

reviews

BOOKS

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Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule. By Ann Laura Stoler. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. Pp. x + 335. ISBN 0 520 23111 2 \$21.95 (pbk), ISBN 0 520 23110 4 \$54.95 (cloth).

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Michel Foucault's argument that sexuality is 'an especially dense transfer point for relations of power' establishes the theoretical framework for Stoler's anthropological analysis of colonial relations in twentieth-century Indonesia. In *Carnal Knowledge*, the sites which mark particularly dense transfer points are ones in which intimacy between Europeans, Annamites, and Indo-Europeans was both normative and yet officially prohibited by colonial elites. In addition to the frequently explored relationships of concubinage and prostitution between Indonesian women and European men, Stoler delves into more subtle sites of restricted intimacy between servants and European children and

between children of mixed race and those of 'pure' European blood. Her book persuasively demonstrates that imperial power was most vulnerable in its reliance upon a paranoid regulation of sentiment and sexuality. Some of the more unique findings of Stoler's archival research include her discussion of European feminists who worked on behalf of the rights of mixed-race children (which she uses as a way of contesting the stereotypically negative portrayal of white women in the colonies), and also her account of the Nursery Campaign in 1902, which initiated an attack on European mothers who left their children with 'morally-corruptible' native servants. The fear that such basic contact might dilute the education of European children in their patriotism is one of Stoler's most original examples of ways in which 'the harnessing of sentiment was a crucial site of political contest' (p. 139).

Stoler's analysis of under-studied sites of colonial intimacies is to be commended for its

sophisticated integration of class, gender, and scientific theories. Her adept use of colonial archives additionally forms the basis of a critique of subaltern studies. In her chapter, ‘Memory-work in Java: a cautionary tale’, Stoler recounts fieldwork interviews with aged, former colonial servants, whom she takes to be representative subalterns. What Stoler finds remarkable about her interviews with former colonial servants is precisely what is unremarkable about them: that their stories were ‘neither dramatic tales with sweeping moral judgements nor wrenching testimonials’ (p. 201); ‘their recollections of touch, taste, and smell were not shaped into tidy plots, much less congealed as anti-Dutch resistance narratives’ (p. 203). Based on her excavation of these subaltern memories, Stoler argues that ‘students of colonialisms’ have misconstrued the voice of the subaltern as being necessarily the ‘circuits in which colonial critiques are lodged’. Elsewhere, Stoler suggests that the postcolonial fixation with the authentic voice of the subaltern is indicative of a broader and false tendency towards ‘category-making projects’ which she calls ‘caricatures [that] effectively capture certain features of colonials but are limiting’ (p. 207).

At times, it seems that Stoler’s dissatisfaction with the semantic limitations of postcolonial terminology is employed in more fundamental ways to undermine the anti-colonial claims that have been made through postcolonial historiography. Her attempt to extract from her historical research the conclusion that it is ‘less easy to be sure of what we know about the colonial, and less comfortable with some postcolonial claims’ (p. 203) is an ambiguous assertion that encapsulates the fraught nature of her larger political commentary throughout. Much of her critique

of postcolonialism appears to rely on self-contradictions. In spite of the fact that her work consistently demonstrates the degree to which sites of intimacy were replicas and ‘transfer points’ of elite colonial power structures, she nonetheless seems inclined to demonstrate how classic colonial relationships such as ones forged with concubines and domestic servants ought to revise the traditional postcolonial approach to power relations. But the question of ‘why should it?’ is never fully answered satisfactorily. Moreover, while her interviews with former colonial servants carry interest, her use of these interviews seems bogged down by a circular logic. On one hand, Stoler cautions against the tendency of postcolonial critics to valorize subaltern voices as the ‘truth of the colonial past’; yet, on the other hand, she herself uses her own interviews with so-called subalterns in an attempt broadly to reconstruct traditional notions of colonial history. Stoler detects a profound ‘unease in recounting “the colonial”’ (p. 165) among her interviewees, and naturally asks herself why Indonesian ex-servants would ‘share these disturbing memories and why tell a Londo (a white or Dutch person) about a londo at all?’ (p. 182) And yet in spite of these self-reflective moments, Stoler seems inclined readily to forget about her own position as an interlocutor and projects large assumptions about what the subaltern is likely or not likely to represent.

In her conclusion, Stoler argues that her work is designed to compensate for the lack of attention devoted to ‘the severed lives that colonialisms’ racial policies produced’ (p. 215). These ‘severed lives’ – particularly those of Indo-European children who were neither part of the colonial enterprise nor allowed to become native – demonstrate that

intimacies ‘cut unfamiliar paths across the distinctions of rule’ (p. 217). Such individual stories ought to ‘disallow neat stories; muddy the waters, confuse the claims’ (p. 213). No one can deny that European privilege and nationalism existed in complex and varying degrees among different individuals. Stoler’s provision of these more nuanced histories, however, gravely lacks a broader attention to the lives of the colonized whose lives were disrupted equally, if not far more, by racist European legislation. Stoler’s predominantly Eurocentric study of colonial intimacies seems plagued by a hesitant inability to condemn wholeheartedly the political and economic project that led Europeans to Indonesia in the first place. While she argues that ‘the colonial’ is best made into ‘a subject rather than an assumed category of analysis’ (p. 203), she fails to acknowledge her limited access and ability to factor Indonesian subjectivity equally into the equation. It is difficult to imagine that the victims of colonialism themselves would have been keen to participate in a project to ‘muddy the waters, confuse the claims’. Her book is itself troubled by an affective landscape that is split by brilliant historical research, on the one hand, and a frustrating political inertia, on the other. Given her longstanding reputation as a contributor to colonial critique, Stoler’s latest work is somewhat puzzling in its intent. In spite of her belated attempt to assert otherwise, Stoler’s book is crucial to the ongoing progress of anti-colonial and postcolonial studies precisely because its historical acumen reiterates the extent of the racism and white privilege entrenched within Empire.

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A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain 1700–2000. By C. L. Innes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. 308. ISBN 0 521 64327 9. *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain*. By Susheila Nasta. London: Routledge, 2002. Pp. 305. ISBN 0 33 670064 X.

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Innes’s volume is the first and most wide-ranging of a number of recent literary histories of black and Asian British writing that include Sukhdev Sandhu’s *London Calling* (2003) and Bruce King’s *The Internationalization of English Literature* (2004). Spanning 300 years and focusing primarily on the period between the 1700s and the 1940s, it represents a timely reminder of a literary history that was largely neglected within the post-*Windrush* publications that appeared at the end of the 1990s. One of the most impressive aspects of the text is the way it delicately traces ‘a series of recurring preoccupations and tropes’ (p. 2) without allowing them to sediment into a discrete, concrete or continuous literary tradition. Innes’s account demonstrates how the narratives of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Mary Prince and Olaudah Equiano draw upon a variety of discontinuous, contradictory traditions that challenge our ‘assumptions about genre, authenticity, and the boundaries between oral and literary composition’ (p. 3). Innes is also sensitive to the different reading formations in relation to which these various writers have been positioned and have positioned themselves.

