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Review of The Future of Literary Archives

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David C. Sutton and Ann Livingston, eds. *The Future of Literary Archives: Diasporic and Diverse Collections at Risk*. Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2018.

At the beginning of *The Future of Literary Archives: Diasporic and Diverse Collections at Risk*, editor David C. Sutton is careful to note that the various chapters in the volume are related to the work of the Diasporic Literary Archives Network (DLAN). A five-member consortium founded in 2012 and led by the University of Reading in the UK, the network focuses on diasporic archives. Instead of giving a brief definition of the concept of diasporic archives, the introduction the book explains how DLAN came to understand the idea as an extremely multifaceted concept that begins with split archival collections and is connected to migratory patterns, the language one writes in, personal connections, and the collecting habits of institutions. Through this framework, DLAN in turn has worked to understand how the location of authors' and publishers' archives interacts with politics, national identity, commercial interests, copyright, the digital age, and other topics. DLAN is still active and continuing its work, but the book focuses on the time frame of 2012 to 2016 and the workshops the group used to explore these pressing questions. Present at these workshops were archival professionals from member institutions, authors, publishers, representatives of UNESCO, and others. The book itself is a tangible outcome of those workshops, authored by participants with an archival, library, or academic perspective but intended for an audience similar to that of the workshop attendees. The archives and institutions discussed in the book reflect the fact that many members are located in Europe or the Caribbean, with only a few North American archives mentioned.

In the book's introduction, Sutton defines the scope of literary archives as correspondence, personal papers, and the manuscripts of poets, novelists, dramatists, literary essayists, and similar creators whose focus is or was creative work, as opposed to journalists, philosophers, politicians, and others. Sutton states that the need for a network such as DLAN is based on the fact that the locations of such archival material tend to be "diverse and difficult to predict; they may have higher financial value which will lead to their more frequently being purchased—as opposed to being deposited or donated" (1). Institutions that take these kinds of manuscripts in have also historically lacked rigorous collection policies. The volume remains focused on archival collections that meet this particular definition, along with literary publishing houses that also hold author manuscripts, correspondence, and complementary records.

Due to the nature of the book, the word "diaspora" is used frequently. For the purpose of clarity in this review, the terms *literary diaspora*, *archival diaspora*, and *diasporic collections* will refer to archival collections that are spread out over multiple locations. *Diaspora* will refer to communities of people. This excludes titles of chapters or quotations from the text itself.

The book is divided into three parts, the first of which is titled "Diasporic Lives, Diasporic Archives." Each chapter within this section focuses on why literary diasporas form—the reasons can include a single author changing their location at various points during their lives, the migration of communities, and the attention given to works written in a local language versus a lingua franca by academics and collecting institutions. Chapter 1, "Caribbean Literary Archives and the Politics of Location: Challenging the Norms of Belonging" by Alison Donnell, discusses how literary archives can become diasporic collections, using Caribbean authors such as C. L. R. James, Una Marson, and Edgar Mittelholzer to illustrate movement for political, personal, and

professional reasons that contributes to such a state. In addition to an excellent explanation of what constitutes and contributes to literary diasporas, this chapter includes the added bonus of a crash course in Caribbean literary history as it walks the reader through the movements of these authors. In emphasizing the work of the University of the West Indies to address literary diaspora through its collecting, it develops an excellent baseline of understanding of literary diaspora that helps inform the rest of the book.

Chapter 2, “The Huntley Archives at London Metropolitan Archives,” complements the first chapter’s focus on the Caribbean by turning its attention to the Huntley Archives, which contain the records of Bogle-L’Ouverture Publications and Bogle-L’Ouverture Bookstore, owned by Eric and Jessica Huntley of Guyana. Bogle-L’Ouverture published material that related to radical black activism and served as a community hub for African-Caribbeans living in London; their publications as well as their bookstore events spoke to the community’s sense of belonging in London during a deeply transformative time. Many archivists who are engaged with diversifying collections and reaching out to underserved and under-documented communities will see echoes of their own work in how the London Metropolitan Archives acquired the material through relationship-building and showing a deep understanding and respect for the material and the history it represents.

