

Book Reviews

David Palumbo-Liu. *The Deliverance of Others: Reading Literature in a Global Age*. Durham: Duke UP, 2012. xiv + 226 pp.

The title of David Palumbo-Liu's fine study introduces the primary goal of his exploration: to trace the character and multiplicity of "delivery systems" in modern society, determine how they connect us with "others," and show how these systems manifest themselves in contemporary literary texts. The book is divided into four chapters, framed by an introduction and conclusion, with each chapter focusing on a specific discursive mode and system through which different people come into contact with each other. The particular discursive modes and systems explored by Palumbo-Liu represent some of the most significant recent developments in theoretical approaches to literary and cultural production, namely rationality and realism, post-humanism, and affect theory. The fundamental question addressed by Palumbo-Liu's study is how much otherness can be absorbed by these delivery systems and those who employ them without these same systems becoming undone. The introduction to *The Deliverance of Others* sets up the theoretical framework and significance of what is to come, including the four primary axes that will occupy each chapter: rationality and literary realism, family, the body, and affect. The spatio-temporal context in which these concepts are explored is what Palumbo-Liu terms the "voluminous influx, quantitatively and qualitatively new" of otherness which he posits as "a distinct feature of the late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century age of globalization" (2).

Chapter 1, "When Otherness Overcomes Reason," centers on Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello*, analyzing the novel within the larger context of the work of prominent theorists and practitioners of literary realism, like Benito Pérez Galdós, Bertolt Brecht, Roman Jakobson, and Erich Auerbach. One could argue that Palumbo-Liu employs his discussion of Coetzee's novel and its metafictional impulse to lay the groundwork for the discussions of literary texts that will appear in the other chapters of his study. Literary realism

and the verisimilitude upon which it relies make it an especially apt vehicle to explore the possibilities and limits of commonality and shared experience. The second chapter, "Whose Story Is It?," examines Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer's *My Son's Story*, exploring "whether the literary imagination, and literary art, can envision a set of new historical conditions under which that emergence of solidarity between self and other might take place" (69). The context in question in this case is South Africa and Palumbo-Liu traces in detail the allegorical role that family plays in the representation of racial, political, social, sexual, and economic exchanges and interactions in this country.

Chapter 3, "Art: A Foreign Exchange," looks directly at bodies and the explicit exchange between them in the form of organ transplants. Palumbo-Liu uses texts like Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*, *The Birth to Presence*, and *Being Singular Plural* to set up his analysis of *L'intrus*. "The Intruder," in this case, is the donor heart transplanted into Nancy's body to continue his life. Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* offers another opportunity to examine the interaction between certain bodies and those around them, addressing the questions raised by a situation in which certain individuals are being sacrificed for others. Palumbo-Liu's reading of Ishiguro's novel serves as a transplant of sorts in which he incorporates the author's own statements regarding the text to establish a dialogue with what could be seen as the "body" represented by his novel.

Chapter 4, "Pacific Oceanic Feeling: Affect, Otherness, Mediation," centers on the work of Ruth Ozeki, beginning with a brief yet thorough discussion of the short film *Body of Correspondence* and continuing with a reading of the novel *My Year of Meats*. This chapter explores an idealized transnational encounter in which the normative force of affect as the construction of sameness and desire connects the United States and Japan. The "Pacific Oceanic Feeling" of this chapter's title is thus a complex one made up of the transnational relationship ("Pacific") of an affect ("Feeling") that is "oceanic" in the sense that its flow is difficult to frame clearly in terms of precise origins and destinations or senders and recipients. This part of Palumbo-Liu's study connects particularly well with the "late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century age of globalization" he seeks to examine through the novels treated in his study.

The conclusion features a continuation of the earlier discussion of Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*, followed by an analysis of Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*. While it becomes clear that this most recent novel fits well with the issues raised and treated by the other texts discussed in Palumbo-Liu's study, placing the analysis of Shteyngart's text in the conclusion seems to marginalize it a bit and also make the conclusion seem like another chapter instead of a conclusion. The conclusion also relies heavily on the work of Paul Ricoeur, in particular *Fallible Man*. The combination of the summary and critique of Ricoeur's ideas that Palumbo-Liu includes in this section leads one to wonder

what might have been gained by including this discussion earlier in the work to flesh out more completely the overarching theoretical framework for the study. Also worth noting is the absence of references to Derek Attridge's *The Singularity of Literature*, a work that could have been put into dialogue with the author's overall framing of the reception of otherness. This omission becomes even more visible when one considers that Attridge's *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event* is included.

