critic Albert Murray's insight into the thoroughly "mulatto" character of American culture. While ideas about a racially "pure" white American nation were never credible, Basson shows that a majoritarian politics of white Americanism powerfully shaped the U.S. state and nation. She shows, moreover, that at the turn of the twentieth century, the white American majority, while hardly homogeneous, advanced this project in part through racially exclusionary policies brandished against "mixed race" persons and territories.

Between Terror and Freedom: Politics, Philosophy, and Fiction Speak of Modernity. Edited by Simona Goi and Frederick M. Dolan. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006. 404p. $80.00.

Republic of Readers? The Literary Turn in Political Thought and Analysis. By Simon Stow. Albany: SUNY Press, 2007. 185p. $65.00 cloth, $19.95 paper.
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— Kateri Carmola, *Middlebury College*

Simon Stow's book on the use of literature in political theory begins with an epigraph from one of Italo Calvino's essays in *The Uses of Literature.* In it Calvino warns against the abuse of literature by politics: "When politicians and politically minded people pay too much attention to literature, it is a bad sign—a bad sign mostly for literature, because it is then that literature is in most danger." Stow's book thus starts out with an apt warning to the reader about the very topic the book examines.

Republic of Readers? is a dense book that nevertheless provides an astute analysis of the debates within the world of political theory since the coming of modern literary criticism. Stow begins by arguing that this "literary turn" has resulted in the replacement of "arguments with readings," and he ends by arguing that the attempt to provide "postfoundationalist" accounts of politics using literature has not lived up to its promise.

The book focuses on the theories of Judith Butler, Richard Rorty, Martha Nussbaum, and Terry Eagleton, all of whom treat literature as either a model for a new theoretical method or as a necessary part of the education of democratic citizens, or both. Stow offers one of the most thorough accounts of the ideas of these thinkers, but then goes on to embed these thinkers in a much larger context. Sometimes this broader account makes reading the book a dizzying experience, as the reader ricochets rather annoyingly across time, from Plato to Alasdair MacIntyre to Karl Marx.

Yet this insider's account of how it is possible to say anything at all that is politically meaningful, whatever the form, goes right to the heart of what it is we academics are doing, in our classrooms and in our writings. Hannah Arendt put it best: The moderns, led by Descartes, had discovered that "even if there was no Truth, man could still be truthful, and even if there was not reality, man could still be reliable." What is a postfoundationalist truth?

By the end of the book, Stow advances his own critical evaluation of the problem with this literary turn, albeit in an overly tentative way: "In the absence of a detailed empirical study, the following claims are obviously somewhat speculative: suggestions perhaps for further investigations by those more qualified than this author for engaging in the kind of work that such an analysis requires" (p. 152). All humility aside, these conclusions make the book worth reading. Stow argues, with great sophistication, that certain dogmatically undogmatic ways of reading books have created students and faculty who are no longer open to books at all; instead they see only what they want to see in each text, and usually what they see makes a certain specific political point. Reading the world, and other people, as "texts" prevents any of the real listening, questioning, and thinking that reading should engender.

Stow demonstrates how the prior political commitments of thinkers such as Nussbaum and Butler actually get in the way, and create "redundant" and ultimately "unsympathetic" readings of the texts they analyze. Rorty's attempt to pragmatically assign literature because it makes us into more humane and less cruel people, and thereby helps sustain liberal democracies, founders when he cannot explain why the language games literature provides will actually do this. The best section of the book treats Terry Eagleton, a complex literary critic who appears above the theoretical conundrums of the earlier three, but by the end of Stow's careful analysis, Eagleton has been shown to have some of the same faults.

Stow reminds his readers that the academic's most important job is teaching, and that teaching requires both good books and a certain "pedagogy of indirection, one that teaches us to read first and to talk about politics second" (p. 135). Since he agrees with Calvino that "no book that talks *about* a book says more than the book in question," Stowe does not talk about books. He instead carefully explains the twists and turns of recent debates about the method of political theory: What are we doing when we think about things, and use literature to help us do it?

Between Freedom and Terror, edited by Frederick Dolan and Simona Goi, aims to answer some of these questions. In general it is a very strong group of essays unified by the rather vague theme that modernity is stuck between paralyzing terror and total (and equally paralyzing) freedom. Some of the essays combine literature and philosophy; others examine philosophers' takes on categories, such as sophistry or aesthetics, that dwell in between foundational Truth and pure lies.

These essays serve as a good example of the kind of "literary turn" that Stow has analyzed. The book's essays

are grouped into four themes: the search for foundations in a postfoundational world; the rethinking of a polis; the use of ordinary life to enlighten political questions; and the strange relationships between author, text, and reality.

