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Reviews

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Reviews

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The Clash of Modernities: The Islamist Challenge to Arab, Jewish, and Turkish Nationalism. By Khaldoun Samman. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011. Pp. 261. ISBN 9781594516986. \$28.95 (pbk).

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Khaldoun Samman explores a number of seemingly antithetical nationalist movements and cultural phenomena from the point of view of comparative sociology. The theoretical framework he operates within relies heavily on Edward Said and is quite familiar to postcolonial literary critics. The book's premise is that the West sees global difference as 'situated in a hierarchy of races and cultures, in which...[western cultures] were temporally farther ahead in time than the Other racial, cultural, national, and civilizational species of the planet' (6). This 'temporal template' is racially tainted, as it allows the West to trap the Other in a different temporal zone that the white race has allegedly outgrown and transcended. The colonized are seen through a 'social Darwinist' lens, which explains western supremacy in biological terms: non-western races are backward because of traits intrinsic to their races, cultures and religions. Viewing themselves as civilizing agents, postcolonial elites of all orientations swiftly appropriated the fundamental premise

of the colonizer's template, but they bent it in different ways and to varying degrees to make it suitable for controlling their own Others. Although they rejected the social Darwinist model of the former colonizer, they inherited his 'modernizing' model, a 'time machine' that can insert the colonized in the western time zone of civilization. According to Samman, those who fully adopted western models, like the Zionists and the Kemalists; those who partially adopted them, like Arab nationalists; and those who fully rejected them, like the Islamists, have been equally victimized by the colonial gaze. In all cases, as Samman shows in detail in chapter 6, women have been the visible signs that the colonizer and the nationalists alike used to measure and showcase progress and maintain power, or as a means to a number of self-serving ends.

What makes Samman's investigation unique in spite of its reiteration of the familiar Saidian framework is that the tools the postcolonial approach offers are used by a sociologist who is also well versed in history, religion, literature and culture and personally passionate about many of the issues he investigates. Samman illustrates the premise he constructs in the introduction by stimulating readings of social and historical phenomena, including theme parks, tourist sites, travel brochures, literary texts, memoirs, dress-codes, grand historical events, everyday personal encounters and feminisms. The juxtaposition of

examples from Israel, Turkey, Iran and the Arab world creates an eye-opening realization of the affinities among these experiences. In lieu of the usual polarizing approaches that contrast Arab–Ottoman, Arab–Israeli, Arab–Persian and Islamist–secular clashes, Samman views all these nationalisms as reactionary to the West’s harsh judgement of their civilization and its constant meddling in their affairs.

In chapter 1 Samman provides a stimulating reading of Disney’s Epcot Center, whose rides and exhibitions innocently but tellingly place the world of western civilization and the rest of the world’s ‘traditional folk cultures’ (21) in two distinct spaces connected by a bridge. The placement of the worlds within the park, the representation of each world (robots, space shuttles and belly dancers) and the souvenirs visitors can buy from each exhibit’s gift shop (battery operated gadgets and toys, stuffed camels and magic carpets) reflect a worldview that has completely internalized the western temporal template.

In chapters 2–5 a mountain of evidence is provided by Samman demonstrating that the same colonial temporal template that produced the Epcot Center was also responsible for the seemingly distinct but fundamentally similar Zionist, Kemalist, Arab and Islamist nationalisms. Judged by the Europeans as belonging to an obsolete Oriental culture, the newly established Zionist state ‘proceeded to remove everyone and everything that they defined, in Eurocentric fashion, as primitive and Eastern, including indigenous Palestinians [and Arab Jews]’ (49). Similarly, Kemal Atatürk, who believed the West’s judgement of Islam as incompatible with modernity, sought to de-Orientalize and de-Islamize Turkish past and present through complete assimilation into European civilization. Arab nationalists, on the other hand, are described by Samman

as culturally schizophrenic. Cultural schizophrenia allowed Arab nationalists slightly to ‘tamper with’ the colonial template. They believed in a separation between an ‘exterior domain’ where science, technology and democracy can be freely imported from the West and an ‘interior domain’ of faith and social customs that has to remain authentic. Islamism, argues Samman in chapter 5, ‘decenters the West and praises the Islamic message as the true measure of man’s perfection’ (160). However, their discourse was produced as a result of the Eurocentric insult, and it still recycles its binary structure: ‘The hegemonic nature of the colonizer’s script of positioning Islam and the West as different species has become *the episteme* through which Islamists think, write, and speak about the world’ (160).

Samman persuasively deconstructs Samuel Huntington and like-minded scholars’ concept of the ‘clash of civilizations’. However, the word ‘clash’ appears in his title and risks discrediting his argument. There is nothing inherent in civilizations that makes them clash; uneven power relations and the will to domination do. The same is true of modernities. Samman should have chosen a different word to represent the relationship between these modernities. The subtitle *The Islamist Challenge to Arab, Jewish, and Turkish Nationalism* does not accurately reflect the spirit or the content of the book. The book is about the ‘Eurocentric challenge’ that has produced and shaped the trajectories of the four nationalisms the book discusses. The existence of an ‘Islamist challenge’ to Arab, Jewish and Turkish nationalisms and feminist movements is not debatable, but Samman’s book does not particularly address that, and the subtitle could misleadingly prepare readers for a different argument.

Samman proposes in the conclusion ‘three ways of thinking outside the time-space box’

(215). One of his proposals suggests that in resisting the hegemon, the latter’s ‘chameleon-like’ discourse must be adopted. If the goal and strategy of resisting hegemony are to be perpetually determined in reaction to the hegemon’s moves, doesn’t that trap ‘us’ into reproducing the very template we seek to undo? One relevant question that the book does not explore is whether the orientation of nationalism (westernized, traditionalized or schizophrenic) matters more than the manner in which it is implemented (top-down, discriminatory, undemocratic).

Overall, Samman’s well-researched book is a must-read for anyone interested in the Middle East. The interdisciplinary approach of the book makes it an appropriate textbook in a number of disciplines.

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Signifying Loss: Toward a Poetics of Narrative Mourning. By Nouri Gana. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011. Pp. 227. ISBN 9781611480344. \$70 (hbk).
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Situated at what he characterizes as ‘the end of the dialectic between...the imperative to mourn and the imperative to refuse consolation’ (179), Nouri Gana’s book attempts to move beyond the limitations of each dialectical pole and to forge instead ‘a situated and flexible theory of mourning’ that can respond to ‘a call for mournability at times and for inconsolability at others’ (10). Such flexibility is vital, Gana argues, for while consolation ‘implies the premeditated forgetting’ of loss and the ‘repression of the knowledge of death

and mortality’ (25), a dogmatic insistence on inconsolability can, on the other hand, ‘deny us the transformational effects of experiencing mourning’ (151). Having located the germ of this dialectic within the dichotomy laid out in Freud’s ‘Mourning and Melancholia’, Gana seeks a corrective in the analyst’s later writing, which treats the titular conditions of the earlier essay as interrelated rather than mutually exclusive. Through an analogy between mourning–melancholia and consolation–non-consolation, Gana posits the same potential for coexistence in the latter pair as in the former, a potential that obtains, he argues, in the realm of narrative fiction, which – because it can ‘bear the burden of the clearly “impossible”’ (135) – ‘holds open a space for mourning’ without ‘promis[ing]... fulfillment’ (157).

