

what our particular “way” is. Notwithstanding my reservations about the lack of an “Introduction” in this volume, graduate students and scholars working within the field will find in several of the articles discussions that point to new research agendas.

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**Maria Holmgren Troy, Elizabeth Kella, and Helena Wahlström, *Making Home: Orphanhood, Kinship, and Cultural Memory in Contemporary American Novels*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2014. 254 pages. ISBN: 978-0-7190-8959-6.**

A list of famous orphans (Oedipus, Moses, Aristotle, Beowulf, Muhammad, etc.) testifies to the deep significance of the orphan figure in history, myth and legend. In more recent Western literature the heyday of the orphan would appear to be the nineteenth century, with Dickens the central figure and his host of orphan heroes centre stage. Troy, Kella and Wahlström take a specifically American focus on orphanhood, analysing an admirably wide range of works by contemporary authors (Barbara Kingsolver, Linda Hogan, Leslie Marmon Silko, Marilyn Robinson, Michael Cunningham, Jonathan Safran Foer, John Irving, Kaye Gibbons, Octavia Butler, Jewelle Gomez and Toni Morrison) and hence covering recent Euro-American, African American and Native American writing. The orphan is viewed through the notion of ‘home’ and the multiple implications of this notion in terms of family, nation and national (American) literature.

*Making Home* argues that the orphan has been a central figure in the formation of a national literary history in the USA. This is true for the obvious examples of Twain’s Huck or Melville’s Ishmael, but orphanhood and family (or absence of family) are also central to such specifically American genres as captivity and slave narratives. Through the figure of the orphan contemporary US authors have inserted themselves into American canonical traditions often to revise or even reject them, and thus “the literary orphan functions both to reflect upon and shape aspects of collective memory in the USA” (4).

Canons and genre go hand in hand, and *Making Home* is particularly good at showing how contemporary American orphan fiction re-visits genre

traditions in order to envision different forms of freedom and community. For example, in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven*, Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* the captivity narrative trope of savage Natives capturing innocent non-Natives is reversed: in these novels it is whites who capture Natives, in effect turning them into orphans. In the light of nineteenth-century Indian Removal, the establishment of Boarding Schools for Native children and forced adoption into white foster families, this reversed trope more accurately reflects history and the way in which Indians in America have served as 'cultural orphans' in Euro-American discourses. Similarly, novels like Irving's *The Cider House Rules* and Gibbons's *Ellen Foster* revise the conventions of the *bildungsroman* and challenge its conventional gender boundaries, whereas Butler's *Fledgling*, Gomez's *The Gilda Stories* and Morrison's *A Mercy* employ genres like the vampire novel and the historical novel of slavery to move beyond established paradigms of the modern black family. Overall, *Making Home* suggests, the obsession with the nuclear family as the norm has demonized alternative forms of extended kinship and community and has in effect made 'orphans' of those who did not fit the norm.

*Making Home* is admirably clear in its argumentation and development, one of its strengths being the way it interweaves literary readings and historical, legislative and social context. Both orphanhood and (transnational) adoption are themes that would seem to appear in literature and public discourse during periods of large-scale national trauma when questions of citizenry and national and racial belonging are foregrounded. Thus, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* responds to the national trauma of slavery by foregrounding slavery as 'orphan making', separating mother from child. A more recent example that Troy et al. give is the response to 9/11. A day after the attack the Twin Towers Orphan Fund was established, suggesting the special status and national recognition of the orphan in a time of national crisis, and in Foer's novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), the 9/11-orphaned white child stands in somewhat sentimentally and conventionally for the process of grieving a national trauma.

As is clear from what I have said so far, *Making Home* is highly recommended and is definitely worth ordering for the library. I did feel at times, though, that certain points were overstated and repeated. One example would be the frequent references to R.W.B. Lewis's *The American Adam*, a seminal work in its time when first published in 1955. Lewis's argument is

that the male literary orphan's escape from family, history and race (most clearly exemplified in *Huck Finn*) is at the heart of the myth of the American Adam. Troy et al. correctly point to Lewis's masculinist bias and show in their readings of Robinson's *Housekeeping*, Cunningham's *Specimen Days*, and Morrison's *A Mercy* how this mythical figure is commented on and critiqued. However, some of the same points about Lewis's argument are unnecessarily repeated in subsequent references, particularly the notion that the American Adam is "emancipated from history" (pp. 18, 45, 88, 123n35, 196). Finally, each chapter has a careful summing up and repetition (granted, with some variation) of the main points of the chapter (see e.g. pp. 119-120). On the one hand, this makes for clear reading, but on the other it does make the tone at these points a little pedagogical and predictable.

The very useful Coda to *Making Home* surveys recent literature, clearly showing that with publication of such novels as Tim Gautreaux's *The Missing* (2009), Chang-Rae Lee's *The Surrendered* (2010), Sapphire's *The Kid* (2011), Eowyn Ivey's *The Snow Child* (2012) and Adam Johnson's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Orphan Master's Son* (2012) the theme of orphanhood figures among writers with a variety of backgrounds. Orphanhood is shown to be a flexible trope that challenges essentialist notions of nationhood and ethnicity. Writing on orphanhood intersects with recent literary-cultural studies on adoption pioneered by Marianne Novy's *Imagining Adoption* (2001) and *Reading Adoption* (2005). As *Making Home* acknowledges, even more recently, increasing attention has been paid to transracial and transnational adoption with the publication of such works as Mark C. Jerng's *Claiming Others: Transnational Adoption and National Belonging* (2010), Cynthia Callahan's *Kin of Another Kind: Transracial Adoption in American Literature* (2011). John McLeod's forthcoming work on transnational adoption in Black British writing and in US writing will add to this growing field.

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