

## Buchbesprechungen

**Bruce Robbins. Upward Mobility and the Common Good: Toward a Literary History of the Welfare State.** Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 328 pp. Hb. \$ 35.00. ISBN 0-691-04987-4.

In this important and committed study, Bruce Robbins looks at upward mobility stories as a genre, offering a detailed exploration of the ways in which literature helps to shape social and political discourses. He argues that “the initial state of economic deprivation represents a perverse sort of capital” (xi). These transition narratives throw questions of class and identity into relief and emphasize the role of class-related feelings. One important ingredient here, apart from anger, is eroticism, and Robbins shows that the special character of the upward mobility story becomes particularly apparent where it is not naturalized as a conventional love story, but features “‘unnatural’ love – provisional, frustrating, often unconsummated matchups that do not aim at or end in marriage, reproduction, or heterosexual union of any sanctioned or enduring sort” (xiii). This approach allows a look beyond the self-reliance of the upwardly mobile heroes, acknowledges their emotional centre in “the protagonist’s relation with a patron, mentor, or benefactor” (xv) and enables notions of the ‘common good’ to enter the equation.

Robbins begins with Rousseau and his relationship to the older benefactress Madame de Warens as a model for French 19th-century stories of male upward mobility. These include an early theory of democratic citizenship which counteracts the aristocratic model of patronage – a tension negotiated in terms of gender. The chapter “How to Be a Benefactor without Any Money” focuses on Dickens’s *Great Expectations* and the help Pip offers the criminal Magwitch, thereby enabling the latter to become his benefactor in turn. Pip becomes a “bizarre figure of administrative expertise who stands prophetically for the welfare state that would aim at not-quite-disinterested care for Magwitch and those like him” (18). Stories of this kind question the zero-sum necessity that one person’s rise must be another person’s downfall. “It’s Not Your Fault” deals with the refusal of individual responsibility and the “rechanneling of responsibility in the direction of emergent public collectivities” (19), “A Portrait of the Artist as a Rentier” looks at stories which feature artists or intellectuals, interpreting their rejection of social climbing as “an unconscious alignment with the old aristocracy” made possible by the “independent incomes that funded the artistic Bohemias” (19). “The Health Visitor” discusses mid-twentieth century texts and their negotiation of an upward mobility brought about by the welfare state’s invasion of private space by its representatives. “On the Persistence of Anger in the Institutions of Caring” offers an extended discussion of Kazuo Ishiguro’s recent *Never Let Me Go*. This extreme case of clones produced for organ donation forces readers to face a chilling scenario where “endless crowds of us, unique individuals every one, try to assert our boundless sovereignty and pack ourselves into the cramped space of a minute statistical possibility” (202) of upward mobility. This bleak picture, which qualifies the optimism related to altruism and the common good and identifies a basic contradiction in the upward mobility story, leads to the conclusion “The Luck of Birth and the International Division of Labor,” which revisits the upward mobility story on a global scale, where the zero-sum necessity still appears to obtain, “according to

which a postcolonial migrant's upward mobility can only happen at the expense of someone at home whom she might know" (243).

Perhaps Robbins should have taken more trouble with theory – he calls his rather erratic collection of material, both fictional and non-fictional, variously an “archive” or a “genre” and does not offer a structural account of his literary ethics – but his readings are so rich, focused and inspiring that this (deliberate) abstinence can be forgiven in a highly readable and enlightening book. The author's ambivalence about his own argument makes it, if anything, more compelling.

Ina Habermann (Basel)

**Nick Bentley. Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the 1950s.** Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007. 330 pp. Pb. € 72.30. ISBN 3-03910-934-0.

After World War II, Great Britain witnessed a variety of changes which could not fail to leave their mark on literature. Despite positive developments like the newly established ‘welfare state’ and increased subsidies for education and the arts, decolonisation, devolution and economic problems impaired the formation of a positive national self-image. In British Literature, the 1950s are associated with anti-modernism, a return to realism and social concerns as well as with two prominent literary groups, the so-called ‘Angry Young Men’ and the ‘Movement.’ In his cultural-historically oriented study *Radical Fictions*, Nick Bentley contests this view, arguing “that the dominant critical reading of fifties English literature as anti-modernist, anti-experimental and representing a return to conventional realist forms is a distortion of the actual heterogeneous nature of the novel produced during this period” (16). Bentley therefore focuses on how the socio-cultural changes of that decade are reflected in the novel of the time.

