *savant-fou*, whose fictional inscription into *fantastique* literature throws into relief for a fascinated nineteenth-century bourgeois readership the "rapports inadmissibles de la science et de la folie" (11). What interests Le Guennec in this investigation of a broad corpus of German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, French, British, and American fantastical tales, is rather the genealogy of this paradox. To this purpose, Le Guennec studies its parallel development with contemporary discoveries in the scientific and medical domains, showing how the genre both reflects and transcends early psychiatric models and theories, anticipates psychoanalysis, redefines the literary hero by splintering the romantic *moi* into a rational/irrational, conscious/unconscious divide, and ultimately signals a nineteenth-century culture deeply ambivalent about modernity.

Part I lays down the cultural context in which the *fantastique* genre emerges. From the very first chapter, Le Guennec adeptly draws in the reader by way of interesting textual examples that illustrate the extent to which the literature appropriates and, more significantly, fictionalizes and transforms theoretical and practical developments in contemporary science and belief, so that in the end, "il y a science et fantasme sur la science" (35). Pages on optical illusion theory, anatomical pathology, artificial intelligence, occultism, hypnosis, metempsychosis, and evolutionism, all offer historical and theoretical overviews that trace the distance between actual therapy and practice in these burgeoning schools, on the one side, and *fantastique* imagination, on the other. If early psychiatry emphatically (Le Guennec never says ironically) underlined the limits of reason and revealed our inability to ever fully penetrate the secret functioning of the human mind, much less cure its disorders, the literary expression of this divide discloses deep-seated anxieties about science, its illusion of mastery in an ultimately unknowable, immeasurable universe.

In Part II, Le Guennec inventories the symptoms of madness through a "galerie de portraits" (126) depicting the neurotic, hysteric, phobic, delirious, hypochondriac, megalomaniac, paranoid, and psychotic anti-heroes, the *insenses* of fantastical tales from countless authors: Tieck, Hoffman, Poe, Wilde,

Stevenson, Turgenev, Gogol, Pushkin, La Garde, Gautier, Nodier, Maupassant, Nerval. The multifarious and spectacular nature of both the psychopathologies explored and the fictional illustrations provided by Le Guennec dumbfound, to say the least, and indicate the extent to which the middle nineteenth century "eprouve pour la folie le meme interet passionne que plus tard pour le reve" (162). Le Guennec situates the protagonists of these tales into categories (innocents, poets, maniacs, pervers, psychotics, and *hallucims*) that problematize the notion of normality — he calls it *l'integrite psychique* — as lines between reason and madness blur. His reading of oedipal metaphors in *Gunner's Jefiatura* (1856) and his pages on prototypical forms of fictional psychotherapy reveal *fantastique* narratives with pre-Freudian leanings, a theme developed more fully in Part III.

Although Le Guennec maintains that *fantastique* literature does not give birth to the theories Freud would develop only in the latter part of the century, Part III articulates the ways in which these tales actually anticipate psychoanalysis, intuit the existence of an unconscious through protagonists characterized by subjectivity, and abstracted into personifications of divided psychic impulses predicting the Freudian ego, super-ego, and id. If the integral "moi" of romantic literature is obsolete, writes Le Guennec, it is because the unconscious, not yet articulated as a theory, so permeates the nineteenth-century air. While the author is quick to point out that psychoanalytical imagery inherits "un arsenal image" from *fantastique* fiction and that "le materiau de la psychanalyse est en soi fantastique" (220), while he compellingly posits a parallel between the reader and psychoanalyst — both are presented with unreliable discourses (the narrator's, the patient's) and, ultimately, the task of sorting out truth from fiction, reason from unreason (220)— —while, once again, he rightly emphasizes the metaphorical spirit of Freudian theory (227), one wonders that he does not pause, conversely, to mention Freud's great formative debt to literature.

The book's conspicuous strengths lie in its comparative approach, experimental empiricism, and extensive documentation. It is especially in this latter respect, with its topography of psychiatric theories and inventions coming from Mesmer (mesmerism and animal magnetism), Braid (hypnosis), Pinel and Esquirol (monomania), to name just a few, that the volume will interest comparative and specialist scholars alike. Le Guennec multiplies his primary literary sources by looking at a broad swath of international *fantastique* authorship, reminding us that the genre developed if not simultaneously, then globally in precisely those nations where psychoanalysis would later take root.

Italy's Ugo Tarchetti is read alongside France's Theophile Gautier and Germany's Erckmann-Chatrian (Chapter III, *Le Fantastique Degenere*), to name just one of countless such juxtapositions. World-renowned works, furthermore, Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, to name just two, are considered in parallel with more marginal texts, either by less recognized writers (Bulwer-Lytton) or by canonical authors not generally representative of the fantastical genre (Melville, Hawthorne, Merimee, Dostoevsky). It is in this latter context that Le Guennec proposes and indeed manages to resuscitate Gogol, whose works he argues quite convincingly have been too often eclipsed by sociological interpretations that overlook their fantastical dimensions (86). These at times unlikely, but always interesting comparisons make up for the fact that Le Guennec does not in this book bring Latin American tales into the broader picture of comparative *fantastique* authorship, although he states early in the Introduction that this body of works is qualitatively rich (14). This, one could argue alternately, is less a fault than an asset in that it paves a way for future comparative studies of the genre. It is doubtless with a view to facilitating such scholarship that Le Guennec provides in the form of ancillary materials a page-referenced index to primary authors, together with several useful bibliographies listing both recent and contemporary secondary studies of the genre, anthologies of *fantastique* literature, and titles of primary works written in French, German, Russian, Italian, and English.

Let us not neglect to mention *Raison et Derazson's* inconspicuous merits. Apart from sporadic typographical errors that distract from the book's otherwise polished content, fluid, elegant prose makes this an enjoyable and accessible read, even for the non-specialist, and promises to provide an excellent secondary resource for university-level pedagogy. (CARMEN K. MAYER-ROBIN, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA)

*NILDA MA. FLAWIA DE FERNANDEZ. *Itinerarios literarios: Construcciones y reconstrucciones identitarias*. Frankfurt, Madrid: Vervuert, Iberoamericana, 2001.

A quick search of the terms "identity" and "Latin America" in any scholarly database of literature is bound to produce an exorbitant number of hits. This is perhaps an unnecessary confirmation of the fact that issue of national identity remains at best a staple and at worst a cliché in the study of Latin American literature and culture. The question, thus, becomes whether

anything new can be said about identity that has not been said before and, perhaps more currently given the present climate of globalization in which identities have become labile and contested, whether the notion of a stable "national character" still holds any sway. It seems, then, that anyone attempting to revisit this *ostinato* must at least either offer a fresh perspective or attempt to chart previously unexplored territory. *Itineraries literarios: Construcciones y reconstrucciones identitarias* by Nilda Ma. Flawia de Fernandez, does the latter but not the former. Addressing the topic of national identity in literature via a fairly conventional method and devoid of an impressive critical apparatus, this study, nevertheless, does approach some relatively new material not yet rendered trite by other critics.

The study sets out from the premise that Latin American literature, in contrast to European literatures, has not traditionally constituted itself as an autonomous field but has instead been forever intertwined with other discursive fields, to quote the formulation of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Identity discourses lie, so to speak, at the heart of literary efforts in Latin America, endeavoring endlessly (and perhaps to no avail) to define the contours of national character. From the specific position of Latin Americans, it means asking themselves who they are, have been, and will be, questions that, as could be expected, meet with a number of disparate, contradictory, and inevitably inconclusive answers. Always in dialogue with its wider social and political contexts, *Itineraries literarios* attempts to offer a panorama of these queries in the context specifically of one country—Argentina—and throughout selected moments of the past two centuries.

Given these self-imposed geographical and temporal constraints, Flawia de Fernandez's study tries, nevertheless, to display variety in its survey of different genres and authors: the book presents literary magazines as well essays and narrative fiction by such canonical signposts as Sarmiento, Bioy Casares, and Borges—this last writer predictably making at least two appearances; other authors better known for their political rather than literary fortunes—such as the patriot Juan Bautista Alberdi; and more off-beat contemporary voices such as Maria Rosa Lojo, Hector Tizon, and David Slodky. In this way, what could seem a tedious replay of the canon is made less so by the focus on little-known works by established literary figures (for instance, Sarmiento's *Argimpolis*) and by the new research on contemporary authors and marginal literary magazines from the early 20th century and the

1940s.¹ This angle, hence, makes this literary "itinerary," feel more like a leisurely country ride through an unfamiliar yet not arresting landscape, than a spectacular grand tour of the monuments of national identity in Argentine literature.