In establishing the need for ‘a sustained critical engagement of our mourning practices’ Gana cites a number of contextual factors, from the ‘banalization of global warfare and everyday violence’ to the decline in ‘communal, national, and transnational mourning practices’ which, he writes, ‘have either withered, or, worse, turned into consumable spectacles, administered differentially along color and culture lines’ (9). But, for Gana, this decline, however troubling, does not signal a decline in mourning practices writ large; rather, as one set of practices wanes, another waxes. Thus, as mourning has withdrawn from the public stage, its exit has ‘given rise to a heterogeneous array of discursive and narrative practices... conducive to figuring the oft-immaterial and unquantifiable... experiences of loss that ripple through... modernity, postmodernity, and postcoloniality’ (9–10).

Setting aside the topic of mourning in poetry (which, he argues, has received significant scholarly attention), Gana focuses instead on the under-theorized relationship between mourning and prose fiction. Through close

readings of James Joyce, Jamaica Kincaid, Taher Ben Jelloun and Elias Khoury, authors who 'straddle [the] traditionally separate fields [of] modernism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism' (15), Gana identifies prosopopeia, catachresis and chiasmus as the master tropes of mourning, melancholia and trauma, respectively, arguing that 'the very nature of [these] tropes...troubles ideas of consolation and/or nonconsolation' (13). In his reading of Joyce's *Dubliners*, for instance, Gana demonstrates how prosopopeia, while 'open[ing] up the mourning subject...to the irreducible alterity of the deceased [and] to the actuality of death', nevertheless fails to provide consolation, for it 'leaves the mourner with the same old demand for mourning' (31). Catachresis plays a similar role with respect to the 'melancholic bafflement' resulting from historical loss (37). For the postcolonial subject in particular, Gana writes, the simultaneous naming/misnaming of catachresis – as in Jamaica Kincaid's question, 'What should I call the thing that happened to me and all who look like me? Should I call it history?' (qtd. in Gana 104) – dramatizes 'the impossibility of articulating' a loss or trauma 'with which one identifies yet of which one can offer no identification' (38). Finally, trauma itself is represented through a chiasmic oscillation 'between...the inadequacy of the symbolic order and the excess of the traumatic event' (169).

It is not through tropology alone, however, that narrative engages with mourning, for Gana sees 'an inaugural entanglement between [the two], not only because the end in narrative does not coincide with the completion of the story, but also because it results in the loss of the story and...the loss of the hope of its completion' (166). Departing from Slavoj Žižek's position that 'it is not [as Adorno suggests] poetry that is impossible

after Auschwitz, but rather prose' (qtd. in Gana 12), Gana examines how form – the very aspect of narrative fiction with which Žižek takes issue – can, when made the locus of experimentation, be effectively deployed to represent the unrepresentability of catastrophic loss. As an example, he cites Elias Khoury's novel *City Gates*, whose 'tirelessly sustained experimental style', he argues, 'is to be understood as a fierce representation of the failure of representation' (160, 171–2). Through its 'fragmentariness' and 'lack of a narrative framework', *City Gates* performs the psychic disorders wrought by war, which, in turn, 'bring about correlative disorders...[in] the form of the novel' (169, 164, 172).

The strength of *Signifying Loss* lies both in its breadth of focus and in its ability to draw productively from an array of traditionally distinct disciplines in order to forge a comprehensive and paradigm-shifting theory of narrative mourning. Impressively nuanced in both its poetics and its politics, Gana's text offers a cogent argument for the need to attenuate the oppositional dichotomy between mourning and inconsolability – thereby making available both what Gana terms the 'empiphanic' possibilities of the former and the ethical considerations of the latter – and for the power of narrative fiction to enable such attenuation. Despite its breadth, Gana's text lacks none of the depth its topic demands. With a formidable archive and a range of original readings, *Signifying Loss* makes a significant contribution to the study of literary mourning and should prove an irresistible provocation to future research.

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Feminist Visions and Queer Futures in Postcolonial Drama: Community, Kinship, and Citizenship. By Kanika Batra. New York: Routledge, 2011. Pp. 178. ISBN 9780415875912. \$138 (hbk).

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The front cover of Kanika Batra's *Feminist Visions* depicts a scene from an Indian street play that gives a visual animation to the fact that the book explores how drama serves as a technology for public pedagogy and citizenship education in the fight against the oppression of racial, gender, sexual and social minorities in the postcolony. The book is divided into three sections focusing on Jamaica, India and Nigeria, while the six chapters in the volume each examine the dramaturgy of various postcolonial artists and how these can be read as positing the importance of 'the rights of subaltern groups marked by race, class, gender, or sexuality as a precondition for postcolonial democracy' (147).

In chapter 1 Batra reads two plays by the Jamaican playwright and poet Dennis Scott, contending that although Scott's *An Echo in the Bone* (1974) and *Dog* (1978) can be read as national pedagogies designed to promote Afrocentric and heterosexual familial relations in postcolonial Jamaica, 'the somewhat tentative move away from normativity' in the above plays 'does forward a querying, if not queering, of kinship and community' (46). Drawing from the works of Joseph Roach and Judith Butler, among others, Batra posits that the presence of non-normative family types in both plays disturbs the attentiveness of Scott's drama to the promotion of heterosexuality as the appropriate value in Jamaica (38).

In a reading of the Sistren Theatre Collective's *Bellywoman Bangarang* (1978) and *QPH* (1981), Batra, in chapter 2, demon-

strates how the plays can be read as protest against a patriarchal and heterosexual system that oppresses women in terms of gender as well as class. The chapter contends that the 'female support systems' that make it possible for the women to surmount the 'verbal and physical violence' occasioned by the patriarchal state's neglect of the nurses' welfare in *Bellywoman*, and the plight of the women in *QPH*, 'can be interpreted as signs of a "deviant" sexuality' (61–2). In Batra's view, therefore, both plays can be read as anticipatory of later sexuality rights movements in Jamaica (64).

Whereas the first two chapters focus on Jamaica, chapters 3 and 4 pay attention to India's political drama. Chapter 3 examines the sociopolitical thrust of the Jana Natya Manch (Janam) drama group, and how they used their work to highlight and critique social violence against women and the culpability of the state security apparatus that participated in the violence instead of combating it. To establish her case, Batra examines three plays by Janam – *Aurat*, *Police Charitram* and *Aartanaand* – and concludes that these artistic expressions collaborate with the work of feminist movements in India to combat the menace of social violence against women and 'the indifferent and often instigator role of the police in these circumstances' (76). On the other hand, chapter 4 examines two proscenium plays, Mahesh Dattani's *Seven Steps around the Fire* and Mahasweta Devi and Usha Ganguli's *Rudali*. For Batra, drama as represented by these plays 'has spoken out on stigmatized gendered and social labor and contributed to the emergent discourse on sexuality in India' (92). She concludes that these plays can be seen as 'attempts to "queer" the Indian stage' and to open up the 'discursive and social space' for sexual minorities in India (109–10).

The last section focuses on Nigerian theatre. Here, the author examines the plays of two second-generation Nigerian playwrights, Femi Osofisan and Tess Onwueme. In chapter 5 (devoted to Osofisan's *Morountodun*) Batra asserts that the 'university-based dramatic production' serves to foreground the role of women in the Agbekoya uprising of the 1960s and to create a dramatic imaginary for the inclusion and participation of women in the democratic experiment of Nigeria's second republic. In chapter 6 Batra reads Onwueme's *Tell it to Women* as 'a commentary on the neoliberal policies of the postcolonial military regime [in Nigeria] and internationally funded cultural activities used to reinforce these policies' (132). To do this, she draws attention to Onwueme's critique of developmental projects like Maryam Babangida's Better Life Programme, originally designed to assist rural women but which became another white-elephant project of the era (142–3). The chapter also examines the sexual politics implicated in the play, and Batra recognizes Onwueme's efforts to discriminate between a western notion of lesbianism and the traditional African notion of same-sex relationships that is devoid of sexual pleasure but established for procreation and lineage continuance. For Batra, however, Onwueme's acknowledgement of traditional same-sex relationships in her play could serve as springboard for the conversation on 'the recognition of multiple sexual identities in Africa' (145).