The Deliverance of Others is an ambitious and well-researched study that collects and sheds light on a series of intriguing narrative texts, exploring how they engage with the forms of intercultural contact characteristic of the new global age of recent decades. While the book's subtitle, "Reading Literature in a Global Age," could be seen as a misnomer since Palumbo-Liu focuses exclusively on narrative texts and one film, his conclusions extend beyond the individual texts he examines and the scope of his readings goes beyond the specific, making his a study that will be of interest to a variety of readers, ranging from advanced undergraduates to professors in literary, media, and cultural studies.

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Natalie Edwards. *Shifting Subjects. Plural Subjectivity in Contemporary Francophone Women's Autobiography*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2011. 171 pp.

In the production of contemporary autobiographies, the increasing blur between fiction, historical and testimonial narratives, the integration of different languages and genres, as well as the inclusion of non-textual components, point to the complexity of autobiographical expressions. It also suggests the relevance of new approaches towards identity and self-representation.

In her last book, *Shifting Subjects. Plural Subjectivity in Contemporary Francophone Women's Autobiography*, Natalie Edwards emphasizes this complexity, and states in her introduction: "There are many different ways to say 'I' [...] There are as many forms of autobiography as there are autobiographers" (11, 32). Originating from Edwards's doctoral dissertation, this inspiring book adds to the legacy of several distinguished critical works that carved out the groundwork for women's autobiography. Edwards focuses on selected writings of four contemporary francophone authors—Gisèle Halimi, Julia Kristeva, Assia

Djebar and Hélène Cixous—all of them adopting narrative strategies that give voice to a multiplicity of subjects and ultimately refute the traditional notion of a unitary autobiographical self. Besides their representation of a multifaceted self, Edwards stresses the difficulties that this refusal implies and argues that the plural selfhood these writers propose is not presented as a suitable means of self-expression, but rather as a site of constant reevaluation and struggle. Far from healing, Edwards affirms: “their attempts do not resolve the trauma at the earth of each text and do not bring any conclusion to the writer’s quest for understanding” (25).

The introduction contextualizes the most prominent theories in the field of autobiographical criticism. This informative overview also analyzes these theories’ progressive change of direction, in the last twenty years, from the individual to the plural ‘I’. Edwards defines the latter as a self that needs to be approached from the point of view of “its intricacies,” rather than to be necessarily understood as “a loss of self” (13). If structuralism, post-structuralism, postmodernity, and psychoanalysis progressively contributed to shape the non-unitary self, Edwards also points to the significance of postcolonial and feminist studies, the contributions of which opened new ways to narrate the self and to express agency for traditionally underrepresented groups. In particular, Edwards continues, whereas postcolonial theories developed the notion of hybridity, feminist studies argued how “self” and “other” are not separate entities in women’s autobiography, the latter “promoting non-unitary subjectivity as the hallmark of female-authored life-writing” (23).

In the wake of these notions, drawn from both postcolonial and feminist theories, Edwards continues her scrupulous analysis by further investigating the functionality and limits of women’s plural self-narratives. She affirms that the autobiographical ‘I’ of the aforementioned francophone authors calls for an innovative critical approach that embraces: “a middle ground, a middle self, in which the subject is neither ‘I’ nor ‘we’ but rather a ‘more than me,’” moving beyond the binary option of unitary versus plural subjectivity (25).

Shifting Subjects is divided into four parts, each one dealing respectively with a different author. The first chapter analyzes Halimi’s *La cause des femmes*, *Le lait de l’oranger* and *Fritna*. Published over a span of twenty-six years, these three works present similar episodes, narrated in slightly different ways, from different points of view and time perspectives. The altered versions of the same story respond to each other and shift from a collective ‘we’ of *La cause des femmes* et *Le lait de l’oranger* to a more self-revelatory and personal ‘I’ of *Fritna*. In chapter two, Edwards examines Kristeva’s autobiographical work *Les samourais* and her strategic narrative of a dual self. Kristeva creates two different characters telling the story in the first and third persons, conflicting with each other and speaking from two different historical times. In so doing, Edwards contends, Kristeva aims to describe the two different sides of her own persona and to

become the subject as well as the object of her own narration, which eventually find no reconciliation. Chapter three is devoted to the analysis of Djébar's *Vaste est la prison*. Djébar's narrative strategies evolve here from the integration of historical elements, as well as autobiographical and fictional accounts in the first and third persons, to the combination of autobiographical components of a personal and family nature. Djébar's inquiry into the usefulness of writing as a tool to recapture individual and collective memories is interpreted as a way in which Djébar "augurs a questioning of this very mode of self-inscription" (86). The last chapter explores the self-narrative of Cixous in *Les rêveries de la femme sauvage*. By means of dreams, a subverted chronology, the incidence of primitive scenes as well as of multiple voices narrating the 'I,' Cixous, according to Edwards, "questions narrated events and the identities of narrating selves," the latter including both characters and even the autobiographer (120).