The “Radical Fictions” of the title are defined as “texts that engage with the constructions, reproductions and negotiations of particular formations of identity and ideology that are prevalent in 1950s culture” (21). At the same time, Bentley deploys a more precise definition by Alan Sinfield, associating the term ‘radical’ with working and middle class opposition to dominant ‘meaning systems.’ According to Bentley, the 1950s gave rise to a number of novels that meet both these definitions of the term. In *Radical Fictions*, he concentrates on Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Wain's *Hurry On Down* (1953), Muriel Spark's *The Comforters* (1957), *Robinson* (1958) and *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) and *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1959), Colin MacInnes's *City of Spades* (1957) and *Absolute Beginners* (1959) as well as on Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). Bentley argues that these novels are radical in two ways: First, although the 1950s are associated with a ‘reaction against experiment,’ the novels’ authors do experiment with narrative techniques, above all with narration and perspective. They considered conventional realist modes inadequate either to give a faithful record of life or to voice the concerns of certain marginalized groups in society. Second, they use the novel “to produce a politically committed writing that challenges dominant power structures and dominant socio-cultural ideologies” (16) with respect to the issues of class, youth, ‘race’ or gender. As Bentley illustrates in three initial cultural-historical chapters, traditional Marxism and the New Left tended to concentrate predominantly on class, neglecting the other issues, although these also played a crucial role at the time. In his analyses, Bentley points out that while each novel provides certain marginalized groups with a voice, it mostly ignores the concerns of other, equally margin-

alized groups. Sillitoe for instance foregrounds ‘class’, MacInnes privileges ‘youth’ and Selvon concentrates on ‘race’. According to Bentley, “[o]nly Spark, perhaps, provides the questioning framework that, potentially at least, signals a correspondence between the sub-altern positions of women, youth, the working class and other ethnicities” (297).

In both the cultural-historical and the analytical parts of the book, Bentley draws on a wide range of critical theory. Thus, the study is grounded in a sound theoretical basis (although fastidious critics might disapprove of slips like the shifting accent from “Lukács” to “Lukàcs”). Often, however, these theoretical references fail to develop into genuine arguments, and Bentley tends to jump to conclusions which his previous reflections do not support as fully as one might wish. Similarly, he sometimes gives the impression of trying to accommodate what he is writing about to the topic of radicalism and of forcing the issue a little, as becomes apparent in the following statement: “Do Sillitoe’s texts of this period represent a Deleuzean and Guattarian empowerment of a minority discourse; a Batailleian radicalization of the transgressive; or a Derridean or Baudrillardian celebration of the irresponsible?” (226).

All in all, *Radical Fictions* is a useful contribution to scholarship on the novel in the 1950s, since with MacInnes, Selvon and Wain, Bentley focuses on authors who have so far been rather neglected by scholarship. *Radical Fictions* provides some interesting insights into the novels discussed, particularly on the link between experimental form and radical content. In his chapter on Spark, for example, Bentley shows that this author deploys experimental strategies inspired by the French *nouveau roman* earlier than suggested previously. Last but not least, the introductory chapters on the crisis in Englishness, on the ideological heritage of realism and on the early New Left provide a good introduction to these topics.

Caroline Lusin (Heidelberg)

**Claire Parfait. The Publishing History of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, 1852-2002.** Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. 269 pp. Hb. £ 55.00. ISBN 0-7546-5514-5.

The spectacular and to this day somewhat enigmatic success of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s sentimental reform novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) has already received an enormous amount of critical attention. Ever since the revival of Stowe-scholarship in the 1980s initiated by Jane Tompkins, Eric Sundquist, Elizabeth Ammons and others, the critical emphasis has been mostly on the reception of the book and the “cultural work” (Tompkins) the novel has performed in various national and international contexts. Somewhat contrary to these developments, Claire Parfait has now documented an aspect of the novel which has received less attention lately: the publishing history of the book. Claire Parfait discusses the novel “from the perspective of book history” (2): Her “work aims to relate the history of the ways the novel was presented to succeeding generations of Americans” (4). In eight chapters Parfait discusses the inception and initial serialization of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the book contract(s), advertising and promotion as well as the distribution and sales of the novel, and she chronicles the numerous editions of the text from 1852 to 2002. This is quite an ambitious undertaking and the author has meticulously researched every detail of the publishing process – ranging from the various cheap and expensive editions of the book, the paratextual apparatus that has been built around the novel with each succeeding edition to the more intricate details of copyright law, book promotion and sales statistics.

Throughout her study Parfait engages with what she calls the “community of interests” that “brought readers, editor, and writer together” (26) and that went into making *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* a Great American Novel. Stowe’s first publisher, John P. Jewett has been

termed both, an “unsung hero” (by Stowe biographer Forrest Wilson) and a “scoundrel” (by Stowe’s sister Catherine), for the role he played in the publishing success of Stowe’s novel (44). Whatever the epithet, Jewett’s marketing of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was highly innovative. Not so much in the sense that he developed new strategies but that he used all of the available ones to promote *one* single text (64). From the beginning he advertised *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as “The Story of the Age,” as a bestseller and as an unprecedented event in publishing history. Promoting the various editions of the book with the most recent sales figures (“50,000 Copies in Eight Weeks!”) Jewett coined a rhetoric of superlatives (reinforced by hyperbolic comments in the American press) that has continued to surround the novel to this day and that also ‘made’ the book the phenomenon that it has become.

