

## Reviews

Stuart Andrews, *The Rediscovery of America: Transatlantic Crosscurrents in an Age of Revolution* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998, £45.00). Pp. 257.  
ISBN 0 333 72618 9.

Stuart Andrews asserts that Revolutionary America had a threefold impact on the transatlantic world of England, France and America. By using twenty biographies of some of the period's most notable figures, Andrews attempts to demonstrate that America was promoted and perceived as "an embodiment of Enlightenment ideals, as an asylum for the 'friends of liberty' and as a stimulus to the Romantic imagination." Andrews' choice of biographies illustrates well the existence of this threefold impact. However, his choices also raise questions regarding the extent to which it affected people throughout the transatlantic world.

Most of the men discussed in this book are well-known figures of the Revolutionary era: Jefferson, Franklin, Paine, Priestly, Lafayette, and Crèvecoeur to name a few. Their lives and their associations with the Enlightenment, in America and in Europe, have been considerably documented elsewhere; their biographical accounts here reveal few surprises. Instead, Andrews' purpose in gathering these men's biographies together is to illustrate how they were influenced by both Enlightenment thought (Voltaire and Rousseau are mentioned frequently) and by the American and French Revolutions, and how they consequently viewed and shaped the transatlantic world in which they lived.

Andrews implies, through these biographies, that the ideals of Revolutionary America were re-exported to England and France and were subsequently widely practiced. He also argues that the concept of a transatlantic world, even an "Atlantic Revolution," is "partly corroborated" by the experiences of such "representatives of the Revolutionary generation." What is problematic about Andrews' approach is that by using the biographies of such illustrious men to prove his argument, he cannot successfully illustrate how pervasive the repercussions of Revolutionary America actually were throughout the transatlantic world. These men's lives, which often intertwined, demonstrate more that Revolutionary America's threefold impact was exclusive and privileged rather than accessible and experienced by many. The few lesser-celebrated figures Andrews chronicles, like John James Audubon and Thomas Cooper, provide perhaps the best glimpse of how ordinary people throughout England, France, and America might have responded to Revolutionary America.

Andrews successfully demonstrates his contention that there was a "transatlantic commerce in ideas" during the Revolutionary era and that these notable

men were “articulate agents” of that traffic. What Andrews does not successively establish, however, is what other types and classes of people were participating in this commerce. Such an account would have provided a fuller picture of the revolutionary, transatlantic world.

*University of Nottingham*

MICHELLE N. FISHMAN

Jonathan Arac, *Huckleberry Finn as Idol and Target: The Functions of Criticism in Our Time* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press – Wisconsin Project on American Writers, 1997, £36 cloth, £16 paper). Pp. 254. ISBN 0 299 15530 7, 0 299 15534 X.

Why has *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* been so obsessively canonized? Why and how has it come to occupy so prominent a place on the American school and university curriculum, and in American culture more generally? To what effect, and to whose cost? Jonathan Arac does not pull his punches in attempting to answer these questions. The idolatry focused on the novel represents wishful thinking on the part of white, liberal America. The allegedly close, spiritual, and nurturing relationship between Huck and Jim demonstrates that America has resolved race conflict in the most important, intimate ways, and all that remains is to implement this good feeling more widely. Twain, as the “quintessential” American author, gives proof that America, “quintessentially,” is fair, humane, and non-racist. America is overcoming the prejudice of its past in the same way that Huck learns to see Jim as “a real person.” But, as this book reminds us, racism is not necessarily – or even most importantly – a feeling, but a way of structuring. *Huckleberry Finn*, then, serves white self-exculpation and complacency. It is a “talisman of self-flattering American virtue.”

