
REVIEWS

Victoria Pedrick. *Euripides, Freud, and the Romance of Belonging*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. 257p.

CATHERINE MARACHI
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA

Victoria Pedrick's *Euripides, Freud, and the Romance of Belonging* is an in-depth inquiry about abandonment, personal and cultural identity, the site of primal suffering, and the impact of the past in the shaping of the present. She chooses Euripides' *Ion* and Freud's case history of the Wolf Man—in "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis"—to frame her discussion, because both texts are concerned with the question of the initial trauma and the origins of family. The *Ion* is truly a tale of abandonment and reunion since, in the play, an infant who is the product of Apollo's rape of the Athenian princess Kreousa, is exposed by his mother. The child is rescued at Apollo's request, brought to the god's temple in Delphi, where he grows up, and is finally recognized by Kreousa, now married to Xouthos, king of Athens. On the other hand, Freud's case history suggests only a fear of abandonment on the part of a patient that Freud named the Wolf Man because of a childhood dream that haunted him. This fear first emanated from the boy's feeling that his father preferred his sister to him, and resurfaced toward the end of therapy, as the anxiety of the coming separation from his psychoanalyst.

Pedrick argues that both authors fall short of successfully tackling the problem of the construction of identity because Euripides fails to show, and Freud fails to identify, the precise moment of the initial trauma. She asserts that the site of the original suffering is located right after birth, when the parents are faced with the frightening choice between embrace and abandonment—amounting to murder in some cases. Victoria Pedrick calls the recreation of this decisive instant "a romance of belonging, as an adaptation of and a challenge to Freud's family romance" (9). The author makes a compelling case for her innovative thesis and presents convincing arguments for critically examining and re-evaluating the principles on which Freud based his psychoanalysis. First, she objects to Freud's family romance, in which "overwhelmed by feelings of neglect, the child consoles itself with the belief that its 'real' parents are not the harsh, humble folk who foster it, but people who are nobler and its by birthright" (32). The elaboration of this fantasy, Pedrick claims, allows Freud to disregard the reality of physical abandonment. Her second criticism concerns Freud's insistence that the primal scene (a child witnessing

its parents having sex) recreates the Oedipal embrace and is at the heart of all neuroses. When Sergei Pankejeff (the Wolf Man) comes to Sigmund Freud for help, Freud authoritatively interprets his dream as the trauma caused by the primal scene, although his patient never remembered such an occurrence, and despite several very traumatic childhood experiences that could have been at the source of Sergei's illness. Victoria Pedrick states, "Freud constructs complementary identities for himself and for his patient that illustrate the scene's fundamental necessity as the master narrative of psychoanalysis, but he cannot resist the temptation to use further constructions of the primal scene rhetorically to buttress his argument as a 'secret weapon' against his adversaries" (10).

Victoria Pedrick's insightful analysis of Freud's case study of the Wolf Man, and her discussion of his disagreement with his former followers, Alfred Adler and Carl Jung, shed new lights on the beginnings of psychoanalysis. It is also the perfect platform for the author to propose her own theory of the primary trauma. She examines the harsh reality of child abandonment in ancient Greece, and even in Freud's era, and the violence at the heart of the romance of belonging. The initial choice of embrace or rejection has to take into account the economic value of the infant who is the object of the transaction. The author re-establishes the crucial role of the mother, who is only a passive, neglected figure in Freud's Oedipal constructions. She states: "This image of mother and child as separate agents challenges stereotypes about what is 'natural'.... But we can sense that the child can also be constructed as an agent of violence, because if it succeeds, it draws from the mother's body relentlessly" (159).

Victoria Pedrick is an Associate Professor of Classics at Georgetown University. Her book, *Euripides, Freud, and the Romance of Belonging* is thought-provoking, well researched, and clearly written. It will be of interest to scholars, and to anyone interested in mythology, psychology, or cultural studies. ✱

Hugh Magennis. *Translating Beowulf: Modern Versions in English Verse*.
Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, Inc., 2011. 244p.

JULES AUSTIN HOJNOWSKI
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

In *Translating Beowulf: Modern Versions in English Verse*, Hugh Magennis transports and regales detailed accounts of segments of the poem instead of a comprehensive review which gathers materials out of numerous works, with four major verse translations while comparing the critical parts of the work. This

archetypal Anglo-Saxon literary work is customarily considered the keystone of modern literature, which partakes in a unique history, therefore complicating both its historical and its canonical position in English literature. This book begins with the Introduction/Chapter 1, explaining why these four authors and their translations were chosen, breaking each down with the difference as to why each did either a domesticating or foreignizing translation, grammar, meter, syllabic meter, and irregular syntax with various translators' arguments about each of these. He also goes so far as to explain the different thoughts behind the various prose translations, those of Tolkien, William Morris (1895), Tennyson, Longfellow, and A. Diedrich Wackerbarth (1849), and a few others.

In Chapter 2—Approaching the Poetry of *Beowulf*—Magennis provides his bibliophile with the poem, and points out key aspects of it and its poetic historical context and language. Magennis flows through the history and significance by breaking it down for all levels of *Beowulf* lovers. He focuses on two specific sections, lines 1-11 and 867B-74, and these are the lines used from the other translators in Chapters 4 through 7. Chapter 3—Reception, Perceptions, and a Survey of Earlier Verse Translations of *Beowulf*—explains the history of the *Beowulf* manuscript. Magennis details how the poem has been acknowledged and observed from the sixteenth century to modern times, and why it was translated into verse for the first hundred years. Magennis does a wonderful job of balancing all the elements of this fragile piece of work while giving appropriate justice to translations that have breathed life into it for the modern reader. He writes one of the finest short, universal introductions to the artistry of the *Beowulf* poem.

Chapters 4 through 7 analyze four verse translations of the poem published since 1950: those by Edwin Morgan (1952), Burton Raffel (1963), Michael Alexander (1973), and Seamus Heaney (1999). These are the most legendary and historically important of that era. Essentially Magennis walks us through the thinking of each of these translators. Chapter 8 addresses all the other verse translations from after 1950 and includes films. The over twenty verse translations come mostly from the United States; a few are British. Each translation in this chapter is given equal time and critiqued fairly, in the same fashion as the previous four major works and translators in this particularly rich period. Magennis offers a serious account of translations in English verse, setting them in the frameworks both of the larger story of the retrieval and treatment of the poem and of insights into it over the past two hundred years. He also makes us aware of key issues in translation theory. Consideration is given to the prose translations and to the artistic versions of the poem that have been produced in a variety of media, including film.

Magennis' conclusion reiterates how the American versions were produced for the layman with more access in different forms and for others working on translations of this piece or other works written in Old English. His book is meticulous and at the same time broad ranged for everyone interested in this magnificent piece of literature. The final section of the book is a three-page Epilogue giving a brief description of films, television productions, computer games, novels, one-man performances, musicals, and an opera based on the *Beowulf* poem. The bibliography is an impressive nineteen pages and immeasurably useful. The information presented in this book functions to contextualize the translations and interpretations of the *Beowulf* poem and enables readers to decide for themselves if they feel the best way to translate this poem is word-for-word, or based on conveying an interpretation of the meaning, or maybe both. ✱

Sandra Ballif Straubhaar. *Old Norse Women's Poetry: The Voices of Female Skalds*. Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2011. 145 p.

CYNTHIA L. HALLEN
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Old Norse Women's Poetry is another installment in the Library of Medieval Women series edited by Jane Chance. Selections from nearly fifty medieval Scandinavian poetic texts appear in six thematic sections: 1) Real People, Real Poetry, 2) Quasi-Historical People and Poetry, 3) Visionary Women: Women's Dream-Verse, 4) Legendary Heroines, 5) Magic-Workers, Prophetesses, and Alien Maidens, and 6) Trollwomen. The result is a diverse and intriguing database of verse written by female authors as well as verse written by male authors who quote the direct speech of Old Norse women.

The overall organization of the book is an effective way to present and access the contents of the book. The format for the textual passages is a standardized tripartite presentation, beginning with actual lines of Old Norse poetry in the left column and a form-focused semi-free verse translation into English in the right column, followed by a meaning-focused semi-literal prose translation into standard English below the parallel verse lines. Here is the form-based verse translation of the words of Steingerðr Þórketilsdóttir in a tribute to her beloved:

Should the gods be goodly,
grant Fate I'll be mated

with none else, O ring-breaker
other than—Fróði's brother. (17)

The meaning-based prose translation reads: “If it happens such that the gods and fate arrange things well for me, ring-breaker, I would betroth myself to the blithe brother of Fróði.” Although the three-part format is helpful, these semi-literal translations do not consistently capture the stylistic and structural features of the Old Norse texts throughout the book. Neither of the translations above capture the non-configurational grammar of the original text:

Bræðr mynda ek blíðum,	Brother-of,—arrange—I—blithe,
bauglestir, mik festa,	ring-breaker—join-hands-with,
yrði goð sem gerðisk	happen gods should perform
góð mér ok skop, Fróða.	good—any but—fate—Fróði's.

A more literal translation in the parallel right columns, or the addition of a word-by-word vertical interlinear translation, would have more fully captured word orders, rhetorical figures, skaldic conventions, and the breathless tone of the passage, making the language features more transparent for stylistic analysis and linguistic exegesis. Perhaps this would be an improvement for future editions.

Old Norse Women's Poetry is laden with golden nuggets of historical information and cultural insight, but the reader has to dig them out and refine them in order to obtain and utilize the riches of the texts. In section five, we learn about the ways, words, and works of wise women, also known as spákonur, vǫlva, skalds, seers, or magic-working prophetesses (72-85). In our day, such figures have been obscured or caricatured because of taboo associations with witchcraft, but remnants of their more positive roles as sibyls, oracles, midwives, or fairy godmothers still surface in the western literary tradition, and it is good to see their roots in Old Norse attestations.

The text selections are silvered with veins of intercultural relations between Norway, Sweden, Greenland, and Iceland, as well as Ireland, Finland, Lapland, and more distant lands. In one passage, a Norwegian saga hero named Oddr hears an Irish princess describe one magic shirt made by seamstresses in six different places:

... One sleeve was made by Sámi [Finnish],
and the other by the Irish [Celtic].
Saxon sisters [West Germanic] strung the silk,
and southern maidens spun it.
Welsh women [Franco-Italian] wove the shirt,
on looms warped by No-One. (88)

Such passages expand our perceptions of the Old Norse worldview in medieval times, subverting one-dimensional stereotypes of brutal Viking barbarians and their mute, ravaged women.