The essays that make up the book (many previously published as such or in slightly different form) have been neatly organized into three sections that correspond to various genres: essayistic discourses, narrative, and literary magazines. While a convenient way to assemble what may otherwise seem like a set of unrelated pieces, the design is less than attention-grabbing and resorts to characterizations that are too general to truly intrigue the specialist: "reflexive interpretive itinerary," "many-faced and polyphonic itineraries," "itineraries of different ways of seeing and saying." This apparently imprecise characterization soon reveals a fairly obvious criterion: the sequence of the essays follows more or less chronological order of publication of the works discussed.

In this historical vein, the book begins in the nineteenth century, with the author addressing the reason why the issue of identity so plagued the Latin American (and particularly the Argentine) psyche. Ostensibly, the fixation had to do with both with the political as well as social history of these nations. A need to "homogenize" the growing population (native and immigrant), according to the author, becomes particularly acute in the 1800s, when a variety of power struggles pit against each other authoritarian politicians against Utopian reformers. In the literature from this period, then, the goal is a normative one, where the idea of an Argentine nation is being imagined and proposed as an ideal to be pursued. The study moves on from documentary literature still addressing the phenomenon of immigration in the late 19th century to the end of the twentieth century, when the question resurfaces as a result of globalization, which seems to obscure, if not openly threaten, identity discourses. In this case, identity formulations have assimilated the images that circulate in the media, problematizing the question of a definite and definable Argentine character.

1 The word "marginal" here refers both to their counter-cultural focus as well as their geographical eccentricity, as they were produced not in Buenos Aires, the obvious center of Argentine literary activity in Argentina, but in the province of Tucuman, in the northwest of the country, where the author herself lives and teaches at the Universidad Nacional.

In the section dealing with the early period and the essayistic genre, the first piece, "Historia y Utopía en dos textos argentinos" examines *Peregrination de Luz del Día* (1850) by Juan Bautista Alberdi and *Argimpolis* (1870) by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. Both of these allegorical narratives display little fictional inventiveness, but stand out instead as treatises of a projected Argentine nation in a period of reformist strife against authoritarian leaders such as the dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas. "El discurso biográfico en la construcción de identidades culturales en crisis," written in collaboration with the historian M. Estela Assis de Rojo, also highlights the history of political conflict attempting, however, an unlikely parallel between Argentine *caudillismo* and ancient Roman history via a comparison of the writings of Rosas and Julius Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*. The essay that closes this section, "Jorge L. Borges y su lectura de la literatura argentina," is of interest in that, rather than approaching Borges's much-discussed fictional and non-fictional works, zeroes in on an often ignored paratext, the prologue, and some of his early essays, which, according to the author, he used as way to build a new "writerly-reflexive space where he would quarrel with the preceding literary tradition and establish a new way of uttering his own [views]" (20).

The period that followed the early dreams of Utopia witnessed the transition to Argentine society that many immigrants underwent. The literature of this moment does not reflect Utopian visions, choosing instead to hold up a mirror to society via the unembellished idiom of documentary narrative. In "Literatura, política e identidad en 'La fiesta del monstruo' de J. L. Borges y Adolfo Bioy Casares," the author points out how this story addresses the rise to power of Peronista forces in 1945, which made visible to the disaffected and educated middle class the plight and the power of the *lumpenproletariat*. For Flawia de Fernandez, "La fiesta del monstruo" constitutes a critique of populism on the part of the liberal intellectuals and betrays a divided society lacking a common project and evincing the clash between high and low. Moving from the class lens to that of gender, space is also accorded to the work of women authors, who, in Flawia de Fernandez's view, bring other perspectives and a new formulation of the question of identity. "Escritura y búsqueda identitaria en tres novelas argentinas" addresses contemporary narrative by Angelica Gorodischer, Ana Maria Shua, and Cristina Bajo, female authors who specifically construct female characters. The author also stresses that these voices also owe their off-center perspective to their diverse geographical contexts (Santa Fe, Buenos Aires, and Cordoba). Two novels by

Maria Rosa Lojo that deal with alternative rewritings of history are discussed in "Mujeres, hombres; pasado y presente en dos novelas argentinas." Still an oblique perspective on identity is provided by another essay ("Escribir desde las fronteras"), which, although it examines the work of male authors Hector Tizon and David Slodky, focuses on their condition as "frontier" writers. This "marginality" has to do with location as they write not about or from Buenos Aires, but rather from a provincial perspective that, in the author's view, differs both from "metropolitan hegemonic conceptions as well as from merely regional vindications" (95).

Two contemporary novels by Abelardo Arias and Enrique Molina depict the figure of the 19th-century Argentine dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas, according to the author, one of the figures in Argentine history who has frequently inspired fictional works in the last two centuries. Both novels, *Polvo y espanto* and *Una sombra donde suena Camila O'Gorman*, resort to the fictionalization of minor historical figures, contemporaries of Rosas, in an effort to construct alternatives to the official version of history sanctioned by political power and textbooks.

Finally, perhaps the most original contribution of this book are the two brief essays discussing three literary magazines published in Tucuman: *Rjevista de Letras y Ciencias Societies* (1904-07), *Sustancia*, and *La Carpa*. This piece serves to document an ephemeral but crucial phenomenon that has become more and more important in the study of literary history in recent years. Here the author specifically highlights the role of these publications as harbingers of metropolitan modernity while not abandoning typical cultural features.

Although the subject matter itself because of the novelty of some of the texts addressed may seem promising, the study itself appears dated in its methodology, and the treatment of the questions raised often leaves much to be desired. For one thing, there is not much quotation of the texts analyzed, and the method of "close reading," a practice widely established in many academic circles, is almost always absent. The critical literature also evinces the gap between academic environments North and South: many of references are to local scholars whose work is not common currency in North American academia; conversely, whenever references to the North American scholars on the question of nationalism emerge (such as Horn! Bhabha or Benedict Anderson), they appear superficial and almost second-hand. Stylistically speaking, it is curious to note that even though the author is a woman, little effort is made to employ inclusive language, and antiquated formulas such as "el hombre" sometimes emerge. Nevertheless, and despite these

shortcomings, this volume will hold the interest of Hispanists as a wide introduction to some lesser-known texts by canonical writers, also offering occasional forays into relatively new material. For the comparatist, it affords an idiosyncratic look at the vast treatment of national identity in Argentine literature, as perhaps not the most traveled of roads but also not an entirely groundbreaking path. (ODILE CISNEROS, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

*VICTOR SEGALEN. *Essay on Exoticism*. Trans, and ed. by Yael Rachel Schlick. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.

Had the French writer and archeologist Victor Segalen lived to complete his notes on exoticism, he might have further expanded upon what he called an "aesthetics of diversity" to account for a myriad of ways that the "other" might have been accessed through a dynamic modern ethnographic poetic vision. James Clifford memorably called Segalen's final incomplete project as a "postsymbolist poetics of displacement," a desire to re-imagine the "other" beyond the conventional language of travel literature—Chateaubriand's *Orient*, the tourism of Pierre Loti, or the adventures of Marco Polo, for instance—and beyond the terms outlined by the Symbolist Movement in Paris. Sadly, Segalen died at the age of forty-one of mysterious causes in 1919 (some say he fell victim to an unexplained illness, a fall, or even suicide), and his work on exoticism has been summarily deemed a "failure" by many notable critics and scholars. The publication of his *Essay on Exoticism* in English by Yael Rachel Schlick, however, has rekindled the debate and drawn important critical attention to what might have been his nascent thought on exoticism. Portions of the manuscript were originally published in 1955 in two installments of the *Mercure de France*, and Segalen's *Essai sur l'exotisme* was later published as a single document in 1978 and 1986. It has generated a lengthy and spirited conversation for years among such diverse critics as Edouard Glissant, James Clifford, Yvonne Hsieh, and Tzvetan Todorov. In fact, one might claim that reading Segalen's work should be required reading, not only because he has been a lightning rod for critics of all kinds—philosophers, poets, cultural anthropologists, and postcolonial critics, among others—but because he had taken and redefined a highly controversial term, confronted the demons that haunt and menace it, and tapped into its resonant discursive power and influence that has become in our times an almost academic obsession.