Arac pursues his argument by focusing on the scholarship, and on the newspaper debate surrounding the various attempts to banish *Huckleberry Finn* from the classroom. He points out, as others have done before him, that the racial message of the novel can be both irrelevant and humiliating for the Black pupil. Would such a pupil really find moral triumph in the discovery that a Black may be “a real person”? Arac quotes one such pupil: “I remember feeling invisible while ‘Huckleberry Finn’ was being taught.” Following Jane Smiley and others, Arac sees prescribing this text above all others as setting the agenda at a very low level.

Debate also takes in Trilling’s highly influential commentary on *Huckleberry Finn*. Trilling’s anti-Stalinism led him to want to present Americanness as counter-cultural and subversive. Along with other commentaries, there was a move to nationalize literary narratives such as *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby-Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn*; more truly national narratives by Cooper and Stowe were discounted altogether. This skewing of the lit. crit. point of view gave further license to specifically nationalist idolatry. Unsurprisingly, Arac extends this argument to cover Shelley Fisher Fishkin’s *Was Huck Black?* (1993). Fishkin’s idea (that *the* American character spoke Black English) drew extraordinary

attention from the academy and the media. My own sense was that there was a collective white sigh of relief and self-congratulation, as if to say: "You see, we've been integrated all along!" Arac finds Fishkin's book to be flawed because it is so committed to nationalism, and because it is based on faulty stylistic and linguistic argument. Among his more straightforward points, Arac notes that Fishkin's examples of specifically Black linguistic usage actually enjoyed a much wider currency. And, perhaps most tellingly, he notes that "there is no evidence to indicate that anyone in Twain's time actually perceived Huck's language as black."

Moving on from the nationalistic preoccupation with "the vernacular," Arac favours "creolization" as a critical tool. The creole "connotes 'mixture' rather than 'purity,' and the making of something new rather than the maintaining of a tradition" (as it happens, Barbara Ladd has already done work in this area in *Nationalism and the Color Line* [1996]).

Occasionally Arac is repetitious, though perhaps with the best of intentions. For obvious reasons, his is a book that needs to be accessible to the non-academic reader. At times it seems that what was already clear has been repeated in the supposed interest of clarity. Also, his main argument prevents him from doing much justice to *Huckleberry Finn* as a critique of American society; likewise his occasional acknowledgement of the novel's interest and qualities seem belated and hollow. But this is a lively and a serious book, and one that deserves a wide readership.

Queen's University, Belfast

PETER STONELEY

Ambrose Bierce, *A Sole Survivor: Bits of Autobiography*, ed. S. T. Joshi and David E. Schultz (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1998, \$38.00 cloth). Pp. 356. ISBN 1 57233 018 X.

"Nothing is more false and misleading than biography – except autobiography," Bierce once remarked with characteristic assertiveness. Nevertheless, he did allow a few, so-called "Bits of Autobiography" to be included in his *Collected Works*, amongst them "A Sole Survivor," his commemoration of long-dead comrades. The present editors have built extensively around those bits and pieces, to produce a substantial volume, with a usefully informative introduction to "what amounts to an anthology of Bierce's journalistic work in addition to his consciously autobiographical writing." There is scant reference in these pages to the first two, virtually suppressed decades of his life, but thereafter all his phases and forays are represented, from the overshadowing experience of the Civil War, through the years of his awesome predominance on William Randolph Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner*, to the last words of his final letter of 26 December 1913, as he leaves "tomorrow for an unknown destination," a septuagenarian horseman, sick of the world, disappearing into Mexico.

Though Bierce knew personal disaster and domestic tragedy only too well, the matters of concern here, in essays and correspondence alike, are of no such kind,