The “community of interests” changed over time. In the last decades of the 19th century Stowe’s reputation was based mostly on her New England novels which were deemed more ‘feminine’ than her first book. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was read then mostly as a “plantation novel.” It became a bestseller again 50 years after its first publication. From the 1930s to the 1950s the novel suffered from an almost complete lack of interest which is reflected in the all-time low of new editions. Parfait argues that Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* (1936) took the place of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the popular imagination. This ‘eclipse’ is followed by the last and most enduring ‘comeback’ of the novel since the 1960s evidenced by numerous new editions and flanked by an intensified Stowe-scholarship since the 1980s.

As Parfait asserts, the “sheer volume of critical literature over the past thirty years all testify [sic] to a sustained interest” (192) in the book, even when for a long time it “failed to achieve first-rank status” (160). Its precarious status as a popular text *and* as a classic she shows to be debated in many 20th-century prefaces to the novel. In 1952 Langston Hughes was the first African American author to write a preface for the novel, and he did so cautiously by calling attention to the difference between Stowe’s text and its numerous “distorted theatrical adaptations.” He valued the book for its suspenseful narrative, its humor and emotional appeal (179). By that time, Stowe’s novel had come under attack from two sides: African American intellectuals (most famously James Baldwin in “Everybody’s Protest Novel” [1949]) accused her of “creating dangerous stereotypes of blacks” (182). At the same time, Stowe was excluded from the canon-building venture of F.O. Matthiessen in his *American Renaissance* where she appears mostly in footnotes (180). Stowe’s rediscovery in the context of the social protest movements is primarily owing to feminist interventions, which also helped Stowe to finally become a canonized writer. These developments in the second half of the 20th century are well known, and they affirm Parfait’s argument that Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is and always has been “a classic with a difference” (203) or, as she puts it elsewhere, “a tear-jerker with a difference” (188). This ambiguity Parfait finds reflected also in the publishing history of the book – in the way different editions have catered to different audiences, in the way it has been marketed both as a literary classic and as a popular read, in the way different generations of publishers and readers have found the text both flawed as well as compelling.

*The Publishing History of Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is an important addition to Stowe-scholarship and a valuable resource for further research. Of particular relevance are Parfait’s historical findings and the insights into the publishing history of the novel in the 19th century that she grants us. She has dug up many new noteworthy details and has excavated tons of facts and figures. Apart from that, we come across more or less well-known anecdotes in the pages of Parfait’s book, the kind of lore that surrounds a book like *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, e.g. that during the serialization of the text in the *National Era* “neither author nor editor at

first knew what the final length of the novel would be” (19) or that Stowe, as a woman, legally could not sign the first book contract herself and that her husband had to sign it for her (38).

Parfait’s study will certainly be appreciated by insiders and fans of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* – for all others it may be a bit tedious to read at times as Parfait’s attention to detail is quite excessive. The latter is somewhat mitigated by the mild gossipy quality of the book, for instance, when retracting the quarrel about the profit that ensued immediately after the publication of the novel or the “copyright thriller” of 1892 when it seemed that the copyright of the book had never been properly registered.

For all its informative value, Parfait’s descriptions too often go without much of an interpretation and appear a bit isolated from the discursive contexts of race relations, gender roles, religiosity, etc. Thus, the information the author gathers would at times be even more compelling when placed in a cultural-studies framework. Over all, Parfait does not come to any radically new conclusions in her reconstruction of the publishing history of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Yet, from the perspective of book history, she tries to give another answer to the question why the novel was such a huge success, a question that continues to engage us.

Heike Paul (Erlangen-Nürnberg)

**Daniel Göske. Poets and Great Audiences: Amerikanische Dichtung in Anthologien, 1745-1950.** Mainzer Studien zur Amerikanistik, 49. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2005. 498 pp. Pb. € 82.70. ISBN 3-631-50312-1.

Poets and critics alike tend to be wary of anthologies, frequently mapping them as a one-way-road to uncritical consumption or ideological brainwashing or both. Daniel Göske’s *Habilitationsschrift* offers a welcome correction of such categorizations at a time when the iron grip of the canon debate has loosened and when popular culture products are no longer necessarily regarded as mere brain-dead mass culture.

Anthology projects derive their cultural impetus from the idea that poets need more readers than the chosen few. “Great poets must have great audiences” (1) is Walt Whitman’s pronouncement, making popularity a touchstone of ‘great’ art. Ezra Pound’s protest against this dictum, “the artist is *not* dependent upon his audience,” and his outraged reference to the immensely popular Longfellow, “my mutton-headed ninth cousin,” (3) as proof that the vote of the masses is inevitably misguided, pits an ‘elitist’ position against Whitman’s more ‘democratic’ view of ‘greatness.’ This opposition epitomizes the discussion around anthologies as a suitable medium for the distribution of art. For Göske, anthologies function as medium for (self-)defining cultural identity and in this sense provide valuable evidence for a cultural-historical exploration of the development of “Americanness” – more valuable than the exclusive discourses of avant-garde art (4). He wishes to explore the “Sitz im Leben” of poetry (e.g. 131, 434).