The 'New Textual Identities' these authors propose in their plural autobiographies, and to which Edwards refers in her conclusion, ultimately need to be understood within a context of a struggle that does not allow them to reconcile the relationship between self and other, between 'I' and 'we.' In so doing, Edwards concludes that these writers redefine autobiographical writing, gender and selfhood in the stories they tell, and: "posit a new construction of identity that lies beyond 'I' and 'we,' in a space of perpetual self-renewal in which the relationality between self and other is fluid, moving, and powerfully unstable" (147). By striving to circumvent the urge of framing contemporary women's autobiographies in a specific genre, Edwards's stimulating work challenges previous studies and opens new possibilities for research on autobiography, capable of capturing the diversity, richness and creativity of its forms. *Shifting Subjects* will appeal to an international audience and will be a cherished tool for specialists in the fields of gender studies, postcolonialism, and autobiography as well as for those who are passionate about francophone literature.

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Zsuzsa Baross. *Posthumously: For Jacques Derrida*. Brighton: Sussex Academy, 2011. 164 pp.

"For my part, what to give him?"

This is Zsuzsa Baross's first epigraph in her tribute to Jacques Derrida. She has borrowed it from "Salve," the final section of *Le Toucher*, Jean-Luc Nancy,

Derrida's non-posthumous *homage* to Jean-Luc Nancy, from a particularly tender moment in the text: "*Que lui donner, pour ma part? Un baiser? Sur les yeux? Il devrait rester invisible au tiers*" (338), which Peggy Kamuf translates as "for my part, what to give him? A kiss? On the eyes? It should remain invisible to any third party" (301). Derrida's gift, the suggestion of a kiss on the eyes, translates in Baross into the five sections of her gift, transmuting Derrida's first person question into her own and turning it back on the spectre of Derrida.

Derrida remains famous for his obituaries. In "Adieu: Emmanuel Levinas," a text built entirely around Levinas's own declaration that "the *à-Dieu* is not a finality," and that for Derrida to say *adieu* to Levinas would in fact be to place him "right before us, responding to us"; thus, in saying *adieu*, Derrida declares, his "voice would tremble" as a result of this spectropoiesis, given that the spectre of the addressee could never absolutely vanish, any more than a Levinas, say, for Derrida, could be in any sense fully present. Thus Levinas, like others (de Man, Deleuze, Athusser, Lyotard...), is lifted out of time and thus of death, transformed into the subject of a treatment rather than any kind of finality. Another way to say this is that the apparent subject of obituary becomes pharmacological, not in the Derridean sense but as a radical neutrality, suspended in the condition of to-be-determined.

But Baross is doing something quite different in her brief *homage* to Derrida's work and life, though like Derrida's "*adieu*" her "*posthumously*" is an act of *sur-vie*, survival, however tremulous. Her gesture, like Derrida's to Nancy and others, is also a gift, both to the inspiration Derrida has clearly provided her thought and her work, and to the fact of Derrida's passing. This double valence, which Simon Morgan Wortham calls Derrida's "gift economy"—the living energy of Derrida's influence and the finality of his death—is at work throughout Baross's book, supplying it with both its central theme—and its greatest limitation.

In *Posthumously* Baross works through a short preface on the posthumous as such, exploring what she calls the threshold between preface and posthumous, the "profoundly anachronic temporalizing structure" that acts as an "impossible division of the border *line*" that, while it seems to mark both the past and a passing, actually arrives from the future. In the following section, "Fragments," re-printed from *Derrida Today*, Baross addresses this threshold-concept from a different perspective, mapping out a strategy for a Derridean "heterodidactics" (borrowed from *Specters of Marx*, xviii) not for survival but for (not) learning to live; Baross passes Derrida's dilemma regarding hetero-didactics on to us as a gift: "this tension now regards (concerns) us in the living present with an actual impasse, which is neither the stumbling block of a binary *contradiction* nor the paralysis of a *dilemma*, but a *performative contradiction*" (16). In an uncanny performative move, Baross addresses Derrida's specter directly, in second person, as though the injunction against "teaching how to live" could be

suspended were one to interrogate the dead, but the performative results only in the lacuna of Derrida's absence.