but rather altogether intellectual, ethical, political. Committed in principle to literary learning and culture and steeped in the English poets, his prose is everywhere studded with ready and felicitous quotations. However, out of sympathy with his times, he was hostile to nearly all types of modernism, whether of the young Walt Whitman, "when the paralysis had, as yet, invaded only his brain," or of Ibsen and Shaw, those "very small men," or of that "sovereign of insufferables, Oscar Wilde." The most withering contempt of all was reserved for Howells's genteel realism, that "detestable school of literature ... absolutely destitute of ... imagination." As for politics, with his vociferous opposition to anything approaching women's rights and his loathing of socialism, labour unions, and strikers, he emerges again from these pages as defiantly reactionary. Yet, unlike such younger San Francisco contemporaries as Frank Norris and Jack London, he was barely susceptible to "that horrible racial antipathy, that mother of darkness," with its "hideous touch," and amidst the noise of racists and xenophobes he expressed his deep respect for "the Jews and the Chinese" and praised the "courage and discipline" of black soldiers. And nowhere does he lash any socialist as furiously as he does Collis P. Huntington, the railroad king, "this old man standing on the brink of eternity, his pockets loaded with dishonest gold," who "deserves to hang from every branch of every tree of every State and Territory penetrated by his railroads." "If I cannot fight the men whom I think public enemies I will not fight anybody," he wrote in a letter of resignation to Hearst. Devoid of any populist instinct or temptation, he sought no wide approval, deciding that "if government has any meaning or function it means the restraint of the many by the few" and the deployment of "all the dreadful appliances of civilization against civilization's natural enemies – the people," in this "nation of benighted and bloated vulgarians, in whom the moral sense is dead." Essentially elitist, individualist, and high Puritan, he deplored exhibitions of public sentiment and the encouragement of mass emotion. Following President Garfield's assassination, amidst the "talk of strong men weeping in the street, of women fainting with emotion, of vast crowds, pale with grief," he attempted to restore some sort of balance and intelligent sense of proportion. Garfield "was not a god. He was not in any sense a great man. He surprised the country by the manner of his death and confused its judgment. It mistook the renown of his death for the nobleness of his life." It was a "midsummer madness," such as recurs every so often, we may remember from a later summer.

Any response to Bierce, however, any understanding of him, is partial without first and then again last reference to the four years between the ages of 18 and 22 that he spent fighting in the Civil War. This was his true education, the source of his lasting values and his knowledge, emotionally the deepest and morally the most meaningful experience of his life, to which especially in his later years he would again and again return, in dream and nightmare, in memorial essays, in the cluster of war stories which are the peak of his literary achievement, and in visits, right up to the time of his vanishing, to "all my old battlefields." It is therefore no surprise that the most moving, the most harrowing, the most haunting pieces here are his various recollections of that war, such as the remarkable "What I Saw of Shiloh," and his tributes, such as the beautifully plain and tender "A Bivouac of the Dead," to those who fell, friend and foe alike, and who "have no voice

in the thunder of the civilians and the shouting.” Perhaps all that followed the terrible, fierce clarity of those years was but a sort of shadowy afterlife, a vapour trail of the life “I should have thrown away at Shiloh.” Thus afterwards he often seemed to think and feel and write in the persona of some kind of “a sole survivor,” as the many and various pieces in this ingeniously conceived and arranged collection so effectively display.

*University of Essex*

R. W. (HERBIE) BUTTERFIELD

Stephen J. Bottoms, *The Theatre of Sam Shepard: States of Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, £14.95). Pp. 301. ISBN 0 521 58791 3.

Stephen Bottoms's study traces the development of Shepard's plays from their raw beginnings through to the more complex and highly wrought later dramas. Locating him very securely in the context of late twentieth-century American culture, Bottoms regards the shifting political, theatrical and artistic contexts in which Shepard develops as fundamental to the direction and shape of his work. Bottoms acknowledges that Shepard's dramatic roots are in the innovative performance practices of Off-Off Broadway. His analysis shows how the influence of the earlier plays, with their focus on collages of imagery, rhythmic patterns of language and structural instability to create emotional disturbance, is still at work in the later more coherent plays where character and narrative are more tightly established.