Göske analyses anthologies in their double function as mirrors and motors of the formation of public taste (20) and in this sense presents an extremely useful attempt to reconstruct the formation of publicly accepted tradition (12). He is interested in the authors and texts that are represented in anthologies as well as poetic forms and prevalent themes at any given time. One of the most valuable aspects of the book is that Göske extends his examination to the material and personal restrictions under which specific anthologies were produced and received among contemporary readers (6-7). He wishes to sketch the multiplicity of reception, the continuities and ruptures in the establishment or disestablishment of repu-

tations, the interaction of publishers, authors, editors and reviewers (22). For this he has consulted not only a large number of poetry anthologies, including bilateral collections – the appendix lists 150 titles –, but also an impressive range of archival material.

Göske's explorations begin with early colonial endeavours, such as the early *Collection of Poems: By Several Hands* dominated by Boston poets (1745). In a sense it is rather ironic that the first poetry collection specifically designed to proclaim the cultural independence of the North American colony should bear the same title that a few years later was to represent the acme of British polite taste in Robert Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* that pushed American products very rapidly out of their own market.

The struggle against British cultural domination was to occupy many anthology projects in the time of the young republic. Göske outlines several anthologies and their genesis under the direction of printers and publishers Mathew and James Carey and early nineteenth-century collections such as Samuel Kettell's *Specimens of American Poetry* (1829).

Nineteenth-century anthologies seem particularly intent on developing the nation's unity through a dissemination of shared poetic heritage. This is exemplified in the most influential nineteenth-century anthology of American poetry, Rufus Wilmot Griswold's *The Poets and Poetry of America* (1842). Well marketed and hotly debated, Griswold's collection gave an important impulse to the discussion about the nature of national American poetry (147). From mid-century onwards, poetry anthologies begin to focus on the emotional needs of readers more than the presentation of national heritage, offering a kind of 'poetical medical chest' for all occasions: Charles Dana (*The Household Book of Poetry*, 1858), William C. Bryant (*A Library of Poetry and Song*, 1871) and John Greenleaf Whittier (*Songs of Three Centuries*, 1876) present many of the "fireside poets" and dominate the anthology market till the end of the century.

At the end of his own career and at the end of the century, Edmund Clarence Stedman, already a well-known critic and anthologist at the time, presented an inventory of American poetry in *An American Anthology* (1900), his task not made easier by the restriction imposed by the "*virginibus* maxim (print nothing to offend a virgin)" (51). Despite such restrictions, Stedman prepared the ground for twentieth-century projects. Göske devotes considerable attention to influential modernist anthologies, especially Harriet Monroe's *New Poetry* (1917) and its forerunners, imitators and detractors. The American anthology landscape of the twentieth century was dominated by Louis Untermeyer, indefatigable in compiling and promoting "art for life's sake" (334) in a large number of anthology projects. Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry* (1919-1969) in its various metamorphoses receives appropriately ample attention.

Again and again, Göske's careful examination on the basis of precise and plentiful data leads to the correction of overly hasty judgements in literary criticism and history, such as Alan Golding's determinedly politicised readings of various anthology projects (e.g. 69, 90, 113, 191) or the tendency of literary historians to ignore the polyphonic state of any canon in its reception through anthologies (e.g. 95, 167). In particular, Göske convincingly demonstrates that it is unjustified to brush aside anthologies as mere superficial reproductions of mass taste or sentimental drivel without relevance for the development of 'real' poetry (e.g. 147, 217, 226).

Somewhat surprisingly, and despite his disclaimers, Göske seems to reproduce the poets' aesthetic categories of judgement and counts only artistic innovation as an acceptable justification for anthologies. The less innovative, 'merely' representative collections that pander to such common-or-garden needs as comfort in grief, patriotic feeling or (albeit clichéd) na-

ture experience are deprecated as commercialized consumer products with mere affirmative qualities (e.g. 10, 81, 140) or low-brow cheapies for a mass market (e.g. 155, 411).

Göske's task is a gargantuan one and in consequence, one sometimes feels that he tries to do too much: He attempts an overview of a large number of poetry anthologies in their cultural and material context. He also presents new interpretations of individual poems and an evaluation of individual poets' oeuvres. All this offers a great variety of insights but the many strands of the argument are sometimes picked up and dropped again a little haphazardly. And perversely, despite the wealth of material that is provided, one sometimes wishes for a little more: For instance, while the copyright issue is given due attention from the nineteenth century onwards, a brief explanation of the copyright conditions on the early American book market would have clarified some issues.

The easy eloquence of Göske's prose and his sense of humour make this a very readable book. He manages to present a vast amount of material without breaking W.H. Auden's eleventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit statistics!" (23). Given the useful material and equally laudable summary of the current discussion on anthologies, it is a shame he does not make any connection to Anders Olsson's *Managing Diversity: The Anthologization of American Literature* (2000), a major book-length study of post-war anthologies.

With all its qualities of content, the book is not well made: the cover evokes the solace of a technical manual, the page layout is overcrowded, there are too many typos and the dates given in references do not always agree with the publication date given in the bibliography (e.g. James 2000 (300), Göske 2001 (266), or Gould 2002 (265)). This should not detract from the fact that this is a wonderful book which needs to be translated quickly to be the more easily included in the current critical discussion in the Anglophone world.