Dolan, in "Thinking and Poetry," analyzes the poetry of Wallace Stevens in light of its debt to Martin Heidegger. In a theme that will recur in later essays, Dolan argues that Stevens adds an optimism to the Heideggerian sense of loss of the gods, and offers a new vision of freedom that can occur with a "celebration of the ordinary" and a turn toward the "world's aesthetic dimension." Both Heidegger and Stevens propose instead a focus on the idea "*that* something is rather than *what* it is" (p. 13, italics in original). Poetry, for both, offers a way to do this: It also provides a way for the world to appear new again, and in Stevens's particular view, even offers a way forward.

Michael MacDonald's "Phantom Wisdom" addresses the tight relationship between philosophy and the sophists through an analysis of Kant (along with Hegel, Marx, Plato, and Slavoj Žižek). He argues that sophistry, from Plato onward, has always saved philosophy from being a tyrannical "wolf at the door." There is always a play of construction and deconstruction of argument with the sophists. MacDonald puts literature in the camp of the sophists: Here he echoes Umberto Eco, who noted that "'fictional texts come to the aid of our metaphysical narrow-mindedness'" (quoted in Goi and Dolan, p. xi.).

Joshua Foa Dienstag's essay on Don Quixote argues that there is a political lesson in the resilient pessimism of Quixote and the characters who decide to imitate him on his quest. He begins by noting that Cervantes's book was treated as a comedy at first, and yet he leaves this insight behind too quickly: There is a wonderful comedic way of embracing absurdity that Dienstag bypasses in order to describe the liberation that pessimism offers.

The next section in the anthology groups together essays that address the new model of a polis in the light of the philosophical realizations of modernity. In what is perhaps the most well written essay in the book, Jeffrey Isaac carefully shows how Camus's less-read dramas evoke (through a certain kind of tragedy) a civilized polis in the midst of the continual threat of a terrifying barbarism. As with Cervantes (and Nietzsche), the tragic sensibility allows the world to be comprehended in all its complexities, imperfections, and possibilities.

Andrew Seligsohn treats the idea of "aesthetics" as a way of moving beyond totalizing analyses. He uses Hans-Georg Gadamer to show how aesthetic judgment can avoid pure relativism and provide for engagement and understanding, while not closing off the possibilities of other opinions. In equating the interpretation of texts with the interpretation of human beings (p. 103), however, Seligsohn initially falls into a trap pointed out by Stow, who warns against "reading people like a book" especially given the questionable literary theories involved in such a reading (Stow, p. 153). Seligsohn ultimately comes out in favor of less methodology and more substance; he asks that "we spend less time on how we should discuss politics and more time discussing politics" (p. 113).

Josef Chytry's "On the 'Terror' of Polis Freedom" is the best essay in the book on the connection between politics and philosophy. Chytry provides a balanced reading of Heidegger's evolving views—of the Greeks, poetry, the ideas of the "holy" and "homecoming"—in the light of the Nazi experience, and then asks whether Heidegger's thought amounts to a philosophical justification for national socialism. From there he turns to Edmund Husserl, and Husserl's student Jan Patocka, and the ways in which these two recast Heidegger's polis ideas, and their impact in the context of a defiant Czechoslovakia in the late 1970s. Discussing Charter 77, Vaclav Havel, and the idea of a "parallel polis," Chytry pays careful attention to the background assumptions that translated Heideggerian ideas into a democratic rebellion.

Peter Euben's essay on "Theodicies of Corruption" is a wide-ranging analysis of the problem of invoking God as a justification for political policy—or theocratism. Such a justification always rests on an account of the basic corruption of the world, and offers (as a cover for its policies) a theodicy, that is, a justification for the fall from grace and a promise of a way back to order and wholeness. In order to understand this dynamic of doubt, justification, and redemption, Euben analyzes the story of Job in the Bible, who is tested by God, despite his uprightness, and in the end is humbled by the power of an all-powerful God. Job's integrity allows him to remain true to himself despite the seeming tragedy of his world, rather than to concoct a vision of a world wherein he could fight back "with God on his side." Job is offered as a direct contrast to the Bush administration's stance in the post-9/11 "war on terror."

In her essay "Despotic Observation," Marianne Constable offers a recasting of Montesquieu's legal theory in light of his less widely read "Persian Letters." She argues persuasively that Montesquieu understood the problems of law and legal judgment, and that far from being a parochial proponent of natural law, his early sociological approach was filled with a nuanced concern for the ability of the judge to "be neither completely outside the system of law nor neglectful of his or her own place within it" (p. 217).

The essay that stands out in this volume is the one that was previously published almost 25 years ago, Hanna Pitkin's masterful interpretation of Gunter Grass's book *The Flounder.* Pitkin adeptly places the book in historical context, and spins out the various possible layers of interpretation. Exploring what Grass offers as "food for thought," she also steps back to expose the limits of his understanding and to offer her own contrasting view of "grown-up" relationships.

