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the underclass in Auster, the spaces of “disembourgeoisement” in Phillips’ novel, and the place of the racially marked body in Morrison’s fictions. Of these, Jarvis valorizes Phillips’ and Morrison’s mappings for their treatment of social relations as informed by more than an inevitable drift toward alienation. Instead, Jarvis finds in these plottings of the postmodern a qualified triumph of memory, feeling, and agency over commodity fetishism. Jarvis’ own intellectual and political investment in these elements of the spatial imagination is offered with argument but without apology, a gesture refreshing in its willingness to claim for itself a place vulnerable to critique.

The last section of the book, on cinematic mappings of future bodies and the spaces they inhabit, finds Jarvis with less to celebrate. He notes the aestheticization of the dystopic cityscape in *Blade Runner*, the gynophobia that mitigates the anti-commodity criticism of *Alien*, and the “testosterone topographies” of Cameron’s *Terminator* films. While interesting, his readings do not offer anything really new to extant critical work on these films. Much better is his chapter on David Lynch as a kind of postmodern Republican whose work outlines a world suffused with homophobia and gynophobia in which an obsession with surreality in the suburbs disavows the corporate and corporeal horrors of America’s urban-industrial spaces.

The concluding pages of *Postmodern Cartographies* make the unsurprising point that contemporary cartographies are still determined by capitalism, patriarchy, and white hegemony. Rescuing his study from the potential banality of this observation is Jarvis’ contention that attention to the body, a nihilistic turn toward self-erasure, an oppositional attempt to reclaim the value of remembrance, and the centrality of the abject in contemporary texts distinguishes them in important ways from their antecedents. Jarvis’ call for more “radical mappings” is made with caution but without irony, something that makes this book, despite its occasional cheap shots at postmodernism, a provocative, politically engaged, and engaging academic work.

Brenda Austin-Smith

Bruce King. *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Pp ix, 714. \$39.95 cloth.

Bruce King’s extensive biography of Nobel Prize winning poet, playwright, journalist, and painter Derek Walcott is subtitled with the indefinite article “a.” It is appropriate in that any life is subject to a range of readings. Furthermore, King’s precaution is well taken because Walcott’s frequent auto-

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biographical disclosures in plays, poetry, prose, and interviews make fair use of poetic license. Walcott reveals truth about himself as he perceives it, but truth is protean and the image that emerges from his work and from his life is a faceted version of the creative artist. King expects other biographies to follow (viii). At the age of 71, Walcott remains a prolific writer. Furthermore, we know from Gestalt psychology that even if Walcott's genius were less complicated than it is, the whole of any life, as with a work of art, is always greater than the sum of its parts.

We can be grateful for Dr. King's diligence in seeking out obscure notes, sketches, letters unpublished manuscripts in scattered archives and private holdings. Beyond written sources, there is testimony from Walcott as well as many of the relatives, friends, actors, stage technicians, editors, and fellow artists who have been privy to parts of his remarkable career. In fact the text is so rife with details that the narrative can sometimes seem burdened. For example, at a 1993 Port of Spain reading of Walcott's play, *The Odyssey*, even the attire of service personnel, snacks and background music in the lounge are described (566). Including as much as he does, however, ensures concreteness and a sense of the kaleidoscopic rush of Walcott's daily life. It also avoids what could have been a bramble of arcane footnotes in favor of a reasonable number of helpful references.

The straightforward chronology of events is accompanied by evaluations of influences and accomplishments and even speculation as to alternatives that might have taken the record in other directions. After covering the early years in St. Lucia, Walcott's taking a degree from the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, his founding of the Trinidad Theater Workshop in Trinidad and up until the early 1960s, the book then conveniently divides into chapters covering short span of one to three years. The blocks of time suggest an orderliness quite at odds with the frenetic activities described within. Perhaps sensing that the information might be getting out of hand at times, King uses Walcott's practice of making lists of sources of income or of pending obligations to serve as a kind of running summary.

In addition to the obligatory accounts of marriages, divorces, children (three of each), professional associations, and friendships with poets such as Robert Lowell, Joseph Brodsky and Seamus Heaney, King focuses on Walcott's life within a changing social and critical context. In his earlier marriages, Walcott drank, could become abusive, and was prone to favor his career above domestic obligations. There is a delicately reasoned handling of the headline-grabbing sexual harassment charge against Walcott by a Harvard student in 1996. Considering Walcott's creative methods of prompting students in his class to react to challenging, even embarrassing

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situations, facts and the matter of innocence or guilt can be easily open to distortion and sensationalism. It is Walcott's genius, his emergence as an artist, however, that sets his life apart.