Bottoms draws attention to not only American but also European influences on Shepard's work, identifying inscriptions of popular and high art in his plays. Iconic figures like Kerouac and Pollock are acknowledged, but so also is Beckett, seen as a seminal influence on some of the early work. The French Symbolist poet Mallarmé is also argued to be resonant in his unconventional and stripped use of language. As regards popular culture, Bottoms explores the influence of music from Jazz and Rock to Country and goes beyond a description of Shepard's debt to the popular, investigating in detail how these musical forms and allusions interlock with the plays.

Bottoms tracks a development from modernism to postmodernism in Shepard's work, from a solipsistic absorption in the crisis of the individual to a focus upon the meaningless superficiality of the contemporary world and “junk” culture. Despite the nihilism of this shift, Bottoms detects a degree of optimism when he finds a more resilient female character in some of the later plays, displacing the doomed masculinity so prevalent in Shepard. Bottoms does not claim Shepard as a feminist, but redeems some of his work from extreme masculinism.

The book is at its most interesting in its discussion of performance, including some productions where Bottoms was involved. The evolution of Shepard's work owes much to his development as a theatre director, and more discussion of performance would enhance the book. But Bottoms has a strong grasp on American politics and culture and he embeds his very detailed readings of the

plays in this understanding. This is a valuable and useful book, especially in the absence of significant scholarship on Shepard.

*University of Reading*

LIB TAYLOR

Nick Browne (ed.), *Refiguring American Film Genres: Theory and History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1998, £40 cloth, £15.50 paper). Pp. 340. ISBN 0 520 20730 0, 0 520 20731 9.

The choice of “refigure” rather than the more common and more cohesive “reconfigure” in the title of this collection indicates a modesty of aim in the work of today’s leading film scholars towards the question of genre. In his opening comments, Browne periodizes the collection by positioning it in stark opposition to formalist approaches to genre ascendant in the 1970s: “The implicit, ideal order of the structuralist system of genre has dissolved.” It has been replaced by what he terms (perhaps over-averring his own posture of typological caution) the “specific assemblages of local coherencies.” In light of the subtlety, complexity and maturity of contemporary debates about genre evidenced here, and considering the diverse approaches taken by these contributors who have jettisoned the seductive solacements of overarching schemata, it is particularly surprising and disappointing that the volume is inadequately introduced by a mere four-page Preface. The volume conspicuously lacks an organizing statement of intent.

While the collection charts key shifts in approaches to genre, it draws no simple conclusions about epochal shifts in film genres themselves. In particular, the work collected here avoids the clichéd trajectory of identifying a classical period of generic purity followed by a post-classical moment of genre hybridity and play. Indeed, many of the strongest essays by film historians explore generic insecurities before the onslaught of New Hollywood in the 1960s and 1970s. Linda Williams rehabilitates the melodrama, arguing persuasively that it should be considered less a specific (usually derided) genre than a dominant “mode” which underwrites American film, and through which “American democratic culture has most powerfully articulated the moral structure of feeling.” Venerable Rick Altman (whose *The American Film Musical* is a foundational genre studies text), armed with an unusual facility for illustrative analogy, proposes a processual model which explains generic evolution or “recycling,” providing a very useful tool for understanding the opposing dynamics of sticking to formula and impulses to innovate. Thomas Schatz discusses war films – again, a transgeneric category which includes the combat film and home-front melodrama – offering an empirically rich account of how film production responded to the changing historical and industrial exigencies of World War II. In these rigorous and historicized contributions, the volume is at its best. Elsewhere, genre is less productively explored, notably in the piece by Leo Braudy on “nature films,” in which the category is expanded so far that it loses its aesthetic or thematic distinctiveness, so that the essay dissolves into a shopping list of competing

articulations. This dissolution of genre as category is a real danger in a climate of criticism which favours a post-taxonomical lexicon of "clusters," "modes" and "nodal points." The reader who seeks an account of traditional approaches to film genre must look elsewhere, but for the purposes of engaging with contemporary genre studies this constitutes a strong collection, ably demonstrating that, if Platonic notions of genre are defunct, the critic's and historian's endeavour to refigure generic trends in American cinema and to redesign the conceptual tools needed for this task, continues to be rewarding.