The text opens with a chronological table that includes Samuel Richardson and Charles Dickens as well as Ignatius Sancho and Mary Seacole and the book’s opening chapters

powerfully demonstrate the ways in which black and Asian writers of the eighteenth century refashioned the rhetorical devices and tropes of the epistolary novel and travel writing, of Lawrence Sterne and Jonathan Swift. More generally, the text reveals the extent to which black and white artists, intellectuals and readers have interacted over the past 250 years. One of the effects of this is to return our attention to the textuality of black and Asian writing in Britain, to consider certain formal and aesthetic qualities that have sometimes been forgotten in accounts of their political and historical significance.

Of several chapters on the nineteenth century, chapter 5 on ‘narratives of escape’ is one of the most original and thought provoking. In it, Innes focuses on African American writers like Moses Roper who came to Britain in search of asylum. The narratives by such writers found a receptive audience for their work, in part because they tended to present Britain as a relatively harmonious setting free from the racial conflicts and inequalities in the US. Ironically these writers bolstered imperial Britain’s mythology of itself as a fair and civilized society even as they challenged the ideology of empire more generally.

The last three chapters of the book focus on the twentieth century, the early decades of which saw professionals, students and intellectuals from across the empire migrate to London. If this inward movement reflected the capital’s status as the heart of empire, then, as Innes documents, it also ‘ensured that it [London] would become the heart of resistance to empire’ (p. 167). Indian immigrants like Dadabhai Naoroji sought election to the British parliament and campaigned for Indian independence; the Trinidadian Sylvester Williams founded the African Association and helped organize the first Pan-African conference in London in 1900; anti-imperial journals

such as the *African Times and Orient Review* were established (1912–20). From the 1930s, settlers like C. L. R. James and Una Marson played an increasingly prominent role in both politics and in British artistic and cultural life. For example, Marson was the founder of what would become *Caribbean Voices*, the BBC radio programme that broadcast work by some of central figures of early post-war British literature: Sam Selvon, George Lamming, Andrew Salkey, V.S. Naipaul. Innes deals briefly with these and other postwar writers in her epilogue, but her main contribution is in providing the first reliable, accessible and erudite history of black and Asian writing in Britain before the post-1950s’ boom.

In *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain*, Susheila Nasta also takes the 1700s as her starting point. However, Nasta is much more centrally concerned with the post-1940s writings that form the epilogue to Innes’ book. *Home Truths* has a broadly historical, tripartite structure. The first section deals with some of the earliest, pioneer narratives of the South Asian diaspora in Britain, from Sake Dean Mahomet’s *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* (1794) to the early twentieth-century modernist fictions of G. V. Desani and others. This chapter provides an important lens through which to view the post-war writings considered in subsequent chapters, from Sam Selvon’s London trilogy to Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*. By providing a ‘context for reviewing modernity through Asian eyes’ (p. 8), Nasta’s opening chapter offers the first of a number of ‘home truths’ in the book. Noting that ‘Britain was as much the *home* of the colonial encounter as were the colonies themselves’ (p. 2), *Home Truths* makes a persuasive case for regarding fictions of the South Asian diaspora as part of what Stuart Hall has famously called ‘the outside

history that is inside the history of the English’.

In the second section of the book, ‘Imaginary Homelands’, Nasta offers a detailed analysis of V. S. Naipaul’s *The Enigma of Arrival* and Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* in a way that reveals significant continuities (and discontinuities) between what on the surface appear to be two very different novels of the same moment: the late 1980s. The third section of the book focuses on South Asian fictions of the late 1980s and 1990s, including the work of Hanif Kureishi, Ravinder Randhawa and Romesh Gunsekera. Entitled ‘Homes without Walls’, the two chapters of this section trace further parallels and developments in contemporary South Asian writing in Britain as it moves from the experimental ethnicities of Kureishi and Randhawa, to the increasingly existential prose of those like Gunsekera, in whose fiction language and memory, more than place, constitute home.

Although the structure of Nasta’s book is loosely chronological, one of its most valuable aspects is its presentation of the South Asian diaspora in Britain as an imagined rather than an historical community. This allows *Home Truths* to make a number of carefully qualified connections between writers and writings that have tended to be neglected in studies of, say, black, Caribbean or Indian writing. However, diaspora is not employed by Nasta as celebratory label that allows aimless and endless wandering between categories. On the contrary, *Home Truths* is alert to the dangers and limitations of diaspora as a universalizing signifier and of the diasporic writer as ‘the “Everyman” of the late modern period’ (back cover). If as Nasta argues, home is a powerful signifier of authority and stability within imperial discourse, then the fictions she explores reveal a ‘poetics of home’ (p. 241) rather than straightforward homelessness:

For diaspora does not only create an unrequited desire for a lost homeland but also a ‘homing desire’, a desire to reinvent and rewrite home as much as a desire to come to terms with an exile from it. Diaspora is therefore as much about settlement as displacement and exists on a shifting axes of differently articulated positionalities, which may be linked to specific histories of recent migration but can also, in later generations, depart from them (pp. 7–8)

The phrase ‘homing desire’ above is taken from Avtar Brah’s seminal text, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, and *Home Truths* as a whole is theoretically informed. Ultimately though, the text is less concerned with the intricacies of postcolonial and diaspora theory and more with producing close readings of some of the most exemplary fictions of the South Asian diaspora. This turns out to be a strength rather than a weakness of *Home Truths*, which supplies sensitive, carefully contextualized and lucid readings of a range of texts that students and teachers of literature will find extremely useful.

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Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid. By Mark Saunders. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2002. Pp. 273. ISBN 0 8223 2998 0.

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 Mark Saunders has written an extraordinarily powerful book. His focus on ‘complicity’ in the context of South African letters serves to breathe air and life into what have become stale modes of enquiry and exegesis in this context. These modes tend to rely on para-

digns of difference, opposition and resistance which neglect the complexities of exchange and entanglement precisely to be found in contexts where boundaries, such as racial boundaries, are erected, legislated for and safeguarded as official fictions.

Saunders' point is that apartheid and its aftermath occasion the question of complicity. But what does he mean by complicity? In the preface to the book he describes how mid-1990s debates on the complicity of European intellectuals in Nazism struck him as weak, focusing as they did on glaring instances of collaboration or accommodation. Using the case of apartheid South Africa to think with, Saunders sought instead a conception that would make it possible to conceive of resistance and collaboration as interrelated, and to explore this 'problem' without either simply 'accusing or excusing' the parties involved. He sought, that is, a conceptual generalization of complicity as the very basis for responsibly entering into, maintaining or breaking off, a given affiliation or attachment. Apartheid struck him as an 'exemplary venue' for the intellectual as a figure assuming 'responsibility in complicity'.

The question of apartheid and the question of complicity have to be taken together because, as in the case of Nazism, both apartheid's opponents and its dissenting adherents found themselves implicated in its thinking and practices. We cannot understand apartheid and its aftermath by focusing on apartness alone, but by tracking interventions, marked by degrees of affirmation and disavowal, in a continuum of what he calls 'human foldedness' ('responsibility-in-complicity'). Apartheid is an exemplary context for writing the history of the intellectual more broadly, 'a history in which there is no responsibility without the troubling and enabling moment of complicity'.