Stefanie Lethbridge (Freiburg)

**Adrian Pablé. The Construction of a Period Dialect: The Language of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and its Sources.** FOKUS Linguistisch-Philologische Studien, 32. Trier: WVT, 2007. 180 pp. Pb. € 22.50. ISBN 3-88476-943-0.

Several critics have praised Arthur Miller for generating the impression of an authentic seventeenth-century English dialect in *The Crucible*. Christopher Bigsby, for instance, argues that the language of the play is "authentic for making fully believable the words of those who speak out of a different time and place" (Bigsby, *Arthur Miller*, 2005: 157). Critics also cite possible sources of the colonial idiom such as the *Salem Witchcraft Papers* and William Shakespeare's plays. But despite the universal praise of Miller's achievement and a few comments on possible sources, analysts have paid little attention to the construct of the "period dialect." Pablé's detailed study fills this gap. Like other critics, he stresses that Miller's period dialect manages to create "an illusion of linguistic authenticity" (4), but he adds Eugene O'Neill's plays to the list of donor sources and engages in a close analysis of nonstandard features in Miller's colonial dialect. Hence, in the general introduction to his study (Part I), Pablé highlights the mixed nature of Miller's literary depiction of colonial speech and argues that the features of such period dialects "may belong to the author's own time, the time portrayed in the work of fiction, or, in fact, to any other epoch" (7).

Part II is dedicated to giving scholarly reviews: first of literary works that treat the Salem witch trials (1820s to 1953), then of the modern political background to *The Crucible* (McCarthyism), and of previous research on the language(s) in the play. Lastly, Pablé traces Miller's acquaintance with the respective donor sources and specifically emphasizes the importance of O'Neill's rendering of rural New England dialect for the play. At the same time, he downgrades Nathaniel Hawthorne's use of dialect in his novels set in Puritan New England (e.g. *The Scarlet Letter*) to "the 'anti-source' within Miller's ideology" (22), for, according to Pablé, the latter's dialect represents a standardized version of a colonial dialect more than an authentic one.

Part III finally focuses on the expected dialectological approach to the linguistic dialect forms in the play, first by clarifying methodological issues and then by analyzing usages according to grammatical functions: verb forms, tense-aspect phenomena, verb structures, noun and pronoun forms, syntactic structures, lexis, and socio-pragmatic features (chapters 6-13). Typically, Pablé begins each section with one or more citations from *The Crucible* to illustrate the particular variant and then examines the same variant in the donor sources. He concludes each section with a comparative summary of his observations and attempts to reconstruct Miller's motivation for selecting (or avoiding) the particular feature. For instance, he first presents three instances of "BE as a finite form" in *The Crucible* (e.g., "Be you foolish, Mary Warren?") and then compares them to similar constructions in the donor sources (60-66). In the concluding summary, he contends that several sources underlie Miller's BE-constructions and suggests that Miller avoided the use of BE as a majority variant in his colonial dialect since it was a rare form in the Salem records of the witch trials.

In Part IV, Pablé reviews the findings made in chapters 6-13 and, against this background, revisits the issues of "speech realism" and the "ideological" dimension of Miller's dialect. The latter term catches an important distinction between writers of conventional period dialects and Miller's "desire to dissociate himself from a standardised period diction" (155) to create a linguistic "authenticity effect" (161) by chiefly relying on the *Salem Papers* and, in part, on Shakespeare's and O'Neill's plays. All in all, Pablé shows persuasively and in great detail how Miller exploited diverse donor sources from various periods to construct a New England dialect in his play *The Crucible*.

Erik Redling (Augsburg)

**Yoshinobu Hakutani. Cross-Cultural Visions in African American Modernism: From Spatial Narrative to Jazz Haiku.** Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2006. 251 pp. Hb. \$ 41.95. ISBN 0-8142-1030-9.

In "Blueprint for Negro Writing" (1978), Richard Wright requires from the African American writer that "every iota of grain in human thought and sensibility should be ready grist for his mill, no matter how far-fetched they may seem in their immediate implications." Quoted in the introduction to Yoshinobu Hakutani's *Cross-Cultural Visions in African American Modernism*, this call for an expression that transcends both racial and cultural boundaries sets the tone not only for the literary texts which are discussed in this book, but also for the overall analytical approach taken by Hakutani.

Hakutani's study investigates the various ways in which 20th-century African American writers engage with and reflect cross-cultural philosophies, ideologies, and literary techniques in their quest for what Wright calls "universal humanism." Through close readings of novels, essays, and poems written by African American modern and postmodern

writers, Hakutani illustrates how these texts create and communicate their “vision” of a universal transcendence of cultural boundaries. Yet, Hakutani not only traces influences of European, Anglo-American and even Japanese literature on African American expression, but also, by means of intertextually juxtaposing these culturally and historically diverse texts, creates his own vision of bridging cultural boundaries.