Batra's book is timely considering the ongoing struggles for social and sexual equality in the postcolony where the privileged few continue to live extravagantly at the expense of the majority, including women and children. As I write, the anti-homosexuality bill is about to become law in Nigeria despite the protest of rights groups and the international community. The book's focus on drama as an

instrument of both public pedagogy and citizenship education is important, especially in an era where prose narrative dominates postcolonial literary and cultural discourse. Its boldness is also evinced by the discussion of modes of sexuality in the postcolony. In this regard, the book can be read as building on existing scholarship in the areas of gender and sexuality as manifested in works like *Gender and Sexuality in African Literature and Film* edited by Ada Azodo and Maureen Eke, and Evan Mwangi's *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, and Sexuality*. A few errors are identifiable in Batra's work, such as the omission of 'as' on line 10 of page 62 and the casting of 'Mbembe' as 'Mdembe' in chapter 5 (120–1). Closer editing would have caught these. However, these minor errors do not detract from the book being a significant addition to the corpus of postcolonial drama criticism and alternative sexualities in the postcolony.

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Caribbean Literature and the Public Sphere: From the Plantation to the Postcolonial. By Raphael Dalleo. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011. Pp. 320. ISBN 9780813931999. \$29.50 (pbk).

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'Caribbean literary history begins in 1930.' 'The disparate temporalities of the various islands make periodization of Caribbean literature impossible.' 'It is unfeasible to construct a literary history of the Caribbean canon due to the large number of language groups native to the region.' These are some of the generally held apriorisms that Raphael

Dalleo problematizes in his comprehensive, meticulously researched new book. Apposing his thesis between Alison Donnell's deconstruction of the canon of Caribbean writing and Peter Hulme's theories of postcoloniality and Eurocentrism, Dalleo makes a compelling argument for rethinking periodization and the function of the intellectual in relation to the public sphere, from the time between the Haitian and the Grenadian revolutions.

He reconfigures Jürgen Habermas's work in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* for a Caribbean context. Here, the public sphere is not only the imagined audience for the texts in question, but also a rhapsodized representation of a marginalized community eager to cast off the yoke of imperialism. Though envisaged by Caribbean writers since the nineteenth century, Dalleo deftly asseverates that a public sphere in this sense is not fully accessible in a colonial society. Accordingly, periodizing Caribbean literature must be understood in terms of how resisting the state is counterbalanced by the need to represent the people.

Dalleo asserts that recent archival work on slave narratives – including Moira Ferguson's *Colonialism and Gender Relations from Mary Wollenstonecraft and Jamaica Kincaid: East Caribbean Connections*; critical editions of non-fiction texts, such as *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*; and reissues of eighteenth-century Caribbean novels, like Stephen N. Cobham's *Rupert Gray: A Tale in Black and White*, edited by Lise Winer – debunks the notion that the nascency of Caribbean writing lies in the anticolonial movements of the 1930s. As such, it is necessary to reconceive how Caribbean literary history has been organized.

The manner in which Caribbean writers have engaged with the public sphere has been contoured by three constitutive distinct histor-

ical moments: the period of plantation slavery; the postcolonial age that began after emancipation; and decolonization in the face of globalization. Dalleo concentrates on that which he describes as 'moments of transition, in which one organizing system gives way to another...as renegotiations of power in response to the successes of oppositional challenges' (8). He is careful to establish that even if the stimuli for epochal change were similar – for example, the abrogation of chattel slavery or the end of the Second World War – their effects were unique to each country.

Dalleo chronologically undertakes his inquiry into the ways in which Antillean writing developed in response to the region's cycle of subjection and resistance. He cogently remonstrates that the history of the Anglophone Caribbean, typically divided into pre- and post-independence stages, deserves reevaluation in terms of the three aforementioned periods. Correspondingly, the Latin Americanist postmodern framework is often insufficient for defining the Francophone, Lusophone and Hispanophone countries, with their distinct histories and statuses of sovereignty. His approach is comparative, with multiple contemporaneous texts of varying levels of renown assayed in each chapter. Appraising both influential and unrecalled texts illuminates why some writers gave voice to the hopes and fears of their people, while others failed to catch fire.

In the colonial Caribbean, local plutarchies ensured there was no space for dissenting voices. Authors like Mary Prince, whose narrative of Bermudian slave life appeared in 1831, had to look beyond their native homelands, to Europe, for public spheres receptive to their abolitionist writings. The work of Jacques Roumain, Claude McKay, José Martí and others lays bare the manner in which emancipation made it possible for writers to



be in conversation with their public spheres for the first time. Dalleo notes, ‘Anticolonialism made writing a crucial part of creating a nationalist public sphere by privileging the figure of the literary intellectual, sensitive enough to listen to and thus speak for the people’ (16). The heroes envisioned in these texts anticipated the emergence a few decades later of transformative leaders like Michael Manley, Jacques Duvalier and Fidel Castro. In the same section, he goes on to describe the ways in which some forms of communication were gendered and devaluated; curiously, this discussion neglects contemporaneous women writers, such as Louise Bennett and Una Marson, although their contributions are discussed elsewhere in the book.

Dalleo’s most neoteric intervention concerns the transition from the postcolonial public sphere, in which oppositional voices lost their function in the newly autonomous nation-states. He bolsters his treatise by examining the coadjutant, improvisatory oral-composition process of the Jamaica’s Sistren Theatre Collective. With its emphasis on cultural self-definition and women’s issues, the Collective’s active engagement with interrogating issues of gender, class and collective activism is contextualized within the broader literary history of the decolonized Caribbean. However, Karina Smith’s recent work on the group’s postmodern, metatheatrical praxis proposes new questions worthy of investigation in this monograph: does evidence of pigmentocratic ventriloquism in their texts need to be reconciled in order to interpret the Collective’s articulated desiderata? Considering that nearly all of Sistren’s productions were staged in legitimate theatre spaces before largely middle-class audiences that already shared their political leanings, who actually comprised their intended public sphere?

Nevertheless, these seem like cavils considering the contribution Dalleo’s survey makes to the available research on the ways of interpreting writers and their public spheres against the backdrop of shifting national power structures.

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Global Icons: Apertures to the Popular. By Bishnupriya Ghosh. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Pp. 400. ISBN 97808223 50163. \$25.95 (pbk); ISBN 9780822350040. \$94.95 (hbk).



While politics and theory many times enter into relationships of convenience, or perhaps instrumentality, Bishnupriya Ghosh’s *Global Icons* takes us to the place where theoretical academic discourse and progressive materialist politics meet most fruitfully. Ultimately, this book asks its reader to consider what might be, in the end, the flimsiness of transnational politics of mass-mediation. This appeal comes clearest through Ghosh’s consideration of the epistemology and ontology of endlessly recirculated transnational signs, or what she calls ‘global icons’.