Saunders finds the report of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission a powerful framing context for his concerns. The report, he argues, stages the question of 'complicity' as he develops it: it employs a vocabulary that generalizes 'ethico-political responsibility' (referring, for instance, to the 'little perpetrator' and the potential for evil in each of us). Likewise, literature itself, which provides the particular archive of his study, frequently stages the drama of the 'little perpetrator' in the self, calling upon a reader to assume responsibility for an other in the name of a generalized foldedness in human-being (and perhaps beyond *human-being*).

Saunders, then, employs a reading strategy, in relation to the work of a number of South African intellectuals, which insists on an articulation in any given situation of a general as well as narrow sense of complicity. Such a strategy calls upon the reader to 'acknowledge one's occupation by the other, in its more and less aversive forms'. Such an acknowledgement is an acknowledgement of a basic human 'foldedness'. Thus it is a strategy which draws out what is both most 'troubling' and most 'enabling' about human being(s). Saunders argues that this manner of reading applies equally to texts we are accustomed to thinking of as 'black resistance texts'. The question of complicity as a context for assuming responsibility is integral to black intellectual life and to the tasks that have faced black intellectuals, he argues – a point he goes on to demonstrate in readings of the work of Sol Plaatjie, Bloke Modisane, A. C. Jordan and others. Moreover, such a reading strategy is one that is profoundly consonant with Saunders' overall argument. It refuses in itself the stance of being 'merely oppositional'. As such, it has no choice but to project itself 'beyond apartheid'. Saunders, then, suggests a theory and a practice which is beyond apartness as such.

The bulk of the text is constituted by a set of close readings of the work of selected South African intellectuals: Olive Schreiner, Sol Plaatje, N. P. van Wyk Louw, Bloke Modisane, A. C. Jordan, Breyten Breytenbach and others. Each intervention offers highly original readings of the texts, opening up the nuances of complicity in profound ways. The chapter on Olive Schreiner pursues the question of embodiment in relation to the female intellectual, and Saunders shows how Schreiner cryptically uses a masculine erotic model in order to figure female intellectual agency and erotic autonomy. Through the figures of her characters Waldo and his 'stranger', each of whom carry autobiographical fragments of Schreiner's own coming to being as a young intellectual, Saunders reads a subversive masquerade for imagining a way for a young woman to enter intellectual life but staging, away from marriage, a place of active desire for herself versus a disembodied intellectuality.

In a brilliant reading of Bloke Modisane's autobiography *Blame Me on History*, Saunders shows how Modisane self-consciously figures himself in his text as a 'beggar' dependent on the 'charity' of a white reader. Saunders discusses the complicity of being a beggar (the complicity which allows Modisane to be an intellectual), as well as the complicity of the reader in this figuration. Occupying the position of donor, the implied reader, he shows, is subject to manipulation. Although called upon to respond to the text out of conscience, however, the reader is not party to the full story. The 'full story', via which Modisane constructs himself as an intellectual engaged in a human foldedness of his own, is that the text is a work of mourning for his father's death. A remedy for the corrosive effects of the disavowal of reciprocity that defines apartheid is sought

by Modisane, Saunders argues, 'in the name of a reciprocity of living and dead'.

In the section on A. C. Jordan, which prompts a re-reading of 'ubuntu', it is not the link to the dead person that prompts a reading of complicity and responsibility, but that to the figure of the stranger. Ubuntu is read as a way of owning 'the one who's not one's own', as what takes place between strangers: the 'attainment of human being through an other not one's own'. Ubuntu, then, is read as an ethics of human reciprocity that shows that there is no ethic that is not also against apartheid. Saunders draws out of Jordan's work a notion of the intellectual as advocate for the figure of the stranger – as the insistence on responsibility for the stranger as constitutive of collectivity itself.

Throughout the book, Saunders insists on deepening the terms on which we read complicity. He is interested in wresting such a figuration, reading strategy or ethical engagement away from narrow interpretations of difference and affinity towards the deepest places of exchange and suffering in South Africa's contexts of violence and renewal. Thus, for example, in the epilogue he returns to the TRC and in particular to the testimonies by women before the Commission. He considers the objection by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) that women tended to speak on behalf of men and not about themselves, which CALS read as indicative of imbalances in gender power in the South African public sphere. Saunders points out that the women's testimonies were often not just about the lives of men but about the lives of dead men, men who had died in the struggle for liberation. Thus, rather than raising the issues of who speaks for whom, and for whom not, in a limited range of senses, Saunders opens the debate further to the question of the living speaking for the

dead. In the process of mourning, the suffering of the victim shades into that of the bereaved, thus making it hard to separate victim and witness, he argues. Moreover, when the victim is dead, the testimony of the survivor is utterly different: ‘with the death of the victim, there is only the advocate’. While considering the verdict of CALS, Saunders goes on to read the testimonial situation at the TRC, and in this case the issue of women testifying about men, as exemplary of the ethical relationship as a foldedness with an other who occupies oneself. As such, he helps us to deepen our enquiries into complicity, which includes the complicity of the living and the dead.

Saunders suggests to us in a tentative way that his re-articulation of complicity, along with the associated concepts of opposition and resistance, will yield new protocols for a writing of the intellectual history of apartheid. I think that he is right. Moreover, it seems to me that his book is an important beacon in the project of desegregating theory itself in South Africa: the project, that is, of attempting to understand the interconnections that define and inscribe the multi-valencies of South Africa now in ways that open us to potential futures. It is a sterling contribution to the debate.

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Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts. By Chadwick Allen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002. Pp. 308. ISBN 0 8223 2947 6 \$19.95 (pbk), 0 8223 2929 8 \$59.95 (cloth).

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In *Blood Narrative*, Chadwick Allen explores and demonstrates, through comparative analysis, the Fourth World linkages between Maori and American Indian literatures. To do so, the author considers the discourse of ancestral ‘blood’ in narratives of indigenous nationhood and anticolonial resistance, identifying what he calls a ‘blood/memory/land complex’ that indigenous writers and activists have deployed in the post-Second World War artistic and political renaissance of American Indian and Maori peoples. American Indian and Maori literatures share a history of colonial invasion and settler presence that has made both groups minorities in their own ancestral homelands, and both have long-standing treaty relationships with the dominant colony. Allen’s comparison of these indigenous texts employs a generous number of literary works and political documents to investigate the rhetorical practices used by indigenous writers, and to assert that scholars from either field can better understand their own literatures in context of the other.

Allen begins his study with Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday’s famous phrase, ‘blood memory’ and its associations with indigenous rights to history and land. Allen considers the interdependence of the contested terms, blood, memory, and land, as a single triad of meaning. In an honest and engaging discussion, the author explores the public and literary declarations of native ‘blood as narrative/narrative as blood’ to secure an indigenous identity distinct from that of settlers. Allen is careful neither to support nor to dismiss the often-essentialist indigenous claims to land and identity on the basis of blood, and instead investigates the rhetoric of literatures invoking blood in arguments for native separatism.