The "Two Versions of the Image" forming the central section of *Posthumously* differ enormously in their significance to Baross's project. The first, "Toward a Memory of the Future," is the transcription of an oral presentation delivered in 2003, before Derrida's death, as a running commentary on Péter Forgács's film, *Maelstrom*, which was projected as the paper was read. While this literally performative gesture plays with time in similar ways to "Fragments," the fact that Baross has chosen, in the absence of the film, not to adapt her text to this image-less context, means that it remains more frustrating than suggestive. "The Image and the 'Trait,'" which makes up half of the book, presents itself as an orchestration of the *traitement* 'treatment' of the/an image relative to the mark or trait which always subverts it. Ostensibly focusing on *Memoirs of the Blind*, in fact the chapter ranges far afield into dream-territory, self-portraiture, and color theory, but when Baross declares that "Derrida's writing ... mourns the image—marks its presence beyond the threshold, outside the reach of the blind letter and its writing *trait*" (89), she indeed strays beyond the threshold—which, according to Derrida, is simply not possible.

Baross concludes with the Blanchotian conundrum of writing one's own death, the remarkable third-person note left to be read *in memoriam*, and which was indeed read by Derrida's eldest son Pierre. It is touching: Baross includes a photocopy of the note, in Derrida's inimitable handwriting—a veritable kiss on the eyes.

Of course if we are to echo Derrida carefully, as Baross wishes to do, we must acknowledge the gift's pharmacological nature. Derrida's chief gift to Baross here is the "heterodidactics between life and death" (12), an impasse that according to Baross is deconstruction, and the strategy through which her book unfolds. This heterodidactics means that Baross is suspended between two varieties of the posthumous: the phenomenological, in which "world" and "the world of experience" (her experience with Derrida) have value, and the radically deconstructed, in which they do not. Derrida was himself suspended between the two; this is deconstruction's double bind, for Derrida and for Baross: value and meaning are by definition posthumous. Transmuting this noun/adjective into an adverb (posthumously), Baross further delimits it, as though it were the closing *salve* of a letter.

On the other hand, one result of Baross's heterodidactics is that *Posthumously* never quite becomes a book, but remains a collage of fragments that, because of their heterogenitive nature, don't quite cohere. Though this itself may be part of Baross's strategy, as a tactic it has the effect of begging another step of combinatory glue. The sections that work best, "Fragments," "The Image and the 'Trait,'" and the Postscript, are wonderfully provocative and properly responsive to the influence Derrida clearly had—and there are many

of us—on Baross's formation as a scholar and thinker.

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Natalie Edwards, Amy L. Hubbell, and Ann Miller, eds.
*Textual and Visual Selves: Photography, Film, and Comic Art
in French Autobiography*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2011.
273 pp.

This edited collection, based on papers presented at conferences in Leicester, England and Buffalo, New York in 2007 and 2008, takes as its subject the role of the visual in contemporary French autobiography. The three co-editors have provided a brief overview of the topic, which is followed by ten essays addressing “textual and visual self-representation in specific French-language autobiographic works” (16).

The editors' introduction traces critical discussions of the autobiographical self and photography, film, and comic art in autobiography, beginning with and circling around the work of Roland Barthes and Philippe Lejeune. Thirty-five years after their first forays into the field, in fact, Barthes and Lejeune serve as the major theoretical reference points for almost every essay in this collection. More recent scholars of autobiography and the visual, on the other hand, are not well represented. Susanna Egan's 1999 *Mirror Talk: Genres of Crisis in Contemporary Autobiography*, Michael Renov's 2004 *The Subject of Documentary*, and Alisa Lebow's 2008 *First-Person Jewish* are among the missing.