The next chapter, “Conserving Private Literary and Editorial Archives: The Story of the IMEC,” by André Derval, focuses on the founding of the French Institut Mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC) and its mission of conserving literary archives that are not publicly available. This includes the private archives of publishing houses and materials retained by individual owners. Since the 1990s, a large number of material has been placed on deposit, which has also encouraged a large number of donors. As a result the collection reflects a large part of France’s twentieth-century literary heritage, and the organization continues to work toward addressing and alleviating the development of literary diaspora. IMEC’s dedication and approach to handling material, including privately owned archival collections, has since helped influence its mission. It is now working to offer safe haven to at-risk materials, with an eye toward the Middle East in particular. Taking in collections from other countries has the potential to create *new* archival diasporas, but the creation of these new archival diasporas are often responses by institutions to political events such as wars and political purges. This in turn brings up questions about where cultural heritage ought to reside, a topic that part 2 discusses further.

Chapter 4, “Migration, Freedom of Expression, and the Importance of Diasporic Literary Archives,” focuses on how migration shapes where an author’s material may end up, not unlike chapter 1. Migration in turn can be influenced by politics, identity, or simple choice. Unfortunately, this chapter quickly becomes formulaic. Much of it simply gives an author’s name, followed by the place they lived and where their major literary archives now reside, serving to drive home the point that movement impacts repositories.

Part 2, “Challenges of Literary Archives,” expands the discussion of archival diasporas in relation to language and identity. This includes deeper discussion of how language impacts a sense of literary heritage, and in turn how literary heritage interacts with national identity. It expands much of the discussion from the first part, and in its best chapters there is careful discussion of colonialism and how it interacts with authors and national identities.

The first chapter in part 2, “The Universal Dimension of Diasporic Literary Archives,” penned by Jens Boels, focuses mostly on the Memory of the World and Endangered Archive Program. Dedicated to preserving material that could be lost for good due to wars, natural disasters, and other crises, the chapter asks the reader to consider when a diaspora could be a good thing. Removing material from volatile areas means preservation and documentation, especially in areas such as war zones when documents have the potential to not only shine light into everyday life and political decisions, but serve as evidence of potential human rights violations. This point serves as a stark reminder that documentation and preservation are the essential tasks of the profession, even if they result in complicated circumstances such as diaspora in the long run.

Chapter 6, “Namibian Literary Archives: New Beginnings and a Possible African Model,” is cowritten by Venó V. Kauaria and David C. Sutton and focuses on the National Library and Archives Service of Namibia. Coming into the project as “an apprentice . . . [and] moving towards a position where by 2020 it aims to be a model in southern and eastern Africa” (65), Namibia examines itself in relation to other countries and their national collections as it works to build its own archive of national literary heritage. The article lays out various points of comparison to the size of other countries, the collecting habits of like archives, and other examples of looking to other nations and their approaches in order to create a model that works best for Namibia. The desire expressed by the Archives Service that their approach serve as a model for other African nations helps to underscore not only why literary archives are seen as a source of national identity (as will be seen in other areas of part 2), but how working to develop such collections now enables conversations with living authors in order to prevent literary diasporas. Most importantly, in laying out their decisions and comparisons, the Namibian Archives Service makes it clear how they are trying to serve as a model for their African neighbors.

