

hampered the efficacy and visibility of the Commission—are thoroughly supported by their research, if unsurprising. The power of the book to shape broader scholarly and policy debates is limited, however, by its language (“legalese”), structure (important insights are buried in plodding prose), and narrow focus on the question of *how* implementation of the commission’s findings has been limited, rather than *why*. NGOs and other advocacy groups have been central to the development and sustenance of the commission—why? Many states have indirectly and often directly challenged the reach and findings of the Commission—why? These and other questions should have led the authors to a far more critical, nuanced approach to their topic (and thus their analysis of interviews and documents), one that takes seriously the politics of the very existence of the commission as a dynamic site for contestations among states, representatives of civil society, advocacy organizations, and other local, national, and international institutions.

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Benjamin N. Lawrance and Gayla Ruffer, eds. *Adjudicating Refugee and Asylum Status: The Role of Witness, Expertise, and Testimony*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 263 pp. Index. \$99.00. Cloth. ISBN:13-9781107069060.

Benjamin N. Lawrance and Gayla Ruffer’s edited collection offers new spaces of inquiry and important insights into the processes and protocols of refugee status determination (RSD), critiquing the central role that social scientific and scientific expertise has come to occupy in asylum adjudication in the global North. This multidisciplinary volume (composed of an introduction, an afterword, and ten topical chapters exploring various forms of expertise mobilized in asylum settings) emerged from the 2012 Conable Conference in International Studies, entitled “Refugees, Asylum Law, and Expert Testimony: The Construction of Africa and the Global South in Comparative Perspective,” held at the Rochester Institute of Technology. The volume argues that expert knowledge has increasingly come to supplant asylum seekers’ own narratives as the key element of asylum cases and has taken on an outsized role in determining the “credibility” of refugee claimants. As Lawrance and Ruffer explain, “the substitution of expert knowledge about the experience of the refugee for the experience of the refugee in an attempt to apply objective legal standards of credibility on the basis of factual accounts of country conditions or persecution sharply reveals the limits of sociocultural understandings across borders” (11).

In bringing together work by experts from an array of fields, the volume contributes significantly to the expanding literature on asylum seeking and RSD, which typically tends to be segregated by discipline. The individual chapters place social scientific, scientific, and medical experts in conversation with one another, while the volume as a whole “highlights the dialectical relationship between asylum adjudicators and expert witnesses” (6). The chapters are further united by an implicit Foucauldian sensibility, treating expert testimony and texts as sites to be discursively excavated and reading the biomedical and psychiatric technologies deployed in asylum adjudication as exercises in biopower.

The chapters are organized into two parts. The first part focuses on the epistemological aspects of RSD, especially the role of cultural (mis)understandings in asylum adjudication and the problems of competing understandings of “evidence” and “truth.” As Lawrance and Ruffer explain in their clear, comprehensive introduction, “the clinical reflections by trauma specialists, legal advocates, and forensic experts . . . highlight the sociocultural inconsistencies in testimonies from refugees, and the back and forth between adjudicators and experts struggling to reconcile testimony with ‘fact’” (5). The second part of the volume addresses the increasing importance of biomedical and psychiatric technologies and expertise in asylum adjudication.

The individual chapters, written by humanists, social scientists, lawyers, refugee workers, physicians, psychiatrists, and psychologists, are framed by three primary concerns: to articulate “the mechanics of refugee adjudication,” to provide an “explicit and extended meditation on how knowledge developed and deployed by Western experts is used to evaluate the particular circumstances of poor people around the world,” and to give voice to the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees (xv, 5). Anthony Good’s chapter, “Anthropological Evidence and Country Information in British Asylum Courts,” unpacks the highly constructed (and political) character of the purportedly objective *Country Reports*—packets of texts produced by the U.K.’s Home Office Country of Origin Information Service providing background on conditions in asylum seekers’ home countries. This chapter stands out for its fine-grained anthropological approach to reading the “archives” of the U.K. refugee complex. Lawrance’s contribution (“‘Health Tourism’ or ‘Atrocious Barbarism’: Contextualizing Migrant Agency, Expertise and Medical Humanitarian Practice”) and the chapter by Richard Tutton, Christine Hauskeller, and Steven Sturdy (“Importing Forensic Biomedicine into Asylum Adjudication: Genetic Ancestry and Isotope Testing in the UK”) are notable for their innovative examinations of how refugee claimants’ bodies are made to speak in the course of asylum adjudication. Lawrance’s chapter presents comparative case studies of two cancer patients from West Africa who sought “humanitarian consideration” to stay in the U.K. and receive medical treatment. It illustrates how so-called country expertise enabled adjudicators to “read” the ill body of the second asylum seeker in such a way that her claim prevailed, while the case of the

first asylum seeker, not augmented by such expertise, failed (224). Tutton, Hauskeller, and Sturdy show how an asylum seeker's body is made to "testify" (212) to his or her country of origin through genetic ancestry and isotope testing, which supposedly pinpoint the asylum seeker's origins and the places in which he or she has lived but in many instances conflate ethnicity and nationality. Noé M. Kam's chapter, "Recovering the Sociological Identity of the Asylum," sheds light on the language analysis technique LADO, which aims "to determine the linguistic identity of the applicant, and thereafter, allocate this identity to a geographic area of a country where s/he could linguistically and socially belong" but at times is bogged down in semiotic theory (58).

Overall, *Adjudicating Refugee and Asylum Status* offers invaluable contributions to the broad range of fields concerned with asylum. Its multidisciplinary approach provides a model for studying the complex, multivalent, and pressing problems of asylum seeking and RSD.

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LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND THE ARTS

Brenna Munro, *South Africa and the Dream of Love To Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. xxxiii + 337 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$25.00. Paper ISBN: 9780816677696.

Brenna Munro's *South Africa and the Dream of Love To Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom* examines representation of same-sex sexuality in South African literary and cultural texts. The book develops riveting and astoundingly eloquent, pioneering queer readings of South African texts, which begin to redefine and extend what constitutes "queer" and the possible work of queer epistemology from a postcolonial perspective. The impulse for the project, Munro explains in her preface, was her curiosity about "how South Africans managed to forge a gay-friendly, radically plural democracy" (xxxiii). Munro's commitment to exploring this question is evidenced by her meticulous, thoughtful, and impressive marshalling of wide-ranging scholarship but also, as her acknowledgements reveal, her intensive research in South Africa.

The book ranges from the period of the intensification of the struggle against apartheid in 1960s, through the period of transition to democracy, and into the posttransition period up until 2010. The roughly chronological ordering of the texts is a function of the author's insistence on locating her analysis in specific histories. Taking her cue from Rita Barnard's idea of "dream topographies" (in *Apartheid and Beyond*, Oxford, 2006)—of key