Segalen's task to redefine exoticism represented a massive and formidable undertaking, one that sought to rid the word of its immediate associations with camels, tropical climates, spices, enchanted islands, and native uprisings, all of which seemed to be forever embedded in the term. He accused Pierre Loti, Saint-Pol Roux, Lafcadio Hearn, and Paul Claudel, among others, of being guilty of this kind of popular romanticizing and located in their singular approach the seeds of cultural imperialism. In this respect, Segalen took issue with his nation's project in empire-building and criticized his countrymen for their degraded and misguided sense of the "other" as a colonial subject. According to Segalen, their misunderstanding could be most attributed to the demand for conquest and new territories, whereas he believed that such limited vision was an injustice to an "aesthetics of diversity" and to an alternative fecund concept of time and space.

For Segalen exoticism meant coming-to-terms with "otherness" as an object outside one's self that nonetheless enabled the self to see itself as "other." Much as Jacques Lacan imagined a self defined against, and inseparable from, the Other, Segalen imbued otherness itself with intrinsic ontological value. From Jules de Gaultier, he adopted the Law of Bovaryism, namely that "every being which conceives of itself necessarily conceives itself to be other than it actually is." This basic premise informed his sense of aesthetics, finding within the concept of difference a means of exploring the sensuous and the sublime. His travels to Polynesia evoked the former, while his experiences in China, and the vastness and immensity that it represented, led to the latter. He wanted to sense Diversity in the ineluctable character of the "other," and to see his own place and time in the particular "'infinitely' granular" worlds that surrounded him. Displacement meant not alienation or abjection, but a form of play, i.e., the "ability to conceive otherwise." This desire led him to draw a parallel to the feeling for nature and the "feeling for exoticism of races and customs" yet with the important caveat that the "other" as external object was always greater than the subject who feels and the diverse natural and cultural worlds that he himself inhabited and described.

The feeling of displacement followed his role as traveler, ethnographer, and creative writer in an increasingly chaotic and fragmented world. Written between 1904 and 1919 amidst the turmoil and upheaval of the birth of the Chinese Republic, the Age of Imperialism, and the Great War, Segalen's *Essay on Exoticism* marked a period of profound disenchantment with modernization and the promises of war and revolution. He lamented the decline of a "pure exoticism" that made difference a sign of wonder and movement but did not

wish to retreat within the elements of modern primitivism or the infantile fantasy of "going native." Segalen's celebration of an "aesthetics of diversity" also remained quite distinct from diversity as understood today as multiculturalism (the corollary that all minority cultures are understood as equal), hybridity, or assimilation. Diversity did not share in the enthusiasm for an emergent cosmopolitanism or the kinds of global exchanges that characterize our rapid movements within the metropolitan center. Segalen's concept of Diversity was far more isolated and personal, retaining a sense of difference that could only be felt in close contact with the "other," i.e., near the self but never merged entirely with it. Diversity as otherness suggested a categorical difference as always-and-already wholly other and thus became an "essential exoticism." Segalen turned to art as a viable alternative to the horrors of Western territorial expansion, which contributed to "Wearing Down Exoticism on the surface of the globe: everything we call Progress." His quest thus resembled the longing for the "aura" or the "enchantment" that represented an aesthetic and purified moment of encountering difference and saw Progress as the enemy of exoticism.

Segalen instead turned to traditional Hindu beliefs in the "one" and the "many," Brahma, and the wheels of existence in order to allegorize his concept of Diversity, and China had especially sparked his imagination but eluded his grasp, thus becoming an object of an "essential exoticism" that occupied his thought and attention during the final years of his life. His plan to travel to Tibet was never realized, though the traces of his intent to do so can be found in his correspondence, his final poem, "Thibet," and his last completed work, *Equipee* (1929). These varied influences make his work a fascinating document of his times and illuminate a new form of modernist poetics that turned to Asia and the Pacific for theorizing cross-cultural encounter and the West. Segalen, however, did not "orientalize" his subject matter; rather he was more self-reflexive and philosophical about his sense of "otherness," acknowledging the limits of his ethnography. He did not feel burdened to apologize for the West but was more concerned with imagining a way to resist homogenizing difference and valuing art through Diversity.

Segalen deserves critical recognition for confronting the totem and taboos of the West and promoting Diversity. At the same time, though, despite his noble intentions, he might be criticized for returning to the language of power and the primal Western gaze in his work. He used the uninspired example of a young virgin to characterize the "shock" and sensuous beauty of encountering other lands and cultures and named this

experience "sexual exoticism." He stopped short of imagining the act of penetration, preferring instead to appreciate the pure and undefiled qualities of virginity from a distance. As Segalen put it in a letter to Henry Manceron, dated 11 September, 1911, "The whole island [Tahiti] came to me like a woman ... My *Essay on Exoticism* will reiterate this sentiment ['my frankest amorous attitude']: the young girl is as far as can be from us, and therefore incomparably precious for all the devotees of diversity." Segalen reserved harsh criticism for feminism too, which he claimed diminished the aesthetic experience of exoticism and was, in his words, "a kind of monstrous social inversion." These disturbing points of view situate his "aesthetics of diversity" in an essentialized and universalized discourse of "otherness" that re-inscribed patriarchy and the "metaphysics of presence." Taken to its extreme, the desire for a pure, separate, and privileged space, embodied in the "aesthetic,"—suspicious of the popular masses and demanding of "monastic practice"—treads dangerously close to the views that would later be put forth by other modernist writers who were attracted to fascism. Segalen's novel, *Rene Leys* (1922), for instance, fantasized about entering Imperial China's Forbidden City and taking the place of the Last Emperor, and one might ask whether or not this engrossing narrative of "otherness" and sexual adventure in fact represented a modern allegory of power and desire.

Segalen, however, did not advocate such proto-fascistic extremes and, in fact, he found reprehensible these kinds of vulgar forms of politics and displacements of power. With so much broad significance attached to his life and work, Segalen indeed continues to fascinate and provoke meaningful dialogue and remains a key intellectual who is deeply steeped in art, philosophy, culture, and the world of ideas. His concept of "exoticism" sits uncomfortably among various types of exoticism and ethnographic descriptions of the "other," and precisely because of this fact, his work will continue to generate controversy and, at the same time, unsettle accepted and conventional bodies of knowledge. Segalen's *Essay on Exoticism* includes some excellent notes, a provocative forward, "The Exotics of Nowhere," by Harry Harootunian, and a useful introduction by Yael Rachel Schlick. The book also contains a brief chronology of Victor Segalen's life, a subject index, and a bibliography of critical works on Victor Segalen in English—all in ninety-five short pages. It is highly worth adding to your scholarly library, particularly for those who are interested and engaged in the ongoing debates on the legacy of colonialism, the subject of alterity, and the discourse on exoticism. (CHRISTOPHER A. SHINN, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY)

*TAHAR BEN JELLOUN. *L' Islam expliqué aux enfants*. Paris :Editions du Seuil, 2002. ISBN 9-782020536257.

D'un bout à l'autre de *L' Islam explique aux enfants*, Tahar Ben Jelloun reconstitue, sous les yeux innocents, attentifs et intéressés de son interlocutrice, L' Islam et la civilisation arabe.

Depuis les attentats du 11 septembre 2001, la vision de L' Islam et des Arabes a pris un sérieux coup dans une bonne partie du monde occidental surtout aux États-Unis. Plus que jamais L'Arabe et L' Islam se confondent avec le terrorisme. Frustrée et dégoûtée par cette malheureuse association, la jeune fille du narrateur déclare son intention de renoncer à L' Islam. Le père ne l'entend pas de cette oreille; il veut, tout d'abord, qu'elle comprenne les raisons qui engendrent la situation actuelle des Arabes: "Si tu veux, mais avant de renoncer à être musulmane, il faut que je t'explique que ces méchants dont tu parles ne sont pas de vrais musulmans, qu'il y a des méchants partout"(8). C'est ainsi que le narrateur s'engage à reconstituer l'histoire de L' Islam dans le but d'encourager son interlocutrice au moral dégonflé car pour elle "être musulman en ce moment, c'est difficile"(53). Fortement inspiré par le Goran, des livres de spécialistes et l'Encyclopédie de l'islam, le récit, sous la forme d'un conte se passe en neuf jours. Il est divisé en deux parties.

