

***World Literature, Neoliberalism, and the Culture of Discontent* by Sharae Deckard and Stephen Shapiro, eds. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, Hardback, £ 79.99.**

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With the rise of far-right nationalism and at the edge of centre-left reformism, neoliberalism has been under severe scrutiny in regards not only to the world-system but also in the cultural atmosphere in recent times. In the present unsettled global economy, how neoliberalism still remains as the major force of the capitalist world-system is a highly debated area for scholars and academics. In such a context, *World Literature, Neoliberalism, and the Culture of Discontent*, edited by Sharae Deckard and Stephen Shapiro, is a brilliant collection of essays in the field of comparative, cultural and literary studies, dealing with the process of neoliberalism in some key aspects such as socio-ecological relationships of neoliberalism, subjectivities, and trends of political resistance.

Sharae Deckard and Stephen Shapiro introduce the volume with a thoughtful and critical reflection on “neoliberal world-culture” and the prevailing neoliberal world-system, focusing on the various cultural aspects of neoliberalism from historical and world-systems perspectives (7). They criticize the earlier studies of neoliberalism, which mainly emphasizes the centre and offers Western contexts. So, they propose three points for the neoliberal world-culture critical approach, including “a world-ecological conceptualization of capitalism as not only a world-economy, but as constituted by and through ecological regimes” (7). They are in favour of a transdisciplinary and comparative exploration of the hierarchical and uneven world-system and try to establish the importance of semiperiphery to understand the role of culture. They also propose to reconfigure “the triptych of modernization/modernity/modernism” in order “to distinguish between neoliber-

alization, neoliberal modernity, and neoliberalism” (15). Their interests in neoliberalism’s periodicity and “the nature of recurring familiarities across historical cycles of capital’s expanded reproduction” to make critical questions to “neoliberalism’s periodization” lead them to make their “own alternative periodization of neoliberalism’s advance” in the concluding sections of the first chapter (26, 40).

Michael Niblett’s essay explores Marlon James’ *A Brief History of Seven Killings* and Paulo Lins’ *Cidade de Deus* to depict a social, political, cultural, and historical account of Jamaica and Brazil during the 1970s and from the 1960s to the early 1980s, respectively. Political turmoil and economic crisis in Jamaica and the dictatorship in Brazil lead to a strong crisis in the neoliberal accumulation and show the impending class conflicts due to neoliberalism. Consequently, the reactionary and forward-looking class has been found between 1960 and 1980 in that region. The following chapter by Kerstin Oloff deals with Puerto Rican literature, exploring the texts of different periods within neoliberalism. Referring to the definition of world-literature, defined by Warwick Research Collective [WReC], and critically engaging with some selected Puerto Rican texts, including Luis Rafael Sánchez’s *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* and Rafael Acevedo’s *Al otro lado del muro hay carne fresca*, Oloff tries to establish Puerto Rican literature as world-literature. In addition, the shifting trends of socio-ecological conditions under neoliberalism with the increased socio-ecological degradation make the texts critically world-ecological.

In chapter four, Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado gives a picture of neoliberal periodization based on Mexico’s experience and proposes a two-axes-cartography for Mexico. According to this cartography, reconfiguring culture, politics and economics is interrelated and a basic trait of neoliberalization. Prado also establishes David Harvey’s *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* and Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine* outdated in the discussion of neoliberalism’s history, providing two

persuasive reasons in the opening part of this chapter. Claire Westall's opening sentence of her essay "[t]he premise of this collection is that the neoliberal is the latest, and potentially last, phase of the capitalist world-system and, consequently, is best read through capitalism's violent contradictions, periodic cyclicity and multi-scalar world-ecological webs of extraction, exploitation and unevenness" is a sharp and strong remark about neoliberalism (111). She deals with contemporary cricket fiction and its neoliberal narratives. Professional cricket has been highly influenced since 1970 due to the rise of neoliberalism. Consequently, this sport becomes global and has also been under criticism because of the neoliberal dynamics. After exploring the recent cricket fictions such as Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* and Chetan Bhagat's *The Three Mistakes of My Life* from various perspectives within the world-literary system, Westall describes the aesthetic mediation and shows an economically emerging India as well as the vulnerability of neoliberalism via metaphors and sport's terms.