Ghosh’s main order of business is to propose and explicate the workings of global icons (bio-icons who, here especially, are public ‘personages’) as sorts of bio-objects, which constitute themselves all at once within life-narratives, clever packaging and strategic distribution and circulation. They are the fetishized artefacts of a hegemonic transnational global modernity. Yet – and this is where Ghosh’s argument becomes especially

energetic – these icons nonetheless make available to (locally positioned) audiences and consumers, at particular sites of consumption and by means of an embodied affective visuality, epistemological nexuses which, through processes of popular reassemblage, can precipitate ‘ontological events’ or, in other words, the possibility of social mobilization. ‘Embodiment’ is therefore Ghosh’s key theoretical move.

Global Icons builds its rich and lengthy argumentation on three examples of transnational bio-icons (though, it will be easily argued, these are especially intelligible in the Indian context). They are: Mother Theresa (the Catholic nun, putative and controversial ‘miracle worker’, known worldwide for her work among Calcutta’s poorest, and beatified by John Paul II’s Vatican); Phoolan Devi (the so-called Bandit Queen, the outlaw who once stood for India’s most disenfranchised and ‘voiceless’, and who later renounced armed struggle to enter the political process and end her life wealthy and murdered in a Delhi villa); and Arundhati Roy (the brilliant Booker Prize winning author of the novel *The God of Small Things*, and more recently an environmental activist in India with a controversial public record). Ghosh creates detailed arguments around her three female figures as images and as bodies, refusing discontinuities between their operations as hegemonic signs (controlled by global interlocking networks of power), their ‘actual’ lives, and the ways each one was, and is, situated within nested contexts of production, circulation, and consumption, and contestation. At the heart of this book is Ghosh’s argument that while the icon ‘materializes in hegemonic guise’ it also forms social bonds that can disturb the no less hegemonic discourses of global modernity (309).

Global Icons develops its arguments across eight chapters gathered into three parts: In-

corporations (the icon as technology); Biographs (the material culture of global icons); and Locations (the politics of the icon). The first part establishes the icon’s ontology as an incorporative technology. These chapters argue for an embodied visuality through the notion of the ‘biograph’, which makes ‘inscription’, an active process of redefinition and reassemblage, intelligible as the interface of bodies and narrated life-trajectories. Part two addresses the histories of the icons’ constitutions and actions in the world – histories of production and circulation, but also consumption – and begins to consider the question of when and how icons are commodities, and at what point they become ‘volatile signifiers’, to be then reassembled by the subaltern into new and always shifting systems of signification. Popular reassemblage, Ghosh argues, is key to the icon’s semiotic constitution as an embodied and embodying object. When materiality is given back, as it were, to the iconic image, we recognize and politicize our location in relationship to the icon. Like the fetish (Pietz), the icon constantly refers back to itself, and also establishes its materiality through our corporeality. Like the fetish, the iconic image is itself dependent on our embodiment, as it does the work of reasserting our physicality.

Iconic figures are ‘personages’ – bio-icons – whose bio/graphy operates as the point of contact between a given situated viewer and that which lies beyond, or behind, the icon: potentialities, desires and actions which may emerge. Ghosh is in the company of Christopher Pinney, Sumathi Ramaswami and Kajri Jain, whose work on South Asian popular visual culture and practices integrates bodies, images and objects within a reenchanting phenomenological field. The concept of the icon as biograph allows a re-suturing of the embodied subject (possessing its own material

and conscious life) to the circulating discursive iconic subject (constructed on partial truths, elisions and obfuscations).

When the icon volatilizes – that is, becomes unmoored from stable epistemological structures – Ghosh argues, hegemonically offered perceptions are disorganized. It is at this moment that one ‘sees’ the icon in its historical materiality (105). Ghosh is interested in what can happen to certain global icons at local sites of consumption, once they’ve volatilized.

By the means of her own careful theoretical assemblage of notions of embodiment, the instability of signifiers, and local reassemblages of iconic signs, Ghosh finds her way to ‘the popular’ (a category whose coherence, for the most part, remains elusive). Ghosh ends in a hopeful (or perhaps necessarily utopian) call for the possibility of social change through popular engagement with hegemonic media discourses, those that peddle the neoliberal democracy, for instance, as globally desirable – an engagement that reappropriates bodies and stories, and reasserts the subject’s materiality. Through a politics of embodiment (which also provincializes academic theories of mass media and communication) and even as global capital continues to appropriate lives, land, bodies, resources and labour, ‘mundane, everyday objects regain their force as magical technologies that regain human agency’ (310).

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Human Encumbrances: Political Violence and the Great Irish Famine. By David P. Nally. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011. Pp. 368. ISBN 9780268036089. \$38 (pbk).

In his excellent book, David P. Nally approaches the Great Famine through the lens of colonial studies. From the outset of the work, Nally makes a clear distinction that studies of the Irish Famine must consider the power struggles and political policies inherent in colonialism. The euphemism chosen for his title, ‘human encumbrances’, refers to people within a population who are envisioned by colonial governing bodies as those who stand in the way of progress or refuse to be assimilated and thus are seen to hinder the growth and progress of civilized, capitalist modernity. By situating Ireland as a colonized land, Nally explores more deeply the historiography of the Great Famine with respect to its political implications, rather than simply as a natural phenomenon or an ‘act of God’. The theory, then, which is a compelling argument, addresses the ill-conceived and in many cases targeted policies of the colonial government, effectively the ‘political violence’ that contributed to the tragic death and intense reshaping of the Irish landscape.

In chapter 1 Nally frames the Great Famine as a ‘colonial experience’, in other words, as a product of the oppressive policies inherent under British colonialism, arguing that three colonial encounters served as the primary force behind the noticeable poverty that characterized Ireland prior to and throughout the Great Famine. His assertion is part of the dialogue that many scholars in recent famine studies put forth, viewing famine as a *process* and not simply an event or an outcome. This

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notion places greater emphasis on the complex interrelationships between populations and their rulers, and exposes the devastating impact that colonialism has on a population and its landscape. Through an exploration of the history of the Pale (England's original colony in eastern Ireland) and its historical expansion, Nally outlines the tensions between English colonial policy and Irish populations. Ultimately, colonial rule drastically affected Irish society through the use of military force, land confiscation, language oppression and the implementation of rural models seeking to 'reconstitute the Irish countryside' in the image of its colonial masters.

Chapter 2, 'Defining Civility', focuses on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rhetoric of Ireland as a poverty stricken colony full of backward people, a condition which precipitated the legitimacy of British intervention and regulation. The biased attitudes towards the Irish population, Nally argues, greatly influenced governmental policies with regard to aid and relief during the potato blight. The contemporary framing of Irish poverty and rural life was polarized against the modern view of civilized society. Nally investigates contemporary travel accounts (primarily, the work of Henry Inglis), pamphlets, novels and similar media, all of which contributed to a racialization and stereotyping of the Irish population that was widely adopted and became the influence for colonial policymaking.

Chapter 3 outlines the creation of the Irish Poor Law, written by George Nicholls in 1838. The Poor Law would (after 1847) bear the burden of responsibility for all relief efforts in Ireland due to the potato blight, as potatoes were the primary crop upon which the poor depended. This fact reveals a significant historiographical paradox, which points towards the key theme and, in my

opinion, the grand significance of Nally's approach as a whole. He writes, 'It is still unproblematically asserted that Irish famine deaths resulted from a political commitment to the principles of laissez-faire, which is interpreted almost exclusively as a policy of non-intervention' (96). Nally argues that the government's relief operations enabled England to monopolize the means of subsistence in Ireland, thus assuming control over virtually every aspect of Irish society. In chapter 4 Nally describes how relief operations for Irish hunger during the Great Famine were inextricably linked with long-term colonial goals that sought to reshape Irish society. Here he elaborates quite well on the rather intricate political history throughout the Famine, equating famine and relief efforts as a kind of colonial 'social laboratory' in which the state experimented, ultimately gaining deeper control over the management of social life.

