context of the broader Nigerian literary landscape, from Chinua Achebe and Flora Nwapa to less canonical authors. For example, Christina Cruz-Gutierrez's " 'Hairitage' Matters" considers the trope of hair in *Americanah* in relation to questions of diaspora, gender, social media, and the "third wave hair movement"—all while putting the novel in conversation with two of Adichie's short stories and interpreting these works in light of other contemporary female Nigerian authors. Essays such as this could provide useful secondary material in graduate and even undergraduate literature courses, where *Americanah* is frequently taught.

Although the volume would be strengthened by greater attention to the relationship between literary form and content, as well as the inclusion of more essays that endeavor to read comparatively across Adichie's oeuvre, it will nonetheless be of interest to scholars and students in a range of fields. Emenyonu positions the collection as a continuing "conversation," and indeed its strength lies in the diversity of voices it includes.

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Post-Mandarin Masculinity and Aesthetic Modernity in Colonial Vietnam
By BEN TRAN
Fordham University Press, 2017, 178 pp.
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In *Post-Mandarin Masculinity and Aesthetic Modernity in Colonial Vietnam*, Ben Tran explores how European literary tropes associated with modernism were adapted by Vietnamese literati to consciously craft a gendered national subjectivity under late French colonialism. This is a significant contribution to our understanding of a Vietnamese social and intellectual world at a moment of transition from Confucian to European social and intellectual habits. Tran's innovation is a focus on gender that places masculine anxieties of modernizing change at the very heart of an emergent Vietnamese national consciousness. Taking Benedict Anderson's formulations of print capitalism as a foundational condition of possibility for a modern national subjectivity—in dialogue with philosopher Jacques Rancière—Tran explores how the narrative modalities that emerged in the 1930s invoked gender in the formation of this subjectivity through the prosaic enunciation of everyday life in which feminine concerns were dominant. Women in these narrations are not only a mime for colonial subjugation—as prostitutes and *mẹ tây* (women who marry a Westerner)—but also as

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a locus of a contested modern autonomy and a new reading public that challenged Confucian norms of masculine address: "[w]omen are excluded from yet revealingly frame the process of modernization" (87).

The post-Mandarin intellectual in this discussion found his homosocial Confucian world fragmented, with Confucian learning diminished but its gendered value systems upheld. Tran shows how this crisis of masculinity resulted in literary productions of unstable gender identities and fractured narrative voices, which he detects in the new forms of reportage, fictional realism, and novels. He sees realist reportage [*phóng sự*] as promoting national consciousness through the autonarration of a national culture, but also as a means for male authors to define the self through "engagement with a female other," (25) usually pathologizing women as objects of colonial desire. The "pornographic" realist novelist and satirist Vũ Trọng Phụng elides this realism with novelistic form, while in the "sociological novels" of the Tự Lực Văn Đoàn [Self-Strengthening Group], Tran sees European modes of critical reflection and modern sociology used to analyze Confucian norms in ways that challenge the subaltern studies group's presumptions about the role of tradition in colonial modernity.

Citing Rancière's "democratization of language," Tran notes: "The imagination of the nation is not technologically determined but rather is prosaically determined" (50), arguing against Anderson's focus on the enabling *technē* of print culture in favor of the narrative itself as a "reconfigured systems of representation" and a condition of modernity (122). Looming large in the emerging national imaginary at this time, however, is not only the notion of simultaneity cited by Anderson, but a proliferation of imagery, which Tran mentions only briefly in relation to an illustration accompanying a work of reportage. Perhaps Tran's privileging of the prosaic too easily forecloses on the complexities of print culture as a technology, as Rancière himself explores in his critique of Walter Benjamin's formulations on mechanical reproduction in the democratization of the aesthetic. Tran also addresses the related Art for Life's Sake polemic, focusing on André Gide not for his engaged literature, but as a bearer of a subverted masculinity that permitted a post-Mandarin homoeroticism. Gide's transgressive sexuality suggested a non-normative subjectivity that could break with Western intellectual practices—escaping the bind of Franz Fanon's trap of colonial mimesis and the subaltern studies postcolonial reinscription of colonial power. Despite the vigor of this polemic, Tran perceptively concludes that the debate over literature's social function, which was enthusiastically joined by Marxists keen to promote the primacy of class, was "never about the autonomy of art but how literature would affect, address, and shape the reading masses" (118).

Basing modernity firmly on the "aesthetic sovereignty of literature," Tran's work occupies an ambivalent position in relation to historical scholarship. His work addresses Peter Zinoman's political biography of Vũ Trọng Phụng, but he engages sparingly with Martina Nguyen's work on the Tự Lực Văn Đoàn and other work addressing the material conditions for the feminizing of modernity under colonialism—where the European women's rights movement, fashion, family hygiene, and so on were already aestheticized in various competing constructions. The (feminized) colonial imaginary was attributable to various contending discourses, including the influential *Phụ Nữ Tân Văn* [*Ladies Journal*], and other women's journals that featured women's voices, including the poet, activist, and journalist Nguyễn Thị Kiêm, an eloquent proponent of women in literature. Nevertheless, in a theoretically engaged work, Tran

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provocatively questions the nature of an autonomous aesthetic modernity under conditions of colonialism and its ability to represent beyond the constraining epistemologies of both tradition and instrumental reason.

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Contemporary African Literatures in English. Global Locations, Postcolonial Identifications
By MADHU KRISHNAN
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Madhu Krishnan's book offers an attention-grabbing investigation into the representation of Africa in contemporary African literature in English. Organized in five chapters, this concise volume explores questions of ethics, race, gender, mythopoetics, and address in internationally published works from the African continent. In her introduction, Krishnan notes that globally published African authors work both with and against the conventions of representation usually associated with postcolonial literatures, giving shape to an idea of Africa that "remains caught in a critical schism between authenticity and cosmopolitan detachment." Investigating the global Africa created and disseminated in novels requires a multilayered study of form, content, and context. By focusing on the intersection of the aesthetic and the political, Krishnan sets out to interrogate what she calls "the complex and often contradictory workings of identification" at play in a reciprocal interaction with larger discourses about Africa. Following a thematic approach and combining close reading with socio-historical and material contextualization, the volume contributes to the framing of a nuanced and deeper understanding of the representations and significations of Africa in a global context.

Chapter One provides some introductory material around the interaction between aesthetic and political modes of representation. This doubling of value, Krishnan argues, should be central to the act of critical and responsible reading. Working against exotic, totalizing, and reductive conceptions of writing, the "interstitial space" thus created repositions the question of address in a complex network of strategies of reading and receiving literary texts.

Throughout the volume, Krishnan consistently champions a balanced understanding of the representations of Africa in literature. Focusing on Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009), Nuruddin Farah's *Links* (2005), and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006), the second chapter argues that race functions in these works as both "a category of being" and "a site of performativity," thus operating within a multivalenced process of becoming. In the three novels, Krishnan contends, modes of subject formation use linguistic and narrative innovation to foreground the contingency of raced identities and to display the ambiguity of African selfhood.