The essays collected in *Textual and Visual Selves* focus for the most part on work produced at the turn of the twenty-first century, and Véronique Montémont begins with an introduction to the idea of *photobiographie* in France. She provides thought-provoking examples of both autobiographical works that invoke photography by describing absent photographs and works in which photographs from the author's life are reproduced, concluding by asserting that photography can imply its own version of Lejeune's autobiographical pact. Shirley Jordan similarly discusses the turn to photography, reading Camille Laurens's *Cet absent-là*, Marie Ndiaye's *Self-Portrait in Green*, Anne Brochet's *The Journey of a Woman Dismissed by Her Lover*, and Annie Ernaux and Marc Marie's *The Use of Photography*. She concludes that all four texts “destabilize conventional understandings of autobiography” (75).

Ernaux and Marie reappear in an essay by Natalie Edwards, who compares

their collaborative photobiography to Hélène Cixous's *Rootprints*. Edwards explores ways in which feminist autobiographers might use photography (more specifically, photographs in which they do not appear) paradoxically to remove their bodies from their texts. Both *The Use of Photography* and *Cet absent-là* reappear as Floriane Place-Verghnes also tackles the "photobiographical today," the fragmentation of the autobiographical subject, and sexual identity in contemporary French autobiography. Place-Verghnes concludes by moving away from photography, however, in a description of the collective nature of autobiographies by Leïla Sebbar and Assia Djebar. Amy Hubbell takes the idea of photobiography in a different direction with a discussion of the nostalgia of "image-based texts" published in France (or on the Internet) by Pied-Noir authors, who use photography uncritically in order to create a sense of community in exile from their former home, Algeria under French colonial rule.

Peter Wagstaff links the absent photographs of Georges Perec's *W or the Memory of Childhood* to the "parallel but unrelated" (206) history of the collaborative documentary film *Ellis Island: Tales of Vagrancy and Hope*. Other than Wagstaff's brief comments on the Ellis Island documentary, photo(bio)graphy gives way to film in a single essay, Agnès Catalayud's piece on the autobiographical film as self-portrait and Agnès Varda's *The Gleaners and I*. Although Catalayud has interesting things to say about Varda, she remains vague in her discussion of the genre, concluding that "Self-portraits in cinema are incredible pieces of work and cannot by their nature be formatted" (231). The comic art of the collection's subtitle is similarly treated in a single essay, in which Ann Miller provides a brief history of what she calls the "autobiographical tendency" of 1990s French *bande dessinée*. Miller cites Lejeune and also an essay on autobiography in film published by Elizabeth Bruss in 1980, curiously using Bruss's assertion of the impossibility of autobiographical film to assert the possibility of autobiographical comic art.

The two strongest essays in the collection each focus on the visual in the work of a single autobiographer. Erica L. Johnson imparts a compelling and convincing analysis of the writing, filming, and rewriting of autobiography in Marguerite Duras's *The Lover*, Jean-Jacques Annaud's film version of this text, and Duras's revision of both text and film in *The North Chinese Lover*. Johnnie Gratton investigates the fascinating interplay between the documentary and illustrative aspects of photography in Sophie Calle's autobiographic performance piece *Suite vénitienne*, enacted in 1979, published in 1983, and republished in 1998.

Textual and Visual Selves offers a solid introduction to the idea of photobiography in France in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, yet neither the editors nor the authors of the individual essays provide an explanation for the limited scope of the collection. Montémont brings up

Dorothy Allison and Jo Spence and Place-Verghnes mentions W.G. Sebald, but without explanation or context for the comparison, and Catalayud rather surprisingly concludes her essay on Varda with an assertion that the cinematic self-portrait is much more vibrant in Japan than in France. If the visual turn in autobiography is not unique to France, then some historical and cultural context and comparative analysis would allow for a more substantial contribution to the field of autobiography studies. And a wider geographical range of work in French would similarly make for a greater contribution to the field of French and Francophone literary, film, and cultural studies.

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Stephen M. Hart. *Gabriel García Márquez*. London: Reaktion, 2010. 224 pp.

To the genre brief-critical-life-of-a-still-living author, Stephen Hart brings many distinctive touches in this engaging, generously illustrated, consistently entertaining, but oddly careless account of García Márquez to date. There is “Reader, I met him” at the beginning of chapter four; I told him he was “the Cervantes of the Americas,” and he gave me my chapter title: “Even I won’t be able to put up with myself” (76). The rule-of-five: García Márquez’s artistry comes in lists of five items, the first of which is reproduced on the jacket cover: magical realism (never defined; I guess we know it when we see it); lapidary one-liners; a shortened and broken portrayal of time; dark and absurd humor; and political allegory. Next are five levels in the sources: a striking visual image; a memory of childhood; details drawn from the author’s life at the time of writing; a literary technique to make the story into art, sometimes cinematic in origin; political allegory, making a second appearance (70). Incommensurable as a Borges encyclopedia, the items merit enumerating.