The book is divided into three main parts, each of which focuses on a distinct cultural context that influenced African American writing in the 20th century. Part One, “American Dialogues,” explores the intricate engagements of African American novelists with their literary environments, whether manifested in Wright’s ‘spatial narrative,’ drawing on American naturalism, or the Emersonian idea of subjectivity as expressed in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. Hakutani shows that African American writers often confront issues of their own racial identity, as expressed in James Baldwin’s optimistic view of “the birth of a new America” (79) in his novel *If Beale Street Could Talk*, or in the ‘vision’ of love and a universal, race-transcending sense of desire which figures in Morrison’s novel *Jazz*.

Richard Wright, the author to which Hakutani comes back continuously throughout the book, is the focal point of Part Two, “European and African Cultural Visions.” Against the backdrop of French existentialism, the role of society and the individual in Wright’s novel *The Outsider* is discussed, while at the same time being re-examined in the context of racial discourse. Conversely, Hakutani reads *Pagan Spain*, Wright’s cultural study of Spain under Franco in terms of a universal cultural and social critique. In a further step, Wright’s travelogue, together with Morrison’s novel *Beloved*, is examined with regard to its ‘vision’ of Africa’s “Primal Outlook upon Life,” another term Hakutani has adopted from Wright, and which is conceived as a deconstructed alternative to the imperialist and male-centered worldview of Western discourse, endorsing instead the spiritual unity of humans and nature as well as communal kinship.

In Part Three, “Eastern and African American Cross-Cultural Visions,” Hakutani establishes a link between postmodern African American writing and Eastern philosophy, introducing not only the idea of Buddhist enlightenment in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, but also examining African American poetry in the Japanese haiku tradition. With regard to haiku collections by Richard Wright, Sonia Sanchez, and James Emanuel, Hakutani reveals how these poets portray their individual versions of exceeding subjectivity in favor of a universal harmony and an overall quest to transcend cultural boundaries.

Hakutani’s evaluation of African American writings in the context of a larger, cross-cultural framework proves insightful and sheds light on key issues for the discussion of (post-)modern African American literature such as race, individuality, and self-realization, while at the same time skillfully emphasizing their universal appeal in a global quest for humanity. Hakutani’s eclectic and often associative approach undoubtedly accounts for its innovative nature; however, at times the correspondences between the texts discussed and cross-cultural philosophies remain rather elusive. Owing to its wide-ranging method, the study contains several problematic juxtapositions of artistic movements and ideas, such as the dichotomy of a supposedly elitist Anglo-American versus a more universally oriented African American modernism as well as the rather intangible comparison between jazz and haiku aesthetics.

Yet, Hakutani’s study offers an important contribution to the field of African American modernism. By establishing and pointing to cross-cultural implications, Hakutani presents a significant alternative for (re-)viewing African American culture of the 20th century in its attempt to find and develop its own literary voice. Hakutani thus justly concludes that “perhaps the most positive lesson of the cross-cultural visions, as strongly reflected in

African American literature, is that seeing human existence can be achieved in ways which do not necessarily assert the self by excluding the other: truth is often a revelation from the other” (16).

*Regina Schober* (Hannover)

**Flora Veit-Wild. Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature.** Oxford: James Currey, 2006. 174 pp. Pb. £ 14.95. ISBN 0-85255-583-5.

Pollution, dirt and desecration in relation to the body are the main literary tropes of interest in this study, rather than madness. The author makes connections between these tropes and madness in the introduction, but insanity quickly takes a back seat and exists instead in an analogous relationship to the tropes of bodily desecration that become the main avenue of investigation in the book and allow, nevertheless, for a fascinating look at parallels between Bakhtinian figurings of the carnivalesque and modes of writing that embody the grotesque. Madness is subsumed by the grotesque, and the body in particular is revealed as the stage upon which the political implications of the writing analysed here is repeatedly played out: “Mad writing cannot be anything but violent writing. The traumas, derangement and suffering that political and mental colonisation have engendered in the colonised subject have brought about literary texts that are cries of anguish, of rage, and more often than not, of violent obscurity” (4).

Chapter 1 focuses on identifying historical continuities in figurings of European colonisers’ fear of Africa and its inhabitants, expressed across a range of non-literary and literary discourses, including allusions to medical, scientific and psychiatric sources. The second chapter introduces African perceptions of mental illness, and underlines a distinct remove from European conceptions with the observation that a “major principle of African psychiatry is that a disease is perceived not so much as a disorder within an individual but as a disturbance within the community” (23). An argument left implicit in the book is that modes of writing madness build on such a tradition by channelling critiques of society through the iconoclastic and subversive literary style employed by the modern African writers focused on later in this study.

Such cultural differences in perceptions of madness are illuminating but insufficiently developed here, and there are grounds for further comparisons between African and European traditions that are also not taken up. One stems from a reference made to vagrant madmen and women who inhabit a fluid and liminal status with respect to the African societies that shun them. Ian Hacking has written on the cultural and medical significance of periods in French history that saw outbreaks of “transient mental illness” among ordinary men and women who would be compelled by illness to live a vagrant existence before returning to society (*Mad Travellers*, 1998). Such intercultural comparisons among related forms of mental illness would illuminate not only the shared pressures and problems that diverse societies confront when faced with behaviour that transcends normative expectations, but also provide a basis for comparison between the symbolic use made of them by writers whose work emphasises the transgressive potential of such acts.

The context of European surrealism is introduced in chapter 3 to support a claim that African writers took on the challenge of appropriating some of surrealism’s subversive literary strategies despite its projection of notions of the primitive onto the body of the African. The book then devotes individual chapters to three writers working from the 1970s on-

wards, Dambudzo Marechera, Lesego Rampolokeng and Sony Labou Tansi, whose writing draws in different ways on the surrealist concern with language as a means of liberation.

Attention then shifts from the expression of oppression through the abuse of the female body in the work of these male writers, to the cultural significance of “grotesque representations of the female genitals in oral culture” (111). The transgressive potential of such representations is taken up from the 1970s onwards in the work of three female writers, Bessie Head, Rebeka Njau and Tsisti Dangarembga and Veit-Wild concludes her book with a chapter on the relationship between representations of violence against the female body and forms of resistance to it by looking at these violent motifs in Dangarembga’s 2004 short film, *Kare Kare Zwako*.

A more immediate and extended focus on the work of the African writers cited here would have been illuminating, but too much space is given over to chapters devoted to historical contexts that confirm the prejudices against which these writers wrote. This is a missed opportunity, and adds to the frustration caused by the fact that the main avenue of investigation suggested by the book’s title and introduction are ultimately not taken up.

*Ian D. Copestake* (Frankfurt)

*Markus Heide und Claudia Kotte. Kanadischer Film: Geschichte, Themen, Tendenzen.* Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2006. 215 pp. 39 ill. Pb. € 24.00. ISBN 3-89669-604-1.

This is the first book in German-speaking countries dedicated completely to Canadian film, after a short collection of essays about the new Canadian cinema which was published in 1998. The authors, Heide and Kotte, give a concise overview of the history and contemporary developments of Canadian film, outline its essence, and at the same time reference its immense heterogeneity. Heide and Kotte trace the continual endeavors of Canadian cinema to establish itself beside the dominant American and also European film industries and to create a national cinema, while also questioning the concept of a homogenous national cinema. Being initially marked by the bipolar voices of the Anglo- and Francophone films (in the absence of an Indigenous cinematic voice), the multicultural Canada later developed a transnational cinema with a variety of traditions.

In four chapters the book contains an inventory of films and filmmakers, milestones, highs and lows as well as different lines of development of Canada’s film industry, film politics and film-promoting institutions, festivals and film awards. In the first chapter Heide reviews the beginning of film from a Canadian perspective, which already foreshadows its bipolarity. The reader is introduced to film pioneers, the clichéd Northwoods melodramas, silent films, newsreels, early documentaries as well as the beginnings of governmental film patronage, which was to decisively mark the Canadian film scene until the present. The National Film Board (NFB/ONF) and Grierson’s documentary aesthetics had a formative influence on the development of the Canadian documentary and animation film. Both traditions garnered worldwide acknowledgement and anticipated similar developments in the United States, as Heide explains in the second chapter with many examples of extraordinary productions. Grierson’s influence on Canadian film is disputed today, because his film politics focused on documentary and animation films and paralyzed the development of a Canadian feature film tradition. NFB/ONF aesthetics changed with the rise of direct cinema, and the establishment of special studios for women and Indigenous filmmakers supported not only their work, but also contributed to the extensive variety of Canadian documentary film. In

the two subsequent chapters Kotte provides a comprehensive outline of both the Franco- and Anglo-Canadian cinemas, which reflect and dynamize developments in both cultures and at the same time battle Hollywood's cultural imperialism. Within the film industry of Quebec, one of the most productive in the Western world, filmmakers create the cinema as a public space that contextualizes social, political, religious, and class topics while it also depicts the personal, individual, and imaginary. The rather heterogeneous Anglo-Canadian cinema leans more heavily on Hollywood and develops different profiles: among its characteristics are documentary realism, regionalism, anti-heroes, eccentric and strange characters, psychological portraits, personal fates, popular culture, as well as transnational, transcultural, feminist, and homosexual themes. Three subchapters deal with the altero- and self-presentation of the Indigenous in early documentary and feature films. Despite Canada's strong Indigenous documentary tradition and the rapidly developing short and dramatic film traditions, these chapters are unfortunately rather brief. Silent films are discussed a little uncritically, and under the category 'First Nations films' work by non-Indigenous filmmakers are also examined, which could lead to a misunderstanding of the term 'Indigenous film.'

The appendix lists film and film promotion institutions, Canadian film journals, film festivals as well as the Top Ten of several years. This very well researched and extremely informative book whets one's appetite to explore the world of Canadian cinema, to watch more films, and to discover Canada in film.

