Stephanie Pocock Boeninger, *Literary Drowning: Postcolonial Memory in Irish and Caribbean Writing*. Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2020. x + 251 pp. (Paper US\$ 29.95)

Among the archipelago of subfields emerging from postcolonialism's remains, there are still areas of great interest. One such subfield assembles insights from trans-Atlantic studies, island studies and comparative investigations in Caribbean and Irish cultures. Included within its reach are anticolonial, modernist, and contemporary literatures; so too are the histories of these island regions as they merge and separate. The most striking commonality is that of transatlantic labor exploitation, as discussed in works such as Sir Hilary Beckles's *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627–1715* (1989). Reflecting this history, literature calls back and forth across the Atlantic in the hands of writers from both the Caribbean and Ireland.

Formative influences in this lively subfield include Michael Malouf, *Transatlantic Solidarities: Irish Nationalism and Caribbean Poetics* (2009), David Lloyd & Peter D. O'Neill (eds.), *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-Currents of the African and Irish Diasporas* (2009), Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Island Writing, Creole Culture" (2011), and Alison Donnell, Evelyn O'Callaghan & Maria McGarrity (eds.), *Caribbean-Irish Connections: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (2015). Most recently, a special 2018 volume of *Caribbean Quarterly* edited by Lee M. Jenkins and Melanie Otto on the theme of "Irish-Caribbean Connections" exemplifies the subfield.

Stephanie Pocock Boeninger's *Literary Drowning* engages with this critical conversation as it examines literature from multiple genres to illustrate transatlantic thematic consistencies. Methodologically, Boeninger focuses on key works as instantiations of authorial ideation, drawing on thoughtful readings, critical insights, and interviews to guide her interpretations. Along the way, she engages with the plays, poems, and other writings of J.M. Synge, Derek Walcott, David Dabydeen, and Marina Carr, focusing on narratives where missing bodies complicate human desires to bury, mourn, and remember the dead. She is also interested in how colonial power obscures and erases memories, and argues that the resulting fragments of memory are left to postcolonial writers, who use literature to enact the work of "remembering rightly."

To shape this idea, Boeninger looks closely at the way drowned bodies influence the decisions of those characters whose lives are shaped by the dead. She finds that Synge's conservative anxiety about cultural loss produces a body lost to the sea, while Walcott's masculine version of "creative amnesia" fixates on bodies that regenerate in oceanic immersion. Most striking of all, Dabydeen's gruesome poetic images of the drowned actively disintegrate bodies, and

Carr's plays examine how women's bodies become ghosts as a result of patriarchal violence. Memory figures as endangered or overpowering, paralytic or productive. All of this is done well and without fuss. If Boeninger veers toward hauntological theory at times, on the whole *Literary Drownings* reads its bodies as intentional cyphers for memory-work and generally avoids the language of gothic criticism and poststructuralism.

Yet postcolonialism cannot but be unsettled by its theoretical incoherence. In *Literary Drownings*, this emerges from Boeninger's argument that the sea is canonically English. She persuasively reinforces this point with recourse to writers such as William Shakespeare, Lord Byron, John Milton, George Eliot, George Herbert, T.S. Eliot, and others. Elsewhere, *Literary Drownings* reveals investments in a homogenized vision of postcolonial subjectivity, as in its assertion that "[a]s postcolonial subjects, Carr's characters, like Synge's or Walcott's, long for a return to a precolonial past" (p. 158). Along with the concern of remembering "rightly" and the haunting of canonicity, such homogenization trades in the conservative tendencies of nostalgia and diametrically opposes the literature and theory of Afrofuturism or Black accelerationism. Surely acts of remembrance, like people's desires, are not so monolithic. What is a "right" remembrance—and for whom?

By adopting a deceptively unifying postcolonial perspective, *Literary Drownings* does not fully explore racialized differences between its primary texts. Histories of slavery produce radically different interpretations of those who have been lost at sea, which in turn may question the idea of remembering "rightly." For example, Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016) conceptualizes "wake work" to discuss how the Black diaspora is marked by the specter of the slave ship. Unlike the melancholia or mourning that dominate symbolic uses of the sea as a container for grief and nostalgic returns to the canon of English literature, concepts such as "wake work" follow in the currents of forced migrations while directly tackling the climate of anti-Blackness that materially shapes politics and literature.

Literary Drowning presents insightful readings of writers whose literature participates in a small but distinct canon in transatlantic archipelagic studies. It also reveals that there is room yet in this literary subfield for materialist, intersectional analysis and a wider net cast among transatlantic Caribbean and Irish writers to imbue its archipelagic assemblage with theoretical resilience and broader explanatory power. Like the touch of coral, the politics of memory are a delicate affair that nonetheless possesses coruscating power.

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