The rest of part 2 focuses on the impact of language and cultural identity, and how literary diaspora impacts a sense of cultural ownership. Chapter 7, “Francophone Archives at Risk,” requires careful reading, as it strives to address the extremely complicated issues of colonialism and imperialism as expressed through language. The French research initiative *Manuscrits francophones du Sud* has partnered with the Institute of Modern Texts and Manuscripts (ITEM) to protect manuscripts from French-speaking nations in the global south, such as continental Africa and the Caribbean islands, that are at risk due to war, extremism, and unrest. One of the project’s goals is to encourage French literary critics to address the texts of authors from these areas of the world, thus subjecting the works to the same debate and discussion as authors who have lived in Western Europe and written in French. The goal of diversifying French literary criticism is one of several examples used to have a nuanced discussion about how language and colonialism intersect, as is the debate around the word “francophone.” The overview of *Manuscrits francophones du sud* and its approach to work with ITEM (which also partners with the previously discussed IMEC) helps to highlight the complicated nature of the relationship between France and her former colonies, and how that relationship plays out between public/private ownership, questions of writing in one’s native language versus a lingua franca, and other issues that have no easy answers. The chapter as an overview of the work is fascinating, although it may have benefited from being presented as a case study of specific examples that then could be used as a jumping-off point for the discussion of how the work attempts to navigate the complicated legacies of colonialism and imperialism. It was also

surprising to see no discussion of how natural disasters, such as hurricanes in the Caribbean, impact the initiative's work and goals.

The last chapter of part 2, "Italian Literary Archives: Legacies and Challenges," turns its attention to Italian literary tradition and how collecting repositories relate to each other both within the country and internationally. This chapter underscores factors that lead to literary diasporas and were previously unaddressed. Rather than reiterate points regarding migrant authors, purchasing power, and privately held material, author Daniela La Penna points out that a donor's consideration of long-term care, how appropriate a place may be in the opinion of a literary executor, or an author's personal politics impact the literary diaspora. While La Penna's examples are meant to underscore how donors make their choices with certain elements in mind, they also reinforce the idea of civic pride or a sense of local or national identity. This plays out in both the national outrage in Italy when Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's notebooks were donated to Yale, rather than kept in the country, and the donation of Anna Maria Ortese's papers to the state archives of Naples, which were felt by some as a "reparation . . . in light of the controversies that surrounded Ortese's *Il mare non banga Napoli*" (93). It is reasonable that the element of identity plays into this chapter, as there will always be writing about strong opinions of where archival material should lie. La Penna strives to point out that donors are not always thinking about concepts such as diaspora or they may have opinions that differ from public sentiment.

Part 3, "The World beyond Literary Archives," strives to ensure that the discussions of the previous chapters can be applied to other types of archival collections. This is generally accomplished by seeking to raise questions that are common to all collections no matter the repository and that most archivists encounter, including access, copyright, and reference services.

Chapter 9, "Unknown/Unknowns and Known/Unknowns," takes pains to move the focus beyond literary collections. This chapter requires close reading because the language of known/unknowns and unknown/unknowns can quickly become confusing. In brief, known/unknowns are defined as material that may or may not exist somewhere. Unknown/unknowns are defined as material whose existence is a true mystery. Trudy Huskamp Peterson quickly dismisses three myths that are a part of this discussion—the idea of total archives, the idea that evidence is excluded from the social margins, and objectivity—while homing in on the shared concept that contributes to these myths: silences. These silences are how known/unknowns and unknown/unknowns enter the picture, and the rest of the chapter focuses on how known/unknowns are created and can be resolved, which serves as the connection to literary diasporas. The idea that lies at the heart of the discussion is that the survival of certain records and knowledge of their location can require "a leak or luck or both" (108). Peterson strives to address the different reasons something may be labeled a known/unknown—classified material, description, the approach of researchers—and emphasizes that researchers and archivists need to communicate more and work openly with other institutions. This approach applies to archival collections of all types—not only literary—and it serves as a worthy introduction to the final part of the book.

The focus on publisher archives in chapter 10 assumes a certain basic knowledge of what a publisher's archive includes. For those unfamiliar, the fact that publisher archives include book

drafts, correspondence, and business discussions, among other elements, is left unclarified until later in the chapter. “Publishers’ Archives, Authors’ Papers, and Literary Scholarship” dives into how this type of material occupies the space of both business records and personal papers because of the creative process that is documented. Correspondence between author and editor is both business and personal, and so publisher archives are hybrids. Looking at the history of UK trends in particular, the chapter deftly demonstrates the potential issues in approaching these sorts of records. The author uses the archives of Macmillan and Longman to illustrate the tension between potential commercial value and cultural value in the marketplace, as the complete collection is now split between the University of Reading, the British Library, the New York Public Library, and the publisher. Sotheby’s auction house has shown interest in the financial value of the material, but only for the authors that they deem important—well-known literary figures who could fetch a high price—but its sale would require that material be separated out from the whole. Scattering the collection over four locations demonstrates that a literary diaspora can be caused not only by the movement of authors, but by publishers and the decisions publishing houses make with regard to their records.

The chapter goes on to explain how this massive split has encouraged other publishers to try and avoid such an outcome, with a brief portion of the discussion devoted to the archives of Random House publishing. This collection resides at the University of Reading and access is managed by requiring researchers to contact the publisher to view sensitive materials. Another example given is the John Murray collection—a historic collection that includes manuscripts from Charles Darwin and Jane Austen and was purchased by the National Library of Scotland in order to prevent it from being broken up.

The discussion of publisher archives brings up questions regarding access, copyright, and sensitive content. Is privately owned material held in a public research institution subject to Freedom of Information Act requests? What are the legal risks from estates if the archives are held somewhere other than the publisher’s office? How do confidence and confidentiality between authors and publishers factor into public/private arrangements? While some of these concerns do not apply to other types of archives, many will sound familiar to people in the field. The issues in the chapter’s conclusion, which ponders digitization and its own complicated set of questions about ownership, copyright, and preservation, will also be familiar to many, although it is unfortunately placed and too brief.

Chapter 11, “Diasporic Archives in Translation Research: A Case Study of Anthony Burgess’s Archives,” highlights exactly how literary diaspora can be a complication for researchers. Using documents that trace the translation of Anthony Burgess’s *Blooms of Dublin* (a musical adaptation of *Ulysses* by James Joyce) into Italian, author Serenella Zanotti demonstrates that translation scholarship relies on having all material on hand in order to have an accurate and useful understanding of the translation process. The constant cross-referencing can become a nightmare for material that is scattered over collections—and in of itself, suggests that the work of translation creates its own set of archival materials. Discussion about translation work links this case study neatly to the previous chapter’s consideration of publisher archives—as there will be correspondence between publisher and translator—but frustratingly, there is little discussion of how collaborative work between institutions could make translation scholarship easier in the future and add greater depth to the study of an author’s oeuvre.

Sutton handles the conclusion, much of which offers a summary of the book's chapters. It is also a summary of DLAN's conclusions after their first six workshops. While Sutton's identification of key network themes (split collections, ethics of acquisition, politics of location, displaced/alien/diasporic archives) might have been better placed at the introduction of the book, putting them at the end makes the reader feel as if they have gone through the journey of work and discovery just as the members of the network did, and now have all the information required to understand how these themes manifested themselves among the network's members.

Digital technology is mentioned in the conclusion, albeit briefly. This includes the potential use of mapping to chart diaspora archives and the future of hybrid and born-digital collections as they relate to diaspora. Many writers keep physical journals in addition to typing manuscripts on computers, and that alone can complicate questions of access and diaspora. That these matters are briefly touched upon suggests that they are currently being contemplated by the network.

Overall, *The Future of Literary Archives* is a useful book for those seeking a different perspective on archival collections, especially with regard to collections that are spread out over institutions or even continents. The undercurrent of the text, that the location of a collection can be influenced by industry operations or a record creator's sense of belonging, nationality, and identity, is articulated in various ways and important to bear in mind. Room for improvement remains, though, as the book devotes a great deal of space to discussing the various forms diaspora can take, but only a few chapters offer examples of how to approach the issues of literary archival diasporas and improve access. Moreover, and more disappointingly, there is little discussion of how future advancements and crises are likely to impact diasporic archives. Sutton's conclusion does address hybrid digital/traditional archives, but missing is discussion of natural disasters and climate change. A second volume that addresses these topics after the network has been able to explore and experiment would be very welcome and has the potential to provide roadmaps for a number of projects outside the world of literary archives.