Drawing on postcolonial theory to explain literary texts and political demonstrations as

anecdotal performances rather than historically continuous cultural practices, Allen avoids the pitfalls of asserting a unified and core-deep portrait of indigenous resistance and literary production in the early contemporary period. Allen, however, also takes issue with what he calls 'orthodox' postcolonial theory, which often characterizes the colonized indigenous condition in terms of ambiguity and hybridity, even though indigenous minorities continue to assert coherent cultural identities and claims to actual territorial lands. In his theoretical position, Allen thus attempts to negotiate the problems of defining postcoloniality and territory without appealing to inherent indigenous qualities, but argues that, as long as indigenous people lay claim to a distinct identity, past, and land base, they cannot avoid some degree of essentialism. Excitingly, the author shows how the discourse of treaties – as documents also evoking narratives of blood, land, and memory – made between Maoris and New Zealand, and American Indians and the United States, configure allegorically throughout a number of creative texts in the 1960s and 1970s.

Blood Narrative is organized in a comparative history of indigenous renaissance, beginning, in Part I, just after the Second World War, when disproportionately large numbers of Maori and American Indian people served across the globe. Formally isolated indigenous groups now entered the industrial workforce, engendering a nascent political awareness that called for the recognition of indigenous humanity. In the 1960s and 1970s, treated in Part II, Allen shows how indigenous voices, having grown frustrated with governmental paternalism and bureaucracy, departed from the more tempered assertions of earlier generations of native leaders to declare their distinct identity as indigenous people with

treaty-guaranteed rights to lands and resources, releasing the blood/memory/land complex in full force. Allen provides excellent cultural analysis of Maori and American Indian uses of traditional social and interpretative models to maintain the intersection of kinship, geography, and history. This process is perhaps most successful and coherent among the Maori people, who, despite their tribal differences, share a common language and similar social traditions. Allen explores, for example, the adaptation of the Maori 'Marae', the architecturally symbolic public house where territory and ancestral memory intersect, among contemporary Maori writers and activists to bolster indigenous unity and pride. And among American Indians, the author investigates the uses of 'winter counts', traditional history texts made with ideographic writing on animal hides, to assert a separate and competing indigenous history, as portrayed in Indian novels.

In *Blood Narrative*, Chadwick Allen carefully delineates these blood narratives in a number of Maori writers, such as Arapera Blank, Mason Durie, Witi Ahimaera, and Keri Hulme, and American Indian writers, such as Ella Deloria, D'Arcy McNickle, N. Scott Momaday, and James Welch, as well as such largely unknown Indian writers as Dallas Chief Eagle. In each text, Allen traces the author's use of blood to revive or even invent a relationship with ancestors, an indigenous past, and a homeland. This study of the complex interplay of indigenous blood, land, and memory investigates with impressive skill and organization a subtle and often confounding moment in indigenous minority letters.

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Theory in an Uneven World. By R. Radhakrishnan. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003. Pp. 217. ISBN 0 631 17538 5 \$US29.95.

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The juxtaposition of the two terms, theory and the world, in the title of R. Radhakrishnan's new book poses an inevitable question: in a world of manifest suffering and glaring inequities of power and opportunity, what room can there be for self-reflexive abstraction? In a world where the political task of resisting colonial and neo-colonial modernity is ever more urgent, is it a luxury even to ask these questions? Radhakrishnan characteristically begins every argument by asking a (much longer) series of rhetorical questions like these. The thrust of such questions is both to induce self-reflexivity and to point to a space outside the frame implied by the questions.

His own response to the tendency to regard theory and the world as mutually opposed is to recreate the binary and then to discover that the two terms are mutually constitutive and each term is already divided. For instance, in order to discuss theory and the world Radhakrishnan invokes Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. Said, although no slouch when it came to theory, made clear that his priority was the political needs of the present. In his case, pragmatism trumped structure and system. Spivak, on the other hand, seeks consistency in the micropolitical context, the academy, precisely because she believes the classroom and the ideas that fill it are not outside the world but of the world. Radhakrishnan values Said for his ambivalence and inconsistency but prefers Spivak's self-reflexivity. Even as he locates her at the pole called 'theory', opposite Said and the 'world', he divides Spivak herself into theory and the

world: the subaltern Spivak forcefully critiques Foucault and Deleuze for ignoring the reality of colonization; the poststructuralist Spivak deconstructs the subaltern studies project and reminds the historians involved that historiography is not an empirical, transparent given. The result championed by Radhakrishnan is a double consciousness, always eager to locate theory in its historical moment yet aware that that history must itself be constructed.

Radhakrishnan's instinct as a theoretician is to say: where there were two let there be three. Sometimes he finds the necessary third term in self-reflexivity, sometimes in double consciousness or hyphenation, sometimes in a radical openness to alterity. For instance, Radhakrishnan, a secularist opposed to religious fundamentalism, is nevertheless conscious that secularist pluralism is inseparable from colonialist modernity and the project of reason. In a critique of William Connolly, with whom he is otherwise in solidarity, Radhakrishnan argues that secularists must go beyond secularism to imagine a space where they can genuinely meet others on a ground they have not already predefined. Most often Radhakrishnan locates the necessary third term in theory itself, which mediates between ethics and politics, the universal and the historical, utopia and the present, self-reflexivity and radical alterity.

Radhakrishnan writes in solidarity with those who seek to overturn the current hegemony and replace it with one newer and more just. He finds, however, that the very notions of struggle and hegemony carry within them the ideas of hierarchy and exclusion. Any emerging idea that sought to change the rules of the world would inevitably betray itself if it accepted the conditions needed to achieve hegemony. Radhakrishnan approves of Gandhi's notion that the Congress Party should

have disbanded itself after independence. Subalternity has to be transcended, yet at the same time constitutes a valuable perspective that must be kept alive. That, Radhakrishnan argues, is why theory remains a necessary complement to politics. Far from being, as some fear, debilitating and without agency, theory is always needed to remind radical politics of the dream of a world beyond winners and losers.

The binary that most concerns Radhakrishnan is between ethics and politics. Recognizing the ethical involves allegorizing, i.e. seeing the universal in the present moment, while the political involves seeing the present moment and the utopian future that points us beyond the present. Radhakrishnan points to Gandhi as someone who was both politically successful and ethically sensitive, who never forgot the humanity of both the colonizer and the colonized. Amitav Ghosh, whose novel *The Shadow-Lines* the critic much admires, suggests that love mediates between self and other, between political self-interest and ethical response. Radhakrishnan, however, asks, 'How should love as a dialogic exchange of intersubjectivity transcend the trap of binarity, the endless repetition of reciprocal objectification?' Love is not the answer, theory is.

Globalization and nationalism constitute a contemporary equivalent to the binary of colonial modernity and indigenous resistance. Globality, Radhakrishnan argues, is merely the ideological guise assumed by the nationalism of developed nations, and he defends the legitimacy of subaltern nationalisms as modes of self-defence and self-representation, more necessary than ever in a postmodern age that has rendered representation problematic. Radhakrishnan himself transcends the binary of nationalism and cosmopolitanism by invoking an ethical universal, not to be confused with objectivity, which is always defined by what-

ever perspective has made itself dominant. The universality he advocates is a 'common ground', relational, decentred, and multilateral, based on the assumption that persuasion among perspectives is possible as well as desirable.