La première est consacrée à la vie du prophète Mohammed, celle de sa famille et ses compagnons, notamment Amina, sa mère, Khadija, son épouse, Abou Talib, son oncle et père adoptif, Ali, son cousin, Abou Bakr, son meilleur ami, Zayd, son fils adoptif, Bilal, "le serviteur noir d'Abou Bakr" et le premier muezzin de L' Islam (25). À la vie du prophète Mohammed le narrateur ajoute un aperçu historique qui rappelle en même temps l'importance de la paix et la tolérance, des valeurs que L' Islam partage avec le Judaïsme et le Christianisme (21). Le narrateur dénonce fermement l'hypocrisie et le suicide sous toutes ses formes, rappelle les débuts de L' Islam, c'est-à-dire Hégire suivi des préceptes de la religion et parle de la notion d'*Oumma islamiya* (34).

La deuxième partie, elle, relate l'apport des savants musulmans Arabes à "tout ce qui fait évoluer l'humanité et la rend meilleure" (42), notamment les arts, les lettres et les sciences auxquels s'associent quelques noms d'érudits comme Ibn Al Muqaffa dont les récits, et ceux d'Esopé, ont inspiré les fables de la Fontaine, ou encore Al Farabi "qui a mis en place un tableau général des sciences" (56) et le voyageur légendaire, Ibn Batouta, qui a fait deux fois le tour du monde, pour ne citer que ceux-là. L'époque de gloire et de lumière est

suivie du déclin de la civilisation arabe, régression qui s'explique par les divisions et les rivalités "à l'intérieur de la grande maison"(59), les croisades et la colonisation. Les dernières pages du livre définissent des expressions telles que "intégriste," "islamiste," "fondamentaliste," "djihad," "fatwa," "chari'a," et "taliban" qui font la une de l'actualité à l'heure actuelle.

Jelloun réactualise la morphologie du conte traditionnel dans ce récit qui obéit aux règles du conte sur plusieurs plans notamment les formules initiales et finales, l'interaction incessante entre le narrateur/conteur et son interlocutrice, le caractère didactique et divertissant, l'actualité du sujet et le choix des protagonistes. La technique narrative qu'emploie Jelloun soutient l'histoire relatée avec une sensibilité minutieuse. Par exemple, le titre du livre qui en indique l'intérêt place les enfants au cœur de son imaginaire: "je raconte l'islam et la civilisation arabe à mes enfants nés musulmans, à tous les enfants quels que soient leur pays, leur origine, leur religion, leur langue et aussi leurs espérances"(14). L'écrivain ne passe pas par quatre chemins pour annoncer son projet. Il adopte la technique du conte, puisqu'il est conscient du fait que cette forme narrative sied très bien aux enfants aussi bien qu'aux adultes: "Je vais vous raconter l'histoire de cette religion comme un conte" (15).

Ce petit livre brille par une clarté de style digne des grands conteurs et exprime avec force l'intention de l'auteur confirmant éloquentement l'idée que tout ce qui touche à la société concerne aussi l'écrivain francophone comme Tahar Ben Jelloun. En revisitant les préceptes fondamentaux de l'Islam sous le prétexte de la tragédie du 11 septembre 2001 qu'il condamne sans ambiguïté, son ouvrage redore le blason de l'Islam et des Arabes, en même temps qu'il rétablit leurs rapports avec le reste du monde. *L' Islam explique aux enfants* est sans aucun doute une belle œuvre d'art culturelle qui constituerait un champ d'études d'une richesse inestimable aussi bien dans l'enseignement secondaire qu'à l'université. (KARIM SAGNA, EARLHAM COLLEGE)

*STEPHANIE NEWELL, ed. *Readings in African PopularFiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

The 15 June 2006 issue of *The Manica Post*, a Zimbabwean provincial weekly newspaper, leads with a bizarre story about an ongoing saga of young girls being handed over to the family of a man murdered eleven years previously, in order to appease his spirit, his *ngozi*. The *ngozi* had made itself manifest here in a python on someone's fireplace, there in the form of a baboon: "It is

believed that the baboon said a few words before departing for the mountains." The man, it is alleged, was murdered by business rivals so that they could glean financial leverage from certain of his body parts.

The theme of traditional belief systems clashing with—or being used to enhance—the social practices of modernity, allied with the abuse of women within various love entanglements, seems to be the central thread of this issue. "Society must protect the girl child," proclaims one headline, another that "Government supports the empowerment of women." Immediately below that, however, we read about "The cancer of husband snatching among women": "Some women are very materialistic: they want flashy clothes, cars and money so they end up dating rich men who are usually married." In a related story, one miscreant is apparently punished for adultery by a painful attack of *runyoka*—perpetual erection. He is magically healed after paying the injured party Z\$28 million (not an awful lot these days). The writer of the story marvels, "One could have been tempted to think they [sic] were reading some fairy tale, Pen Pal stuff." Which is, culturally speaking, an extraordinary way of signalling the weird nature of the story, which clearly the paper believes will titillate the sensibilities of its readers, even as it elsewhere explicitly validates the use of traditional medicines, at one point noting, *a la* Thabo Mbeki, that "some doctors are against retrovirals ... and instead recommend traditional herbs."

This somewhat tangential introduction allows me to broach several points about Stephanie Newell's fascinating collection, *Readings in African Popular Fiction*. One is to note the strong overlap in themes between the paper and the bulk of the fiction discussed in the collection: generally relationships -sexual, family, business—a world of what Newell titles "good time girls and sugar daddies" (6). The expression of these liaisons is invariably tinged with local practices, textures and twists, often embodying tensions between the local and traditional and globalising modernity. (As often as not, these tensions are not the explicit focus of the work: this issue of the *Post* carries a long article on the "drum as a means of communication"—deeply ironic given the near-collapse of Zimbabwe's phone system—the drum having "stood the test of time, despite the onslaught from Western modes of disseminating information"—and one has to wonder whether or not the English-language *Post* intends to include itself in that onslaught.)

Second, these personal relationships are largely depicted at a strange remove from the overtly political, apart from general corruption (as a Zim-

babwean government mouthpiece, *The Manica Post* generally eschews the political, unless it is to vilify the opposition).

Third, even these journalistic articles are couched in a sensationalist mode recognisably derived from popular fictional models, an aspect of African popular culture addressed particularly in Njabulo Ndebele's perennially provocative essay, "Rediscovery of the ordinary," included in the collection. Part of this "spectacular" mode is to collapse the potential intricacies of the stories into the overtly moralistic, whether it's to condemn the adulterer, rant against the "racism" of Western scientists who locate the origin of AIDS amongst African chimps, or the promotion of "efficiency" in business.

Picking serendipitously on a Zimbabwean publication also points to an inevitable patchiness in the volume's coverage: Zimbabwe scarcely features, and nor do a number of other countries, though the organisation of the book is regional: West African, East African and Southern African. This is not a criticism of Sewell's selection—a gathering of key critical readings is perforce selective—so much as an indicator that there are large areas which can benefit from the perspectives which this volume now makes more readily available. Fascinating, even dramatic perspectives they are. My own reading of *The Manica Post* was enriched by them, raising another underlying issue, which several contributors address. This is how to define, on the one hand, the meaning of "popular," and, on the other, how properly to confine the category to "fiction." As Michael Chapman's essay on South Africa's *Drum* magazine, and Bodil Folke Frederiksen's chapter on Kenya's popular magazine *Joe*, implicitly recognise, "popular fiction" readily spills over into journalism, parable or business tract.

The phenomenon of Onitsha market literature, which since my own days as a student twenty-five years ago has served as the benchmark for such popular production, focusses the problem. While some earlier commentators, both overseas and African, deplored the dodgy grammar and tinny plots of many of these tracts and potboilers, more recent critics seek to validate loyalty of readerships and local commercial vigour over intrinsic artistic merit. As Newell herself notes in her useful introduction: "Western preconceptions about popular publishing ... need to be displaced in favour of production models that are not bound to late-capitalist industrial societies" (1). One persistent Onitsha pamphlet, *How to become rich and avoid poverty*, Newell goes on, actually "reveals] this literature to be linguistically and generically ebullient, to such an extent that it nearly always exceeds the Western languages and models from which it may have emerged" (9).