University of Central Lancashire

EITHNE QUINN

Hazel V. Carby, *Race Men. The W. E. B. Du Bois Lectures* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1998, £14.95). Pp. 228. ISBN 0674 745582.

*Race Men* is founded upon an uncompromising premise: black America's production of "race men," stemming from black people's need "to prove ... that they were not inferior beings," recurrently leads to the "aggressive demonstration of their superiority in some field," with gendered consequences; a masculine, even masculinist discourse results, with "epistemological implications" for black women, whose "intellectual work ... is not thought to be of enough significance to be engaged with." Since Carby has engaged with the latter in her powerful *Reconstructing Womanhood*, she now turns her attention to this "race men" discourse, and how its construction of "black masculinities" changed during the twentieth century. Her claim is that, however much surface-structural support "race men" may offer female equality, this is compromised by the operation of deep-seated, gendered structures of thought and feeling. *Race Men* examines the way black males have interacted with and sometimes resisted this discourse.

So Carby sweeps down upon du Bois's proposals in *The Souls of Black Folk* that "Washington's counsels of submission overlooked certain elements of true manhood" and that "Washington belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinction," laying waste their gendered predicates. Her reading of du Bois gathers authority as it spans the opening chapters, but her emerging argument is also plainly polemical, and at times strained. So she bludgeons her way past the slightly awkward presence of Josie and her race sisters, du Bois' pupils in chapter IV of *Souls of Black Folk*: observing that when du Bois returns to his Tennessee country school, the powerfully portrayed Josie has died, she rounds on the "abrupt" way Josie has been erased. But, in fact, du Bois offers some account of Josie's intervening life, and those of "bouncing Ella ... plowing corn on the hot hillside" and "Birdie ... tall and tawny" as well, in a passage where the women are given some real strengths in an account of mixed fortunes for both sexes alike.

This is *Race Men's* limitation: its tendency to obliterate any obstacles as its argument vigorously ranges over the decades, embracing Robeson, Leadbelly, C. L. R. James, Miles Davis and Danny Glover. Carby's polemical challenge to

endemic neglect of gendered language and representation is sustained and always interesting, but not always convincing in the detail. Thus, when arraigining Lawrence Kasdan for his soundtrack's selective use of Ice Cube's gangsta rap lyrics in the film *Grand Canyon*, she undervalues the way that these lyrics contain (in Toni Morrison's phrase) "recursive ironies" that make Kasdan's partial sampling more reasonable than she allows. At other times, to cement her argument, she leaps gymnastically from theme to theme: her interesting exegesis of Robeson's singing suddenly returns to its earlier contemplation of "public representations of Robeson's black male body," whilst her analysis of Davis' *Kind of Blue* jumps to the unexplained conclusion that his music represents "a gendered organizational structure that could be used to challenge jazz criticism."

An uneven text, then, and perhaps one written hurriedly: at one point it allows readers to believe that the Staffordshire and England cricketer, S. F. Barnes, was black (he was not) by suddenly inserting James' 1933 description of him in a discussion of the ageing black male body. But it is also a constantly stimulating book, demanding study when approaching the subject of Black American masculinity.

*The Nottingham Trent University*

R. J. ELLIS

Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999, £33). Pp. 143. ISBN 0 8032 1480 4.

Eradication of tribal traditions and affiliations was the prime goal of Federal Indian boarding schools. Over the last decade, scholars have examined these schools' powerful impact and the ways Indian children resisted their purpose and subverted their aims. However, recurring in many of these studies has been an acknowledgement that boarding schools, despite their punishing regime and rationale, have played a critical role in defining the lives and identities of many American Indians. This book does not down-play the pain and loss which was integral to many children's boarding-school experience, but places that experience in a wider context. Child argues that tribal communities and families often provided support and ballast, enabling many children to return to productive, if altered, lives amongst their own people. And, just as the star blanket has found a lasting place among tribes of the upper Midwest, as a result of quilting skills learnt at boarding school, so, too, the schools have become a vital part of a collective, pan-Indian identity.