For the most part, the mingling of biography and criticism is deft. Hart emphasizes sexual transgressions across the generations—bastards, adultery, incest, naked women on balconies, abortions, and torrid love affairs—to weave the life and the fiction together to create a stimulating reading experience. The brevity of the text and Hart’s own considerable skill with details illuminate García Márquez’s early journalistic styles, and he excavates the valuable observation that García Márquez at first thought writing was a limited medium compared to film and aimed to reproduce cinematographic effects in writing. Experience in film making soon showed language’s comparative limitlessness,

and that new sense of freedom from the visual, the chronological, and others' interference enabled *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. There are provocative accounts of García Márquez's relations with Fidel and Vargas Llosa, materials for studying García Márquez's filmography, and a recipe for Macondo lobster (210n27). The latter half of the book, listing works and dates, might engage more deeply with the texts and García Márquez's literary reputation. There is little sense of a trajectory or dialectic in the writing life García Márquez has created for himself since his life-and-literature-changing novel, and the critical treatment of later texts seems somewhat cursory. Is he simply the inventor of a rhetoric, as he has feared, or is there more there? The book concludes in the middle of things, with a tantalizing vision not of the author (who in one photo resembles Woody Allen listening to Bill Clinton [173]), but of Salma Hayek.

There are oddities. García Márquez is said to display "literary flair" and to have "the eye of a novelist" (26, 20) when he writes his own autobiography. Later he is faulted for writing his memoir as if it were a novel, as indeed he did. Recounting the life as it led to the novel, the memoir saucily pre-empt's critics' "discoveries" of the life in the novel. Demanding an "objective" autobiography (165), whatever that would be, Hart grumbles at an artful memoir that preserves privacy while satisfying literary curiosity and frustrating professional critic-biographers. The book is light on literary antecedents and context, especially Hispanic. García Márquez is said to have invented political allegory (72, 75) for Latin American literature, erasing any possible precursors. Such omissions create opportunities, but also reinforce existing ignorance.

There is a persistent, and seductive, reduction of the literary to the biographical, even when it produces absurdities. So the banana massacre's fictionalizing is represented at length as a "false memory" (87). The "false memory" cannot be García Márquez's, since he was not there. To whom, then, does the "false memory" belong? A class could parse that for hours, so such passages provide fine opportunities for critical thinking. Hart makes excellent use of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's parliamentary investigation in his account, but fails to ask why García Márquez suppresses that investigation entirely, even to his own grandfather's testimony, or to note that if a man named Márquez is writhing on the ground and clubbed to death at 4:30 a.m. (95), then the massacre occurred closer to 3 a.m. than mid-day as the novel has it and the memoir still proposes, looking at a square where 300 people could not fit. Too much emphasis on the empiric, perhaps Hart's favorite word, obscures the novelist's art and invention. Though Hart's lively prose sometimes turns into flaccid thinking, it offers abundant opportunity for others to cinch up, if they can resist the temptation simply to imitate the flow of materials from interviews and Gerald Martin's superb biography.

There are a few problems that anyone putting this enticing work into student hands should be alerted to. There is no index. Citation is careless: one

note misspells the author's name twice—differently each time—and makes errors in both the book's title and its bibliographical details. Four mistakes in one entry undermine confidence. Gene Bell-Villada's collection of English-language interviews, *Conversations with Gabriel García Márquez*, is unaccountably missing from the bibliography, as are his well-received biography and Jacques Joret's valuable edition of *Cien años de soledad*. The primary bibliography, to put it as tactfully as possible, is disgraceful. Ordered by no known criterion, the list begins with García Márquez's memoir and proceeds neither in alphabetical nor in chronological order. The student looking for guidance through the author's works will learn that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was published in London in 1978, several years before the last book listed, *Cien años de soledad*, was published in Barcelona in 1980. That's magic realism. It does not belong in bibliography. Bibliography is not, of course, sexy; it is barely even political, but it is a duty scholars owe the readers who take it—and them—for granted.

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Vivian Liska. *When Kafka Says We: Uncommon Communities in German-Jewish Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2009. 239 pp.