The process of marketing popular literature itself proceeds in ways frequently resistant to capitalist-oriented analysis. Don Dodson's examination of the role of the publisher in Onitsha market literature moves the emphasis from the cultural to the entrepreneurial; he unpacks some of the complex relations between writer and publisher, all of them "hungry," sometimes loosely associated in an informal guild, sometimes ruthlessly plagiaristic. The simultaneous tenacity and tenuousness of much of this enterprise is neatly encapsulated in Alain Ricard's mini-biography of Felix Couchoro, a Togolese Ricard describes as "one of the first African novelists, the inventor of chapbooks in Francophone Africa, the master of serial writing and the author of more than twenty novels in French," but a writer so generally unrecognised that Ricard suggests in his case that the term "popularity" has little meaning; Couchoro should be valorised rather in terms of his loyalty to his local audience (70).

In many ways, given the volume's self-confessed Anglophone bias, the presence of Western, colonial, neocolonial, postcolonial or globalising influence is inevitable, but what it also reveals is that such influences are far from being the only ones. African popular literatures' interface with the kinds of traditional belief systems evident in *The Manica Post* issue is rather under-emphasised in the volume, Misty Bastian's discussion of *ogbaanje* (spirit children) in southern Nigerian writing excepted. However, other aspects are richly illuminated. In one of the most exciting chapters, Brian Larkin's 1997 essay, "Indian Films & Nigerian Lovers," shows how Bollywood film motifs pervade West African popular or *soyyaya* novels—much more so than American Hollywood images. There exist, in short, what Larkin calls "parallel modernities": in the midst of "multiple economic, religious and cultural flows," African readerships enjoy experiences which go beyond "nostalgic imaginings of a partly invented native land" (as Appaduria's concept of "alternative modernities" conceptualises it) to a participation "in the imagined realities of other cultures as part of their daily lives" (18).

Film is only one such influential medium in this realm, which borders on the broader category of "popular culture" (one is nudged into reading this book alongside the companion volume, *African Popular Culture*, edited by Karin Barber, whose seminal work is so often cited by these contributors that one is tempted to ask why an essay by her is not included.) Another medium touched on, for instance, is the South African writer Alex la Guma's use of comic strip; along with extracts from other primary texts (*Joe, Drum*, Ben

Mtobwa's novel *Dar es Salaam by Night* among them), we are treated to some examples of la Guma's quirky "Little Libby" cartoons.

The whole volume's balance between secondary and primary texts, including illustrative material from Nigerian film posters, advertisements from *Drum*, and facsimile pages from Onitsha pamphlets, is inspired: a heady mix. While the tripartite geographical arrangement sets up its own dynamic, it's instructive also to read the essays against the organisational grain, as it were. Try, for instance, reading them in order of publication, the earlier seminal articles against those written specially for the volume. Donatus Nwoga's introductory essay "Onitsha Market Literature" was first published in *Transition* in 1965; it remains serviceable, though primarily descriptive, even naive by comparison with the theoretical sophistication of, say, Graham Furniss's 1998 exploration of "Hausa creative writing in the 1930s." Furniss is by then in a position to take on aspects of developed postcolonial theory, using detailed analyses of Hausa novels to expose "grievous distortions" in previous accounts (13). As Furniss points out, early Hausa-language fictions, though produced during the colonial era, "constitute part of a pre-existing and subsequent multigeneric dialogue about the nature of a wide variety of West African societies, and the notion that such a dialogue (in any of Nigeria's 400 languages) fell silent in the face of English is, to anyone who knows Nigeria, quite laughable" (13).

Analogous advances in sophistication might be tracked in the area of gender between, say, Bernth Lindfors's outline of Malawian Aubrey Kalitera's career, "Romances for the Office Worker," Nici Nelson's examination of men and women in Kenyan novels, Dorothy Driver's exegesis of "spatial configurations of gender" in *Drum*, and Sarah Nuttall's discussion of interviews with African women readers of romances, which brings reader-reception into rare and fruitful focus. All these approaches throw fascinating sidelights on, for instance, the extracts from Kenyan Charles Mangua's 1971 novel *Son of Woman* (reproductions unfortunately almost too tiny to read).

In its mix, too, of broader, national surveys such as Richard Bjornson's overview of Cameroonian writing and detailed studies of more specific regions such as Sophiatown (Paul Greedy's more sociological than literary article is exemplary), of the conceptual and the personal, *ladings in African Popular Fiction* covers a satisfying range of seminal essays, and provokes endless possibilities for research. Doubtless other work has been done, and is being done, in those areas not explicitly covered by this selection (Lindy Stiebel's exploration of South African 'tec novels here, for instance, is amplified by

Ranka Primorac's recent chapter on a Zimbabwean thriller in *Versions of Zimbabwe* [Primorac and Robert Muponde, eds. Weaver Press: Harare, 2005]). Nevertheless, I suspect that even scholars better-versed in the field of popular literature than I am will find this handy, square-format, double-column volume of exceptional interest, even inspirational. (DAN WYLIE, RHODES UNIVERSITY)

*SUTHIRA DUANGSAMOSORN et al, eds. *Re-imagining Language and Literature for the 21 st Century: Selected Proceedings of the XXII International Congress of FILLM held at Assumption University, 'Bangkok, Thailand from 19-23 August 2002*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005. Pp.414. Hard cover.

It is a promising volume with a wide coverage of latest developments in Language and Literature written in English. The essays have been put into four sections and the rhetoric commences with the invocation of ethics—very much a concern of the orient. The theme of the volume is "West's marginalization of the Rest." The inaugural essay by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reminds of my own experience at the Eastern Michigan University way back in 2000 with a scholar from Canada. He had made an interesting presentation on the remnants of aboriginal art that had mystical values beyond his comprehension, as per the admission of the researcher himself. He concluded by saying that he had found no clues or cross-references to decode the messages incorporated in those sketches, in the vast body of literature available in Canada and the U.S. Apparently it had not occurred to him that the civilized world beyond North America extended into the South through Mexico to Brazil-Argentina and encompassed vast tracts of Africa and Asia and even Australia and New Zealand! He was excited at the suggestion to visit India to have a cursory look into the interiors of any humble dwelling in any hamlet, particularly in the Madhubani region of Bihar-West Bengal. Even my mother used to draw sketches on the walls around Navratra-Diwali period, in celebration- obeisance to mystical powers. This used to be the most sanctified period marked by abstention and fasting and feeding on fruit and non-cereals for several days. Upon my visit to Mexico later, where every inch seemed to have the imprint of Mayan culture, I felt more and more for the Canadian scholar. Reflecting upon that I feel after reading the present volume, that the East and the West don't meet because there seems no desire on the part of the East to be taken seriously by the West, for exploring it for answers to the

unexplained socio-cultural residue of the latter. It is neither due to the stubbornness nor incapacity of the West. It is attributable to a general apathy fed on Oriental casualness that makes the former oblivious to existence on the other side of the stream. The consequences of such an approach plague humanity and undermine its integration. To this extent English attitude and intrigue as pointed out by Spivak, the high priest of post-colonial rhetoric, could be held responsible for many an issue. However, one feels like contending that it may befit a saint-mendicant to be indifferent to worldly glories but should the worldly stop being tempting? Shall a being forsake its basic nature and instinct for the sake of forsaking. To graduate to stoicism is different from being stoic for its own sake. The problem with the academician is that he wants to maintain pretensions of professionalism while being emotional in his approach all along. The West exports its junk only because the East either does not distinguish bad from good or is not inclined to suffer and sacrifice for the best although it accepts and adopts parameters set by the West! Notwithstanding the above exposition, the West's bias towards the East is as good as a refrain and cannot be dismissed as an aberration. Moreover, "Grounding Language and Literature in Ethics" could be conceived only in an Eastern setting because it is high on its culture-generated agenda. For this reason there is much merit in Vridhagiri Ganeshan's poser, "How many European teachers learn non-European languages to be well informed of the cultures and literatures of the East. Anders Petterson objects to the inadequate, therefore imbalanced, view of the world's literatures because its perspective is decided by western cultural tradition. It is not possible to integrate different national literary distinctions and make it into a representative mode. Edward P.Vargo joins the issue by focusing on returns on costs of education. Such an attitude has distorted the human face of it. "Do more with less" has taken a toll of excellence that comes from dedication rather than from meeting considerations like technical measurements and tools of evaluation like duration, specified content and features. Old world notions of trust, understanding, esteem etc. have lost edge and appeal because they cannot be evaluated in material terms of monetary compensations.