Much of Child's story is not new – homesickness, strict regimentation, poor diet, hard work, high mortality rates – but it is told to us here in Indian voices and with telling detail garnered from personal correspondence. The principal source for this book was the hundreds of letters written between school officials, parents and the children attending Haskell Institute, Kansas and Flandreau school, South Dakota. Its subtitle is apposite: *American Indian Families*. By including the responses of adults as well as children, it both locates the school



within the broader community and shows how parents tried to shape it to their own needs. During the 1920s, the policy and practices of Indian boarding schools were subjected to severe criticism by white officials, culminating in the publication of *The Meriam Report* in 1928. This study reveals that, from the start, Indians themselves were the schools' best-informed and least listened-to critics.

The author is an Ojibwe Indian. She openly focuses on her own Red Lake community and within this specific context makes clear some of the more welcomed functions of boarding schools. They offered skills, access to education notwithstanding severe winter weather, financial relief for single mothers, and, most poignantly, provision for orphans when breakdown of traditional community no longer ensured the embrace of an extended family. Sensitive and skilled in its portrayal of individual lives, this book sometimes falls short of projecting a broad historical picture; we never learn, for example, just *how* twentieth-century boarding-school practices have improved since the "height of the assimilation movement." Yet, framed by a commitment to listen to the Indian voice, it succeeds admirably in revealing the boarding-schools' failure to break family and community loyalties.

University of East Anglia

JACQUELINE FEAR-SEGAL

Mark Nathan Cohen, *Culture of Intolerance: Chauvinism, Class, and Racism in the United States* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998, n.p.). Pp. 325. ISBN 0 300 07072 1.

There is much to admire in this intelligent, lucidly written and humane contribution to the often bitter debate over multiculturalism in the United States. The author, an anthropologist at SUNY Plattsburgh, makes no secret of his contempt for the current growth of intolerance in America – a process which he locates in the country's blinkered attitude to non-core values. Deeply troubled by what he sees as recent efforts to trivialise and distort science in the pursuit of right-wing goals (e.g. Herrnstein and Murray's lamentable 1994 work, *The Bell Curve*), Cohen demonstrates convincingly that inter-group differences are largely the product of varied environmental and cultural contexts rather than genetic variations between so-called "races." Although most readers of the *Journal* will be unsurprised by the conclusion that "the reality and the ideal in America are very far apart," this book is aimed at a general audience in the United States rather than the academy. It is precisely for this reason that one might wish that Cohen's handling of topics outside his own specialist discipline had been a little surer. For example, his statement that the American Civil War "was of interest primarily to the wealthy on both sides" is of dubious validity and his insistence that the US Constitution "did nothing" about slavery is just plain wrong. Both of these examples, in fact, are symptomatic of Cohen's pronounced fondness for the counter-cultural school of history represented by the likes of Howard Zinn – puny ammunition, some would say, in the struggle against cultural orthodoxy. At times, moreover, Cohen's text is simply too one-sided to carry any real weight.

Any defence of affirmative action that fails to engage seriously with the policy's current marginal utility to the poor is bound to be of limited value. Similarly, his shopping-list of solutions to the nation's ills (redistributive taxation, greater receptivity to alternative cultures and points of view, the development of a softer form of capitalism, etc.) will doubtless prove attractive to many progressives, but most, if not all, of these goals, have more than a whiff of utopianism about them. Notwithstanding its occasional *naïveté*, however, this book offers a refreshing and spirited defence of multiculturalism. For that reason alone, it deserves to find a wide readership in contemporary America.