Most academics find themselves engaged in an ongoing balancing act such as Radhakrishnan's. He is admirably aware of the stakes involved and does a better job than most of us could do of locating himself between self-consistency and openness to the world. For instance, much of what passes for theory today defines itself against an evil or at least a falsehood called essentialism. This exclusion of one pole of a binary goes unnoticed and uncommented upon by theorists who otherwise pride themselves on their consciousness of the problem of binaries. The strength of Radhakrishnan's project is that he recognizes that ideas have just as much existence as does facticity. Essentialism exists the same way other ideas do: because people think it and it can be put to use. Radhakrishnan proclaims that 'the term "strategic essentialism" is redundant, for essentialism has been nothing but strategic', and I agree with him.

My own reservations about his project are inseparable from the things I like about it. More double consciousness! He argues that manifest suffering demands an ethical response from the theorist, and oppression requires a constant monitoring of the self on the part of the theorist so that his theory does not replicate power imbalances. Ultimately, however, the world interests Radhakrishnan less than the proper position for himself, the theorist, in the world. He does not historicize or even theorize unevenness. He asks 'Where should I stand?' instead of 'Where am I standing?' Theory, as he uses the term, is not multiple but is always *true* theory or at least the best theory. By his definition, if an

analytical frame were not ethical and politically effective, or if it were not oppositional, it might be ideology or it might be poststructuralism, but it would not be theory. Radhakrishnan's defence of theory is therefore circular. There is no way to critique it except to dispute the definition.

Radhakrishnan points out that Homi Bhabha, although he proclaims a third space between the west and its others, relies almost exclusively on poststructuralism, the opposition that the west itself has generated to modernity. Radhakrishnan distinguishes poststructuralism from theory, which maintains an awareness of non-western alternatives. The critique of fundamentalist Islam, Hindu nationalism, and third-world modernizing elites cannot derive solely from the west; at least as important are the alternatives and critiques produced by submerged indigenous traditions. However, Radhakrishnan does not escape the bind he catches others in. His own arguments proceed not by engaging alternative traditions but by critiquing theoreticians, showing how they are insufficiently aware of alterity. He discusses secularism, multiculturalism, political correctness, and globality but not, for instance, religion, the delinking currently under way in Africa, or how to think through indigenous land claims. The only alternative traditions that he explicitly invokes are those represented by Partha Chatterjee and Ashis Nandy, yet he passes over in silence their rejection of Indian nationalism as itself symptomatic of modernity, an argument that does not accord well with his own defence of third-world nationalism in the abstract.

As part of his ethical project, Radhakrishnan values persuasion, which involves meeting the other and going beyond both positions. He even goes so far as to declare that a goal of his is to persuade 'a young entrepreneurial billionaire... to feel, perceive, and understand his or

her reality as an inhabitant symptom of global unevenness'. In practice, however, as opposed to in theory, Radhakrishnan is writing for a narrow range of readers who start from the same point he does. In his discussion of political correctness, for instance, his goal is not to persuade the insensitive of the unethical nature of their speech or behaviour but to persuade pusillanimous right-thinking people that they must intervene in everyday social contexts. Radhakrishnan frequently uses the first-person pronoun 'we' to refer to Americans, usually in quotation marks and ironically. I admire this complicated rhetorical strategy to put some distance between himself and his fellow citizens, those who might use the pronoun non-ironically. Radhakrishnan's use of the pronoun locates him in America even as it contests hegemonic thought. But one result is that the book is occasionally off-putting for any reader outside America. Only an American could recognize Radhakrishnan's summary of what was at stake in the NAFTA debates. His critique of Charles Taylor is based on the mistaken assumption that Taylor is an American writing about third-world nationalism, when Taylor is an English Canadian from Montreal attempting both to explain and to be fair to Quebec nationalism, a force belonging to another that represents a real threat to the self. Radhakrishnan's theory, ever careful to balance universality and location in order to challenge hegemony and identity rhetoric, sometimes falls victim to the same traps that it can recognize so clearly in others.

Radhakrishnan's weakness is, however, inseparable from his strength: he discusses things that matter. In a chapter-long discussion of postmodernism Radhakrishnan does not mention actual examples but assumes that, like the unevenness of the world, readers will already know and understand postmo-

dernism in the same way he does. Yet, in the midst of all this abstraction, Radhakrishnan is capable of the insight and power of poetry, as when he writes about postmodern anthropology: 'If canonical anthropology's message to premodern societies was "I think, therefore you are," postmodern orthodoxy takes the form of "I think, therefore I am not. You are 'I am not'"' (p. 7). Statements like this one, concentrated, quotable, and infinitely suggestive, convince the reader of Radhakrishnan's insight and make his book engaging and important reading.

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Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop. By Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. Music of the African Diaspora. Samuel A. Floyd, Jr, series editor. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press and Chicago: Center for Black Music Research, 2003. ISBN 0 520 21048 4 \$29.95.

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How does one demonstrate the powerful role of black music in the shaping of African American culture? For a long time, critics and historians sought to do so by making extravagant claims of continuity and essence, suggesting that in black music one can identify transcendent, racially determined qualities (rhythm, soul, moral certitude, etc.) that enable it to rise above the material impositions of white dominance. While such claims are still sometimes put forward, they have been increasingly unable to stand up to the more skeptical critiques of culture and race occupying postcolonial and cultural studies since the 1980s. And so, despite notable advances in the

state of research (see, among others, the work of Eric Lott, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Robin D. G. Kelley), African American music studies has remained burdened by a formidable interpretative obstacle, being unable to resolve key questions about its very make up, and, in turn, its relationship to US culture. In *Race Music*, Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr boldly faces these questions head on, and, in so doing, provides an original and important step toward their resolution.

For Ramsey, black music is not a mere symptom of culture but a central constitutive force in the making of the modern African American experience. The musical texts of the second half of the twentieth century, he writes, do not simply reflect or symbolize the ethnicity process among African Americans; they are important sites within which the very process itself is worked out and negotiated... Music works not as a residual artifact of ethnic identity but as an important part of the materiality of ethnicity' (p. 37). In order to demonstrate this, Ramsey takes the reader on a fascinating musical journey that reorients the practice of historical writing according to the experimental procedures that informed anthropology and literary criticism in the 1990s. Employing a creative blend of historical research, memoir, and ethnography, he fashions a portrait of a dynamic and evolving tradition, a musical realm of blackness whose chief claim to continuity lay in the imaginations of a southern pastness that forms the basis of so much musical innovation. This is what he names contemporary black culture's musically oriented 'Afro-modernism', a celebratory 'race music' that became the shaping force of a distinctively urban cultural sensibility after the Second World War.

At the center of things is Ramsey's own Chicago background. A product of the city's expansive black neighborhoods growing up in

the 1960s and 1970s, Ramsey proceeds from the position of the insider, casting a history that negotiates the stories of his informants with the insights of contemporary cultural criticism. Intersplicing tales of family members and friends with portraits of professional figures from Dinah Washington to James Brown to Kirk Franklin, he offers what seems at first to be an unabashedly romantic celebration of Chicago's African American musical life. With each gesture, however, he steps back, placing his assertions under scrutiny and critique. For example, he openly acknowledges that his family's claims of southern musical connection are in large part the product of a collective memory, whose 'truth' and accuracy are undoubtedly suspect. And he is similarly direct in critiquing the more egregiously essentialist declarations of critics past and present who seek to claim for black music some racially determined property. Yet Ramsey is equally insistent that such claims, however problematic as evidence, are nonetheless critical to comprehending the manufacture of race music and culture. In a people's myths, one may locate the impulse and feel of life's living.

In Ramsey's portrait of black Chicago, music's centrality arises from specific historical circumstances that give to sound an enduring significance as that sonic quality adjusts to the particulars of a given moment. Indeed, one of the more original aspects of Ramsey's argument is his insistence on both musical continuity and discontinuity. Rather than a static, uniform blackness, 'race music' remains important within the contexts of the modern even as its qualities change. He is less interested in defining an essential character than exploring, and, indeed, celebrating, the role that music plays in texturing the qualities of the everyday. While acknowledging the importance of the familiar themes of racism,

dislocation, and suffering that so commonly accompany the story of black music, Ramsey prefers to give primary emphasis to the ways in which African Americans creatively crafted positive meaning. In this way, he shares similarities with Albert Murray and other 'elders' of black criticism, as he calls them, who similarly foregrounded the musical means of creating an imaginative life, rather than simply living through it.

Ramsey's arguments are at once inspired and inspiring. As he draws from prior critical practices, he also outlines an important and potentially influential new direction in the field of musicologically oriented black studies. Still, there is a sense that the basis from which Ramsey operates must inevitably qualify the extent of his influence. For if, as Ramsey asserts (quite rightly), music operates within the realm of discourse and is a socially constituted amalgam of sound and text, it must necessarily participate within the broad expanse of meaning making and not solely within a sequestered location of blackness. And, while he does acknowledge these 'outside influences', it is unclear how wide a claim of racial distinctiveness he can ultimately make without also considering African American innovation within a greater social relation. Indeed, it would seem impossible to determine the validity of his claims for black music without comparative investigation, together with a more critical consideration of how innovations by African American musicians arose within the networks of ideas and social forces that constituted the modern. Afro-modernism is an undeniably black-specific cultural contribution. But its shape and meaning came about within a larger circuit of forces, key among them being the very idea of a 'black music' progressing within the domain of an internationally based American popular culture.

These matters are, perhaps, only marginally relevant to Ramsey, whose primary concern is the site-specific analysis of black music within a particular location of culture. One senses, though, that he is attempting something more. The very title of the book makes a broader claim: *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* suggests a musically based general theory of black modernism that grows from Ramsey's own past. To what extent one can extrapolate a history of black music from the particulars of an acutely modern historical circumstance will depend on how fully one wants to grant to Ramsey the ethnographic authority that this narrative appears to claim.

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Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation. By Pheng Cheah. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. Pp. 408. ISBN 0 231 13019 8 (pbk).

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Pheng Cheah's text is one of those rare occasions where scholarship and political commitment become supplementary to each other, and offers the unique pleasure of following and arguing with a committed scholar. Traditional scholarship on nationalism has largely been veering around three central positions – instrumentalist explanation, as pathological aberration, and inadequacy of modernity to cope with an essentially pre-modern phenomenon – allegedly on the ostensible lack of any philosophical foundation of nationalism. As a result of such limited scope, nationalism is reduced to a series of Eurocentric taxonomies of good vs. bad, civic

vs. ethnic or some other version of the basic binary of European vs. non-European. Cheah's text, on the contrary, undertakes the comparatively rare task of interrogating the philosophical milieu of nationalism, away from the customary academic analysis of a concrete manifestation and as an attempt to understand nationalism's capability to generate diverse and context-specific ideologies outside the available and accepted academic narratives.

In his significant contribution, Cheah traces a symptomatic link between German idealism, particularly its emphasis on 'organic vitalism' as the site for 'actualization of freedom' (p. 3), and radical postcolonial decolonization as the last bastion for this organismic metaphor, albeit under different insignia of 'spectrality'. He describes the link as a continuous struggle between the promised infinitude of freedom, embodied in the national *Bildung*, and its other, the inorganic *techné*. In the available literature, however, the link is primarily sought through the experience of modernity; unlike Britain or France, which had a more moderate pace of industrialization and modernization, Germany and the ex-colonies had the experience of an accelerated rate of modernity. As a result, as has been noted quite often, there were strikingly comparable reactions to rapid and aggressive modernization, often expressed in the ideological envelop of nationalism. Marx pointed out this phenomenon with respect to Germany and critiqued the retarded German bourgeoisie for failing to cope with it and taking refuge behind the ideological shield of nationalism. And Frantz Fanon indicated similar experience in Africa. But to fix nationalism within such 'historical/sociological deterministic argument' (p. 6), Cheah argues, produces a reductionist reading of nationalism with a single emphasis on a historicist frame, and

manages to point out its Eurocentric limits only within postcolonial locations, most often reducing nationalist politics within predetermined forms of derivation.

There is, however, a second possibility, and here he points out a long-forgotten association in contemporary academia between culture and politics, that conjoins German idealism and postcolonial experience. His thesis is to read much of European philosophy from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as concerned with culture as the ground for the actualization of freedom. His rigorous and brilliant reading of German texts makes a very strong case for his claims. Outside the ambit of modern cultural studies, which often tends to depoliticize everyday cultural practices in its zeal to prioritize ‘culture’ as a normative category for politics, he proposes a long German tradition that enshrines political freedom within various organismic metaphors of culture. In Kant, for example, the idea crystallizes in his insistence on the analogous nature of culture/organism and freedom; ‘Kant’s vision’, Cheah argues, ‘prior to the age of nationalism in Europe, is a prenatalist attempt to reform absolutist statism’ (p. 62). In Fichte and Hegel, however, the link is pronounced in the way they posit culture as a ‘paradigmatic case of finitude-transcending’ (p. 119) and the way they eventually ‘territorialize culture in the nation-state’ (p. 176). It is because of this shift that they can proceed to pose oppositions between ‘living nation’ and ‘machine-state’ and between ‘organic state’ and ‘mechanical civil society’. And finally in Marx, it is the idea of ‘appropriation’ – through which alienated products return to producers and thus form the core of Marx’s principle of proletarian revolution – that shows evidences of being informed by the narratives of organismic vitalism. Marx’s theory of labour, Cheah argues, is closely linked to the national

question, not only because he envisioned the nation-state as trapping and closing off the boundless possibilities of labour but also because it shows a constant tension between two competing narratives of organismic vitality, nation and labour, and Marx’s resolute stand to subordinate one within the revolutionary possibility of the other. What is crucial in such a reading of Marx is to acknowledge his ‘inheritance from German idealism’ (p. 191) that goes largely unnoticed. Such reading, Cheah argues, make clear the rational basis of organismic vitalism, and, when combined with his insistence on politics-culture continuum, shows that:

culture’s transformational capacity is precisely what the impossible imperativity of postcolonial nationalism puts into question: It is not that human ideals cannot be incarnated because reality is never adequate to ideals, but that any process of actualization is inevitably haunted and can go awry. (p. 8)

It is this logic of ‘contamination’ of the *Bildung* vitalism through its encounter with alterity that he recommends as a better explanation than either ‘derivative discourse’ or the neat and chauvinistic binary of good/bad nationalisms. It is the logic of contamination, again, that explains the passage of the national *Bildung* from German idealism to postcolonial locations, which not only dismembers the claims of organismic vitalism of the former but offers a different metaphor of ‘spectrality’ for further articulation and actualization of freedom.

Bildung requires us to open ourselves to an ideal image, an other that we give to ourselves. Yet without our sheer exposure to alterity, without the inhuman other’s *techne*, the teleological time of *Bildung* would not be possible

in the first place...[T]he incarnation of rational ideals, which is the ontological paradigm of any normative political project, is constitutively susceptible to contamination because all incarnational activity occurs in finitude and is dependent on the absolutely contingent but necessary gift of time. (p. 113)

Such instances of contamination are available in postcolonial narrative fictions of the nation, embodying an ineluctable bildungsroman format but radically exorcising the claims of organismic vitality. The passage from organismic vitality to Derridean 'hauntology' as a guarantor of the actualization of freedom, however, begs further question about the status of contamination itself, and here one detects a problematic area that Cheah manages to avoid in the first part. He situates the claim of postcolonial radical nationalism as a form of spectral *Bildung* in his readings of Pramodya Ananta Toer and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. But his call to step outside the Eurocentric framework of historicism (p. 9) does not sit well with his attempts to schematize the genesis of an 'ideal' in German idealism and its contaminated reincarnation in postcolonial politics, as evinced in Toer's or wa Thiong'o's work. It betrays an implicit claim to binary oppositions, one among many, that historicism sets into operation. If contamination is a necessary condition for the actualization of any ideal, one wonders, why it should be given a special status in explaining the postcolonial incarnations of nationalism. In other words, in assuming contamination as the *raison d'être* for the passage in question, Cheah's argument inadvertently lapses back into a division between the ideal and the incarnation, theory and practice, and loses the edge he gained in his analysis of German philosophy by eroding theory's status of what Foucault once described as 'regional system'. What, however,

eminently redeems the book is its political commitment, erudition and brilliantly argued sections on the rationality of what has long been relegated into the murky closets of obscurantism and irrationality.

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Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions. By Kofi Agawu. New York and London: Routledge, 2003. Pp. 304. ISBN 0415943906 \$23.95 (pbk), 0415943892 \$85.00 (hbk).

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Kofi Agawu's new book *Representing African Music* is a rare and valuable intervention in the field of African music studies. Drawing on the work of various postcolonial writers, yet in a distinctive and unique voice, Agawu launches a devastating critique of the machinery of knowledge production about African music in the west. Stylistically speaking, this book is also unique. At times frankly informative, at times darkly ironic, and at times passionately earnest, *Representing African Music* reads like a resource text, satire and manifesto all at once. The book's central themes range from mapping the general archive of knowledge about African music, then advancing critical assessments of representations of African music, and finally staking out viable options for future inquiry. Hence the subtitle: *Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*. Agawu's basic strategy is to describe the relationship between various conceptual figurations of African music and the tilted institutional terrain in place to support them. The book's impressive grasp of the mechanics of power and domination across the globe today makes possible the trenchant critique of

otherwise neutral-seeming representations of African music. Along the way, Agawu makes many daring statements and reaches a series of alarming conclusions.

In ‘African music as text’, for example, Agawu unequivocally claims that ‘the idea that African music is functional in contrast to a contemplative European music is a myth’ (p. 104). While the simple truth of it is as obvious as a truism, this statement has devastating consequences: it undermines the very condition of possibility of a certain brand of mainstream ethnomusicological discourse, which at bottom regards music as/in culture. Agawu links the incoherent belief in the myth (of a *functionalized* Africa) to an ideological desire to see Africa as ‘intrinsically different’ (p. 106). This kind of ‘anthropological ethos built on a search for difference’ (simply put, ‘an epistemology of difference’) is foundational for ethnomusicology (pp. 119, 153): ‘Ethnomusicological knowledge may be defined as knowledge produced by scholars from the metropolis (Europe or America) about the musical practices of less-privileged others (in Africa, Asia, or Australia) often (but not always) on the basis of (brief) periods of so-called field work’ (p. 155). In the context of this polemical re-definition of the field, Agawu demonstrates the ways ethnomusicological discourse is implicated in the knowledge venture of colonialism (p. 155). The argument goes beyond critique, offering a host of solutions to the basic predicaments identified. Sometimes these solutions are technical correctives to widespread misconceptions about African music. For example, theorists who ‘collapse grouping structure into metrical structure’ fail to grasp that ‘a single regulative beat exists for all members of a Southern Ewe ensemble’ (p. 81). Other times Agawu offers future-oriented solutions, which imagine *possible* African musical practices

under more equitable material conditions than today. For example, changes in cultural practice make possible new conceptualizations of African music in empowering terms such as ‘absolute music’ (p. 170). The list of solutions goes on.

Basic to Agawu’s political imagination is an insistence on the presupposition of epistemological sameness on the terrain of musical culture. Only through a sustained acknowledgement of our shared humanity can African subjects become genuine political agents in the drama of representation: ‘It is time to shun our precious Africanity in order to participate more centrally in the global conversation. It is time, as Paulin Hountondji advocates, “to *impoverish* resolutely the concept of Africa,” free it of dense layers of attributed difference. It is time to restore a notional sameness to our acts of representation’ (p. 171). The question is: Can one afford – even in a political conjuncture desperately calling out for it – to represent African music under the pure rubric of epistemological sameness instead of difference?

In ‘Polymeter, additive rhythm, and other enduring myths’, Agawu spells out the specific ways African music has been misrepresented via ideologically charged terms in the scholarly literature. Agawu places the terms ‘polymeter’, ‘polyrhythm’, ‘additive rhythm’ and ‘cross rhythm’ under particular critical scrutiny, arguing that the very plethora of terms circulating in popular scholarly parlance registers an ‘incorrigible urge to represent Africa as always already different’ (p. 72). Instead of dignifying these terms in his analyses, Agawu identifies various rhythmic *topoi*, or time lines, to describe common African rhythmic patterns in less exoticizing terms. Here the most significant intervention is Agawu’s inclusion of the movement of the dancers’ feet to access the metric structure of the various

dances. 'For cultural insiders,' writes Agawu, 'identifying the gross pulse or the "pieds de danse" ("dance feet") occurs instinctively and spontaneously. Those not familiar with the choreographic supplement, however, sometimes have trouble locating the main beats and expressing them in movement' (p. 73). With the choreographic supplement firmly in place, Agawu's time lines unambiguously elaborate basic metric schemes. The so-called 'standard pattern' often heard as a bell pattern in Ewe dances such as *Agbadza*, *Agbekor*, and *Adzida*, for instance, falls into four main beats in 12/8; while the 'Highlife' time line, while strongly off-beat centered, falls into four main beats in 4/4 (p. 75). Agawu considers the Yoruba rendition of the standard pattern (p. 75) as 'so close that [it] may be regarded as a variant' of the standard Ewe pattern (p. 74). As it is in western music, then, Agawu posits a regulative background that enables 'the accentual and durational patterns that constitute a particular *topos*' (p. 78). Far from the 'clash and conflict' identified by Jones as a 'cardinal principle' of African music, Agawu describes a 'communal and cooperative' musical situation operating according to the familiar mechanism of 'hidden background and a manifest foreground' (p. 79). Agawu uses examples from Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms to demonstrate, *vis-à-vis* the mechanics of rhythm and meter, a kinship between African and western music.