Next to commercial, the political considerations play a dominant role in deciding issues of medium of instruction like that of Afrikaans (H.P. van Coller). His claim that the University of Bologna is the earliest university, conflicts with the general impression that the University of Paris, founded by Abelard in the 11th century is the mother of all the universities! His demand

for an exclusive Afrikaans University also seems out of synch with the spirit of the theme of the proceedings and venue of the Congress. However, Pierra Correlli & Louise Maurer's critique of Ernst van Alphen's French paintings *vis a vis* Italian painter Mimo Papadimo as well as those of George Gittoes (Australian) makes it a rich rewarding reading. Piera Carroll's acknowledgement of immigrants' desire to experience other cultures reinforces the contention.

The section on New Contexts lifts up the spirit of the volume by discussing the role of language in effective communication. Roger D. Sell focuses on literary scholars' and linguists' mediation in effective triangular communication. He recognizes that humans ought to be taken not as cultural isolates but as integers that constitute the whole. His defense of Saussure's positive contribution is the need of the times, particularly against the onslaught of distortionists who have destroyed the soul of the former's findings.

Liang Chua Merita's revelation of Thailand as a "One language nation" and its mode of assimilation of Chinese makes it a valuable contribution to knowledge of the East Asia where so much remains to be highlighted. Esther V Schneider Handshin discusses Ingborg Bachmann's *Malina*, I Vol. of her *Todesarten* project, to show the "development of a language of dream and trauma through which the repressed in the unconscious can speak." Sigfrid Hoefert's choice of "German Naturalist Drama in Film" for satirizing Prussian officialdom could better be called socialist drama, particularly for the pointed accusation of porno and homo Marxism. Sonia Faessel's fiat reads more like a review. She talks of Sia Figiel and Flora Devatine's invention of new writing strategies to make the reader feel for his own culture. This is sought to be achieved by choosing colonial languages French and English as the medium of expression of a never subjugated nation!

It is followed by the section on "Integrating Technology into Language and Literature Studies." This is impressive and timely. Issues like "A World Without Authors," (Antonine Compagnon) and "Literature and Globalization: The Future of the Humanities" (Patrick Imbert) have a common refrain: Worrying over the negative effects of an otherwise revolutionary invention of Internet as an engine of liberation of knowledge in defiance of fundamentalists' attempts to keep the masses steeped in ignorance, it seeks to elevate mankind on the same scale as was done by the invention of printing machine. It opens up possibilities of multi-dimensional creativity of the deprived and the oppressed to flourish even though fraught with the risks of

cross-fertilization and mis-mating. Mita Grosman's concern for the Death of Literature ("Literature Teaching As a Challenge") as a consequence of the end of reading also flows from the concerns expressed in the preceding discussion over the chain of developments. He dispels all fear by talking of bringing "to life the meaning of potential texts." It echoes the usual expression of worry at every unconventional development; "The Changing Form of Fiction" (Suthira Duangsamorn) is a reminder of the American debate on the fate of fiction in the conventional form at the rise of New Journalism (also called Fact-fiction, in the nineteen sixties); "Technology and Literature As the Art of Possibility" (Greg Stratton & Donna Czekalowsky); and "A Revolutionary Medium: The World Wide Web in Peace Activism" (Maria Luisa Antonaya) are in tune with the changing times and seek to refurbish the image of the literary critic that he is capable of meeting the demands of new times: they assure the reader that the present effort is a valid answer to the fast pace at which changes based on technological breakthrough are affecting the perception of literature and language in the 21st century.

The last section is named "New Communications" but, in fact and effect, it is conventional approach cloaked in fancy wear. It is an attempt to reestablish the relevance of literature in varied formats so as to reflect the challenges and aspirations of fast moving times. The "Contemporary Poetry As A Global Dialogue" (Chetna Nagavajara) is very refreshing. It records the attainments of Thai poets at par with those in the U.S., U.K., Germany and France. However, he highlights that Buddhist spiritual poetry has "very high level of serenity and detachment" that balances with "human engagement." In "Post/Modernist East" Theo D'haen and Cecilia Hsueh Chen Liu in "Writing Back to the Empire" illustrate, through the Chinese play *M. Eutterfy* written by a Sino-American David Henry Hwang, the post-colonial misperception. The play focuses upon the West's international rape mentality towards the East. He makes his position clear by saying that "resistance to imperial control does not mean rejection." He finds the presentation of *M. Butterfly* as a set of alternative reading practices. Mithilesh K. Pandey treads on safe grounds by talking of perception and realization of illusion in Raja Rao's *The Serpent and The Rope*, a well acknowledged exposition of mystical confusion; Carrie Villeneuve attempts to suggest a way to better understanding of post-colonial texts in her presentation of "A Lesson in Orchestration and Mastery of Language." Sushama Kasbekar calls the work of Thai writers, a middle class phenomenon. Somotow is a Thai writing in English. Incidentally, English in Thailand enjoys an independent status—"a prestige dialect" that does not signify colonization

as in the case of Indian sub-continent. "Representation in Philippine American Women Writers" (Hope Saban-pan Yu) and "The Return of the Native: Lewis NKosi's *Mating birds* (1986) Revisited in Post-apartheid Durban, 2001" convey that literary criticism remains rooted largely in conventional fertility. And that, no new fissures and cracks seem to have been detected in spite of newer sophisticated tools and technologies being developed and available. However, essays like Chetana Nagavajra's redeem this section by its wholesome approach.

Also, instances of expressions like, "we could speaking from our own..." (134); "She happens be..." (136); "The notions of author and hypertext are they compatible?" (230); "students will have to be lead to..." (237); "would have impossible" (283) and numerous other instances of this kind of new English gaining currency outside native grounds would have to be debited to the Editor's account.

All said and done, it is a good volume deserving a place on the open shelves of every advanced library. (SURESH CHANDRA VERMA, 8KB INSTITUTE OF INNOVATIVE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, NAGPUR, INDIA)

*CHRISTIAN MORARU. *Memorious Discourse: Reprise and Representation in Postmodernism*. Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005. US \$52.50

Christian Moraru's recent book, *Memorious Discourse: Reprise and Representation in Postmodernism*, can be read as a continuation of his former interest in the scholarship of postmodernism. Polemical to those critics who envision postmodernism as a philosophy with no concern for the social and the political, Moraru's book examines a wide range of postmodern texts from a deconstructionist perspective. He concocts the term *memorious* he borrows "memoriously" from Borges to define postmodernism as an erudite machine whose gearing is formed by superimposed texts carrying with them intertextual allusions and narratives from the entire world literary history, in dialogue with one another. This complicated mechanism of textual play, which Moraru takes to be a characteristic of postmodern writing, explains the prodigious memory of literary texts in postmodern literature.

In his previous book (*Rewriting: Postmodern Narrative and Cultural Critique in the Age of Cloning*, State University of New York Press, 2001), Moraru

examined rewriting in postmodern fiction and argued that certain narratives borrow extensively from earlier texts in a polemical way, in order to re-write them, to appropriate them and to change their intention, to correct some injustice embedded in the representation they make out of historical events or to challenge well-established prejudices in their writing. Representation, essential in Moraru's previous book, becomes here the object of the critic's investigation.

Moraru's focus in *Memorious Discourse* is more philosophical, as he becomes concerned with matters of ontology that are derived from his discussion of representation in postmodernism. In a way, the focus is similar to his earlier book on postmodern rewriting of more traditional texts, since here representation is envisioned as a palimpsest of voices in Bakhtinian dialogue with previous literary history. The subtitle, *Reprise and Representation in Postmodernism*, could also read Representation as Reprise in Postmodernism since Moraru defines postmodern representation as a "reprise, a representation of other representations" (21). Texts come into existence only in relation to other texts, in a playful chain of innovative intertextual practices or in a palimpsest seen as a reinscription that displaces earlier texts and this playful writing represents the condition of possibility for the postmodern discourse. According to Moraru, Borges and Nabokov set the tone for the postmodern turn from modernism as discursive reprise, whose successors will be as diverse as Earth, Pynchon, Coover, Reed, Perec, Peter Carey, and Danilo Kis (Moraru 192).