*Kerstin Knopf* (Greifswald)

**Aleida Assmann. Einführung in die Kulturwissenschaft: Grundbegriffe, Themen, Fragestellungen.** Grundlagen der Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 27. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2006. 248 pp. Pb. € 19.95. ISBN 3-503-07977-7.

Aleida Assmann makes it clear at the outset that her introduction to the study of culture surveys the field from the vantage point of literary scholarship. The aim of the volume, and at the same time its way of proceeding, is "to identify some basic themes in which the interests of cultural studies have culminated, and to link these themes with literary texts and their readings" (7, my translation). Its target audience are students and lecturers in (English) Literature with an interest in the culturally oriented reading of texts. Though films and other media products have reached the lecture halls and seminar rooms, the reading of texts within their cultural context still appears to be the main concern of English or British and American studies in the German-speaking university classroom.

In the introductory chapter, Assmann briefly sketches and helpfully systematizes various dimensions of the concept of culture and traces the trajectory of the most important movements in cultural theory and criticism that have emerged in the twentieth century. She points to the differences as well as to the overlap between (British and American) Cultural Studies and (German) *Kulturwissenschaften*. It becomes clear at this point that the volume under review is an introduction into *varieties* of cultural studies: the notion that there might be one *Kulturwissenschaft* which the title may evoke is duly refuted – there is, of course, no such thing. Assmann then devotes a chapter each to seven basic concepts that are fundamental factors of human existence, communication and cultural production: "Sign," "Media," "Body," "Time," "Space," "Memory," and "Identity." This may at first sight seem an idiosyncratic and selective choice of fields – readers may for instance expect chapters on such issues as 'Gender,' 'Performance' or 'Popular Culture' – but in fact it would be difficult to point to omissions. Not only have the seven basic concepts dominantly

shaped the study of culture, or cultures, in recent years, all of the other aspects mentioned are also duly dealt with in the course of the book. The volume is not intended to either historically survey or systematically classify approaches to the study of culture, but it introduces the reader to, and shows in application, a broad range of concepts of various schools and presents an impressively dense network of questions that the study of culture must be concerned with.

The contents of the individual chapters cannot be summarized here, but a remark on the method of the book may be in place. Assmann very elegantly puts cultural theory and literature into a dialogic relation. She either infers the importance of a cultural concept from literary examples, as for instance when she opens the section on "Time" with quotations from, and discussions of, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and his Sonnet 77 (121-3); or she introduces a set of questions and concepts first and then refers to texts that engage with the concepts, as for instance in her analysis of forms of memory in *Hamlet* (190-203) or her reading of the spatial semantics of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (165-71). Assmann always reads the theoretical concepts and the literary texts within their historical context, so that the reader picks up chunks of both the history of cultural investigation, as well as of cultural and literary history, from the Early Modern period until today.

The experience of a scholar's working life and the author's awe-inspiring erudition have gone into the writing. And the book is beautifully written. In some places, though, Assmann tends to overestimate her target audience's abilities and her degree of erudition is likely to mar her project of introducing concepts. Thus, when she states in the chapter on media that the role of the scribes 'turned increasingly marginal and subaltern in the era of the reproducibility of texts through printing technology' ("[...] wenn auch ihr Status im Zeitalter der drucktechnischen Reproduzierbarkeit von Texten immer marginaler und subaltern wurde," 66), it is with faltering conviction and only with a good deal of hope that the present reviewer can conjure up the image of a student excitedly reaching for dictionaries of foreign words and technical terms rather than putting the book away in frustration. But perhaps it is a blessing that not all scholarly publication has yielded to the pressures of the market yet. The only serious flaw of this admirable volume is that it contains no index of names and subjects. Each chapter is so rich in information, quotations and references that the uninitiated may get lost in the sheer *richesse* of noteworthy authors, works, points and arguments. Though there are lists of cited works and bibliographies for further reading at the end of each chapter, an index would have been invaluable for the purposes of repeated reading and intensified study. It would also have made apparent the network-like connections between the concepts, terms and approaches presented in this volume, which, it may be added, deserves an English translation.

Ralf Schneider (Bielefeld)

Robbins concludes that upward mobility stories have paradoxically helped American and European society make the transition from an ethic of individual responsibility to one of collective accountability, a shift that made the welfare state possible, but that also helps account for society's fascination with cases of sexual abuse and harassment by figures of authority.Â 0. 8. |i Print version: |a Robbins, Bruce |t Upward Mobility and the Common Good : Toward a Literary History of the Welfare State |d Princeton : Princeton University Press,c2007 |z 9780691146638. 797. 2. Bruce Robbins . Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007.Â If these narratives fill gaps in the sensibility, perception, and values of the public, then a "œliterary history of the welfare state" ought to correlate, even roughly, with the specific mental or ideological blockages and impediments that prevented the emergence or flourishing of the welfare state at historically crucial moments. Of the welfare state. Bruce Robbins. Princeton university press.Â Library of congress cataloging-in-publication data. Upward mobility and the common good : toward a literary history of the welfare state / Bruce Robbins. p.cm. ISBN-13: 978-0-691-04987-8 (cloth : alk. paper).