Agawu's analyses and re-transcriptions are entirely consistent with, if not beholden to, a particular brand of theories of rhythm and meter (Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, Carl Schachter, and William Rothstein), where the two musical dimensions have been placed in opposition to one another: rhythm is the actual flow of sounding durations, meter the abstract grid of strong and weak pulses.

Aside from the occasional tantalizing remark, Agawu mostly does not recognize that it is precisely this sort of western theory of rhythm and meter that in fact lays the conceptual foundations for the fantastical western views of African rhythmic and metric complexity he aims to critique. Most of Agawu's analyses bear the mark of this deep contradiction. For example, Agawu describes the *kaganu* pattern in *Gahu* (p. 81), a Southern Ewe dance, (as transcribed by David Locke) as 'consistently, persistently, and permanently off the beat' (p. 80). No doubt Agawu is correct in claiming that the actual beat is nonetheless felt 'elsewhere in the ensemble' and that the *kaganu* player actually 'depends crucially on it' (p. 80). But the reason for this 'elsewhere' feeling upon which the player depends has less to do with the claimed appreciation of a distinct 'grouping structure and metric structure' than it has to do with the simple fact of the dance steps (p. 81). Once again, subject to the analytic grip of Lerdahl and Jackendoff's metric preference rules *alone*, *kaganu* comes to imply a radically different meter than the correct African meter. According to the rules, *Kaganu*'s 'short-long' structure conspires to placing a strong beat on the second of the two notes in each of the rhythmic groupings, precisely the *weakest* beats in the actual music. Thus a repeated pattern that, in the west, *goes as* metric experience would imply, under Lerdahl and Jackendoff's particular brand of western hearing, the factually incorrect metric structure. This is precisely the kind of error committed by writers like A. M. Jones. The point is that A. M. Jones's attribution of staggered polymetric strands in African drumming ensembles (conceptualizing the iambic feel of *kaganu* precisely as 3/8, for example) is more consistent with the generative processes encouraged by Lerdahl and

Jackendoff than Agawu’s argument is able to admit.

While they occasionally lead into paradoxes such as these, Agawu’s analyses mostly shed much needed light on the workings of African music in global modernity. Those in search of a genuinely international musical discourse – one that necessarily involves the concrete uplifting of African music and musicians – could do much worse than begin their quest by reading Agawu’s *Representing African Music*. His is the unmistakable voice of authentic hope.

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Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution. By Sybille Fischer. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. Pp. 384. ISBN 0 8223 3290 6 \$24.95 (pbk).

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A remarkable new book, *Modernity Disavowed* by Sibylle Fischer, forges vital connections between the Haitian Revolution and the Hispanophone Caribbean, notably Cuba and the Dominican Republic. It is ironic that, although public knowledge of Haiti is minimal in the US, as well as in France, Haitian revolutionary studies has been a distinguished and highly developed field for two centuries. Fischer, whose primary field is Latin American and Caribbean, tests the theoretical contributions and impasses of virtually the entire corpus on the Haitian Revolution, from Hegel to Genovese and beyond, to frame her cultural and literary case studies on the evolution of modernity in Cuba and the Dominican Re-

public. She also provides newly nuanced analysis of the political culture of theater in Saint-Domingue, of the reign of King Henri Christophe, and of the production of constitutions in Haiti. In this book’s freedom to take on all relevant domains of history, epistemology, and culture, it most resembles Joan Dayan’s *Haiti, History and the Gods*. Fischer argues that ‘the modernity of slavery and the cultures that had developed in its shadow were routinely disavowed even by those who acknowledged and attacked the institution’ – and that our theories of trauma and history are inadequate to conceptualize that disavowal.

The book’s substantial introduction cautions convincingly that ‘[i]f we do not take into account to what extent modernity is a product of the New World, to what extent the colonial experience *shaped* modernity – in Europe and elsewhere – politically, economically, and aesthetically...talk of modernity is just a reinstantiation of a Eurocentric particularism parading as universalism’. In the first chapter, Fischer examines the legalistic traces of a lost book of images by a black Cuban insurgent, José Antonio Aponte, who was convicted and executed for conspiring against slavery in 1812. Although Aponte’s book has been lost to posterity, trial transcripts describing it, as well as additional documentation of Aponte’s life, point to a revolutionary conception of black agency based on the Haitian model of a slave revolution. Subsequent chapters take on topics including the remains of nineteenth-century ‘primitive’ Cuban wall paintings by artists of color; the often astonishing poetry of the Cuban mulatto poet Plácido, who was executed in 1844 in connection with an anti-slavery conspiracy; the nineteenth-century development of a Cuban novelistic ‘antislavery imaginary’; the complex early nineteenth-century history of Haitian

occupations and imperialism in the Dominican Republic; the Dominican indigenism movement; and nineteenth-century Dominican literary representations of Haitian desire as necrophiliac rapt. After the Cuban and Dominican sections of the book comes a section on Haiti proper, through its theater, postcolonial monarchy, and constitutions.

It should be noted in relation to French material that this book does contain some eye-popping errors. Fischer refers to General Leclerc, the leader of the French expedition in Haiti, as Napoleon's 'son-in-law' rather than his brother-in-law (Leclerc was the husband of Napoleon's youngest sister, Pauline, who accompanied the expedition and whose notoriously flamboyant behavior in Saint-Domingue earned her a prominent place in many literary accounts of the Revolution, including the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier's famous novel *The Kingdom of this World*.) Fischer states that Victor Hugo wrote the first version of his novel about the Haitian Revolution, *Bug-Jargal*, 'in 1803 (i.e., before Haiti had even declared independence from France)', a date at which the admittedly precocious Hugo was one year old. She also claims that the novel is narrated 'from the perspective of one of the officers in Leclerc's army', whereas it is set a decade before the

arrival of the French expedition. It is narrated by a French-born inhabitant of Saint-Domingue who, after suffering devastating losses, seeks and eventually achieves suicide by military valor in the revolutionary army in France. Such slippages are, in my view, a price one pays for Fischer's admirable refusal to capitulate to disciplinary territorialism; as she notes, 'Elite abolitionism, slave resistance, Haitian independence, postcoloniality, abolitionist literature, and religious antislavery are claimed by disciplines and subdisciplines that do not always look kindly on neighboring scholarly practices.'

To see the 'map of the slaveholding Caribbean in its entirety', as Fischer aims to, works such as this one must navigate and establish commerce between a daunting array of regions and their cultural and scholarly histories. *Modernity Disavowed* is a deeply challenging, philosophically fluent book that does not put Haiti on the map – it has long been there – but on the same map as its Spanish-speaking neighbors; and, as a Caribbean region, on the same map with Europe; and, as an epoch, on the map of a modernity that has not been fully explored.

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