Moraru employs deconstruction as the prevailing reading strategy for the fiction he chooses to analyze and invokes Derrida often to support his theoretical approach. Derrida is the philosopher who provides Moraru with the reflection on the ambiguity of ontology (his example of the specter which is neither being nor non-being in *Specters of Marx* and his notion of *hauntology*). Postmodern texts are haunted by an entire tradition with its misreadings that new authors challenge and attempt to deconstruct. Moreover, the always possible return of the specter allows one to stop thinking the chronology of history and open reader's minds to the postmodern authors who displace historical events and play with anachronisms in order to propose new values and disrupt previous learning of history.

The ontological question gets more complicated as we follow Moraru's argument in his discussion of posthumanity. Related to Derrida's idea of hauntology was Donna Haraway's concept of a cyborg's ontology. In her "Cyborg Manifesto," she asserted that "by the late twentieth century, our time,

a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. This cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics" (Harraway, Donna, New York; Routledge, 1991,150). These post-human anxieties are also echoed in Moraru's book, where we are presented with an entire literary tradition, whose leaders seem to be as heterogeneous as Thomas Pynchon, Philip Roth, Joseph McElroy, Mark Leyner, equating postmodernism with posthumanism (156). Drawing from Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Becket's creatures in *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*, these authors push the reflection on the uneasiness regarding posthuman transformation beyond readers' expectations by blurring the distinctions between reference, representation and receptor, thus marking a revolution in the thinking of ontology. For postmodernists, the object represented is already a textual composition, re-presented before it is presented again for representation. To paraphrase Derrida, reality is already represented to us and this raises a difficult question for the authors discussed by Moraru, who grapple with the "ontological impasse stemming from the postmodern fictionalizing of this world" (193).

The postmodern authors assembled in Moraru's essay are precursors of a new order, for the study of which there is a need for a new ontology to account for the post-human, for the thinking of what is not yet existent (as Derrida noted) and for the erudite mechanism of writing in order to represent that which is already a representation. Secondly, for Moraru, the tautology of postmodernism or its "memorious" dysfunction consists of representing prior representations and the discursive dominant of postmodernism is its capacity of re-appropriation and reprise.

Moraru's analysis is convincing and coherent in its approach, and the authors summoned by the critic have similarities in their preoccupation with the displacement of more traditional thinking of ontology, of the non-coincidence between representation and its avatars in writing, and the polemical dialogue with tradition. Ambitious, Moraru's book contributes to more optimistic views of postmodernism, cultural trend in which the critic recognizes the prospects for a rhetoric of subversion and for political engagement. (FEVRONIA NOVAC, OTTAWA)

*RUNE GADE and ANNE JERSLEV, eds. *Performative Realism. Interdisciplinary Studies in Art and Media*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005. Pp. 294. ISBN 87-635-0078-7. US\$50, €39, £28, DKR275

Realism has been the focus of a number of recent critical anthologies edited and authored by a group of Danish researchers in the humanities. In 2002 a team from Aarhus University and the University of Copenhagen published a volume on New Realism of the 1990's, *Virkdighedshunger* (Hunger for Reality), and in 2003 followed an anthology on the Realism of the Avantgarde, *Virkelighed, virkelighed!* (Reality, Reality!). A third volume, *Performative Realism. Interdisciplinary Studies in Art and Media*, appeared in 2005 in English with articles by several of the scholars that also contributed to the earlier publications.

Performative Realism that features an eye-catching image "Stealth" by Hayley Newman of a naked woman (Newman) suspended in midair on its front cover, contains nine chapters and an introduction by the editors Rune Gade and Anne Jerslev. While four of the discussed art works are by Danish artists, the rest are not. The German performance artist Christoph Schlingensiefels political "electioneering circus" is the topic of Solveig Gade's contribution; the British photographer Hayley Newman's "fake documentations" are discussed by Camilla Jalving; the Yugoslavian-born Tanja Ostojic's controversial personal advertisement on the Internet is analysed by Rune Gade; and the performative aspect of Gertrude Stein's texts is the subject of Laura Luise Schultz's article. The article on LARP (Live Action Role Playing) by Britta Timm Knudsen investigates a particular game *Vampire Live* that is played out by gamers in Denmark; however, the game is an American invention. The articles dealing with Danish artists make inquiries into four different media: Dogme film, documentary film, photo books and installation art.

The exposition of each article is the same; the first half establishes the theoretical frame work, and the second half discusses a particular artist and his/her art work. This structure proves to be very helpful to the reader who becomes increasingly more familiar with the common theoretical territory of post-structuralism that informs the anthology as a whole. Indeterminacy, processuality, destabilization, anti-essentialism and "becoming" (as opposed to "being") are some of the chosen terms that appear throughout the volume, while performance and performativity are the key concepts under consideration.

As mentioned by a number of the contributors, the linguist and language philosopher John L. Austin introduces the concept of performative speech already in 1955, and Peggy Phelan is among the first to theorize on performance art in her book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* from 1993. Moreover, in 1990 Judith Butler's theory on gender performativity in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* contributes to the so-called "performative turn" notably in the disciplines of cultural studies and aesthetics (Gade and Jerslev 8).

Several criteria set out by Phelan are consistently questioned in the anthology. The idea that a performance is live, unique and ceases to be authentic if recorded or reproduced is considered too limited a definition. Through her perceptive and complex analysis of the violent acts in Euripides' *Medea* and Lars von Trier's *Dogville*, Bodil Marie Thomsen for one redefines Phelan's concept of "performance as negativity," and Anne Jerslev argues very convincingly that Sami Saif's and Phie Ambo's documentary film *Family* about Saif's quest for his Yemenitic father is an example of performative documentary that constructs moments of presence and authenticity.

With two photo books from the 1970s by Bjørn Nørgaard and Lene Adler Petersen as examples, Mette Sandbye challenges the notion of "original presence" and proposes that the intimate photo book with its images taken from everyday life introduces a form of performative reception that is political in nature and akin to the poetics of the Situationists of the 1960s. However, because the books in this reviewer's opinion are rather uninteresting compared to other much stronger works by Nørgaard, the argument to defend the banal content seems less than cogent.

Anne Ring Petersen also stresses the bodily and imaginative involvement of the spectator in her informative article on installation art. Following a historical overview of installation, the article examines a piece, "Seven Attempts to Create a Suitable View" (2002), by the interesting artist Thomas Bang. The viewer "theatricalizes" the art work and consequently changes her/his way of looking at the world.

One of the commendable editorial features of the volume is the extensive bibliographies at the end of each chapter. The illustrations are not plentiful but decently reproduced; it is only a pity that the three images showing Bang's work are misplaced although the mistake has been remedied with an errata note.

This highly readable anthology demonstrates more than anything the high quality of contemporary art and literature criticism that has evolved in

Denmark during the last few decades. It also shows how necessary and close the relationship between artist and critic/theoretician has become, and how the artist often is the first to challenge existing theories. *Performative Realism* can be recommended to artists and academics alike who are interested in theories of the new art and media forms related to performance. (MARINA ALLEMANO, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

*THEO D'HAEN, PAUL GILES, DJELAL KADIR, and LOIS PARKINSON ZAMORA, eds. *How Far is America From Here?* Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2005. Pp. 636.

This collection of 40 papers presented at the first World Congress of the International American Studies Association (IASA) in Leiden, The Netherlands, May 22-24, 2003, provides a glimpse of recent academic work from 16 countries on several aspects of the United States (and other parts of the Americas), including its historical and literary relations with the rest of the world. Not quite half the contributors seem to be citizens of the U.S., some of whom are teaching outside the United States. A few of the authors are British, two are Canadian, a dozen are Europeans, two are from Mexico, and one each from Brazil, South Africa, Thailand, India, and Japan. Identifying them by nationality is necessary because Djelal Kadir, founding president of the International American Studies Association and professor of comparative literature at Pennsylvania State University, makes remarkable claims for the historic importance of the meeting that produced this volume, including asserting that the IASA is answering an unmet need in redefining American Studies. The truth is that international American Studies have existed for more than 50 years, although he dismisses much of it as tainted by American imperialism. Courses and programs on American subjects now exist in universities in virtually every country in the world. Few of them receive any support from the U.S. Many countries have national organizations of American Studies and currently more than 40 journals of American Studies are published outside the U.S. The European Association of American Studies (EAAS), a federation of associations from 26 countries, has held biennial meetings since 1953. The publication under review needs to be seen, not as a new beginning, but as yet another venue, and one still dominated by U.S. academics.