The end matter of the volume includes four highly useful tools: an “Old Norse Literature Time Line,” a “Glossary of Personal Names,” a “Bibliography,” and an “Index of Names.” The time line provides a chronology for some of the textual passages that appear throughout the book. However, the edition would have been more useful if approximate dates had been given to contextualize all of the passages in the book. For example, no date is given for the story of Hildisif and Alsol Ptólómeudóttir (two daughters of King Ptolomeus of Arabia), so there is not enough context to surmise why a Norse text concerns two Arabian princesses (91). The story comes from the text titled “Hjálpés saga ok Olvis,” which appears in the Glossary and Index, but the title does not appear in the Time Line nor in the Bibliography, so it is difficult to get further information about the work. Although the Foreword (x) invites readers to “seek out the full contextual environments” for the brief passages given, the value of the book would be more obvious if commentaries were sometimes less understated and somewhat more explanatory.

Minor punctuation errors can occasionally confound the reader. For example, an opening single quotation mark has no follow-up closing mark for the last passage on page 79. However, such format inconsistencies are rare and quite forgivable considering the dense, terse, and substantial matter of the book. ✱

Molly Martin. *Vision and Gender in Malory's Morte Darthur*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010. 201p.

BENEDICK TURNER
ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE, NEW YORK

In *Vision and Gender in Malory's Morte Darthur*, Molly Martin argues that the *Morte* is mainly concerned with “defining and valorizing the male community of knights and its specific version of romance masculinity” (1). According to Martin, Malory’s “masculinist project” depends upon vision, in particular how masculinity is produced in images of masculine bodies and behaviors. Right at the start, therefore, Martin makes it clear how her work is supplying something that is lacking from the existing body of Malory scholarship: a book-length study of the relationship between vision and gender in the *Morte*. Martin rightly notes that this lack is especially surprising given our age’s critical interest in vision, thereby encouraging her readers to believe that her book is an innovative contribution to a popular direction of scholarly inquiry.

Martin’s introduction explains how later-medieval ideas about seeing and being seen are more complicated than the theories of vision most commonly

embraced today: instead of being located primarily in the male gaze, visual power is apportioned between both the image and its viewer. Martin argues that the production of masculinity in the *Morte* depends in large part upon knights becoming “spectacle[s] of masculinity” that are viewed by a multilayered audience consisting of other characters, the narrator, and the readers: the reactions of these various audiences are essential to the text’s valuation of masculinity. But Martin also describes how one of the most influential medieval theories of vision—the one asserted in the idea of courtly love as defined by Andreas Capellanus—manifests in the *Morte* to present the male lover as incapacitated by the sight of his beloved lady. While the knight’s masculinity depends upon the images of his person and his masculine behavior being viewed by others, it is also endangered when he gazes upon his lady and is rendered passive by the suffering of desire.

Martin’s first chapter following her introduction focuses on “The Tale of Sir Gareth.” It might seem imprudent for Martin to devote an entire chapter to just one episode; after all, her subject—the *Morte* in its entirety—is very long while her book is not (180 pages, quite a few of them dominated by notes, albeit ones justified by the breadth of Martin’s research). However, “Sir Gareth” provides the clearest and most basic examples of the phenomena described in the introduction. Furthermore, the thorough examination of this story is especially welcome considering the one shortcoming of the introduction, which is that Martin is so busy explaining theories about vision and courtly love that she has to postpone presenting passages from the *Morte*. Admittedly, introductions are often light on evidence, but quotations from Andreas, Lacan, and Barthes show up before passages from Malory; a chapter that lingers on one part of the *Morte* and examines several substantial passages up close thus comes as a relief.

Martin’s ensuing chapters deftly expand the breadth of her focus without sacrificing depth of analysis, and in most cases it is immediately clear how each chapter will add a new layer to Martin’s argument. Chapter Two examines the linked cases of Launcelot and Trystram, two men whose visibility is especially important to their status as champion knights and thus as ideals of masculinity: they must be seen fighting in battles and tournaments, and they must be seen as objects of female desire. But at the same time, the fact that their sexual desires are adulterous requires that they maintain a certain degree of *invisibility*.

The third chapter might seem the least involving. It explores the cases of four more knights, including Gawayne, who either fail at creating masculine spectacles of themselves or choose not to do so. Martin’s conclusion is that in every case, the knight who is not seen performing masculine action is marginalized by Arthurian society. Thus there are no exceptions to the rule Martin described in earlier

chapters, or rather the exceptions are punished so severely that they prove the rule. This chapter at first appears simply to anticipate disagreements with Martin's thesis and defuse them by reclaiming the examples that would otherwise seem to contradict her argument; it makes the book more persuasive, but does not develop the thesis in a way that is immediately apparent. However, Martin's assertion that the rule governing vision and gender is inviolable is actually part of an emerging argument about the cohesiveness of the *Morte* as a single narrative as opposed to a collection of related stories.

This emphasis on cohesiveness becomes a focal point in Chapter 4, in which Martin explores the relationship between vision and gender in the parts of the *Morte* devoted to the Grail Quest. In this section of the text, women, who elsewhere in the *Morte* are very important as both images and observers of images, are largely excluded. But Martin, in her most detailed examination of how the *Morte* compares to its sources, shows how Malory maintains the romance model of vision (in which men create and maintain their masculinity through displays of prowess) rather than shifting to the more spiritual, Christian-centric system that prevails in the French *Queste*. Whereas Launcelot is explicitly criticized for his concern with his own earthly image in that source, Malory obscures this failure. Even Galahad who, as the paradigm of Christian knighthood is unconcerned with his own image, is judged worthy of pursuing the Grail based on his physical features and the spectacle of his martial victories. In revealing the flexibility of the romance model of vision—its ability to persevere even in an explicitly Christian setting—Martin situates herself among those Malory scholars (a vocal minority) who argue that the *Morte* is a single coherent “book” (as Caxton refers to it) and against those who instead insist that it is a patchwork of several quite different texts (as Eugène Vinaver does).

Women return to prominence in Martin's fifth chapter, as she focuses on the way some female characters experience threats to their femininity when they gaze at men in a way not dissimilar to the way knights find their masculinity endangered when they gaze at their beloved ladies. But whereas men can reassert their gender on the pre-established stages of masculine performance (the tournament, the battlefield), Martin argues that women have no such ready-made recourse. The way women respond to this challenge varies greatly from individual to individual. Some create one type of stage for their gender performance, others another type, and yet others fail to create any stage at all. Femininity is thus more multiple and varied than masculinity, according to Martin's reading. But Martin also notes that the way women lose and regain their femininity through seeing and being seen is fundamentally similar to the way men lose and regain their

masculinity. Furthermore, each variation of femininity functions to further define (by contradistinction) the single model of masculinity; by the end of the chapter, it is again clear that Martin's primary purpose is to emphasize the coherence of the *Morte*.

This emphasis on coherence unsurprisingly occupies the spotlight in Martin's conclusion. Martin also reasserts her argument that the importance of vision and the various ways it functions throughout the *Morte* should lead us to think of it not just as a single text but as a single *romance*. As she indicates in her final sentence, genre has been as much her concern as gender. But, apart from suggesting that her book might deserve a more inclusive title, this illuminates the study's greatest strength: that it will appeal to readers with diverse interests. Other medievalists as well as scholars interested in vision will benefit from Martin's explanations of medieval ideas about seeing and being seen as well as the way she employs those ideas to analyze a text. Readers interested in gender, masculinity especially but not exclusively, will likely welcome this addition to the corpus of studies that link gender to performance, whether they focus on the medieval period, another period, or gender theory in general: Martin's argument is a worthy complement to Judith Butler's theoretical work, but also, for instance, to James Eli Adams' study of styles of Victorian masculinities. And those interested in the *Morte* in particular will find a thorough examination of the text, replete with comparisons to its source, that contributes to the ongoing conversation about the way we should classify Malory's work. ✱

Richard M. Cook. *Alfred Kazin: A Biography*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. 452p.

MARTHA KIM
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

Richard Cook's *Alfred Kazin: A Biography* is well worth reading. Richard Cook uses Kazin's lifetime of journals and his copious writings and his two major works, *On Native Grounds* (1942) and *A Walker in the City* (1951) to analyze what made Kazin the pre-eminent spokesperson for American literature and arts during the 1930s through the 1950s.

Cook's writing style is crisp, clear, and easy to read. Cook, who is a Professor of English Literature at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, does a good job of interpreting Kazin's life—his interests, views, achievements, conflicts, Jewishness. Cook includes extensive quotations from Kazin's journals and publications. Further, Cook's biography is well documented with extensive notes organized by

each chapter and an extensive bibliography, and lends itself to being a source book for further research.

Cook's biography goes into detailed discussions about the political and literary movements that Kazin was involved in during the early and mid-twentieth century in America and abroad, which was every important movement during the time. Kazin made copious notes about everyone he met, about the literary journals that were flourishing in the 1930s and 1940s, and about the literary critics and political radicals that he was friends with. He later turned his journals into detailed and accurate memoirs of his and his contemporaries' involvement in Socialism, Communism, and the Democratic movements of the times. His life was a recordation of the America of the 1920s through 1950s, a mini-history of the times.

Kazin was a great supporter of all that was uniquely American in a time when most Literati worshipped Europe and looked to European artists, authors, and philosophers for inspiration. Kazin realized that he had discovered his life's work at the age of 25, when he was a new graduate of City College and a sometime reviewer for various literary journals. In a journal entry in 1939, Kazin says, "I suddenly realized, and for the first time consciously, that I had a passionate and even professional interest in American culture and literature" (70). Kazin followed up on this realization by deciding that he wanted to write the definitive history of late nineteenth- / early twentieth-century American literature. The result was *On Native Grounds* published in 1942.

Kazin expressed in his journals lively and insightful opinions about the universities where he taught and faculty and students he interacted with, whether in New York City, Michigan, North Carolina, or Massachusetts. Kazin harbored a special feeling for the Midwest, where he thought the students were sincere but unimaginative, and liked least Amherst, Massachusetts, where he thought professors and students alike were pompous and pedantic.

When Kazin got older, he returned to walk the Brownsville streets of his youth, looking for what defined him from that environment. In an effort to make sense out of the dualities that he felt in his life, he compiled his Brownsville ramblings in *A Walker in the City* (1951), the second of his important works, this one about the effect that a person's childhood experiences has on shaping the adult. The struggles that Kazin had to make a living in the literary world that he had chosen as his life's profession, the difficulties that he had to come to terms with his parents' immigrant status and lack of American ways, lack of English, lack of education, and lack of money are vividly portrayed in Cook's biography, and their influence on shaping the character of the young Kazin, who often hid in the local library to

avoid the conflicts of Jewish Brownsville and his crowded, poverty-stricken home are explored.

Cook's biography explores the personal side of Kazin: his need to reconcile his Jewishness with his life as a nonobservant Jew, his failed marriages, the estrangement that divorce caused between Kazin and his son, Michael, his reconciliation with his son as adults when they both came to realize that they had an intensity for American life and political involvement (Kazin in the Socialist movements of the 1930s and his son in the radical movements of the 1960s and the Vietnam era), his daughter's immigration to Israel, and his final illness. Throughout every change, challenge, and storm, Kazin maintained his trueness to American literature and to his writing. Kazin lived the life of the ordinary man while being an extraordinary critic. ✱

James Schiff, ed. *Updike in Cincinnati: A Literary Performance*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007. 129p.

