

points in the direction of polyphony. Is Michaels's "poetry after Auschwitz" less legitimate than Appelfeld's "indirection" or Patrick Modiano's fugue for two voices, *La place de l'étoile*, treated in the essays that follow?

The final essay in this volume negotiates the terrain between Robert Antelme's account of his experiences in the concentration camps, *L'espèce humaine*, and Marguerite Duras's response to her husband in *La douleur*. Like the other essays, this one adds to our knowledge and our understanding of the Holocaust. Yet for all of its sophisticated techniques and theories, *The Holocaust and the Text* reaches its limits at the "unspeakable." After a little over a half-century, historical distance offers advantages and disadvantages. The Holocaust itself made possible the impossible (and vice versa), writing is a first-stage remove, and theorizing a second-stage distancing. While much attention has been paid to temporal distancing from trauma, perhaps more consideration needs to be given to geography, for the transatlantic experience of most North American Jews calls for a different understanding than the Euro-centred immediacy in *The Holocaust and the Text*.

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Gillian Whitlock. *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography*. London: Cassell, 2000. Pp. viii, 232. \$26.95 pb.

Recent trends in literary criticism of autobiography have moved toward an increasingly complex reading of the autobiographical subject, particularly the female subject. Questioning traditional concepts of autobiography as form and as reading practice, theorists in the 1970s such as Paul de Man, James Olney, and Philippe Lejeune examined relationships between the autobiographical narrating self and the written text. In the 1980s, critics Mary Mason (1980), Domna Stanton (1984), Estelle Jelinek (1986), Sidonie Smith (1987), Sheri Benstock (1988) and Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenk (1988) reread and reinterpreted women's writings and their place in the autobiographical canon to show how female gender affects the form of autobiography. Theorizing began to move beyond the impact of gender on autobiographical form to address the imbricated effects of race, culture, class, and situation on the construction of the female autobiographer's text, a project informed through work by Françoise Lionnet (1989), Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (1992), Marlene Kadar (1992), Helen Buss (1993), and Leigh Gilmore (1994).

Enlarging on the work of previous theorists in *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography*, Gillian Whitlock particularizes the complex intercourses between gender, race, culture, and class when the

autobiographical narrator is positioned in relation to a colonial or post-colonial discourse. Whitlock begins by establishing a metaphor for her readings of autobiography "in the pink." "In the pink" refers not only to the female gendered writing that is Whitlock's focus, but also to the peoples who are implicated in colonialism, mapped in pink on the terrain of the Empire. She draws her metaphor from an artifact of the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, "Queen Mary's Doll's House," which houses a tiny map of the empire, "one inch square and covered with red leather, embossed in gold" (1). Still on display today at Windsor Castle, the map is liberally marked in pink with all the dominions of the Empire: Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, the Mediterranean, Australasia and the Far East. Grounding texts within the pink of the Empire's reach, Whitlock carefully contextualizes readings of women's autobiographic writing from 1830 to the present "to examine how subjectivity has been produced, imagined, scripted and resisted both then, when much of the world seemed to be pink, and now, in its aftermath" (2).

Using "in the pink" as an "elaborate conceit" to bring together writers "as diverse as Mary Prince and Susanna Moodie, Audre Lord and Doris Lessing, Mamphela Ramphele and Ruby Langford Ginibi, and space as disparate as Upper Canada and post-apartheid South Africa" (2), *The Intimate Empire* reads colonial spaces, texts, and voices that were not "uniformly, evenly, 'in the pink'" (2). Instead of applying a critical perspective that expects a uniform or continual story from one end of a woman's life to another, Whitlock reads for complex and contradictory narratives between women's lives and even within a single woman's life. Whitlock reads for "intimacy," that is, the relations and rogue connections between different female subjects and the "leakage between what might seem to be secure gendered, national and racial identities" (3). Leakage is an evocative image that captures Whitlock's ability to read the seepages between texts, among narrative layers of texts, between writers, and between text and reader. For example, the first chapter reads *History*, the slave narrative of Mary Prince, alongside the white settler narrative of Susanna Moodie. These two texts are linked, not solely through their proximity in time of writing or their gendered narrators, but through their very production and their simultaneous authorizing through and resistance to the colonial discourse. Mary Prince dictated her autobiographical narrative to her amanuensis Susanna Strickland, before she married, became Susanna Moodie, and left England for the life of a white, Canadian settler, a life she recorded in her well-known *Roughing it in the Bush*. Whitlock examines the processes of writing the self within a colonial discourse that produces Prince and Moodie as "volatile subjects," not the fixed and stable autobiographical subjects we may expect.

The reading of women autobiographers as "volatile subjects" accents this book's project to demonstrate the uneven and mixed genealogies

of colonial literature and the oppositional agendas that are evidenced through colonial and post-colonial autobiographies. The strength and appeal of Whitlock's text lie in its attention to the individual and bodied lives of women autobiographers, to the intimate details of their lives as they are interpellated by various historical, cultural, racial, and gendered forces. *The Intimate Empire* brings to the fore textual marginalia, the at times incompatible codes of race and gender written into women's texts, and cultural constructions of truth and authenticity in autobiography to demonstrate the changing status and readability of texts over time. As Whitlock skillfully weaves together the unexpected connections between writers, places, and texts, she provides enough historical, literary, and cultural detail to reach the reader who is not intimately familiar with the texts under discussion or the range of autobiographic, narrative and post-colonial theory underlying her argument. At the same time, her close attention to the details of the autobiographer's texts, lives, and narratorial positioning satisfies readers who specialize in disciplines of autobiography and postcolonialism while introducing them to some lesser-known texts and different ways of reading more familiar texts.

The reader, stresses Whitlock, is an "important element" in *The Intimate Empire*, autobiographic writing is oriented to capture and captivate, not the author, but the reader. Although Whitlock's readings are thorough and complex, making more evident the hidden discourses of truth, identity, and power that run through women's colonial and postcolonial autobiographics, this is the one area in which she, surprisingly, confounds the reader's expectations. Announcing the importance of the reader in her Introduction, Whitlock returns to the strategic importance of autobiographic writing as a means to reclaim history by presenting previously "invisible" narratives of oppression and to stress the significance of the reader's part in the creation of autobiographical subjects, particularly the black autobiographical subject: "in contemporary autobiography, as in the past, black women become autobiographic subjects through complex inter-racial relations which are negotiated in and around the text, and which must be engaged with in the process of critical writing" (160). Paying attention to the critical production and reception of texts like *The History of Mary Prince* and *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole*, Whitlock further contextualizes the author's writing self in Ellen Kuzwayo's *Call me Woman* and Emma Mashinini's *Strikes Have Followed me All of my Life* by careful attention to her text, the production of her text, and her imagined readers. Noting Whitlock's comment that "Moments when the construction of the autobiography through inter-racial collaboration is brought into view are strategic" (162) the reader wonders at Whitlock's lack of comment on her own positioning as reader, critic, and writer of these other women's autobiographies.

Presenting a grounded, detailed, and very thorough reading of a wide range of diverse texts, written from many differing perspectives, cultural vantages, and (post)colonial positions, this text is of immense interest and use to a range of scholars engaged not only in autobiographical fields but also interdisciplinary fields.

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