The usefulness of a volume of conference proceedings papers rests less on the claims of its organizer, of course, than on the strength of the individual papers. No one except a reviewer will read all these papers because they cover a wider range of topics than any single individual is interested in. Although well over half the papers deal with fiction, poetry, music, or film, the way in which these creative works are read and analyzed varies from feminist to Marxist to racial to linguistic. Moreover, because of the emphasis on comparative studies, about a quarter of the papers focus on authors or topics with little or no reference to the U.S. This is perfectly in keeping with the trend over the past ten years within American Studies programs and academic meetings to extend the definition of "American" to the entire hemisphere. The benefits of mutual enlightenment are obvious, but so are the problems of finding common ground. A Faulkner scholar or a specialist in 19th century immigration to the U.S. may need to know something of South American fiction or Creole culture in Peru, but she may find it difficult to understand all the nuances of the experts from fields so different from her own and she will have a lot of catching up to do. Scholars from outside the U.S. who take up American studies almost always have an advantage over their U.S. colleagues because they begin with a comparative perspective and bring a solid knowledge of cultures and behaviors other than that traditionally defined as "American." When anyone takes up a new field of study there is always a certain amount of reinvention of the wheel. The specialist in one half of a comparative study is almost always disappointed in what the author says about his specialty, while accepting uncritically what is said about the half he knows less well.

I found about half the papers in this book informative and readable and about half uninteresting and jargon-filled. I suspect that other reviewers will feel the same, although they might have different favorites from mine. The papers are grouped into six topics: 1. American Studies from an International American Studies Perspective; 2. International, Transnational, Hemispheric America; 3. American Social, Ethical and Religious Mentalities; 4. Comparative Perspectives, Literary Counterpoints; 5. American Identities; and 6. Space and Place in American Studies. Professor Kadir opens the volume with what can only be described as a jeremiad, filled with apocalyptic rhetoric about U.S. imperialism and American Studies as a discipline in self-denial, and with such bloated statements as: "In a global age of informational hyper-conductivity and even greater hegemonic hyper-power, we have come to realize that we are

simultaneously spun out centrifugally and taken in by the centripetal's lure, hustled by the wizards of spin and squeezed by the buzzards of spam."

Mercifully, a reviewer does not need to explain or respond to Kadir's rants because Professor Amy Kaplan of the University of Pennsylvania and President of the U.S. American Studies Association in 2003, provides a brief, lucid, and diplomatic rebuttal in her paper, "The Tenacious Grasp of American Exceptionalism." Pointing out that Kadir clings to a rigid division between national and international perspectives on American studies, she also notes that his idea of an alternative to the America of George Bush is an all-male pantheon of Melville, Twain, Jefferson, and Lincoln. Kaplan's piece is followed by a more detailed critique of Kadir's narrow definition of international American Studies by Professor Kousar Azam of Osmania University in India, who calls attention to the numerous academic organizations already focusing on America in a global and comparative context. Critical of the emphasis on cultural matters at the neglect of political and economic in the papers presented at the IASA meeting, Azam goes on to discuss current anti-Americanism and globalization, urging American Studies scholars to reflect more fully on transnational and post-colonial issues.

The final essay in the first section is Werner Sollors' "How Far from America is America?" The German-born Sollors, who is currently Chair of the History of American Civilization Program at Harvard University, has written extensively on race, American literature, and American intellectual history. He is the editor of an important book on the literature of the United States in languages other than English, *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature* (New York University Press, 1998). Sollors' elegant and informed paper first plays with the tide of IASA conference and its proceedings, exploring various meaning of "here" and "far." Drawing on recent writing by Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, Jonathan Franzen, Kurt Vonnegut, Calvin Trillin, and Nikki Giovanni, Sollors discusses the distance between the current political situation in the U.S. and the ideal expressed by the playwright, novelists, and poets. He concludes his piece by looking at how major figures in American Studies—Leo Marx, Gunnar Myrdal, Edmund Morgan, and Sacvan Bercovitch—have tried to bring a comparative perspective to the field and how they have concluded that America is not one thing, but a work in progress. This is by far the finest piece in the book.

The papers in the second section begin badly, with Janice L. Reiff's embarrassingly naive account of her Fulbright year in Germany. Reiff, who

teaches U.S. history at the University of California Los Angeles, seems to think that sending Americans to teach in other countries is a better investment in the war on terror than bunker busting bombs. Wouldn't it be nice if things were this simple? J.P. Brits, a professor of history at the University of South Africa, offers a long, detailed paper on "American Diplomats in South Africa and the Emergence of Apartheid, 1948-1953." It is a dismal story of American economic interests and anti-communism supporting a repressive government. By focusing on just five years, however, Britt chews more than he bites off. The level of scholarship improves with Allison Blakely's paper on "The Quest for Cultural Identity in the African Diaspora in the Americas and Europe in the early Twentieth Century." Blakely, a professor of European history at Boston University, is a noted authority on Africans and African-Americans in Russia and the Dutch empire. His paper discusses some well- and little-known African-Americans and shows how they were both popular symbols of modernism in some countries, while still experiencing racism in others. Roland Walter, professor of English and comparative literature at the Federal University of Pernambuco in Brazil, provides a competent analysis of four novelists who deal with migration and acculturation: T.C. Boyle, in *The Tortilla Curtain*, Dionne Brand in *San Souci and Other Stories*, Leslie Marmon Silko in *Gardens in the Dunes*, and James Welch in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. The final paper in this section is Justin Read's humorous "Anthropofagismo and the 'Cannibal Logic' of Hemispheric American Studies." Read, who teaches Spanish and Portuguese at the State University of New York at Buffalo, must have had the otherwise grimly serious conference in stitches when he read (sang?) the lyrics of Cole Porter's "Anything Goes," to make a point about the "cannibalizing" high culture by popular culture. His main point, about the metaphor of cannibalism for Brazilian nationalism, made me think of the wonderful 1971 movie by Brazilian director Nelson Pereira dos Santos, "How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman," and wonder why he didn't mention it.

The papers in the other four sections are a mixed bag. There is commendable work by Mary Kupiec Cayton of Miami University on "The New American Spirituality;" by Helena Carvalho Buescu of the University of Lisbon on modernity in novels by a Brazilian (Raduan Nassar's *Lavoura Arcaica*) and a Portuguese (Teolinda Gersao's *Arvore das Pa'avras*); by Cecilia Enjuto Rangel of Yale University on the baroque in T.S. Eliot and Octavio Paz; by Goniil Pultar of Boggazicci University in Istanbul on a Turkish-American memoir; and by Pedro Garcia-Caro of King's College, London, on the concepts of time and nation in Carlos Fuentes' *The Death of Artemio Cruz*

and Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. The eleven papers in the American Identities section, the longest in the book, frequently suffer from arcane narrowness, e.g., Creole identity in 18th century Peru, or an excess of theory over content, e.g., a feminist reading of Marilyn Robinson's *Housekeeping*. A paper on the way the world is depicted in *National Geographic* in the years 2001-02 is too trivial to be noticed, except that the author unaccountably fails to acknowledge the work of Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), which covers the same ground. On the other hand, Helen M. Dennis of the University of Warwick does an excellent job sorting out conventions and formulae in novels by four American Indian novelists, and Joshua L. Miller of the University of Michigan illuminates the use of language-switching in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* and R. Zamora Linmark's *Rolling the R's*. Three of the papers in the final section are excellent: Marina Peterson, University of Chicago, looks at official efforts by the city of Los Angeles to bring international music and theater companies to LA to highlight the city's cosmopolitan population and global economy; Markku Salmela, University of Tampere, reads the novels of Paul Auster and Don DeLillo for images of New York City; and Dorothea Lobbermann, Humboldt University, Berlin, contrasts the mental maps of Manhattan held by tourists and the homeless.

The book would have benefited from better proofreading and an index. As it is, it is a plausible addition to the shelves of monographs and anthologies on American Studies by scholars from around the world and should be in every university library with the superb books edited by Rob Kroes, *Predecessors: Intellectual Lineages in American Studies* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1999), and KousarJ. Azam, *Rediscovering America: American Studies in the New Century* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 2001). If there is little that is new in *How Paris America From Here?*, it is still a useful volume that gives a sense of what is going on in "American Studies" both near and far from here. (BERNARD MERGEN, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY)