

textual evidence. In fact, the whole chapter downplays literary and historical analysis in favor of theoretical arguments (not only critical readings of the novel but also Freud on narcissism and hysteria). Perhaps sensing the risks inherent in the arduous enterprise of using the psychoanalytic lever to name matters that the texts in question convey only in covert, coded forms, Greven had prudently asserted in the Introduction that he did not intend to “privilege desire over history” (29). The impression is that on the spur of the author’s militant investment in his revisionary project, this is sometimes the case. If it succumbs to this temptation, the book is nevertheless rich in fine analyses and brilliant suggestions, which will prove useful to scholars of the nineteenth century.

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Ludwig, Sämi and Nicoleta Alexoae-Zagni. Eds. *On the Legacy of Maxine Hong Kingston. The Mulhouse Book. Contributions to Asian American Literary Studies 7*. Zürich and Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2014. 347 pages. ISBN 978-3-643-90299-3.

For almost forty years, from the stunning debut with *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Childhood Among Ghosts* (1976) to the latest—and last if we believe the author herself—more meditative text *I Love A Broad Margin to My Life* (2011), Maxine Hong Kingston has continued to challenge her readers’ notions of what fictional genres should look like, moving freely between the autobiographical and the imaginary. Her texts are frequently taught in university courses and they continue to garner the attention of scholars and critics worldwide. The collection of essays published under the title *On the Legacy of Maxine Hong Kingston. The Mulhouse Book* (2014), edited by Sämi Ludwig and Nicoleta Alexoae-Zagni, is a recent and most welcome addition to existing Kingston scholarship.

The essays in this volume have their basis in papers presented at the first conference dedicated solely to the work of Maxine Hong Kingston, held at the UHA Mulhouse in Alsace, France, in 2011. In the introduction to the volume, Sämi Ludwig defends the editors’ decision to publish the conference proceedings, and thus going “against the grain of most academic publishers nowadays, who look down on conference volumes. This is why we call it *The Mulhouse Book*. The chronotope is real. Time and place matter.

They provide a particular intersection that can be very productive” (12). The essays collected in the volume confirm this claim, having something to offer the newcomer to Kingston’s work as well as those who are already familiar with her writings.

Maxine Hong Kingston herself attended this conference and her opening speech and a “dramatic reading” of selected Kingston texts are featured in the collection. While it is possible that the presence of the author could have a regulatory effect on the critique of her work, it mainly appears to be an energizing force, as evidenced by the broad range of constructive analyses in the collection. The ability of her texts to give rise to ever new critical insights and approaches serves as testimony to their enduring vitality and complexity.

Furthermore, the essays collected in *The Mulhouse Book* operate as a blueprint for how the critical focus has moved from the issues of “authenticity” and (mis-)representation of China, the “cultural homeland,” which was part of the response to Kingston’s early work, to a greater appreciation of the hybrid nature of the identity constructions in her texts. For example, in “Maxine Hong Kingston as Counterculture Writer” Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet observes: “Universalism fell out of favor in the late 1970s, critiqued as Euro-centric and insensitive to real differences, but over-attention to cultural and racial differences can also inadvertently lead to their reification and essentialization. Kingston asks us to look beyond cultural and racial difference to perceive the inherent connectedness (not the same thing as sameness or “identity”) between people” (189). This example illustrates how well Kingston’s ideas sustain shifting critical trends and how time has made a fuller appreciation of the depths of her work possible.

A brief outline of the contents of the volume points to the wide range of perspectives on Kingston’s work that are represented here. The volume is divided into four chapters, the first of which is called “Revisiting the canonical texts: *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*” and includes nine essays dealing with transnational identity, gender, and eco-criticism, in addition to reading Kingston’s works in relation to children’s literature and gothic. The second chapter, “On less frequently discussed and recent texts” is made up of six essays discussing such issues as Kingston’s peace activism; her relationship to the counterculture of the 1960s; and her “engaged aesthetics.” This chapter also features a “dramatic reading” and a Q & A session. Chapter three, entitled “Parallel readings,” includes three essays that focus on Kingston’s postmodernism; abjection and hypochondria, and

genre/gender transgression. The fourth and final chapter is called “Kingston’s influence—between paying homage and experiencing an ‘anxiety of influence’” and is comprised of two essays tracing the legacy of her texts to works by authors Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Marilyn Chin.