Previous studies of the Irish Famine focus on perceived political and social motivations garnered from more recent reconstructions of Ireland's past, but in chapter 5 Nally examines Thomas Carlyle's journeys in Ireland (in 1846 and again in 1849). Carlyle's trips book-end the beginning and the tragic end of the Great Irish Famine, and his descriptions of various 'faminescapes' are significant. Equally significant is Carlyle's relationship with the well-known nationalist Charles Gavan Duffy, and Nally offers a compelling contextualization of how each of these writers captured the political climate with regard to the 'Irish Question'. The sixth chapter of the book revisits a few of the main themes that emerged throughout the book. The striking paradox that Nally explores represents the glaring contradiction between the rhetoric of colonial relief and the lasting devastation caused by the Great Famine. He argues that the combination of ideological detachment with targeted policies that



sought to reconstitute Irish society under the colonial model created an environment in which the Famine was allowed to take place.

Overall, this thoughtful book brilliantly posits that the context in which the Great Irish Famine occurred is important to understand, not only for addressing specific causes and engaging in historiographical debate, but also on a broader scale, in order to think critically about governmental policies during times of famine and to better understand the contributing factors that shape famine susceptibility and mortality.

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European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Post-national Europe. By Fatima El-Tayeb. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. Pp. 304. ISBN 9780816670161 \$25 (pbk); ISBN 9780816670154. \$75 (hbk).



In this study of new forms of art and activism produced by Europe's migrant and minority communities from the 1980s to the 2000s, Fatima El-Tayeb explores challenges to a characteristically European form of racialization that combines a largely unacknowledged association among Europeaness, whiteness and Christianity with a widespread denial that the concept of 'race' is relevant to Europe's post-Second World War realities. This implicitly racialized understanding of European identity recognizes the non-white descendants of migrants only as permanent outsiders, producing European-born minorities as 'impossible' or 'queer' subjects who inhabit

the seemingly incompatible identities of 'European' and 'migrant' (xxxiv). In response, El-Tayeb argues, Europeans of colour across the continent have developed a multitude of strategies that expose, disrupt and subvert the culture of disavowal that protects the deeply entrenched narrative of a homogeneous Europe. Drawing on theorizations of resistance in queer-of-colour critique, *European Others* offers an innovative interdisciplinary analysis of practices that transform the tension of living in impossibility into creative articulations of new minoritarian identities.

Since the 1950s, according to El-Tayeb, public and academic discourses on the immigrant presence in continental Europe have consistently focused on the arrival and integration of migrants, ignoring the implications of the fact that many descendants of migrants are culturally and legally European. In what this study calls 'an active process of suppression' of history (xxiv), protests by 'second-generation immigrants' are often interpreted as singular, unprecedented events that threaten national or European identity – a response seen during the 2005 youth uprisings in France, which were widely explained as a sign of the immigrants' failure to integrate into the nation rather than as an expression of a French-born minority's frustration over its virtual exclusion from civic life. A crucial contention of *European Others* is that approaches that externalize native minority populations by analysing them through the lens of migration are fundamentally inadequate to address the structural exclusions produced by Europe's racisms. This study, therefore, examines transnational alliances, public art and activist interventions that reveal how collective identities are being forged across national borders and traditional ethnic groupings in response to patterns of racialization and exclusion that reproduce themselves in similar ways across Europe.

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A particular strength of this work lies in the dexterity with which each chapter weaves a set of well-argued close readings into a theoretical argument that engages with existing scholarship on race, diaspora, nation, gender, sexuality and migration. In chapter 1, after analysing the discursive construction of a normative post-national European public space, El-Tayeb examines the challenges to such exclusionary constructions that arose within the transnational European hip-hop culture of the late 1980s and 1990s. Chapter 2 analyses the novel conceptions of diaspora reflected in two anthologies of Afro-German feminist writing and the activism that surrounded their publication, while chapter 3 offers a detailed reading of performative feminist positionalities in debates about the figure of the veiled Muslim woman. The final chapter examines how Dutch and German queer-of-colour activists in the 1990s and early 2000s disrupted their discursive invisibility in Europe's cities with a variety of performances, including drag shows and subversive television interviews, that transformed public spaces into venues for critiques of neoliberal discourses on diversity. Each chapter explores different aspects of the 'queering of ethnicity', a process that describes how young Europeans of colour, rejecting both essentialist identities and the trope of 'lost between cultures', denounce and turn to creative purposes the contradictions that Europe imposes on them.

European Others represents a valuable contribution to an ongoing critical assessment of the notions of blackness, race, diaspora and postcoloniality as they relate to the experiences of Europe's 'visible minorities' and migrants. El-Tayeb's study distinguishes itself from work focused on more traditional literary sources through its attention to a rich archive of vernacular culture. Even more significantly, it examines an eclectic set of ethnicized groups, including black Europeans, Roma and Sinti,

and Muslims, in order to develop a sustained argument for the importance of a transnational and comparative perspective that recognizes common conditions faced by racialized minorities across Europe while accounting for variations within groupings and among local contexts. *European Others* also builds on theoretical work on race in Europe by scholars such as David Theo Goldberg, Stuart Hall and Étienne Balibar; here, the originality of El-Tayeb's approach lies in her focus on the agency of Europeans of colour in responding to the processes that construct them as outsiders and foreigners. In her use of methodologies from queer-of-colour critique, Caribbean *créolité*, women-of-colour feminism, diaspora studies, and critical race studies to explore this agency, El-Tayeb makes a convincing case for the potential of theories developed outside Europe to illuminate resistance to European ideologies of colourblindness.

European Others offers a lucid and meticulous assessment of the cultural interventions with which racialized groups in recent decades have challenged continental Europe's silence about the history of minorities and their current role in shaping Europe's identity. El-Tayeb's work will prove relevant to scholars interested in race, migration, sexuality, Islam and youth activism in Europe. More broadly, it will invite scholars researching diaspora, creolization and postcolonialism to consider questions raised by the framing of these concepts in continental European contexts. By arguing for the value of conceptualizing a transnational European discourse on race, El-Tayeb lays the groundwork for further studies of transnational minority countercultures in Europe.

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Memories of Empire, Volume 1: The White Man's World. By Bill Schwarz. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 584. ISBN 9780199296910. £35 (hbk).

Empires orchestrate strange lives. Sir Roy Welensky – heavyweight boxing champion, prime minister of the short-lived Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Cold War wildcard and, in the 1960s, rugged doyen of the nascent Tory New Right – fought black nationalists at the end of his career but Blackshirts at its inception. Taunting Mosleyites dogged his early trade union canvassing in Broken Hill (now Kabwe, in modern-day Zambia) with anti-Semitic taunts. Bizarrely, the settler supremacist was later able to exploit this victimization to present himself as a postcolonial honest broker. ‘I am a member of an oppressed race myself’, he once confided to the black author Peter Abrahams. ‘I am a Jew and I have never forgotten being persecuted by fascist elements in Rhodesia before the war.’ Upholding the British tradition of constitutionality, conciliation and fair play, he persuaded his followers in Westminster that his was a genuine ‘civilizing influence’ in southern Africa. Unlike his hostile counterpart in Pretoria he had manifestly not, as the infant Christopher Hope was told when passing Dr Verwoerd’s house, ‘spent the war knitting socks for Mr Hitler.’