*University of Sheffield*

ROBERT COOK

Judith Fryer Davidov, *Women's Camera Work: Self/Body/Other in American Visual Culture* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1998, £69.95 cloth, £24.95 paper). Pp. 494. ISBN 0 8223 2054 1, 0 8223 2067 3.

Dorothea Lange's renowned "Migrant Mother" is the point of departure for this generously illustrated and intelligently argued book, and Lange, whose work is the subject of the book's longest chapter, figures as something of a touchstone throughout. The major contribution of Judith Fryer Davidov's study of "Women's Camera Work," however, is its gathering and juxtaposing of the work of a number of more or less well-known women photographers. These have in common, besides their gender and period (roughly, the first half of this century), beginnings in Pictorialist photography of the Clarence H. White school and subsequent development of a distinctive style. Most prominent among them, besides Lange, are Gertrude Kasebier, Imogen Cunningham, Frances Johnston, Doris Ulmann, Consuelo Kanaga, and Laura Gilpin. Davidov presents them as a loose network rather than a movement and, in her close readings, attends to what is unique in their work as well as what they might have in common.

Although, in each case, the gender of the photographers is taken as a significant element in the shaping of the images they made, it is never the only, nor even the overriding, one. As her title, with its reference to Stieglitz's influential journal, *Camera Work*, signals, Davidov is not afraid to engage in debate with critics such as Alan Trachtenberg, who have helped establish the current, largely male, canon of American photography. Constantly aware, however, that the deciphering of photographs is as conditioned and political an activity as the taking of them, Davidov scrutinizes essentialist claims; compares images made by her chosen subjects with those of such luminaries as Steichen, Curtis, Adams, Weston, Walker Evans, and Stieglitz himself, and takes note of cross-gender mentoring, collaboration, and common subject-matter.

The account she gives of the working methods of each of her subjects is, nevertheless, suggestive, as is the way she juxtaposes images. Without hectoring or evident *parti pris*, but with convincing contextualizing and attentive close reading – particularly good in the case of Lange and Gilpin – Davidov guides her readers' responses to the chosen images. She identifies, in the photographers in

whom she is most interested, an alertness to difference – alterity – in the subject and a contingent impression in their photographs of “an encounter,” “an exchange between self and other.”

Clearly packed with information of interest to students of photography and, indeed, of twentieth-century American culture, the book, strangely, lacks a bibliography. Readers must find their own ways of attending to the main text while consulting, skimming, or ignoring the mixture of further information, anecdotal additions, and biographical insights that make up some hundred pages of end-notes. We would have been better served by sterner editing which exhumed the references buried deep in this excess of annotation and directed significant information into a coherent appendix.

University of Cambridge

JEAN CHOTHIA

William Merrill Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America Before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper). Pp. 304. ISBN 0 8078 2438 0, 0 8078 4743 7.

One of the earliest records of a letter originating in the New World appears in a log-book that would become known as *The Diary of Christopher Columbus*. Caught in a storm on the return voyage just west of the Azores, and fearing the worst, Columbus took up pen and parchment and addressed a letter to his Spanish sovereigns. Having written down his amazing discoveries, he commanded that a large wooden barrel be brought, and the letter placed in it, without any one knowing what it was, and “he ordered it thrown into the sea.” William Merrill Decker cites this unusually dramatic epistolary occasion as a classic example of the way that epistolary practices have coincided with American experiences of space, settlement, separation, and reunion. From the settlers onwards, letter-writing in America has inscribed an often intense awareness of the possibility that letters may be lost in transit, or that separation may be final and reading a posthumous event. *Epistolary Practices* takes absence and bereavement as the defining motifs of letter writing in America.