Another take on food, literally, is found in Anne-Lise Francois's account of genetically modified foods and the desire for a modern reenchantment of the world. Francois argues that one way that late modernity is trying to free itself from the cage of mechanized ordinariness is to create a magical world of perfect foods. She brings in Wordsworth to demonstrate how the "natural piety" he speaks of could be seen as a justification for keeping natural things (genetically) "as they are," without succumbing to the typical "ascetic" stance of the whistleblower against genetically modified organisms.

Goi's essay on Mary McCarthy and Hannah Arendt argues that McCarthy depicted a much more nuanced idea of "the social" than did Arendt, and that the normal everyday social lives of her characters offered stepping stones toward Arendt's much vaunted (or heroic) idea of political action. Ramona Nadaff's essay on Flaubert's writing of *Madame Bovary* looks at the process of writing and rewriting in the midst of censorship, and how Flaubert adapted to the demands of his censors while also subtly resisting them. She chronicles the political process of the negotiation between publishers and authors, and how the story itself comes to reflect these negotiations in Flaubert's case.

Stow uses Philip Roth to reflect on the difference between "written and unwritten America." Most of us inhabit unwritten America, but we use literary figures, the written characters, to capture our experiences in the (unwritten) real world. Roth peoples his written world with plenty of "real-world" figures, and allows the reader to step out and judge the depiction of the problem in this written world. Stow's piece is a subtle reflection on the power and limits of literature as a stimulus to political judgment.

The problem with books of this sort is that the whole is less than the sum of its parts. While the individual essays are very good, the themes that they share seem cobbled together under duress. The initial introductory essay frames the book as especially necessary in the aftermath of September 11. Yet political theory has always been framed as a response to a crisis of or in modernity, to the point of cliché. The collection, filled as it is with imaginative readings of the kinds of books few but academics read anymore, panders to its readers by evoking terror in order to get us to care. It thus succumbs to some of the failings of literary criticism powerfully exposed in Stow's book, to the detriment of its own interesting essays.

Calvino may advise us to read books rather than to read about them. And he is right about the danger of overpoliticizing literature. All the same, as I read these essays, I was repeatedly struck by how much I learned about the original texts under discussion, and by how previous assumptions about politics were called into question. In that sense, the essays themselves exemplify the sophisticated "pedagogy of indirection" endorsed by Stow's *Republic of Readers?* and demonstrate the value of linking politics and literature.

Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans. By Charles Hersch. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. 256p. $35.00.

Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire. By Bob W. White. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. 328p. $84.95 cloth, $23.95 paper.
doi:10.1017/S1537592708082017

— Simon Stow, *The College of William and Mary*

Musicians, as Karl Marx might have said, make their own music, but they do not make it under conditions of their own choosing. Bob W. White and Charles Hersch both examine the ways in which social and political structures influence musical forms and, to a lesser extent, the ways in which those forms impact the social and political. Despite addressing two ostensibly different genres—Congolese dance music and American jazz—there are considerable areas of overlap and intersection in the methods employed and insights offered by the two studies. Both eschew simple content analysis and situate their claims within a detailed understanding of the music's historical context, and both identify the ways in which the agonistic relationship between social constraint and individual creativity spurs artistic production. Such similarities suggest, perhaps, the fundamental validity of their respective conclusions. Neither book is without its flaws, but the overwhelming impression is of texts that make a significant contribution to our understanding of the long-standing—but understudied—relationship between music and politics. As Plato observed in *The Republic* (424c), "Never are the ways of music moved without the greatest political laws being moved."

Beginning with what he calls an "Opening Riff" (p. 1) on Jelly Roll Morton's performance of John Philip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever," Hersch foreshadows the themes of his next five chapters: place, reaction, musicians, music, and dissemination. He argues that Morton, an Afro-French Creole from New Orleans, transforms the song using African-based musical devices, setting up "a multilayered musical conversation with his country" that helped to change the nation (p. 2). Situating himself in opposition to previous histories of jazz that depicted it as either an expression of racial essence—an argument made by both black and white critics—or the product of an ethnic melting pot, Hersch aligns himself with the more recent creolist perspective that stresses the dynamism of the music and the ongoing interactions between races. He nevertheless offers a corrective to what he perceives to be creolism's excessive focus on openness. "There is," he notes, "something creative and open about creolization, but the openness is bounded by power relationships" (p. 9).

Building on a detailed history of the development of jazz in New Orleans, Hersch argues that jazz—which, he suggests, ultimately helped to break down racial barriers in the United States—emerged from social and political