

Book Review

Owen, Hilary, and Anna M. Klobucka, eds. *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print.

This carefully edited volume brings together a collection of original essays that through diverse approaches to a broad scope of materials explores cultural and literary representations of the Portuguese expansion and former empire, and postcolonialism in the Portuguese-speaking world. The volume functions as a whole because of the carefully constructed interconnections of gender, race, politics, class and imperialism, among other themes, that are woven throughout the studies, and that are enriched by varying positionalities that include different Portuguese-speaking geographic regions and theoretical points of reference. Critically unraveling these “intersections,” as the title of the volume suggests, engages postcoloniality with some of the lingering myths of the Portuguese colonial empire and is one of the overarching merits of this timely publication, along with the consistently high quality of the individual studies.

The introduction to the essays provides the necessary context of the volume and also serves as a useful overview of previous scholarship, a timely *mise au point* of postcolonial studies in relation to the Luso-Afro-Brazilian world. The essays have been organized within four different thematic and theoretically resonant parts consisting of three chapters each. While the chapters of each cluster constitute cohesive units, given the interconnected theoretical approaches beyond these divisions and the fact that these essays at times build upon common previous concepts and studies, the volume merits reading as a whole, as the following outline aims to indicate.

Part I, “Lusotropicalist Affect and Anti-Imperial Ethics,” opens with a mesmerizing poetical philosophical essay by Leela Gandhi, which problematizes the concept of worth in relation to Fernando Pessoa’s heteronymic writing. Leela Gandhi takes her lead and returns to Pessoa’s unpublished fragments of an essay on the anti-imperialist Indian leader M. K. Gandhi as a means to interrogate the self and Pessoa’s heteronymic work as a challenge to identity stability within a

transnational context. The following essay, by Anna M. Klobucka, is a perfect segue that draws from Leela Gandhi's previous work on *Affective Communities* (2006) to examine the interconnections of Lusophone colonial and postcolonial ideology with the problematics of Lusotropicalism's affective pretenses. Klobucka first discusses Gilberto Freyre's Lusotropicalist exogamy in *Casa-grande & senzala* and his subsequent writings as a framework through which to analyze Isabel Figueiredo's 2009 literary memoir, *Caderno de memórias coloniais*, which boldly denounces racism despite the necessary betrayal of the father who embodies the colonial order. The final essay in this first section, by Ana Paula Ferreira, develops the affective disconnect between the Lusotropical myth and racism in twenty-first century Portugal by juxtaposing the critiques in literary representations of immigrants in two contemporary novels (*O vento assobiando nas gruas* by Lídia Jorge in 2002 and *Irene ou o contrato social* by Maria Velho da Costa in 2000) with the denunciations of postcolonial racism in the media, prominently during the 1990s. This creates a platform to broach the interconnections of power, class and sexism enmeshed in global multiculturalism during Portugal's transition to neoliberalism and to question the role of art and literature in terms of truth-telling and denunciation.

Part II, "Empire of the Lenses: Cinema and the Post/Colonial Gaze," brings together a series of three essays that examines a broad spectrum of Portuguese cinema, namely propaganda films under the New State from the mid-twentieth century, revisionist cinema of the colonial war, and a late-twentieth-century film, *Non, ou a vã glória de mandar* by Portugal's most prolific film-maker Manoel de Oliveira. All three of these chapters develop along complementary, intersecting lines of inquiry of gender and race. White women in the colonial context are associated with the African soil and thus bind the male protagonists to the land and to Africa in Patrícia Vieira's reading of *Spell of the Empire* (1940) and *Chaimite*. Turning his attention to *The Fall of the Vátua Empire* (1953), Mark Sabine analyzes the position of male subjects and the objectification of male bodies through the authoritative protagonist/narrator gaze, which parodies conventional white, male heroism. Hilary Owen provides a novel reading of sexuality and race in the anachronistic Isle of Love sequence in Oliveira's *Non, ou a vã glória de mandar*, where Lusotropical racialization has already taken place and is framed by the disaster of the Colonial Wars.

The third group of essays, “Postcoloniality and Gender Politics in Visual Arts,” begins with Kimberly Cleveland’s critical overview of the figure of the “black mother” and its visual representation and significance in Brazilian society before and after the abolition of slavery. Memory Holloway examines two seasons of Rego’s work and skillfully weaves her discussion around Rego’s portrayal of gender inequalities, female emancipation, defiance, and subversion, through different uses of the gaze. Elise Dietrich guides the reader through an engaging analysis of the contradictory messages (submission/independence) of female characters in the comic book, *A Turma do Pererê*, and the gender ambiguity it projects, typical of the 1960s in Brazil.

In Part IV, “Heroes, Antiheroes, and the Myth of Power,” Maria Tavares discusses the representations of female heroism in the male-dominated heroic society of Mozambique as illustrated by an analytical close-reading of the biography of Josina Machel (the wife of Mozambique’s first president Samora Machel) and the fictional portrayal by Paulina Chiziane of the Olympic gold medal winner Lurdes Mutola. M. Irene Ramalho Santos’s chapter reads Maria Velho da Costa’s novel, *Myra* (2008) in terms of female emancipation, the human, class, gender and hegemonic power. In the last chapter, Steven Gonzagowski discusses António Lobo Antunes’s 1988 novel *As Naus* and its problematization of postimperial Portuguese identity and gender crisis in response to the postcolonial condition.

Given the scope of the essays, the internal cohesion of the volume and its interdisciplinary focus, *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony* will be of interest to a broad scholarly readership and makes a solid contribution to a dynamic field that has traditionally been dominated by Anglo-American studies. Furthermore, the essays point to new areas of research, and as such the volume becomes part of an ongoing postcolonial dialogue that extends beyond language and geographical boundaries of the Portuguese-speaking world.

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