Such piquant ironies abound in Bill Schwarz’s pathology of the racial mindset, traced through its many subtle, adaptive mutations. Welensky liked to describe himself as ‘half-Jewish, half-Afrikaner’ and ‘100% British’. But, to those attuned to his rhetoric, what this really signified was 100 per cent white – a good deal whiter, in fact, than Harold Macmillan and other spineless ‘pin-

kos’ whom he was certain had sold their Empire down the Limpopo. His was the pure life, the clean, the regenerate. However muddied their ancestry, those who abandoned frowsy old England for booming postwar Rhodesia swiftly discovered their inner frontiersman, so efficient were the systems of collective memory evolved by the young state.

Racial difference was the medium through which these national memories were chiefly filtered – a pattern, Schwarz argues, common to all the settler colonies. Leaving out the essentially expatriate society of Anglo-India, his examples from Sub-Saharan Africa, Australia and British Columbia are drawn out along individual biographic threads. Ian Smith follows Alfred Milner and a highly nuanced portrait of Jan Smuts. Whiteness was not a coherent standpoint to which these men subscribed, but rather a ‘force-field, traversed by many contrary political currents’, through which even the most resolute proconsuls felt their way with care. Once nurtured, ethnic populism imparted a logical unity to the British Empire but could also stimulate, as in the Rhodesian case, secessionist resentment. Fluid, pervasive whiteness, moreover, did not resemble definitive philosophies of governance by becoming the property of any given party or class. Dispensing with Disraeli’s officially sanctioned, feudalized imperial pageantry, Schwarz stresses the Radical impulse behind Charles Dilke’s advocacy of *Greater Britain* and the Radical provenance of Joseph Chamberlain and Henry Parkes. The latter two referred their expansionist projects back to a dynamic metropole that was not London but nonconformist, artisanal, egalitarian Birmingham. Their colonies were new, unhistorical lands where the tradition of English liberality might be remembered and realized by working-class emigrants. Newness necessitated the erasure of aboriginal predecessors. That much

is grimly evident. But the transformation of colony into *nation*, through the establishment of this founding myth, triggered a long, late Victorian struggle more familiar to present-day nations. Cornish miners on the Rand and Cockney dockers in Sydney had to be legally shielded from interloping Chinese labour. Parkes' Australia was a petticoat, printing-press, electric-light future contingent on keeping the black man down and the yellow man out. Schwarz (144) compresses his political career into one overarching formula: 'to become modern was to become white.'

Such proof of how progress is conceived in racial terms is a valuable reproof to the sanguine economic narrative of Niall Ferguson, which seeks to partition colonialism's regressive aspects from its supposedly felicitous contribution to the future wealth of nations. This epigrammatic puncturing of a blithe teleology is a victory Schwarz doesn't need to underline (although he does allow himself a moment's dubiety as to the likelihood of Simon Schama's next bestseller disinterring Welensky and his expediently forgotten Federation). But a recent study that is taken to task is Bernard Porter's *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (2004), for its unbendingly literalist search for imperial consciousness in late Victorian society. By contrast, Porter devotes considerable page space to Disraeli and masses to Kipling, whose tireless chiding of 'The Islanders' supports his postulate that Britons' mental investment in overseas dominion was negligibly trivial. According to this methodology, an event like Mafeking Night is significant only for its contemporary context, 1900s spike of jingoistic enthusiasm disguising – or being orchestrated to disguise – a state of pervasive apathy. The approach taken instead by *The White Man's World* is indicated by the surtitle under which it appears as the first of three

volumes. *Memories of Empire* is intended to deal not with the Empire's articulate development but with the often silent afterlife of an *enduring* impression it registered on the metropole. To sound this impression empirically, Schwarz avers, is to rely excessively on public polls, newspaper editorials and reading patterns – all data, like the television clap-o-meter, at the mercy of a staged moment. The droll observation that homeowners in Lucknow Road or Bulawayo Street can't and probably never could pinpoint those places on a map (or their associated massacres on a timeline) will continue to recur, but what does it really tell us of imperial consciousness? From it we learn little, moreover, of our contemporary cultural inheritance. To privilege Porter's choice of evidence is to understand imperial citizenship as the daydream of a bubble era, which expired and has vanished without trace. But feel instead, intuitively, in the right psychic areas and the Empire's lingering impression becomes a sinister Freudian residuum, not a bruise or trauma on the body politic but an encoded system of thinking, whose dormant neural pathways can be reactivated by certain stimuli. For much of Schwarz's study, which leads up to the late 1970s, the history of whiteness in Britain is a submerged narrative.

The book's chief strength is sensitivity to multiple registers of evidence. Witness the General Smuts pub (Bloemfontein Road, White City) where white youths congregated in 1958 before a calculated incursion into Notting Hill; or a *Hancock's Half-Hour* from 1960 themed around the comic misadventures of a would-be Ten Pound Pom; or the 'Rhodesian Embassy in Iceland' which sponsors a never-say-die Internet subculture. Schwarz understands whiteness's independent, populist existence, but he is also finely attuned to parliamentary politics. He offers a kind of

ethnography of postwar British conservatism, anecdotally illustrated from his interviews with various party dinosaurs. The political moment which serves as the conceptual frame for *White Man's World* is 1968, and the aftermath of the notorious speech – delivered, like Chamberlain's tariff-reform manifesto and Parkes' homecoming address, in Birmingham – which resulted in Enoch Powell's ejection from the Tory Shadow Cabinet. This was the moment at which a submerged, unspeakable discourse was suddenly articulated, and resoundingly echoed by hundreds of thousands of letters addressed to Powell – and not a few envelopes stuffed with ordure for Ted Heath. The ethnic populism that had more than once driven settler societies away from what they perceived as a decadent imperial centre was now unleashed at home, against the despised political elite. The particular soundbite to which Schwarz repeatedly turns to adumbrate the moral, gendered and class concerns orbiting the criterion of whiteness came when striking dockers marched on Westminster to support Powell. 'He,' shouted one, pointing at the Houses of Parliament, 'is the only white man in there.' It was a critical moment not only for West Indian immigration in Britain, but also a turning point in Tory fortunes. Watching from the 1960s backbenches was Margaret Thatcher, stirred and indignant at Rhodesian decline, but impressed by the demotic, grassroots reach attained by Welensky and his fellow lobbyists in London.

A word Schwarz repeatedly uses to describe this sequestered, sleeping racial mentality is 'reverie'. It is an apposite coinage, since much of his argument turns on conscious or unconscious processes of remembering. 'Reveries of empire' also calls to mind Raj costume dramas or Michael Caine battling Zulus on Boxing Day, and much other guileless nostalgia that appears bath-

etically to mark Empire's absence and romantic irrelevance, when in fact it obsessively reenacts. The phrase poses questions of our contemporary, formal commemoration, our archiving and teaching of the imperial heritage. Do we need to uncover this submerged history in order to lay its lingering ghost? What becomes of the privately funded British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, lately closed in Bristol but promised an indeterminate move to London? What of the school curriculum? What even of Guy Gibson's unspeakable black labrador, and a whole tranche of postwar filmic mythology whose evergreen innocence, we now sense, relies on its blissful elision of imperial complications?

Schwarz can only be faulted on his omissions: India which, as already mentioned, was another country altogether; the Irish, whose highly mutable relationships to whiteness are left to other studies; but also this particular moment of wartime crisis. Jamaican airmen in Piccadilly nightclubs, and Lord Constantine being evicted from the Imperial Hotel by US servicemen, will almost certainly be met in the next volume. So, undoubtedly, will be the Far Right of the 1970s. But what more will be heard from Roy Welensky's antagonists at Broken Hill? It has been suggested that the BUF's failure lay in the organizational disjunction between the anti-Semitic agitation of its East End cells, and the parochial, Little Englandish, back-to-the-land preoccupations of its rural chapters. Such concerns could hold little interest for an urban working class that had long perceived its destiny, whether imperialist or communist, in global terms. Could it be that off-beam British fascism failed not in essence but merely in articulation, by failing to engage discursively with the established ideological 'force field' of imperial whiteness? That, indeed, would polish off a particularly cherished subset of the great British legend of

compromise, constitutionality and common decency.

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Tracking Modernity: India's Railway and the Culture of Mobility. By Marian Aguiar. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. Pp. 226. ISBN 9780816665617. \$25 (pbk).
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The image of the train passenger gazing at passing landscapes is an ur-image of modernity, encapsulating some of the double-edged characteristics of modernity's unfolding: the divide between the private and public, between inside and outside, viewer and viewed, subject and object. These dyads are never stable, of course, even if the strange public-private space of the train produces them and throws them into question at every turn. Marian Aguiar, in an extended analysis of the railway in India, is attuned to such subtleties. Given the prevalence of the image of train travel in colonial and postcolonial India, it is remarkable that its detailed cultural analysis has not been undertaken before.

Tracking Modernity is as concerned with the ideological force of British narratives about railways 'developing' the colony as it is about the counter-narratives regarding modernity's progress that the train as a figure of mobility also produces. The book's scope is impressive: from the 1844 beginning of the Indian railway system to the 2008 terrorist attacks at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai. What becomes clear by the end of this excellent book is that the Indian railway has been a unique site for producing counter-

narratives to modernity, which is to say, narratives that rub up against the grain of regnant notions of modernity's progress, especially its claims to have secularized and rationalized the (colonial) world.

This book is rich in historical research and far-reaching in its theoretical implications. The introduction discusses the Indian railway as a material reality and a cultural figuration that emerges between the circuits of capital and local forms of exchange and meaning-making, between secular understandings of the world and its religious figurations, between a colonial discourse of improvement and its attendant discourse of racial difference, and finally between competing notions of gender visibility and gender roles. From there, Aguiar begins to weave the intricate narrative of the Indian railway with an account of its place in the British colonial imaginary in the first chapter. The railway here is a wonder of western progress, rendering Indian figures awe-struck but secondary to the scenes of modernity's forward movements. Such a rendering is, of course, of a piece with much colonial discourse, but then Aguiar's argument takes a brilliant and inventive turn when she reads Rudyard Kipling and Flora Annie Steele's fiction as providing, within the very space of such colonial figurations, a counter-narrative of modernity. In his short story 'The Bridge-Builders' Kipling 'highlights the visionary aspects of the narratives of modernity' such that secular rationalist 'progress' is assigned the aspects of a dreamlike vision and the 'sacred vision of [Hindu] gods' becomes the true reality (42). Flora Annie Steele, too, in her story 'In the Permanent Way', reveals colonial modernity to be divided: an Indian guru who resists the new cartography brought by the trains becomes a permanent figure of modernity's disruption. Aguiar's readings are inventive because they

do more than read these canonical texts of colonial discourse against the grain – instead, they imply that colonial modernity is composed of contradictory narratives whose tensions can be found even in sites where one would expect colonial discourse to provide a univocal celebration of modernity's progress. Aguiar's reading is not a simple reversal of expected terms, but rather an acknowledgment that the Indian railway was always already territorialized by life-worlds considered marginal to modernity's secular and rational advances.

Chapter 2 charts the responses of Indian intellectuals to the railway in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and what emerges is a discourse as contradictory as the colonial one: secular nationalists and social critics of the railway (Dadabhai Naoroji, G. V. Joshi) criticized the railway since it made it easier to exploit India and transform local systems of exchange, and spiritualists (Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi and Tagore) found inspiration in religious traditions in their own critiques of the machine and the ideology of modernization. Here, again, Aguiar is cautious not to impute to these critiques the easy category of 'local difference', but demonstrates how these writers articulate their local resistance because they're formed by transnational networks of intellectual exchange. The ideology of modernization would eventually be preserved by the postcolonial Indian state. However, at the very moment of India's creation, the train turns out to be a figure not of progress and the (coming) good life, but rather an uncanny figure of death and destruction as the 'death trains' arrived in cities on both sides of the partition, filled with dead victims of communal rage. Chapter 3, 'Partition and the Death Train', the best chapter of the book, is a *tour de force* of analysis that combines historical eyewitness accounts, literature, and visual

culture surrounding the death trains. Trains heading east near the border came to signify 'Hindu trains' and trains heading west signified 'Muslim trains' in spite of some inaccuracies in these designations. Aguiar writes that these trains disembed identity and 'show the abstraction produced by mobility that enabled the violence to take place' (85). In the literature and films that take up the partition, 'the altered timeline of modernity appears in narrative in the form of a train that shuttles back and forth in violence and retribution rather than goes forward: a pendulum rather than a vector' (86).

The culture of mobility, embraced by officialdom in the postcolonial nation, continues to receive ambivalent and multivalent responses in Indian literature and film from the 1950s through to the early twentieth century, material that chapter 4 takes up in a helpful synoptic fashion. The final chapter excavates the counter-narratives of modernity offered by Bollywood film. The conclusion finishes the journey by radically repositioning the question of terrorism and mobility: Aguiar thinks past contemporary rhetorics around terror, reaching back to the beginnings of the Indian railways to show how a certain spectacular terror has always resided at the heart of the railway's figuration since its beginning: the enormous machine inexorably moving at high speed, the terror of such a machine derailing or crashing.

Some social movements during the colonial period targeted trains, and the insurgents were of course cast as terrorists. Contemporary terrorist attacks on the railway system must be read in a genealogy of cultural and political history that would situate the rail line as the contested site for concerns about national territory: 'Because terror works by consolidating communities in their responses to acts of violence, the [Mumbai] bombings have both entrenched a sense of the nation and displayed

its fault lines’ (166). Aguiar is interested in how terrorism and the railway figure together in broader systems of meaning.

Perhaps one of the most satisfying aspects of this book is that it delivers everything that it promises in its introduction, and while its turns of argument open up new thought, one is immediately aware that the paths that seem untaken have only become visible to the reader because Aguiar has opened up those paths and those sight lines. There is much to admire in this finely wrought book. *Tracking Modernity* abundantly demonstrates that all categories (of nation, of race, of modernity, of thought itself) are subject to fissure, with their productive aspects being intimately linked to their undoing. To track modernity means not only to track such fissured terrain but also to excavate modernity’s counter-narratives, its tales that bid us beware. It could do a lot of good to attend carefully to the story Aguiar has to tell.

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The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880–1922. By Joseph Valente. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011. Pp. 289. ISBN 9780252035715. \$50 (hbk).
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In a work of soaring ambition and equivalent achievement, Joseph Valente’s study of the Victorian trope of manliness in Irish national culture has the potential not only to influence postcolonial studies beyond its subfield – Irish studies – but also to bring the subfield itself into broader geopolitical circuits of scholarly exchange. Valente applies to turn-of-the-

century Irish national literature and culture compendious knowledge drawn from three decades of engagement within Irish and British studies with masculinity, gender norms and national identity. The result is a sophisticated argument that simultaneously consolidates and extends the work of two generations of scholars and theorists delineating the crucial but slippery gendered norms underwriting the British Empire’s expansion, maintenance and ongoing global legacy.

Valente engages with his subject – manliness – with two deceptively simple questions. First, ‘what is the relationship of manliness to its ground in masculine gender identity’, and, second, ‘what is the scope of manliness’ – is it one unitary thing, or would it be more accurate to say that there are ‘many representative types and codes’? (1). Valente identifies a definitional slippage that has led to seemingly opposed interpretations of manliness as either *ontological* – and thus as virtually interchangeable with masculinity – or, conversely, as an independent *ethical* category antithetical to masculinity’s inherent propensities (1–2). Pointing to the capacity of English manliness invisibly to conjoin the ontological and the ethical, *The Myth of Manliness* reconceives manliness as an *ideological* category, filling ‘the space between the *is* and the *ought* of its own definition, solidifying the hegemony of actual men under the color of the idea’ (2).

Geopolitically, this is an important study of gender in the discourse of British imperialism that takes Ireland as its test case. Despite the astonishing vitality of gender and sexuality studies within Irish studies, a field thoroughly and seriously engaged with questions of colonial/postcolonial identity and representation, the field as a whole generally imports rather than exports postcolonial theories of gender. Despite periodic efforts on the part of Irish studies practitioners to engage with postcolo-

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nal gender studies as a whole, Irish postcolonial gender studies has typically occupied a secondary or derivative position relative to postcolonial studies. Valente's study, however, challenges the assumption of Irish exceptionalism by treating the double-binds of imperial masculinity as they shaped and constrained the anticolonial struggle in Ireland as exemplary rather than anomalous. Viewed through Valente's optic, British representations of manliness and the struggles of Irish nationalist leaders and cultural producers to counter them clearly demonstrate both the power of gendered discourse within imperial networks of exchange, and the considerable, if often self-destructive, energies with which anticolonial movements have sought to counter it.

Valente methodologically shifts questions of the gendering of Englishness and its Others from the surface effects of manliness to the discourse's underlying logic. Because manliness subliminally conjoins the ontological and the ethical, operating simultaneously as symbolic capital and symbolic mandate, it could 'enric[h] or bypas[s] individual or corporate subjects on politically contingent grounds, ... introducing into the texture of gender identity apparently extrinsic factors like class or racial origin' (9). Thus, 'a crucial part of the political efficacy of manliness was that while it presented itself as a broadly available prospect, it remained a stubbornly restricted prerogative' (9). In other words, for the colonized, the contradictory manly ideal conceals a treacherous double-bind. The Englishman possesses as his birthright manliness that is simultaneously inherent and his highest ethical attainment, and from which others are definitionally excluded. This internally contradictory ideal – which finds simultaneous moral, gendered and ethnic validation in the tension between powerful drives and their mastery – served to affirm manliness (among the manly) as clearly demonstrated in a broad spectrum of

behaviours, all the way from passionate effusions to the cold suppression of all feeling. Conversely, it stigmatized this same range of behaviours among the intrinsically unmanly.

Some form of this gendered double-bind, which rendered the colonized bestial if they fought and effeminate if they reasoned or conciliated, will be familiar to most readers of *Interventions*. Valente, however, has pointed to the unexpectedly central role of the Irish in the construction of English manliness. As Valente points out, most of the leading nineteenth-century theorists of English manliness were also key proponents of the Irish as both inherently feminine and as bestial (14). This correlation between two landmark developments within British imperial gendered discourse has gone largely unnoticed because Irish studies scholars have typically focused only on the paired feminization and simianization of the Irish, while scholars in British, empire and postcolonial studies have considered the discourse of English manliness without reference to its consistent invocations of Ireland as England's unmanly Other. Valente, however, focuses on the interrelationship *between* English manliness and the feminization and bestialization of the Irish that Irish studies scholars – invoking this discourse's salient parallels with Said's Orientalism – term Celticism.

Valente demonstrates that the Irish were a key representational foil against and through which the discourse of English manliness emerged through readings of Irishness in some of the seminal texts of English manliness. Indeed, nineteenth-century codes of English manliness would appear to have grown out of emerging representations of Irish unmanliness in much the same way that heterosexual normalcy was defined through the sexological cataloguing and New Journalist sensationalizing of heretofore unmentionable forms of homosexual deviance. Key political

and cultural essays and oratory produced by the leading proponents of manliness from the mid-nineteenth century betray a recurrent fascination with unmanly or even bestial Irishness (14). Valente further points to the constitutive role of unmanly Irishmen in literary texts central to the production of the refined English manliness of ‘strong passions, strongly checked’, that would come simultaneously to bond colonized populations to and exclude them from the gender norms of the imperial metropole (2). For instance, Valente highlights Alfred Lord Tennyson’s incorporation of the ‘blind hysteria of the Celt’ into *In Memoriam*, the manly moral/cosmological landscape the wildly grief-stricken (but paradigmatically manly) poet constructed over the eleven years following Arthur Hallam’s death (15). Similarly, in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, Tom fully commits to the course of manly self-possession after a degrading conflict with ‘a violent, buffoonish Irishman’ (15). Across five chapters and an epilogue, Valente both argues for and exploits turn-of-the-century Ireland’s position as the site where the double-binds of imperial manliness took their ‘most visible and powerful form’ (11).

In focusing on gendered representations of Irishness at the height of British imperial dominion, Valente’s analysis is particularly engaged with the ambivalent or ‘metrocolonial’ position of Irish political leaders and writers (19–25). Within postcolonial studies the ambivalent position of the Irish within the British Empire – as both empire’s beneficiaries and its victims – has situated Ireland as exceptional or anomalous within a broader colonial/postcolonial terrain that has remained, through thirty years of poststructuralist theory, most saliently defined by economic, cultural and racial oppositions. Valente, however, takes up the particular acuteness of the contradictory colonial and anticolonial material, cultural and psycho-

logical forces made evident in a close examination of Irish male leaders’ relationship to the discourse of English manliness. In doing so, this work makes the Irish position less an exception to than exemplary of the characteristic contradictions negotiated by a range of cosmopolitan leaders – albeit in varying ways and to varying extents – in a range of colonial settings.

While the contradictory position of Irish men, ‘enlisted as foot soldiers of empire’ while ‘stigmatized as [imperial] manhood’s other’, is especially flagrant owing to the greater opportunities for imperial assimilation their light skin afforded, Irish men were hardly alone in the double-binds Valente explicates (19). And while the geographic and cultural proximity and the definitional overlap that existed between the Irish and the British at the turn of the century helps to explain the particular opportunities for the production of an Irish nationalist leader like Charles Stewart Parnell, the central figure of Valente’s first two chapters, draped in the mantle of English manliness, it would be a mistake to read Valente’s exfoliations of Parnell’s celebrated, politically potent manliness as further evidence of Ireland’s exceptionality. Surely the subtle ideological mechanisms Valente delineates were operative all over the British Empire, and similar gendered identity processes were and are undoubtedly at work in Hispanic, Francophone and US imperial networks. Across geopolitical contexts manliness, or something like it, conjoined ethnicity to morality so as to write colonized men a cheque that they lacked the proper identification to cash. Thus, in Valente’s work, we might find the beginnings of a broad comparative consideration of manly metrocolonial males, from Jose Rizal, Frederick Douglass and Emiliano Zapata to Nelson Mandela and Subcomandante Marcos, an invitation to engage in comparative work seeking to better understand where, how and what kinds of imperial,



gendered double-binds have shaped both the successes and the failures of the unfinished and still urgent work of decolonization.

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