King notes Walcott's life-long drive to fulfill the truncated artistic ambitions of his father. Just as Warwick Walcott's amateur poems and drawings grew out of copies of originals, Walcott deliberately pursues his apprenticeship by learning from the masters. From the start, he has such respect for craftsmanship and tradition that he proceeds as though "in art originality is a vice" (22). In spite of this tradition-oriented sense of discipline, however, King draws from Walcott's commentary on Robert Penn Warren to confirm his fundamental belief in narrative and authentic roots. He quotes Walcott's essay: "your vision is out of what you know, out of knowing where you are, where *you* come from" (459). As King points out, Walcott's position between the established literatures of declining empire and an emerging post-colonial aesthetic makes for a controversial milieu. His principled insistence on craft and technique "would continue to set his work aside from, and make it far superior to, those who assumed that something was supposedly essentially West Indian—such as being 'black,' using dialect, or as a kind of political slogan—was the heart of the poetry and art" (47).

While an inheritance disagreement unfolded between the "humanistic" Walcott and the advocates of folk nationalism, in the late 1950s and 60s larger philosophical and aesthetic transformations were taking place on the international scene. Walcott was temperamentally and, as King puts it, "without knowing it, part of a larger movement, a change in the sensibility of our age in which those on the margins of the cultural establishment were to become a new establishment, a counter-tradition, part of, while challenging and outside of, the tradition" (67). Subsequently, hydra-headed post-modernism has spawned its politicized argot and new camps have been established. At one time, for example, Walcott's creative assimilation of cultural shards from polyglot West Indian society might have been described as a positive example of multiculturalism. Walcott has recently come to reject this term because, influenced by the forces of political correctness, it has taken on negative connotations along the lines of "racial victimization and separatism" (569). Walcott has also found cause to react against tenets of post-colonial theory, charging that the term itself has now been reduced in practice to meaning 'anti-colonial.' He prefers to estimate the achievement of emerging literatures "on their own and not as a part of, reaction to, or in relation to others" (583).

Seasoned critic that he is, King candidly admits that in undertaking *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life*, there was much he stood to find out beyond the life of a single man: "I would learn much about the arts and culture in our

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time. After all these years what did I know about how poets support themselves, what a literary career meant, how great publishing houses become great, how Nobel Laureates are chosen, what it would mean to try to live in the West Indies as a poet or a dramatist?" (626) Midway through his book, King comments that in his essays Walcott's prose style resembles "a series of evocations in which plot of narrative is hidden, ignored" (431). In comparison with the *bel canto* of Walcott's prose poetry, King's recitative maintains its steady rein on an explicit story line.

Robert D. Hamner

Wai Chee Dimock. *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006. Pp. 264. \$35 cloth.

Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time charts a necessarily far-ranging course, both chronologically and geographically: we find Emerson keeping company with the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz, both of whom embrace Islam's hybrid history; Henry James meditates, along with Veronese and Plutarch, on Alexander's victory in the Battle of Issus (333 B.C.E.); Robert Lowell uses Horace to comment on the Vietnam War. Wai Chee Dimock proposes a new paradigm for American literary studies, one that seeks to wrench Americanists out of their habit of thinking in national terms, their periodizing according to nationally-sanctioned dates (e.g., 1776). Instead, she takes the *longue durée* view and wonders "[w]hat would American literature look like restored to a . . . scale enlargement along the temporal axis that also enlarges its spatial compass?" (4). This book both keeps company and parts way with other recent work in American literary studies on globalization: like this other work, hers considers American literature in a global, often imperialist, context, but, unlike theirs, *Through Other Continents* abandons "American" as a potentially fruitful category of analysis: "Deep time is denationalized space" (28), Dimock insists. Yet her own chapters revolve around canonical American authors, a principle of selection whose value is both rhetorically apparent and, if we are convinced by her own claims, ultimately untenable.

How revolutionary is this book? Certainly it aims to be: most obviously, Dimock wants to revolutionize American literary studies by asking those of us working within it to relinquish our dependence on the category of the nation to generate our claims about the literature we analyze, but she also asks