Despite the impressive variety of approaches seen in this overview it is possible to recognize a recurring theme in several of the contributions, namely the relationship between fact and fiction; history and imagination. Kingston’s texts, whose topics range from ghosts and myths in *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* (1980) to an increasing focus on her own political commitment to pacifism and non-violence, particularly evident in later texts like *The Fifth Book of Peace* (2003) and *I Love A Broad Margin to My Life* (2011), invite the investigation of this nexus as they continue to blend the autobiographical and the imaginary in a way that challenges simplistic genre divisions. The interaction between fact and fiction takes many forms, one of them being a concern with the relationship between speech and writing. In the Opening Speech of the conference, Kingston reflects: “I feel that my own contribution to literature is to show how to get from the oral to the written. I have a huge inheritance of talk-story from my ancestors, and my task has been to figure out how to work that into text [...] How to get the living language which is spoken and heard, how to get that into text” (24 - 25). This is one explanation for why it is often so difficult to pin down her work to a certain genre: Kingston is, in fact, reshaping our conception of what writing can be, and *do*.

She goes on to discuss the book of poems by war veterans she edited, *Veterans of War, Veterans of Peace* (2006), which sprung out of a number of creative writing workshops. The money made from the book went into building a new school in Quang Tri, Vietnam, so that the soldiers who were once sent to destroy the country are now engaged in rebuilding it instead. Kingston explains, “And it was done through poetry! [...] What I’m trying to say is that our work is not abstract, that we effect and affect the real world! And that real life goes into our writing and real life comes out of the writing!” (28). Kingston’s oeuvre is, in fact, testimony to the belief in the artist’s ability to use her imagination to transform the present moment and imagine new futures; thus becoming a potential instrument of political action. As Sämi Ludwig explains in his essay “Ishmael Reed, Maxine Hong Kingston and Postmodern Referentiality”, for Kingston (as for Reed), “reality is not a phenomenal part of the writing but part of its intention, a target for its impact” (259).

On the Legacy of Maxine Hong Kingston: The Mulhouse Book comes with a DVD comprising scenes from the official opening and roundtables, the highlight of which is the reading from *The Fifth Book of Peace* by Maxine Hong Kingston, her husband Earll Kingston and Buff Parry. Readers might be familiar with Buff Parry as a character in *The Fifth Book of Peace* (Louis D. Buffy Perry), but to the great surprise of Kingston as well as the conference organizers, Parry appeared at the Mulhouse conference giving corporeal form to the fact-fiction complex. Unfortunately, the quality of the DVD is not very good, but it brings the words on the page alive in a manner befitting Kingston's concern for the translation of the oral into writing.

This book is the seventh volume in the Lit Verlag series *Contributions to Asian American Literature*, which is dedicated to emphasizing "the exploding plurality of approaches possible in Asian American studies today" as the series editors Rocío G. Davis and Sämi Ludwig put it in their mission statement. The present publication bears out this aim very well and we can only hope to see more of its kind in the future.

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Sandra Lee Kleppe. *The Poetry of Raymond Carver. Against the Current* Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014. xi, 186 pages. ISBN 978-1-4724-1167-9.

Sandra Lee Kleppe's study of selected poems by Raymond Carver (1938-1988) argues that important trends can be identified in Carver's poetry production. These include his preoccupation with observation, an overlapping of his poetry and short story careers, the images of water and fish as recurring structural devices, his use of the elegy genre, and the intersection of his poems with medical humanities.

Better known for his short stories, Raymond Carver has attracted more critical attention for his prose than his poetry. Kleppe's study addresses this imbalance. Divided into three parts, *The Poetry of Raymond Carver* explores selected poems within their historical and contemporary contexts. Kleppe adopts the term "autopoetics" to describe the relationship between Carver's poetry and its rich environment of past and present influences. Autopoetics focuses on the larger field of human culture rather than on divisions between such fields as literature and science. "Against the Current" in the title refers to the multiple levels on which Carver's poems operate.