TREVOR JACKSON
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, STANISLAUS

Updike in Cincinnati: A Literary Performance does not represent a typically conceived academic argument. Rather, it compiles a series of literary and scholarly genres, along with an illuminating and contextualizing preface, to form a multidimensional collection united with humanizing details, often absent in academic scholarship (as far as textuality is concerned), superbly captured by its subtitle. The volume comprises records of four events over two days during the 2001 Cincinnati Short Story Festival at which John Updike read his short fiction, answered audience inquiries concerning many aspects of his career, listened to scholars present conference papers on his work, and participated in an in-depth interview conducted by Professor James Schiff, editor of this volume and author of *Updike's Version: Rewriting "The Scarlet Letter"* (1992) and *John Updike Revisited* (1998) among numerous other articles on the author. Despite its lack of a direct, argumentative point, the collection concerns itself with three strains of inquiry: Updike as a writer, the much undervalued, unexplored category of the literary performance, and the fading genre of the short story.

One implicit concern of the collection is to rally attention to the short story as an art form. Throughout the book, readers are provided with three short stories written at different point in Updike's extensive career. The first two presented—"Snowing in Greenwich Village" (1959) and "Free" (2001)—display Updike

working with similar themes, both stories, he says, about a “husband, a wife, and another woman” with the caveat that what seems “sexually exciting” in the first story, set in the fifties, might seem dull compared to the content of the second, written in the same year of Updike’s participation in the Cincinnati Short Story Festival (4). The third story—“The Bulgarian Poetess” (1965)—is the first of the nineteen Henry Bech stories, representing the origins of a character that would express Updike’s themes for decades. At the conclusion of the short story readings, audience members ask questions and Updike answers with astounding clarity and insightfulness. Although many of the inquiries do not necessarily concentrate on the art of the short story, they delve into many aspects of Updike’s prolific career, detailing everything from his attitudes about the social importance and obligations of a writer, to Updike’s experiences editing the story collections of other authors, to his concerns about the book review replacing the book and his creative urge to produce writing. On the other hand, the questions that do concern the short story provide valuable insights into Updike’s view of the declining genre. Among other observations too numerous to elucidate here, he calls the short story the articulation of a “single idea, a single moment ... carried forward,” unlike the novel, which focuses on a “field of ideas” and a broad social subject, as a more autobiographical endeavor, as an artistic endeavor that arrests its creator in a continuous breath of inspiration (80-84).

The interview with Updike conducted by collection editor James Schiff more specifically attempts to “cover some new territory by focusing on the short story” in terms of Updike’s attitude toward the genre and his journey as a writer through several decades and dozens of literary projects (72). Indeed, Schiff proposes that his entire motivation behind arranging both the four events Updike takes part in and the compilation of this book detailing them is to shift some academic attention toward the short story. The second event, the presentation of two conference papers—“Updike Experimenting: *The Music School*” by William H. Pritchard and “John Updike, Don DeLillo, and the Baseball Story as Myth” by Donald J. Greiner—highlights scholastic approaches to Updike’s short story collections in hopes, as Schiff says of his decision to organize the panel, of more adequately recognizing and discussing Updike’s short fiction (34).

One need not be intimately familiar with Updike studies or his body of work to benefit from this collection. The interviews, stories, and essays collected here serve as a healthy introduction to scholars interested in Updike, and for scholars already familiar with his work, as it supplements a great deal of already published material. Though the book could benefit from a greater contextualization of its place in Updike studies, particularly in the introductory section, its purpose is

rather to present Updike in a venue infrequently granted to literary personalities, whose works are usually confined to the impersonal text on the page that private audiences bring to life in the reading process. Where Updike, like any author, remains reclusive as he produces his work, the opportunity for readers and authors to interact is far more limited. By presenting this volume in the form of a literary performance—which is accomplished wonderfully through the combination of mediums—Schiff allows the charming, personal side of an author to be communicated to readers.

Schiff's poignant introduction to *Updike in Cincinnati* assists in bringing a personal warmth to the event. In addition to complementing Updike as being a consummate reader and ultra-articulate performer, Schiff positions Updike within a long line of writers whose public performances have gone unacknowledged in literary studies because of their evanescent nature, accounts that are unavailable in newspapers soon after their occurrence and thus whose legacies (non-textual as they typically are) quickly fade in ways they did not in the time when the likes of Dickens and Twain performed elaborate readings of their own work in similar venues over a century before. Schiff succeeds not only in collecting a great deal of valuable material on Updike and his legacy, but also lining it with personal touches that humanize the author and the event. The collection approaches readers with the flavor of a familiar academic conference, presenting a textual example of what several panels at such a conference would feel like.

Although *Updike in Cincinnati* does not claim to make any groundbreaking movements in the area of literary studies, it succeeds brilliantly in accomplishing what it sets out to do: mainly, to show the experiences of an author and his readers at a public exhibition. The volume provides an array of information to acquaint or deepen one's understanding of an author in the vein of Nabokov's *Strong Opinions*, an author highly influential to Updike. *Updike in Cincinnati* also succeeds in shedding greater light on the neglect of both the short story and the public presentation of academics and authors. ✱

Steve Shoemaker, ed. *Thinking Poetics: Essays on George Oppen*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009. 283p.

BRIAN F. McCABE
CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

Thinking Poetics: Essays on George Oppen, edited by Steve Shoemaker of Connecticut, serves as a worthy and necessary addition to the library of anyone studying either the poet, specifically, or post-modern American poetics. The

volume is comprehensive, exploring Oppen in terms of philosophy and theory, his relationship to other great thinkers of the twentieth century, and even to his own protégées. Divided into five major sections, fifteen essays comprise the collection, providing students of Oppen with both solid as well as more creative theoretical takes on his poetics. A good blend of historicism and philosophy also makes this text useful for those seeking either biographical or philosophical work about the poet.

In Section I of this very thorough volume on George Oppen, “Working Papers / The Mind Thinking,” readers find Michael Davidson’s essay titled “Palimtexts: Postmodern Poetry and the Material Text.” The essay provides excellent insights into the material nature of Oppen’s poetics, primarily as found in his notebooks and journals. Davidson reminds readers of poetry that, in ways similar to those surrounding Dickinson and her fascicles, Oppen’s work comes with a host of “archeological” matter. He writes that this manifests “the gradual accretion and sedimentation of textual materials, no layer of which can ever be isolated from any other” (27). Davidson continues on to explore Oppen’s work as a poetry that is more participatory than it is demonstrative in terms of thought. Indeed, Davidson explains the poet’s palimtextual work reveals itself to be in conversation with itself, words and phrasings tacked upon one another, rising up off the page, proving its own dialogue, materially. One of the most useful aspects of Davidson’s essay is the comparative poetics in which he engages toward the essay’s close, exploring the technical relationship of Oppen’s work to other the poetic geniuses of his lifetime, Creeley, Olson, Ginsberg, Pound, Williams, and others. Overall, the essays provide a nice grounding in the techniques and practices utilized by Oppen, and end by situating him firmly within the modern poetic tradition.

Section II of the collection, “On *Discrete Series* / Of the World, Weather-Swept,” is made up of two essays, one by Shoemaker himself, and the other by near-legendary experimental poet Lyn Hejinian. Hejinian presents a “Preliminary to a Close Reading of George Oppen’s *Discrete Series*,” beginning with a bit of publication history. She recounts the ways in which New Directions published *New Collected Poems* initially, making it “at times difficult to know where one poem ends and another begins” (47). She notes the ways this problematizes a reading of the poetry’s “contrapuntal development,” which she deems vital to Oppen. Citing Mary Oppen’s biography of Oppen, Hejinian also examines several influences on Oppen, including, significantly, Marxist and Heideggerian philosophy (it’s worth noting, no few of the essayists in the volume examine Oppen in light of Heidegger), as well as Virginia Woolf, Proust, and Henry James. Hejinian also takes time in her essay to explore Oppen’s social justice orientation toward the world,

especially in light of his own intersection with both WWII and later, the Vietnam War. Shoemaker's essay, "*Discrete Series and the Posthuman City*," provides insight into Oppen as Imagist / Objectivist poet of the postmodern. The essay highlights a "modern landscape ... subjected to an act of dis/closure, revealing itself as a vanguard site of the post-human order of things" (61). Shoemaker also describes Oppen's "serial topography," in which the poet concerns himself with the fact of a world not created by the poem, but already extant. Oppen's poetic, Shoemaker explains, concerns the nature of objects as opposed to their function in the world. While the essay includes some jargon that can be difficult to wade through if one is not a student of poetics, its value lies in that Shoemaker always brings his observations around to the work and words of the poet himself.

"Among the Philosophers," the collection's third section, closely reads Oppen's connections to philosophy, primarily through phenomenology and Heidegger. Oppen's readings of Maritain also figure in Peter Nicholls' essay, "Oppen's Heidegger." Maritain provides for Oppen an "awakening," as Nicholls' puts it, which was central to Oppen's re-emergence into the world of poetry after his long post-war silence. Nicholls exposes Oppen's Heidegger as the way in which Oppen "link[s] objectness to the disclosive force of being rather than making it a condition of subservience to subjectivity" (99). One of the great points of the essay is Nicholls' integration of Heidegger into his own insight about Oppen: "The nature of the image,' writes Heidegger, 'is to let something be seen' and one can imagine how readily Oppen would have concurred with the claim several lines later, that 'poetic images are not mere fancies and illusions but imaginings that are visible inclusions of the alien in the sight of the familiar'" (Heidegger, qtd. in Nicholls 110). While the reading in this section can challenge the non-philosophy student, the understanding of Oppen conveyed herein is valuable. The essay paired with Nicholls' in this section, Forrest Gander's "Finding the Phenomenal Oppen," allows readers more insight in Oppen's philosophical poetic, citing his interest not only in Heidegger and Maritain, but also his reading of Schelling, Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty. Most interesting, however, are the interviews, notebooks, and letters of Oppen, which Gander employs. These writings shared by Gander give readers real knowledge of Oppen's personal ideology and how it factors into his work. For example, from an article by Rachel Blau DuPlessis (whose own essay is the standout of Shoemaker's volume) we read that Oppen believes, "The Primitive fact: *the existence of the world* and that the light of the world is our humanity"; and later, from the *Iowa Review*, "I THINK THAT IF WE FOLLOW VERY SCRUPULOUSLY THINGS AS WE FIND THEM, WE ARE DRAWN BEYOND OLD CONCEPTS AND, PERHAPS, BEYOND

THE POSSIBILITIES OF CONCEPTS” (123). This concentrated, centralized, intimate knowledge of Oppen is invaluable to anyone making a study of the poet and his work.

Section IV of the volume, “Two Wars,” educates readers by way of two well thought out essays about Oppen’s first-hand war experiences and how they serve to inform his poetry: “One among the Rubble: George Oppen and World War II” and “‘The Air of Atrocity’: ‘Of Being Numerous’ and the Vietnam War,” by Kristin Prevallet and John Lowney, respectively. Prevallet’s brief work explores Oppen’s involvement in WWII, and the time he spent in foxholes in Europe, many of which would become suspended periods of time, expressed years later in vibrant and terrifying poetry. Prevallet opens up the ways in which Oppen’s own experiences in war figure quite prominently in any number of his works, including the poems “Of Hours,” “Myth of the Blaze,” “Survival Infantry,” “The Familiar,” and “Of Being Numerous,” to name but a few. Prevallet describes how these very personal experiences inform Oppen’s later ideology as he writes poetry about and during the Vietnam era. Indeed, Oppen’s strong feelings about war become evident, writes Prevallet, as one reads both poetry and letters; Oppen writes, for example: “The name of the game is imperialism, and we throw away our lives for it. We can hardly be said to possess our own lives” (137). Prevallet points out that “the presence of war, the catastrophe and sadness of it is central to Oppen’s poetics” (141). John Lowney’s essay takes up this theme in earnest, elucidating the pressure Oppen felt during the Vietnam conflict. Lowney’s essay presents Oppen’s “critique of the hegemonic masculinist stance of representing war, including the subject positions through which he remembers his own experience of World War II” (145). One of the points Lowney makes is that the experience of war is an alienating one, and this factors into Oppen’s poetic. Oppen experiences, as he writes in “Of Being Numerous,” “A ferocious mumbling in Public / Of rootless speech” which leaves him isolated, for all his experience (149). Lowney’s close reading of the grammar of Oppen gives readers useful insight into the way Oppen’s work seeks to counter its author’s sense of isolation. He writes that Oppen’s use of the plural in “Of Being Numerous” “resolves, however provisionally, the opposition of the poet to the social totality [and] also undermines not only an exclusionary construct of nationality but the primacy of nationality altogether” (153). While Professor Lowney’s essay could benefit from a deeper treatment of Oppen’s poetry to back up his assertions, it succeeds in concert with Prevallet’s work, lending the section a sense of completeness.

Shoemaker’s volume closes with a rather lengthy, but entirely worthwhile section (V) on “Receptions” of Oppen’s work. Beginning with poet Ron Silliman’s

all too brief section outlining “Third-Phase Objectivism,” this near 100-page section really forms the heart of the volume. Silliman uses three of Oppen’s poems to expand upon the poet’s origins in poetic Objectivism. He is, Silliman argues, “the bridge-poet between the tendency known as the New American Poetry and those in the middle ground, an accomplishment of third-field Objectivism” (168). Next, in sustained close readings of several poems, John Taggart tackles the question of Oppen’s inclusion or non-inclusion in literary and poetic anthologies in “George Oppen and the Anthologies.” Shoemaker notes for his readers that, as Taggart’s essay is a bit dated, having first appeared in 1985, the topic of Oppen’s anthologization is not quite as fraught as it once was, his work now appearing in “what Taggart labels the ‘anthologies of influence’” (171). One of Taggart’s main points regarding whether or not Oppen is anthologized is his often non-traditional form —Oppen, however, seems to insist on employing the traditional language of prosody to term his poetics. Oppen’s poetry also challenges, which may be another reason for its dis-inclusion, Taggart explains. He writes, “I had thought the ideal would be to live ‘responsively’ with the world, to recognize its fatal nature and, like Ishmael, to float on the margin of what was disaster for others. Now I doubt if the vision of George Oppen’s poetry allows for any such ideal or ‘right’ behavior. However carefully one lives, however skillful in precarious balancing, *there will be shipwreck*, if there is any consciousness at all” (178). In Taggart’s reading of Oppen, then, his liminal poetic is, in fact, what causes him to be occasionally marginalized by anthologists.

Michael Heller’s “Conviction’s Net of Branches,” provides a reading of Oppen centered on a sense in which he is both metaphysical and anti-metaphysical at the same time. Heller notes a tension in Oppen, made evident in his reading of sections of several poems, including “Of Being Numerous” and works from *Seascape: Needle’s Eye*, in which Oppen finds himself pulled by these seeming opposites. Henry Winfield refers to this as “when the known and the unknown touch” in his own brilliant addition to the volume at hand. Heller’s essay presents some challenges in terms of its occasionally cumbersome writing, but what it lacks there, it makes up for by returning, time and again, to the poetry of George Oppen itself, something often missing in critical inquiry in poetics. Oppen’s desire to both examine and eschew the mystical, then, comes to be revealed through Heller’s direct engagement with the poetry, which he takes up no fewer than twenty-six times in his short essay. Professor Charles Bernstein follows Mr. Heller’s work with his glancing “Hinge Picture (on George Oppen).” I refer to this work as “glancing” due primarily to its brevity. And while much more could be said about Oppen, Dr. Bernstein’s piece succeeds in that he offers some of the most

tantalizing formulations of the poet and his work in the collection: “For Oppen, there is no neo-Nietzschean rejoicing in ... loss”; “This tension ... is at the heart of his use of line break as hinge”; and finally, “Could the twenty-five year gap between *Discrete Series* and *The Materials* be Oppen’s grandest hinged interval?” It would be fascinating to hear more from Dr. Bernstein, especially with regard to his highly inventive “G-E-O-R-G-E O-P-P-E-N” acrostic technique.

Essay 12 of the collection is by far the high point of the volume, from Professor Rachel Blau DuPlessis. What makes DuPlessis’ essay so striking is her intimate familiarity with Oppen, the man himself. She documents some of her own conversation and letters with Oppen, thereby lending readers the very pleasurable experience of becoming acquainted with the poet in a more than simply critical manner. Punningly titled “‘Uncannily in the Open: In Light of Oppen,’” DuPlessis writes that, like other creative and philosophical geniuses of the age (Ezra Pound, Paul Celan, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno), Oppen, “asks in every word how to make art, what art is possible, what must be said given the pressures and demands of our position in history” (203). Her highly readable and accessible analysis allows readers to see the connections between these great thinkers and Oppen, in both his poetry and his more personal writings and conversations. DuPlessis shares with readers her own impressions of the poet, and how much he challenged her to become a better writer in her own right, writing her “forthright corrective statements [such as] ‘One cannot make a poem by sticking words into it, it is the poem which makes the words and contains their meaning. One cannot reach out for *roses* and *elephants* and *essences* and put them in the poem—the ground under the elephant, the air around him, one would have to know very precisely one’s distance from the elephant or step deliberately too close, close enough to frighten oneself” (207). By sharing such tidbits with readers, DuPlessis’ essay transcends mere criticism, rising to the level of an essay on craft, becoming, in many ways, something similar to Hugo’s “Triggering Town” or Mary Oliver’s *Poetry Handbook*. The essay also quotes Oppen, citing his project as *avant-garde*, “in his conviction of historical and political crisis—the ‘avant-garde of time ... itself’ to which work must respond by thought” (212). DuPlessis’ own writing about Oppen, and the craft of poetry itself exhibits her own very fine poetic abilities, making this essay a joy to read.

The final three essays of Shoemaker’s collection, respectively, “George Oppen: A Radical Practice,” “if it fails—,” and “Excerpts from ‘Because the Known and the Unknown Touch’: A Reading of Oppen’s ‘Of Being Numerous’” provide readers closing insights on Oppen. From Susan Thackrey, author of “Radical Practice” we read this formulation of Oppen: “In his practice Oppen simply refused a poetics

that was based anywhere other than in this present experience” (229). Thackrey also shares Oppen’s own opinion on the nature of language, quoting from a letter, “Words cannot be wholly transparent ... the ‘machine of words’ which resolves everything—until one steps out the door” (231). This last of the longer essays in the volume closes with yet another examination of the Oppen-Heidegger relationship, appropriately. Enslin’s brief following exploration of several excerpts of Oppen helps readers to see how connected Oppen’s thematics are, across the body of his work, and also includes thought-provoking personal insights in the same vein as DuPlessis. Excerpted sections of Dr. Henry Weinfeld’s reading of Oppen close out the volume with another reception of Oppen’s metaphysical poetics. One of the more interesting notes made by Professor Weinfeld is that of Oppen’s “conscious process of *deceleration*” (260). He also writes of Oppen’s tendency toward poetic intertextuality, and of the poet’s use of “marvelous” non-specific references, which allow Oppen’s poetry to achieve universality in the mind of readers. The essay closes, however, with a note on Oppen’s specificity, and Weinfeld’s reading that he insists readers “face the ‘wild glare’ of reality” (270). In Weinfeld’s essay, one feels that the consideration of Oppen undertaken in the collection has come full-circle, and encompasses both the philosophical and the personal addressed throughout the volume, always in light of the poetry, of course.

As one can see, Shoemaker’s volume serves as indispensable to the library of any scholar seriously engaged with post-modern American poetics, or philosophy. Oppen, silent in his own right for so long, and far too long ignored by major publishers and anthologists, receives the attention his work deserves in this well-selected compilation of critical essays. ✱

Sylvia Henneberg. *The Creative Crone: Aging and the Poetry of May Sarton and Adrienne Rich*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010. 203p.

JULIE J. NICHOLS
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

This fine volume makes important contributions to three areas of scholarship: age studies; literary studies in general, especially as they embrace the discourse of aging; and, specifically, the study of two important women poets of the twentieth century, May Sarton and Adrienne Rich. These are not always seamlessly interwoven. Sometimes the explication of the poems overrides the discussion of aging; sometimes the connection between the discussion of aging and the individual poems seems forced. Occasionally the writing seems awkward, as when Henneberg repeats title, author, and date for a poem she has already discussed.

Minor inelegancies aside, the contributions this book makes to the conversations in all three areas of study are satisfying and significant. The book is well researched, thorough, and especially gratifying in its attempt to fill the serious gap in literary studies that involves the discourse of aging. This reader learned a great deal not only about May Sarton and Adrienne Rich and their poetry, but also about the discipline of aging studies and its relation to literary scholarship.

While the less critically-acclaimed Sarton (1912-1995) explored questions of age directly from the beginning of her career in her poetry and prose, as well as in her personal life, the much-awarded Rich (b. 1929), a public, often confrontational feminist, politicized everything that was of consequence to her (17). Investigating the work of Rich's later career makes it clear that as she aged, her dedication to social causes took complex turns—she “became more patient, more accepting of beginnings, dissonances, and compromises ... [more willing to] enter negotiations” (17). Henneberg considers the work of these two poets in relation to aging, then, to be complementary; taken together, their work demonstrates multiple conscious ways to interrogate, resist, embrace, and give expression to the process of aging. Henneberg's premise is that contemporary literary studies must “encompass all cultural texts and contexts ... to reevaluate the social construction of age across the age spectrum” (1-2) and that a close study of the life work of these two poets can expand scholars' capacity to do so on multiple levels.

It is worth noting here that though Rich gave Henneberg only limited permission to quote, Henneberg references interviews and prose extensively and professionally. Her syntheses of the work of scholars as Gullette, Gelpi and Gelpi, Kastenbaum, and many others new to this reader, along with such familiar names as Gilbert, Alteiri, Heilbrun, and Birkerts, is impressive.

Divided into five chapters, the book situates Sarton and Rich in their critical milieus and narrates succinctly their stories of ageism and aging. Early on, Henneberg distinguishes between passive and positive ageism. The former ignores age as an issue; the latter overcompensates for negative stereotypes of aging, wildly praising the “wisdom” and “depth” that age brings, acknowledging neither the difficulties of age nor the individual ways people experience age. Though Sarton sought out older women mentors from the start, the early writings of both Sarton and Rich (who saw aging, like so much else, as a public responsibility rather than a personal experience) show evidence of positive ageism.

Yet inevitably the “ageism” of each poet modified as she aged. This discussion of *their aging*—not merely of *aging*, nor merely of *their poetry*, nor of *aging as a theme in their poetry*, but how they aged differently and thus how their poetry evolves differently as they age—is one of the great strengths of this volume. Both Rich

and Sarton sought in midlife to control their own reception. But because Sarton's poetry received little critical praise, her "midlife anxieties" included speaking more and more personally through her journals. On the other hand, Rich seeks "both to widen and to deepen her political vision" (90), seeing herself as a voice of revolution, urging readers to see the ills of war and despotism and to do something about them.

In addition, as "midlife" gave way to older age, both poets developed "a special sense of time"—a characteristic common for those who are aging, surely, but different for Sarton than for Rich, and thus demonstrative of the diverse possibilities inherent in aging. For Sarton, "the passage of time grants the intensification of experience and personal growth"; in contrast, for Rich it provides "cultural memory and hindsight ... to achieve a greater sense of cultural identity and to raise political consciousness" (120). Aging, as exemplified in the lives and work of these two poets, is not a monotone event, and literary studies would benefit from seeking out the variety of ways aging can be read and written.

Similarly, the processes of reassessing, reviewing, reevaluating, and renegotiating the entirety of a life happen differently for every active individual. Instead of succumbing to "narrative foreclosure"—a term attributed to Randall and McKim and defined as "the inability or refusal to live actively and develop one's life story as one ages" (154)—both Sarton and Rich vigorously extend and expand their life stories as they age. Sarton directly responds to aging in her journals and poetry, sometimes fighting it, sometimes loving it (Henneberg celebrates the contradictions and paradoxes). Rich, on the other hand, "demonstrates the possibilities of aging by creating poetry that evolves with each decade of her life" (155-156) from strict formalism to angry free verse to a less confrontational, but no less urgent, optimism about the possibility of change. Impressively, by referring specifically to both the diversity and the individual content of the two poets' responses to their own aging, Henneberg does exactly what she observes her two subjects doing—that is, demonstrating and supporting their (her) argument in both method and content.

Both poetry and prose is addressed. Most poems are mentioned and explicated more than once. Readers interested in Sarton and Rich will be enlightened by the depth and breadth of Henneberg's readings. Scholars of aging studies will learn a great deal about the issues with which they should be engaged. And literary scholars of all stripes will find their understanding heightened not only of these two poets, but also of the ways in which close readings, taken in light of the stages of life in which they were written, can enhance appreciation for the power of the written word to shed light on the mysterious individualities and commonalities of the human condition of aging. ✱

Daniel Herwitz and Ashutosh Varshney. *Midnight's Diaspora: Critical Encounters with Salman Rushdie*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008. 149p.

MELANIE WATTENBARGER
OHIO DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY

Midnight's Diaspora: Critical Encounters with Salman Rushdie is a unique scholarly work in the scope of materials it offers. The editors begin by offering short segments taken from interviews with Salman Rushdie when he visited the University of Michigan campus in 2003 before serving the expected selection of articles from distinguished scholars. Also delightfully surprising, the editors in turn completed the work with a direct response from Rushdie on this book they have put together. This response of his may perhaps rule my review as redundant, so in the interests of transparency, don't take my word on this book; go see what Rushdie has to say about it himself!

The initial value of this collection undeniably lies in the comments by Salman Rushdie himself. Between the opening excerpts from interviews with him to his closing remarks on *Midnight's Diaspora*, the voice of the author offers an indispensable insight into his art and the world from which it sprang. These firsthand encounters with Rushdie about his life, art, and politics take advantage of the fact that this author can directly respond to an audience who is actively questioning and responding to his work.

What is most intriguing about this collection is the way all of the selected essays seem to dance around Salman Rushdie and his work even though they are expressively included in a work on him and his art. All of the essayists address topics that directly relate to Salman Rushdie and his novels—from freedom of speech to the nationhood of Pakistan, the intrigue of Bombay versus Mumbai to the clutter that is India as a whole—and yet none of them delve deeply into the works or life of Salman Rushdie. These scholars tend to mention Rushdie in their introductions and conclusions as an anecdote for their essays, not the subject; he plays a supporting role in the essays that are purportedly about him.

Towards the end of the collection are Thomas Blom Hansen's "Reflections" and Sara Suleri Goodyear's "Rushdie Beyond the Veil" which are the only two essays that reach into any depth of literary or biographical meaning; only including two essays of such substance seems at first like a deception on the part of the editors of this volume. In a book titled *Midnight's Diaspora: Critical Encounters with Salman Rushdie*, it seems intuitive to expect a volume of critical work delving into the inner sanctum of Rushdie's work and imagination, his very life and soul—as if such an endeavor is feasible.

Instead, the reader encounters essays concerning the world in which Rushdie writes. A great deal of attention is granted to seemingly periphery concerns when

discussing Rushdie, such as secularism in India and freedom of speech; yet, it is this macro examination of the work of Rushdie and the world in which his work exists which make this collection a necessary read for anyone who studies Rushdie's work. In trying to capture a holistic view of an author who is political as well as artistic, the editors—Daniel Herwitz and Ashutosh Varshney—chose an excellent selection of pieces to include and even ordered them in accordance with what a neophyte approaching scholarship on Rushdie may initially be concerned.

The editors begin the essay portion of the book with the obvious topics of the fatwa against Rushdie and freedom of speech with the work of Akeel Bilgrami, then move onto Pakistan in the essays by Ashutosh Varshney and Husain Haqqani before travelling back to India and more specifically Bombay in the essays by Thomas Blom Hansen, Sara Suleri Goodyear and Shashi Tharoor. This order of essays seems backwards from the chronology of Rushdie's writing—if we ignore *Grimus*, Rushdie began his career concerned with India as a whole in *Midnight's Children* and specifically focused on Bombay/Mumbai (his chosen hometown from childhood); he then drew direct attention to the issues of Pakistan and freedom of speech. Yet, the collection is justly ordered. As Shashi Tharoor duly notes, many readers, new and old, approach Rushdie's work out of a response to the gossip surrounding *Satanic Verses* (Tharoor 122). Thus, the editors of this volume present a window into the world of Salman Rushdie by introducing the reader first to the author's own voice then to the issues which will immediately come to mind when speaking of him: freedom of speech and Islamic statehood in Pakistan. Whether it is just that these two topics are irrevocably associated with him even over twenty years since the fatwa against him was issued, this is the reality in which Rushdie sits in our conscience no matter how many novels he has written since *Satanic Verses*.

From the often convoluted language of "Twenty Years of Controversy" to the repetition of historical and political material in "Lasting Injuries..." and "Inhospitable Homeland," there are some distinctive flaws to *Midnight's Diaspora*. The editors offer tantalizing tidbits from the interviews with Rushdie which are unsatisfyingly brief then follow in the book with a very dense argument by Akeel Bilgrami, a dramatic shift which could easily frustrate readers into abandoning the book. Bilgrami effectively unpacks critiques against Rushdie and *Satanic Verses* and provides a space where Muslims and non-Muslims alike can approach this novel to engage in its dialogue instead of simply railing against it, yet the reader can easily get lost in his argument through seeming streams of consciousness and his ending of the essay with a personal diatribe against the American-Iraqi war

which seems altogether a tangent. Another editorial flaw of the book lies in the political overviews of Varshney and Haqqani; although immensely informative, they tend to repeat one another more than build upon the other's essay.

To the credit of the book, Shashi Tharoor does what he does best by presenting a clear and entertaining view of life and politics in India today and Thomas Blom Hensen's depiction of Bombay's history and Mumbai's contemporary reality are not only entirely accurate but beautifully rendered. However, Tharoor's general essay on Indian politics today and issues of national secularism when paired with the structure of the book and repetition of material in the articles on Pakistan lend this book to a readership which is casually interested in Indian-Pakistani literature and the works of Salman Rushdie. It is an excellent resource for neophytes, but perhaps a majority of the essays are too redundant for the seasoned scholar of contemporary South Asian literature who already has a pulse on the political and cultural situations in India and Pakistan.

This collection of interviews and essays is the perfect jumping board into the world of Salman Rushdie. All of the contributors pose important questions about the world in which his work resides and they pull readers out of critiquing the mind and art of Rushdie and plop them straight into the immediacy of the world; they address how the works of Rushdie speak to reality. This collection is not just about conversations with Rushdie on literature and politics, but about how his work communicates with the world and how the world has spoken back. What's more, *Midnight's Diaspora* invites scholars to join in the dialogue and to be aware of the unique political situations of that corner of the world, even if it is not their area of expertise. Except Sara Suleri Goodyear's piece, this collection is evasive in its refusal to directly address any depth of critical analysis of Rushdie's work yet entirely effective in how it forces readers to engage with the greater conversation of Rushdie and the world. ✱

Karin Roffman. *From the Modernist Annex: American Women Writers in Museums and Libraries*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010. 252p.

THOMAS P. FAIR
ADAMS STATE COLLEGE

Focusing on four modernist, American women writers—Edith Wharton, Nella Larsen, Marianne Moore, and Ruth Benedict—Karin Roffman's *From the Modernist Annex: American Women Writers in Museums and Libraries* expands cultural literary analysis outside customary critical perspectives. Conventional analytic approaches considering politics, family, gender, and economics appear

incidentally in Roffman's discussion of the biographical context for each writer. Roffman's premise asserts that, for these four women, museums and libraries operated as sources of cultural and intellectual influence in a manner comparable to the university's influence on a majority of male writers. Roffman's book opens new analytic possibilities regarding the development and shaping of each writer's perceptions and responses and the subsequent influence on her art. Most important to this study is Roffman's contention that once the categories and organizational patterns were understood, each woman responded critically and subversively in her writing.

Although Roffman's discussion lies outside the usual social and political issues of the era, the informative focus of her opening chapter examines the little known nineteenth- and early twentieth-century development and professionalization of American libraries and museums and the ideological debate over the purpose of cultural places. In each of the subsequent chapters, she supplies ample biographical evidence, including any directly related social and economic concerns, of each author's involvement with museums and libraries; however, questions persist regarding the possibility of other influences. She comprehensively investigates Wharton's personal connection with European and American museums and her belief in the museum's responsibility to provide the American public with a sense of aesthetics, history, and culture. Likewise, she examines Larsen's professional training in Dewey's library classification system and experience as a librarian at New York's 135th Street library, which leads to Larsen's awareness of the problems, limitations, and exclusionary aspects of classification. Roffman also examines Moore's early employment both as Melvil Dewey's secretary and later as an assistant librarian at the New York City Hudson Branch as instrumental in revealing the importance of organizational patterns in defining both purpose and response. Relying on mostly unpublished materials and ample biographical details, Roffman establishes Benedict's frustration with sexist limitations in her struggles for professional recognition as an anthropologist and for attainment of a university position. Roffman intertwines Benedict's professional struggle with her desire for creative opportunities and satisfaction through poetry. Unfortunately, Benedict's critical reception caused her to realize "that the dissemination of those aesthetic ideas was possibly more difficult—at least as controlled and limited—by modern poetic professionalism as by anthropological professionalism" (151).

Roffman continues her examination of the modernist revolt against traditional forms of structure and organization through analysis of each author's work. For example, she employs the controversy surrounding the Metropolitan Museum's Cesnola exhibit and Newland Archer's two visits to it in *The Age of Innocence* as

a significant focus in this chapter. She associates both his discomforted response to the public spectacle of museum displays and his disjointed memory with the failure of modern museums to provide opportunity for individual aesthetic experiences. Although a more substantive textual analysis would better serve Roffman's provocative claim that the museum sections in the novel demonstrate "Wharton's shift in writing style" (63), she briefly discusses the shift in focus to the city and the modern condition as a movement beyond the museum and as a central emphasis in Wharton's subsequent novels, *The Mother's Recompense*, *Twilight Sleep*, *Hudson River Bracketed*, and *The Gods Arrive* (63-64). Similarly, in an extensive analysis of both *Quicksand* and *Passing*, Roffman next argues that Larsen incorporates her own library experience and her search for other means of knowledge and classification. The quests for knowledge to attain intellectual and social fulfillment of Helga Crane (*Quicksand*) and Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield (*Passing*) and their awareness of classification systems demonstrate "that the production of knowledge is always also the production of new methods or theories of exclusion" (8). Roffman concludes that for Larsen "all systems needed to be resisted because they carried within them limits and exclusions that could be institutionalized in other models of thinking" (101).

Citing a 1937 Moore essay on an exhibition, Roffman argues that for Moore "certain means of disrupting orderly systems actually enable a greater vision of the ideal order of a group or a collection" (111), and her extensive examination of Moore's published and unpublished materials details this experimentation with organizing techniques in individual poems and in collections. In a reference to Moore's essay "Art and Interpretation," Roffman focuses on Moore's process of ordering her poetry to develop thematic content and on the idea that "for a good exhibition—or good poetry—to work it needs to undermine the very system that it relied on to organize it, explaining that 'imaginative organizing' ... leads to an 'enlargement of knowledge'" (126). Examining Moore's epigraph in *Complete Poems* in which Moore writes "omissions are not accidents," Roffman argues that the term "accidents" carries equal importance to "omissions" and that Moore moves beyond the modernist principle of compression toward a revising concept of "miscellany and accident" (136-137). Roffman concludes with an insightful biographical discussion of Moore's organization of her library, papers, and apartment furnishings in the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia as an arrangement consistent with Moore's literary technique, creating a space within the several rooms that simultaneously function as library, archive, and museum.

Roffman stretches her argument with her inclusion of Benedict as a modernist poet rather than her established position as an anthropologist. With only

twenty published Benedict poems, Roffman primarily relies upon unpublished materials that she often includes in lengthy but not always complete excerpts. Using Benedict's professional criticism of library study in place of ethnographic study as intellectually limited, Roffman links Benedict's concerns to the central criticism of the other three writers: the need to unlock the individual's response and relationship to both libraries and museums. Blending Benedict's developing anthropological methodology of cultural patterning with her poetics, Roffman posits that, outside of libraries and in a manner suggestive of New Criticism, Benedict's work suggests: "No detail was unimportant, and every detail reflected in some way on a particular patterning within that culture" (177).

Despite her expressed intent to examine the unique quality of modernist women writers' intellectual shaping through museums and libraries compared to the university's influence on the era's male writers, her analysis focuses more upon their resistance to and subversion of a conventionally patriarchal system of organization and presentation. *From the Modernist Annex* provides a new dimension to a cultural, critical approach to Wharton, Larsen, Moore, and Benedict through a comprehensively noted and insightful examination of the influences museums and libraries had for these four authors. The insights provided in *From the Modernist Annex* question whether there are other modernist writers, women or men like Arna Bontemps, who share comparable experiences or responses to the cultural influences of libraries and museums and who would benefit from a similar critical approach. ✱

Gaurav Desai. *Teaching the African Novel*. New York: MLA, 2009. 427p.

CAROLINE BESCHEA-FACHE
DAVIDSON COLLEGE

Teaching African literature has proven to be a great challenge in the particular context of American academia, whether because students are not sufficiently trained in African national languages, or because they may not have acquired sufficient historical and general knowledge about the African continent. Teachers of African literature often face the questions of how to teach African literature without giving a full historical and literary survey, and how to engage in a genuine intercultural approach without lapsing into simplistic exoticism. *Teaching the African Novel*, edited by Gaurav Desai, addresses these questions directly and brings together a variety of rich essays written by various scholars and teachers of African literature and that focus on teaching African texts. This "companion for teaching" is an essential tool for the neophyte or the expert in teaching African literature because the collection covers a vast array of issues in African literature,

proposes concrete ideas for the classroom, while it also participates in current scholarly discussions. But, unlike many others, the volume concerns a much larger geographical area than Sub-Saharan Africa and involves the entire continent. In addition, it moves beyond the theoretical framework and brings the discussion to a global and practical conversation. The essays do not provide an exhaustive historical or geographical survey of African literature, but rather they engage in concepts and practices to teach the African novel.

The collection is divided into three sections that move from a more conceptual and theoretical approach to more specific institutional and classroom contexts. The first section, titled “Theories and Methods,” comprises six essays that address theoretical apparatuses to approach the African novel, identifying the various levels on which African literature operates. While Odile Casenave, in her essay “Women Writers and Gender in Sub-Saharan Novel” demonstrates how gender and sexuality shape and inform African novels today, contributors such as Tejumola Olaniyan and Nicholas Brown draw attention to the political dimensions of African Literature (Marxism, political resistance and subversion, etc.). The second section of the book, which focuses on “Regional Imperatives,” and “Thematic Cartographies,” gathers nine essays that tackle diverse issues from “Lusophone African Fiction” (Arenas) to the *Griots* (Wise), and Islam (Edwin), among many other themes. Since the volume aims at “reimagining models of organizing African literature in coherent units that speak to specific and pressing thematic concerns” (Desai 11) this section allows for a great understanding of Africa as a vast continent and a land of extremely rich and diverse literatures and cultures. Together, these articles “map ways of meaningfully engaging the north-south divide instead of foreclosing the productive dialogues that have continued to take place in the literary traditions across the continent” (11). The last section of the volume concentrates on “Pedagogical and Institutional Contexts.” Its essays offer concrete suggestions for course organization, addressing concerns such as integrating African novels in broader literature survey courses, or bringing an African novel in the French-language classroom, such as Mohamad Kamara’s “The Francophone African Novel in the French-Language Classroom.”

Desai’s edited volume encourages a more sensitive reading of African literature by considering its colonial history and its present multiculturalism at the same time. We can only agree with Simon Gikandi when he considers this book as an essential tool for teachers of African literature. It is, we might add, a must-have not only for these teachers but also for any humanities program, and language and literature departments, and it will tremendously enrich anyone’s understanding of African literature. ✱

Nayibe Bermudez Barrios. *Latin American Cinemas: Local Views and Transnational Connections*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011. 333p.

ELENA FOULIS
OKLAHOMA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Interest in film studies has been on the rise over the last two decades for critics and scholars alike. Whether in the classroom or as the primary focus of research, films offer an effective way to connect with the world outside our own and with topics often studied in literary texts. While Latin American cinema has been a popular subject, Nayibe Bermudez Barrios in *Latin American Cinemas: Local Views and Transnational Connections* compiles a collection of essays that offers an intellectually stimulating study of those less studied, and some fairly recent, films. Her book is arranged in three parts. Part one titled “Crisis of the Nation-State and Desire for Community” captures the directors’ interest in exploring the breakdown of the state, community, and our established ideal of the family unit. In this part, films such as *Luna de Avellaneda*, and *La ciénaga*, with the backdrop of citizenship and the state’s responsibility for the crisis of capitalism, emphasizes the community, and solidarity in light of economic crisis. While many of the films signal the importance of human engagement, the selection of Brazilian films studied in the article “Films by day and films by night in São Paulo” critiques the often romanticized view of urban life as a place of conflict and corruption. More importantly, films such as *O Invasor*, point to the dangers of losing our humanity when people begin to look out only for themselves.

Many of the essays in this collection offer the social, political, and cultural contexts of the films, without using restrictive paradigms to allow scholars and critics to see how, for example, feminism or the condition of women improves or deteriorates if we forget to keep evils such as rape a concern that still exists. This is clear in part two of this anthology, titled “Sexuality, Rape and Representation.” Intentionally or not, part two is the center and most fluid collection of essays in this anthology. Although focused on the thematic elements of its title, this section shares concerns presented in the first and last section of this book. For example, the article “Bodies so Close, and Yet So Far: Seeing Julián Hernández’s *El cielo dividido* through Gilles Deleuze’s Film Theory” shows how the film challenges and questions heterosexual ideas of homosexual desires. The film’s use of time-image as understood in Deleuze’s theory, allows for memories of past and present experiences to fuse, and inner thoughts and reality to make characters suddenly become passive. It is clear in the analysis of this film, that the desire for a new understanding of community invites us to consider looking outside patriarchal visions of masculinity.

Similarly, in this same section, “Myth and the Monster of Intersex: Narrative Strategies of Otherness in Lucía Puenzo’s *XXY*” shows an interest in Latin American cinema to explore the theme of sexual diversity. This article makes clear how the film negotiates between several dichotomies—national (Argentina) and foreigner (Uruguay) identity, humanity and nature (specifically, the sea), traditional female and male roles, myths and truths—making this film rich in themes to analyze. Here again, we are presented with a new “normal” that challenges our understanding of male and female roles. Moreover, the films and article demonstrate the damaging effect of strict cultural and social structures and the fascination, to the point of fetishism, of the medical professions to normalize bodies. The last article in this section takes us to several decades of Mexican cinema and their representation of rape. While the first two movies in this study, *Doña Barbara* and *La negra Angustias* (both made in the 1940s), link rape to national identities and nation-building, movies such as *Perfume de Violetas: Nadie te oye* and *Sin dejar huella* (both from 2000), challenge feminist thought and women’s complacency with sexual brutality by ignoring victims or blaming them for their own rape. Both movies, especially the latter one, bring up the current condition of women and the lack of resources women have to protect themselves. More specifically, both films focus on the condition of lower-class women, and the informed viewer cannot avoid thinking about the still unsolved murders of hundreds of women, often found raped and mutilated, in Ciudad Juárez. This last article and the films it analyzes are an urgent call for solidarity and activism against a system that has rendered women’s bodies unequal to men, benefitted from public indifference and thus, has failed to provide safety to women.

Part three, titled “Visions of the Transnational,” calls our attention to the globalized condition of our day. Without leaving the importance of community presented in the previous two sections, part three picks up the transnational global flow of cultural exchanges needed to recognize our interconnectedness to the world outside ourselves. All of the articles in this section use their own focus to bring the reader to this understanding; for example, the first two articles examine the representation of indigenous communities in a non-stereotypical way. Both articles study how films such as *Eréndira Ikikunari* and *We are Equal: Zapatistas Women Speak*, force the viewer to re-evaluate our understanding of native cultures, and to recognize and accept Latin America’s cultural diversity. Although one fiction and the other a documentary, it is important to note that both films, as the articles explain, are interested in portraying indigenous people as subjects, not objects, perpetually in progress of social transformation. And in the case of *We are Equal: Zapatistas Women Speak*, it allows women to “challenge their

previous condition of invisibility” (239). The last two articles in this section focus on transnational business practices used to promote and exploit Latin American cinema. “Sexploitation, Space, and Lesbian Representation in Armando Bo’s *Fuego*” centers on the issue of the representation of the female body to promote a film with explicit lesbian thematic elements, but that seeks or appeals mostly to a male audience. More importantly, the article explores issues of work and class that the film uses to assign negative and positive attributes of lesbianism. The last article in this section shows what Colombian filmmakers are doing to solidify their national cinema in order to enter the global market. Colombian filmmakers are re-thinking representation of violence and national identity, along with economic profits and adaptability as adapted by Film Law 814 to establish transnational connections with other Latin American cinemas, without relying on the Hollywood model.

The organization by sections in *Latin American Cinemas: Local Views and Transnational Connections* allows readers to see the relevance of the topic with the specific film or films studied; however, many of the films in Bermudez Barrios’ anthology can also be classified under more than one of these topics, allowing scholars and critics to cross borders within the book. For example, *Ojos que no ven*, placed in part one, can also be studied in part two for its representation of the body. In the same way, movies such as *Doña Barbara*, *La negra Angustias*, and *Sin dejar huella*, examined in the article “Watching rape in Mexican cinema” in part two, also bring themes of national identity and police corruption explored in part one of the anthology. Similarly, the film *Fuego*, studied in the article “Sexploitation, Space, and Lesbian Representation in Armando Bo’s *Fuego*” by Bermudez Barrios in part three, can be studied in part two for its discussion of women’s bodies and gender roles as explored in the film *XXY*. This book is a notable addition to the study of Latin American cinema, especially in its exploration of recent topics of interest and current concerns such as, sex, gender, sexuality, national identity, and globalization. ✱

Lahoucine Ouzgane. *Men in African Film & Fiction*. Woodbridge, UK: James Currey, 2011. 180p.

Alix Mazuet
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

In recent years, there has been a growing interest internationally on engaging men to implement and maintain gender equality and justice. This move toward a balanced sharing of men’s and women’s abilities to make their own choices without

being limited by socially and culturally constructed stereotypes also allowed, if only in part, that research in men's and masculinities studies greatly increase. Although publication in this field is still rather small, it already stands as a stimulating newcomer in the examination of a wide range of social, political, historical, and economic issues within the academe. In addition, men's studies contribute to the pioneering work accomplished in women's studies, by confronting gender injustice in no less comprehensive, multiform, and innovative ways. When it comes to exploring men's involvement in any kind of unjust practice, however, the critic's task may appear difficult from the outset. Indeed, men are traditionally represented as dominators and oppressors of women more so than the opposite. The task is, by no means, less complex, when problematics of gender are located within an African context, for men on that continent are usually seen as either victims or perpetrators of slavery, subaltern actors in colonial, postcolonial, neocolonial settings, just as much as they are considered imperialistic when it comes to controlling the various forms of African women's individuality, health, sexualities, civil and legal rights.

To me, the exploration of literary and cinematographic works that play a part in undermining the order of any culture dominated by men is one of the main reasons why *Men in African Film & Fiction* (2011) is an exciting book that presents innovative research not merely in men's and masculinities studies but also, African studies as a whole.

But perhaps, it is best to make a pause here, for I feel that what is meant by "masculinities studies" remains rather blurry and could thus benefit from some clarification. I will propose, then, that "masculinities" not be understood in parallel with or opposition to "femininities," for this interpretation would taint the entire discipline and its body of inquiry with the gender stereotypes, the psychological traits and behavioral acts characteristic of men and women, it so vibrantly works at deconstructing. Rather, "masculinities" is a term that epitomizes a socio-politically oriented body of knowledge that establishes a dialogue with and allies itself to various critical and theoretical perspectives, such as psychoanalytic criticism, feminist, queer, and postcolonial theories.

On the one hand, then, this collection of articles edited and co-authored by Lahoucine Ouzgane examines African patriarchal discourses that manifest various modes of domination controlled and exercised by men, modes of male domination that remain quite prominent throughout the continent. On the other, the book challenges a number of preconceived ideas perpetuated in the West about African men and the roles they play in their respective societies. The authors embrace multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives, but they nonetheless

chose to concentrate on two particular modes of cultural expression: literature and film. Each in a unique way, they examine certain of Africa's important challenges: poverty, gender inequality, AIDS, sexual ostracism, to name only a few. One of the many virtues of this book is that it offers deft and ground-breaking analyses that move beyond the rhetoric of crisis, chaos, disorder, and what have you that we have been accustomed to hear when it comes to Africa, its people and cultures. Another of the book's virtues is that its essays examine just as much Africa's longstanding history and its colonial period, as the recent socio-economic impacts globalization has on this continent.

Jane Bryce's essay, for instance, "The anxious phallus: the iconography of impotence in *Quartier Mozart & Clando*," looks at sub-Saharan cinema with a focus on the two Cameroonian films (those named in the title) from a dual standpoint, psychoanalytic and political: how can the castration complex in Freudian analysis and more specifically, the loss of potency—which, she adds, is a recurrent theme in African cinema—illuminate the functioning of political power structures in sub-Saharan countries? One of the conclusions Bryce draws, "These two films offer a representation of the dangers and shortcomings of dominant modes of power and masculinity in Africa" (25), could be less universalizing, so that the many countries which make this vast continent, their peoples, languages, histories, ways of life, belief and value systems not be leveled out in one all-encompassing gesture.

Overall, however, the book contains a skillfully crafted unifying thread: the exploration in literary and cinematographic works of uncertain times of the past and the present bridged together in a successful synergy between the authors' key ideas and Africa's geopolitical scenarios. This is to say, the examination throughout the book of various discourses of male domination is particularly relevant in Africa where political regime changes since the 1960s Independences have not put an end to civil rights violations and brutal acts of repression. As a point of fact, it is commonly acknowledge that the political tactics used by a great number of African heads of states—Robert Mugabe, Idi Amin Dada, Joseph Mobutu Sese Seko, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, Ahmed Sekou Toure, Muammar al-Qaddafi, to name only a few—have had one main purpose: to retain power.

The idea that dreams of liberation, equality, and socio-economic wellbeing have been shattered by the new order of the African male autocrat ruler is best examined in the first section of the book, "Man and Nation in Africa," which concentrates on patriarchal dominance and the part African men play in maintaining gender inequality. In "Wild Men' & emergent masculinities in post-colonial Kenyan popular fiction," for instance, Tom Odhiambo takes Kenyan popular fiction as his main object of study. He places the rise of this body of literature at the dawn of

the postcolonial era—from the 1960s to the 1970s—and he establishes intricate relationships between Kenyan male urban population, the sexual anxieties this particular group of men experienced during that time, and the passage from colonial to post-colonial order. One of the main arguments Odhiambo develops is that, contrary to what the liberation speeches heard across Africa had led everyone to believe, Kenyan women of the post-independence did not enjoy “social freedom and choice in matters pertaining to their sexuality” (52).

The second section of the book, “Alternative Masculinities,” shows how the configurations of men’s and masculinities studies are constantly in the remaking. This section, it seems to me, is most challenging and innovative in terms of literary and film criticism, because it examines gender issues from an ambiguous location that stands as a paradigm for the refusal to understand African realities of the past and of the present in fixed, homogeneous, rigid terms. In this section, certain hybrid realities are shown to oscillate between modernities and traditions, norms and margins, the subaltern and the imperialist, local, global, and diasporic spaces of power, while other hybrid realities bring them together. Moreover, the differences and similarities in the behaviors, expectations and responsibilities of women and men that the authors present in the book reveal contemporary tensions between sexes and help illuminate possible alternative models to men’s dominance over women, possible models that are increasingly visible in certain African countries, notably Senegal, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Uganda. One example of an alternative model of masculinity is certainly that which Katrina Daly Thompson’s essay successfully draws. In “Imported alternatives: changing Shona masculinities in *Flame & Yellow Card*,” she analyzes two Zimbabwean films that depict Shona men’s acts of violence against women and argues that both films are vivid representations of a call for alternative models of men’s social involvement in that country. One last example: in his essay on the work of renowned Kenyan fiction writer, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Andrew Hammond examines political resistance of a non-violent form and emphasizes the idea that, in Ngugi’s novels, tribal unity seems to “overcome local divisions” and counter “the masculinist creeds of competition and self-aggrandisement” (116).

To my way of thinking, there is a weakness of *Men in African Film & Fiction*: the claim that the book speaks of the entire African continent when in fact it concentrates almost exclusively on Anglophone Africa. In spite of this universalizing gesture, however, it would be difficult to overstate the immense quality of this collection of essays. With the coherence, depth, and convincing analyses it is made of, this book does indeed fill a gap in the works that, to this day, have been published in the field of African studies. In addition, Lahoucine

Ouzgane has nicely tied together the body of critical texts presented in this collection in a nexus of interrelated themes and problematics that extends beyond disciplinary frontiers. For indeed, the main focus is on men's and masculinities issues in specific works of African literatures and films, just as much as rigorous cross-disciplinary connections are made between postcolonial, diasporic, gender, feminist, queer, and subaltern theories. ✱

Roger J. Porter. *Bureau of Missing Persons: Writing the Secret Lives of Fathers*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. 202p.

TERESA CORONADO
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN--PARKSIDE

Roger J. Porter's book, *Bureau of Missing Persons: Writing the Secret Lives of Fathers*, is a compelling close reading of eighteen memoirs all of which, Porter finds, struggle with the problem of narrative voice and agency in the context of auto/biography.

Structurally, Porter's book is methodical, with each text given the same treatment: a thesis that connects the text to the chapter's theme; an introduction to the text; the methods or levels of detective work involved in the writer's search; the attitude with which the text seems to be written—vengeful, understanding, judgmental, self-reflective; a comparator text; and an interrogation into whether the text's success in "finding" parent or self. For each text, Porter also invariably addresses the question posed by memoirs that are written by a child about a parent: is the book ultimately about the child or the parent, and what does the answer to that question mean about the relationship of writing to, and about, self and others?

The pattern of the readings makes *Bureau of Missing Persons* a good resource for dipping into, as Porter reads each text closely, and offers introductions and connections to his primary thesis, seemingly assuming that the reader will not have necessarily read the other sections of his book. The structure seems forced in places, however, in that not all of the texts Porter reads really concern just the father. Helen Fremont, Mike O'Connor, and Joseph Lelyveld seem to have written their texts in search of their parents, with the mothers playing a crucial role in the search for the authors' family, family identity, or self identity. Further, three authors, Geoffrey Wolff, Nathaniel Kahn, and Essie Mae Washington-Williams do not seem to be so much searching for their fathers, as explaining how the openness, in the case of Wolff, or public lives, in the cases of Kahn and Washington-Williams, led the authors to attempt to connect to their fathers in a public way. These

exceptions to the overall theme of the book, as indicated by the subtitle, do not detract from the thorough work Porter has done in terms of examining the texts as biographies and autobiographies that all address the same problem: “Their need to understand who they are and how they have been formed by the paternal secrecy has provoked this particular kind of life writing, through which the adult child may seek to regain a closeness that the secrecy either precluded or threatened to rupture. The father may not, or may not be in a position to, affirm that truth, but these texts often express a desire for a lost closeness that the children, by narrating their parents’ and their own story, hope at last to repair” (16). Porter addresses this problem in all of the texts he examines, offering his own close reading of each text, as well as additional support by other life-writing scholars, including Timothy Dow Adams, Paul John Eakin, and Nancy Miller.

Although most of *Bureau of Missing Persons* is quite specific to the texts Porter chooses to examine, overall this book is a good resource for scholars examining larger themes in life-writing, especially narrative voice and the ethical complexities of examining the lives of others, even if in the pursuit of oneself. The struggle of narrative voice in all of the auto/biographies in *Bureau of Missing Persons* is, clearly, that of the child attempting to tell the story of the parent as well as his or her own story. The struggle comes through most clearly when Porter addresses the problem of reconstruction of the parent, through memory, artifact, and/or interviews. That reconstruction, Porter shows, requires the writer to analyze his or her motives, to question the reliability of the detective work he or she has had to do, and to find more and less than the child desired in the quest to write about his or her parent. All of these factors, Porter demonstrates, make the struggle for identity also a struggle for a strong narrative voice. Many of the writers discover that they cannot depend on their work to answer the questions they have about themselves, despite the book-length struggle to do so. In offering different examples of authors who have attempted to achieve self-through-writing, Porter’s book gives a variety of ways for other scholars to understand how, and why, memoir can give evidence for authorial agency, even when in pursuit of that agency the author writes him or herself out of that agency.

Like most other scholars of memoir, Porter addresses the ways in which the pursuit of self results in the exposure of others. Perhaps naively, Porter argues that each author in *Bureau of Missing Persons* seems to be genuinely concerned about the level of exposure he or she is giving the parents: “these children do not appear to write from a position of defensiveness nor punitive vengefulness so much as to show how the shaping power the secretive fathers consciously or inadvertently exercised over the offspring confused, regulated, and compromised the latter’s

self-understanding” (188). Porter does support this understanding throughout his book, however, offering few judgments of writers who may, at times, lack a consistent amount of attention to the vulnerability of their subjects.

Porter addresses each auto/biography or memoir with the care and respect that he attributes to the authors of those texts. Although the divisions of the memoirs into chapters—“Faith-Changing for Life,” “Deciphering Enigma Codes,” “The Men Who Were Not There,” “Becoming One’s Parent,” “Breaking the Silence”—seem, at times, forced, and while he should have given more space to the questions of race in the last chapter, his study gives the authors a narrative voice that they themselves struggle to find. With thorough research and grounded close reading, Porter’s *Bureau of Missing Persons: Writing the Secret Lives of Fathers* is a compelling addition to the study of life-writing. ✱

Roxanne Harde and Irwin Streight, editors. *Reading the Boss: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Works of Bruce Springsteen*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011. 303p.

COLIN CARMAN
COLORADO MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Call it what you will—hyperbolic, hagiographic, hilarious—but Roxanne Harde and Irwin Streight, editors of *Reading the Boss*, liken their subject to a modern-day Shakespeare. Their introduction, “The Bard of Asbury Park,” adumbrates some of the literary traits the two share; beyond a 2009 cover photo from *Rolling Stone* and its resemblance to the famous Chandos portrait of the Bard, there’s Springsteen’s abiding interest in loco-descriptive histories, or stories involving a particular place (i.e. Nebraska, Thunder Road, E Street), class struggle, song cycles and the fact that both the Boss and the Bard “offer a profound insight into the hungry human heart—and Springsteen, arguably, with more breadth and depth than any other current American singer-songwriter” (6).

Filling a void in theoretical readings of the more than 260 songs that comprise Springsteen’s catalogue, the first section attends to his influences, from the obvious (Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan) to the surprising (Flannery O’Connor, Walker Percy). The first of four, Section 1: “Reading Influence,” provides not just the etymology of the musician’s Dutch name—it means, literally, “springstone” or a stone from which a spring runs—but the novelists whose works Springsteen’s songs flow beside and intersect: first, Walker Percy (1916-1990), the Southern writer who shares his attention to the disenfranchised in American culture, and second, O’Connor, another Southerner interested in violence and spiritual alienation. Two essays, by

June Skinner Sawyers (editor of 2004's *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader*) and Michael Kobre, align Percy's and Springsteen's appreciation of history, heritage, and the lonesome seekers (ex-cons, bank robbers, and Mexican migrants) who populate their works. Springsteen himself acknowledged his debt to Flannery O'Connor in an interview with *Rolling Stone* in 1984, and according to Irwin Streight, they share, as storytellers, a sensitivity toward the "meanness in this world" as O'Connor herself termed it, particularly meanness as it conflicts with a Catholic worldview (58). Streight reads two of the songwriter's solo albums—*Nebraska* (1982) and the Steinbeck-inspired *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995)—as "song narratives" in which he lets "his violence-driven characters speak for themselves, his own voice, as he intends, disappearing into their voices in a series of what are mostly musical dramatic monologues" (64).

The pair of essays forming the book's second section, "Reading Place," deepens the collection's awareness of landscape in Springsteen's songs as both real and metaphoric. Thus to be a "nowhere man" represents a terrifying state of displacement. But the collection really deepens its engagement with Springsteen, in Section 3: "Reading Gender," with "'Who's That Girl?': Nostalgia, Gender, and Springsteen," and a consideration of nostalgia, that ardent clinging to one's "glory days." This essay, by Kenneth Womack, is one of the most sophisticated, theoretically speaking, in the collection. By linking music and psychology, Womack contends that, for the male narrators of Springsteen's love songs, women function especially as conduits to past emotional states: "She's Candy, Rosalita, and Terry. She's Bobby Jean. Although she comes in many guises, she's the female face at the heart of the sociocultural nostalgia that structures Springsteen's sense of pastness throughout his work" (121). Womack evokes Levinasian alterity, but he could have pushed the point further. He comes close when he identifies nostalgia as an encounter with the otherness of the past, an alterity that must be reshaped in accordance with the present, but he stops short of exposing the masculine, heterosexual ego as another fiction. (De Beauvoir or Butler would have bolstered here.) What happens to the heteronormative machismo we associate with Springsteen's iconicity—what Cadó and Abbruzzese call Springsteen's "tough image and burly appearance"—once the "dream woman" of his imaginary past becomes nothing more than a narcissistic projection (115)?

"Growin' Up to Be a Nothing Man: Masculinity, Community, and the Outsider in Bruce Springsteen's Songs" turns out to be the perfect complement to Womack inasmuch as it stresses the instability of Springsteen's preferred narratological perspective, that is, one belonging to a white, working-class man. Springsteen's love of fast cars and girls in summer clothes, especially in his early

songs, doesn't preclude the fact he views gender as a social formation capable of being transgressed, or to use a vehicular metaphor, overridden. Liza Zitelli differs from earlier Springsteen critics since she asserts the fundamental fragility of gender politics in Springsteen's body of works.

How should the Boss be best read in terms of myth and metaphysics? The book's final section, "Reading Philosophy and Religion," presents an ecumenical artist and appropriator of Judaic and Christian traditions. Borrowing from biblical tropes such as the covenant and the Exodus story, "The Promised Land" (from his 1978 album *Darkness on the Edge of Town*) reconfigures the ancient contract as the modern-day American Dream and the singer-songwriter as the high priest. President Obama's observation from this speech at the Kennedy Center Honors that "His tours are not so much concerts but communions" certainly supports the image of Springsteen's concertgoers as not just congregants but disciples (189). This is executed with minimal irony while Peter J. Fields, in "Ironic Revelation in Bruce Springsteen," would have us believe that if Springsteen offers an apocalyptic message, it's a deeply ironic one in which sinners are saints (to borrow a locution from the Rolling Stones) and the fallen are paradoxically rising. Fields evokes everyone from Sartre from Kierkegaard to substantiate his claims, but it's more than a little short-sighted to omit Bob Dylan, a more probable influence over the young Springsteen and the one with, "Desolation Row" and "High Water," who first fused eschatology and rock and roll. Moreover, Springsteen is hardly alone in blurring the line between the musical and the liturgical: that other Catholic American who peaked in the 1980s, Madonna, continues to convert sports-arenas into altars and fans into fanatics. The collection concludes with musicologist John J. Sheinbaum's demystification of Springsteenian "authenticity" and Roxanne Harde's Derridean reading of mourning vis-à-vis *The Rising* (Springsteen's post-911 response to the traumas of mass-murder and loss).

This is a highly auspicious time to read the Boss since as *Rolling Stone* (12/22/11) recently wrote, "after two years of downtime, Bruce Springsteen is roaring back in 2012" with a new album and world tour with the E Street Band, sans, for the first time, the late saxophonist Clarence Clemons (13). Nearly two decades ago, on his smash single "Dancing in the Dark," the Boss crooned: "I'm dying for some action/I'm sick of sitting 'round here trying to write this book.... Come on now baby gimme just one look." *Reading the Boss* provides not just one look, but at least a dozen different ways of (re)seeing and hearing the music and lyrics of Springsteen. Though, at times, the tone is more complimentary than critical—to criticize, after all, is not to devalue but to seriously engage with one's subject—editors Harde and Streight have assembled some informative and insightful approaches to the Bard of the Garden State. ✱

