

Chapter Six traces histories of agrarian transformation and rural industrialization in mainland China (where many Taiwanese industrialists settled) and emphasizes specifically the fact that rapid industrialization in China and Taiwan occurred without dispossession from the land. Whereas “Taiwanese investors in mainland China have derived huge benefits from social investments set in place during the socialist era” (206), in South Africa, Taiwanese industrialists encountered a workforce with no basic forms of security to fall back on and no hope of upward mobility, leading to widespread dissatisfaction with unfair labor practices and low wages. Hart’s main aim in following these trajectories is to suggest “a political strategy that *dis*-articulates the land question from agriculture, and *re*-articulates it in terms of the social wage, and the moral and material imperatives for basic livelihood guarantees” (231). In the final part of the text, Hart considers accumulating tensions in post-apartheid South Africa regarding the remaking of the local state. The interesting culture of participatory democracy that has developed in the local state of Ladysmith/Ezakheni with its historically specific legacy of resistance (clearly absent in Newcastle/Madadeni/Osizweni), opens up promising possibilities for renegotiating the terms of consent in the face of neoliberal globalization and for rethinking the land question in terms of a social wage. Even though Hart never explicitly defines what she means by a ‘social wage’ in the South African context, she does add eleven theses in an appendix that seek to address “the crisis of livelihoods, ongoing job losses, increasing service charges, and demands for security and a place called home” (325), which provide a useful platform for further debate. Indeed, I believe the questions raised in this brilliant study will continue to haunt political and economic debates in South Africa and will enable scholars in the fields of postcolonial theory and South African culture studies to encounter questions of globalization and contemporary neoliberal capitalism with greater sensitivity.

Helene Strauss

Christopher Hitchens. *Unacknowledged Legislation: Writers in the Public Sphere*. London, New York: Verso, 2000. Pp. xx, 358. \$35.00.

“Our era is one of forgetting. If there is a role for the public intellectual, it is to insist that we remember, and that remembering is a moral act requiring the greatest intellectual and moral clarity.” So wrote Jean Bethke Elshtain in the fall of 2001.

Professor Elstain must look forward to Christopher Hitchens's columns and articles in *Vanity Fair*, *The Nation*, or *Harpers*, since as a public rememberer and moral account-keeper, Hitchens has few North American rivals. With an audience far broader than that of writer like Edward Said or Cornel West, and far narrower than that enjoyed by media titans like Oprah, Hitchens manages to go on writing as if literature and ideas matter. Unacknowledged they may be, but this hardly negates the weightiness of either the writing itself, or the debates it excites. Hitchens maintains this stance without ever slipping into the received Oprahesque notion that books are important mainly for their therapeutic properties. Above all, Hitchens promotes the once-commonplace argument that prose style matters and often provides a reliable index to political and personal integrity.

Unacknowledged Legislation reprints thirty-five essays, reviews, and addresses from the nineties. These are occasional pieces, prompted by events, anniversaries, deaths, and publications. They are polemical: it is important to note that Hitchens "regards 'pamphleteer' as a title of honour" (34). The collection's unity derives ostensibly from the essays' shared focus on "authors occupied with the political condition as naturally as if they were breathing" (xvi). Gore Vidal and Raymond Williams obviously qualify. It is less clear how a superficial retrospective look at Andy Warhol fits this bill. The title of the section "For Their Own Sake" seems an admission that some of these essays, on for example Patrick O'Brien and F. Scott Fitzgerald, appear "just because." The essays are often personal as well, as benefits Hitchens's hybrid persona: part literary critic, part current events pundit, part higher gossip-columnist. The impurity of the resulting discourse is also its main strength, as each of the areas only gains in vitality, consequence, or resonance from promiscuous mixings with others.

In most of these essays Hitchens writes as if Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" was bedtime reading in his formative years. Close readings of the prose crafted by his enemies and his idols provide the most entertaining passages in the essays collected here. Again and again he argues, asserts, or assumes that obfuscatory or tone-deaf writing (the "*langue du bois*") is a kind of smoke which always accompanies the smoldering fires of lies and bad faith. The writers of graceful or clear-sighted prose are few, and they make a mixed group. Hitchens brings Wilde, Orwell, and Kipling together under this banner—for even though their beliefs and situations differed, all wrote well and in good faith. Kipling's documented racism provokes, but Hitchens has less colourful things to say about that than he does about Norman Podhoretz's revisionist betrayals of his ex-friends.