Vivian Liska's *When Kafka Says We* explores literary conceptions of community and collective identity in works by twentieth-century, German-speaking, Jewish authors such as Paul Celan, Ilse Aichinger, Else Lasker-Schüler, and Franz Kafka. Liska shows how each writer, through narrative and representational strategies and divergent goals, employs literature to construct uncommon communities. These communities, she argues, resist simplistic political and ideological programs aimed at homogeneity and exclusivity, while still communicating the significance of a shared Jewish past, upbringing, and cultural tradition.

The book is divided into five parts and fifteen chapters. The first part (Kafka's Communities) concerns Kafka's ambiguous relationship to Judaism and Zionism as expressed in his diaries, letters, and literary works. In the second part (Revisiting the Common Ground), Liska turns to configurations of individual and community in Theodor Herzl's late philosophical tales and Lasker-Schüler's *Hebrew Ballads* (1913) and *The Nights of Tino from Baghdad* (1907). The third section (Communities of Fate) reads the poetry of Celan as

a meditation on the “impossible community” (104) of the dead and those who mourn them. In the final chapter of the third section Liska situates Celan’s poetry alongside his contemporary, Nelly Sachs, and her own use of the term ‘we’ in describing the complex relations between the survivors and the dead, the rescued and those untouched by the forces of the Nazi regime.

The fourth section (Contentious Commemorations) begins by looking at Aichinger’s contribution to a post-Holocaust poetics and continues by addressing related issues of silence and remembrance in contemporary novels by the Austrian-Jewish authors Robert Schindel, Robert Menasse, and Doron Rabinovici. The fifth section (Kafka’s Companions) revisits the topic of Kafka and community, investigating the ways in which Celan and Aichinger engage with their predecessor’s representation of the dangers and attraction of collective belonging in their poetic works, while at the same time taking seriously the function of Kafka’s writings as themselves helping to foster a sense of German-Jewish community.

The strongest sections of the book are the first and the last, where Liska grounds her discussion of community in the more specific context of Kafka’s writings and their reception by later literary authors. The study provides an excellent corrective to dominant accounts of Kafka as the quintessential loner of modern literature, demonstrating the extent to which the “ambiguities and hesitations” (17) in his statements regarding the value of community express not a wholesale rejection of collectivity, but instead raise vital questions about the nature of identity, common ground, and the shared foundations of modern society. The sections on Celan’s relationship to Kafka as his “brother in arms in the struggle for language” (175), and his poetic construction of an imagined community “with Kafka as one of its most prominent and secret members” (182), are also impressively researched and contain perhaps her most compelling readings of individual works.

Less persuasive is Liska’s conception of literature more broadly speaking, her emphatic celebration throughout the study of the contrast between fiction and other modes of writing. Literature’s power, she argues, lies in its ability to raise questions about preconceived notions of togetherness, collective identity, and the basis for community. The point is well taken and fairly uncontroversial. But one often gets the sense that Liska equates complexity with ambiguity and, perhaps more problematically, that she sees ambiguity as a good in itself. In perhaps the most explicit formulation of her view, Liska describes how Menasse’s *Expulsion from Hell* (2001) adopts a style that, “like literature itself, subscribes not to clarity and clearly circumscribed definition, but to an imaginative power moving in and between the words themselves, the playful deployment of which explodes the barriers of unyielding concepts—and with them the ghetto walls” (169).

There is great value in the modes of interpretation and critical thinking

elicited by works of literature, especially in their ability to perpetually draw into question precisely those absolutist and exclusionary binaries on which the ghettos depended. However, at times Liska seems to suggest that literature is only in the service of blurring distinctions and undermining preexisting ideas, rather than both questioning accepted knowledge as well as outlining more concrete visions of what, for example, an uncommon community might look like. Is ambiguity truly valuable as such, and does the construction of uncommon communities in literature depend on such ambiguity?

Liska's thoughtful readings of figures like Kafka and Celan compel us to look closer at the ways in which literature reflects on and actively creates new visions of community. But her study would be made even stronger by additionally situating those literary representations of community within the context of non-literary discourse on citizenship and the nation-state, globalization and cultural memory, alienation and the commodity form. It would be especially valuable to see how Liska's analysis of literary communities helps shed light on the current battle between the National Library of Israel and the German Literature Archive in Marbach over possession of Kafka's literary estate. Juxtaposing Liska's insightful close readings with contemporary discussions surrounding copyright, legal possession, and the commodity form, we might begin to get a better sense of how the question of what Kafka meant by 'we' has become entangled with the equally difficult question: Who owns Kafka?

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