Daniel Hartley's essay argues that "the impersonality of historical capitalism is best conceived as an uneven, often violent, combination of socio-cultural processes of depersonalization and (re-)personalization" (132). The contributor uses Alain Badiou's concept of "passion for the real" and makes various socio-political, cultural explorations of the selected texts, namely, *The Alphabet of Birds* and *The Flamethrowers*, to claim neoliberalism as an uneven world-system. Besides, his argument shows the limitations of Badiou's philosophical idea. Mathias Nilges, in the following chapter, poses some critical questions about neoliberal culture, its regulation, influence, and relationship with(in) neoliberalism (capital). His argumentative exploration gives a comprehensive account of the complicated but significant underlying relationship between neoliberalism and culture in response to the multifaceted inquiries.

Richard Godden's essay turns to neoliberal America, its influences and effects due to the neoliberalism within and outside of the US in a narrative, which gives a clear picture of the economic war and heavily militarized influence of the US in the recent past decades, and thus, echoes the common proclamation, which is the twentieth century belongs to the US. "... or a debt factory operate[s] as the world's bank? Preservation has depended on US military spending, as that which guarantees the dollar's lingering value" is an important reflection of the infatuated neoliberal turn (181). But, the military expenditure and financial reserve of the US and the global economy's paradigm have been changed dramatically due to some tragic events and the ever-changing economic dimensions and prospects in the 21st century. Exploring Jayne Anne Phillips's novel, *Lark and Termite*, Godden shows the contradictions and problems of neoliberal America and the American implied vision of monetized war.

Amy Rushton's brilliant put up about the critically significant issues such as depression, rejection, and suicide as the negative consequences of neoliberalism in the prevailing narratives in *A Little Life* and *All My Puny Sorrows*, shows the vulnerability and weakness of the logics of neoliberal success, which is partly reflected in "[i]nvariably, the emphasis on community is at odds with the neoliberal fixation on individualism and demands for self-responsibility: both novels make it clear that individualism is a convenient yet morally bankrupt dumping ground for responsibility, instead offering community and radical empathy as strategies of resistance to an inhumane and irresponsible neoliberal society" (196). Her essay gives a new way of understanding the dark sides of neoliberalism and capitalistic cultures. Matthew Eatough presents South African contemporary fiction as the "African Renaissance" product in his essay and claims that the culture prevailing there is less influenced by the Euro-American neoliberal ideologies (218). South African

neoliberal ideologies are futuristic and messianic. In such a context, fiction becomes the tool for the author to understand neoliberal temporality and emerging neoliberal industries in Africa.

Sharae Deckard's essay, in some ways, is the best contribution of the volume in regards to the literary texts and cultural variations, dealing with African resource culture, world-ecology and different texts, which are strong reflections of the age of decolonization. Her study of symbolic trains, stones and energy resources in the African fictions, selecting various cultures and different sorts of writers and texts, shows a new way of exploration of culture and literature in the neoliberal world, which is more integrated to world-ecologies. She demonstrates how significant politics, aesthetics, history, fiction, music, visual art and so on are in dealing with world-culture in the last chapter.

Though this volume theoretically emphasizes cultural studies of world-system and world-ecology in a proposed new critical approach of neoliberal world-culture, it lacks substantial reflection of the culture of peripheries. Geo-cultural selections are a bit selective. If more essays on the issues of world-ecology from the other parts of the world were presented, the volume would be more meaningful with its theoretical developments. However, this book differentiates neoliberalism's ideology from its cultural production and restores globalized capitalism as the critique object. Moreover, it is a fresh and lively book, not only in its examination of the neoliberal world-system but also in its selection of topics, removing, to some extent, categorical boundaries associated with postcolonial and Anglo-American approaches. Thus, this book becomes a key text for the development of new methodologies of world-system and world-ecology and gives a new horizon to (comparative) world literature.

Work Cited

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