

Fall 2006, Volume 39, Number 2

The Ethics of Postmemory in Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*

Sinéad McDermott

Even the marginalized Kentucky location is represented as pervaded by the Vietnam War, which lingers on in the uncomfortable figures of the veterans and the families, wives, and girlfriends who are left trying to pick up the pieces of their damaged lives.

History and Memory in a Dialogic of "Performative Memorialization" in Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*

Lisa A. Costello

Maus utters speech/text that is necessarily wedged between the past and the future—between the fear that the traumatic past of the Holocaust recedes too much and the concern with what might become of this past for the generations that follow.

The Difficulties of Verbalizing Trauma: Translation and the Economy of Loss in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*

Gabriela Stoicea

With its strict dismissal of any direct representation of the past, whether by means of fictional reenactment or genuine archival footage, with its desacralizing insistence on minute details and on a testimonial reenactment, rather than an aesthetic figuration, of traumatic experience, *Shoah* is unlike any other cinematic exploration of the Holocaust before and after it.

Extricating the Self from History: David Albahari's *Bait*

Tatjana Aleksic

The past *Bait's* Serbian narrator has to face is not only the one he lived through but his mother's as well, for the germination of his present condition lies deeply embedded within her past, the trajectories of which he follows in the form of the audiotapes that he listens to for the first time only a decade after her death when he is already an émigré in Canada.

Memories from Tazmamart: Writing Strategies and Alternative Frameworks of Judgment

Johanna Sellman

In their capacity to judge, memoirs from Tazmamart focus on those who profited from the misery of the inmates, such as the director of the prison, who would shave rations to increase his own budget. However, they judge silence just as harshly; more than petty profiteering, they argue, the secrecy of Tazmamart could not have been sustained without the silence and complicity of key leaders, many of whom remain in positions of influence, untouched by the current reconciliation proceedings.

No Laughing Matter: Violence and the Comic in Alicia Borinsky's *Mina cruel*

Janis Breckenridge

Violence lurks in the background as farcical transformations and juxtapositions take center stage. Disrupting conventional categories of genre while exposing the “farce” of individual and national identity, Borinsky’s novel remains dead serious when depicting memory (both personal and collective) as a social production.

Impossible Returns: The State of Contemporary Francophone Literary Production

Kevin Carollo

To work properly, the past must be ritually evocative and elusive, promising more than it can truly be allowed to deliver.

History, Memory, and Exile: Edward Said, the New York Intellectuals, and the Rhetoric of Accommodation and Resistance

Matthew Abraham

The ability of the individual to make an impression on the collection of civilization’s accumulated texts and traditions signals the importance of human agency in forging intellectual resistance against discourses like Orientalism and imperialism and against the luxuries of a culture’s selective amnesias.

Book Reviews

***Losing Our Heads: Beheadings in Literature and Culture.* By Regina Janes. (Elizabeth Klaver)**

This volume offers a cultural study of the displacement of the head by the body over two thousand years of Western history, from the Greeks, Celts, and Romans to postmodernism.

***Rhetorical Women: Roles and Representations.* Edited by Hildy Miller and Lillian Bridwell-Bowles. (Donna Decker Schuster)**

Beyond the issue of women’s rhetoric’s, this collection’s value lies in its ability to address the intersection of literary, rhetorical, and pedagogical theory outside of feminism—undoubtedly, a central concern and tension among English departments that strive to be active in all three of these academic areas without the luxury of specialists and researchers in individual fields.

***Images of the Corpse: From the Renaissance to Cyberspace.* Edited by Elizabeth Klaver. (Ilya T. Wick)**

The complicated relationship between Western notions of subjectivity and the body is problematized by the corpse, a monument to the inevitable transition from subject to object.

***Arbitrary Power: Romanticism, Language, Politics.* By William Keach.**

***The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s.* By John Barrell.**

(Eric Reid Lindstrom)

Keach's book thrives on judicious close readings and yet has carefully subordinated those gifts of critical analysis to a spirit of political redress. Barrell offers instead a whole culture of charged politicization.

***Reading the Brontë Body: Disease, Desire, and the Constraints of Culture.* By Beth Torgerson. (Erin Claire)**

Locating herself within the discourses of cultural studies and medical anthropology, Torgerson devotes each of her four chapters to specific diseases represented in the texts of Anne, Charlotte, and Emily Brontë and reads them through the technologies of power at play in nineteenth-century England.

***Hawthorne's Shyness: Ethics, Politics, and the Question of Engagement.* By Clark Davis. (Matthew Russell)**

In his brief introduction, Davis ruminates on the Whipple Daguerreotype of 1848, the only surviving photograph of Hawthorne, in order to show that Hawthorne's "shyness" was dependent upon the writer's complex awareness of being "publicly private"; in other words, Hawthorne felt that he was under scrutiny by a public that demanded a stable identity, one that he found impossible to assume.

***Grotesque Figures: Baudelaire, Rousseau, and the Aesthetics of Modernity.* By Virginia Swain. (Tammy Berberi)**

Swain offers thoroughgoing and often brilliant readings of Baudelaire's prose poems through the prism of "Rousseau," a cultural phenomenon signaling an obsession with France's traumatic past.

***Conscience and Purpose: Fiction and Social Conscience in Howells, Jewett, Chesnut, and Cather.* By Paul R. Petrie. (Derek Driedger)**

Petrie draws conclusions from the Harper's Monthly columns as if they were one text, even though Howells did not write each of his dozens of entries solely to prescribe the guidelines for realism.

***Dissonance (if you are interested).* By Rosmarie Waldrop. (Daniel Listoe)**

Waldrop shares with the French writer Edmond Jabès a movement toward prose poetry rich with referent and difficulty.

***Distant Reading: Performance, Readership, and Consumption in Contemporary Poetry.* By Peter Middleton. (John Wrighton)**

Distant reading requires not only a wider focus that addresses the socio-historical, but also a consideration for the poem's focus, specifically how it allows for such distances to mediate intersubjective co-production.