In those essays that most obviously exemplify the collection's title, Hitchens takes on moments that placed imaginative writers at the crossroads of recent history. The *fatwa* pronounced on Salman Rushdie, for example, not only made *The Satanic Verses* and *The Koran* more consequential for many readers. It also offered an early occasion for Western liberals to clarify their thinking about fundamentalist interpretations of political Islam. (Hitchens's tone becomes unashamedly self-congratulatory as he describes his own instant and unwavering support of his friend Rushdie, in contrast to the craven words and actions of John Le Carre, British Airways, and others). On a similar scale, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the presidency of dissent playwright Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia allowed at least one author to become an acknowledged legislator. Havel is the topic of important asides here, but not a full-length essay: too bad.

Hitchens ought to scandalize scholarly readers who have no time for analysis that is "inadequately theorized." What is more likely is that such readers treat Hitchens with the scorn he reserves for "the arid practice of theory" (80). In fact, Hitchens boasts that he has "never even opened any books that purported to tell me of the postmodern death (or the relativism or collectivization) of the author" (xx). Certainly the Rushdie *fatwa* demonstrated that much of the world is with Hitchens here: no death sentence was pronounced on "the discourses of Western secularism." Personal authors, editors, and translators carried the weight of sanction. Yet Hitchens, no less than anyone else, constructs his own tradition with its sacred texts and legendary moments, thereby giving greater point and resonance to his own voice and the voices he praises. (A Hitchens fan site collects these "Artists, Comrades, Mentors" going back to George Eliot and Thomas Paine. It can be found at <http://www.interact.com/~peterk/>). Something more "collective" than personal authorship is at work here, but so far Hitchens does not want to examine it. He just wants to get on with writing.

At its best Hitchens's writing exemplifies that "crucial and delicate task of discrimination" (205) which he sees as the critic's first duty, especially to writers entangled in the political and moral complexities of the twentieth century. His readings of Philip Larkin and Anthony Powell, for example, offer balanced, informed, and topical analyses. Because he never separates the artistic, the literary, and the personal, Hitchens manages to live up, at least part of the time, to the stated aims of this collection: "to make political writing into an art" and to show how some artists "have involuntarily committed great political writing" (xv).

The Irish novelist Ronan Bennett told me in an interview that the contribution of writers to political change has always been overrated, at least in his

part of the world. What Hitchens's essays show is not so much that imaginative writing changes the world, but that instead, a crucial poem or work of fiction can crystallize issues at an important moment. He illustrates how protagonists in literary controversies always show their political colours. He traces the process by which arguments used to support or condemn a Wilde or a Wodehouse become the arguments for or against political or legal actions. As Hitchens states more than once in the volume, the activities of "making sentences" and "pronouncing sentences" eventually coincide. In the face of so many appalling sentences pronounced in recent decades, how is it that Hitchens's gloomiest exposés never fail to reassure? Perhaps it is because of their solid liberal faith that Auden's ironic points of light remain visible through the murk, and that the messages they flash out still reach an audience of "the just."

Harry Vandervlist

Works Cited

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. "Why Public Intellectuals?" *Wilson Quarterly* Autumn 2001: 43.

Graham Huggan. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001. Pp. xvi, 328. \$38.95.

What do we, as politically committed cultural critics, do when the postcolonial critique of the fetishization of cultural difference is in fact what makes the field of postcolonialism a hotly sought-after commodity? What happens when the postcolonial slides, sometimes invisibly, yet inexorably, into a form of colonial nostalgia? How does one talk about cultural difference without reifying it beyond recognition? These are the kinds of questions Graham Huggan is exploring in *The Postcolonial Exotic*. As Huggan points out, postcolonial discourse has long been characterized by soul-searching, yet Huggan provides an additional twist on this process in his analysis and history of the institution of postcolonial studies itself. In so doing, he fills an important gap in current postcolonial theoretical debates.

Huggan's analysis of the paradox at the heart of postcolonial discourse is compelling. The index of this constitutive contradiction is what he terms "the postcolonial exotic." The postcolonial exotic is the repressed contradiction that has haunted postcolonialism from its beginnings; it refers to the in-