After offering a useful account of the letter as a literary genre, with a brief history of the changing editorial practices of published letter collections, Decker discusses letters by writers of varying degrees of education and literacy. The epistolary productions of indentured servants, New England factory workers, slaves, soldiers, and Western pioneers are examined alongside those of John Winthrop, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Abigail and John Adams, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, Samuel Clemens, Henry James, and Alice James. Despite acknowledgement of the specificity of each epistolary moment, Decker reads largely to substantiate his argument that such diverse letter-writers nevertheless employed similar discursive conventions and shared many assumptions. Individual chapters devoted to the letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, and Henry Adams continue this theme.

Finally, Decker takes a brief look at the ongoing transformation of letter-writing in the electronic age, particularly the changes to American experiences of space and time brought about by the advent of the telegram, the telephone, and other electronic methods of communication. The letter of condolence now coexists with cemeteries in cyberspace allowing bereaved parties to establish virtual gravesites; and the love letter has gained new energy as a form with the advent of the possibility of e-mail affairs. What is lost in e-mail, Decker reminds us, is the sense of the letter as artefact. The materiality of a letter, which functions as a reminder – and a physical trace – of the body of the absent author, is largely erased in e-mail.

It is perhaps inevitable in a book of this sort that the most compelling aspects of the study are the letters themselves, rather than the analysis of those letters. Decker's New Historicist and post-structuralist approach emphasises shared conventions, common themes, and similar narrative forms. Yet, ultimately, it is the unique qualities which many of the letters manifest and the individual personalities of their authors which prove most arresting. Emily Dickinson's erotic personification of her cold as a lover kissing her throat; Abreham Scriven's first and possibly last letter to his wife on the occasion of being unexpectedly sold by his master to another, distant plantation; Virginia Reed's description of her experiences as a pioneer on the Oregon Trail surviving only by cannibalism: these and other compelling epistolary moments are inevitably the highlights in a study whose analysis functions as a foil for its primary material rather than a compelling narrative in its own right.

*University of Liverpool*

VAL GOUGH

Julie Bates Dock (compiler and ed.), *Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-paper" and the History of Its Publication and Reception: A Critical Edition and Documentary Casebook* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, \$35). Pp. 132. ISBN 0 271 01734 1.

This is a fascinating and extremely detailed study of the publication and reception history of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel *The Yellow Wall-paper* together with an authoritative critical edition of the story and many important primary documents. Julie Bates Dock reveals how myths and legends such as those about Silas Weir Mitchell and the reception of the novel as a ghost story, have grown up and been perpetuated to the detriment of the work, Gilman herself and feminist scholarship in general. Whilst acknowledging that there is always more work to be done in the field, she aims to give as complete a picture as possible of the history of the novel. From the outset, however, Dock warns literary critics about the need to treat documentary evidence with caution and argues for the seeking of a middle ground between a simple faith in sources and outright rejection – between what she terms “naïve positivism and naïve skepticism.” She also warns against the tendency to “find what one expects to find.” Critics need to be aware of their own biases and expectations in order to evaluate documentary evidence satisfactorily.

The critical edition of *The Yellow Wall-paper* which Dock offers is based on the first published version of the novel which appeared in *The New England Magazine* in January, 1892, rather than the manuscript version. The reasons for doing so are carefully explained and result in what she states is her "best estimate of the story as Gilman might have expected her first audience to read it." The comprehensive editorial apparatus which she employs gives the most complete guide to the work as it exists today. Following the critical edition are a number of documents which further clarify *The Yellow Wall-paper's* publication and reception. These include Gilman's comments concerning the story, letters to and from Gilman, 26 contemporary reviews and excerpts from longer essays of a more general nature. In each case the document is introduced and annotated. Finally, an Appendix gives a "partial record of the printings and reprintings of 'The Yellow Wall-paper' since 1892" in chronological order. Gilman scholars will find this book indispensable, but no doubt will be as frustrated as I was by the lack of an index and a bibliography.

*University of Glasgow*

MAUREEN MCDERMOTT

Bette Novit Evans, *Interpreting the Free Exercise of Religion: The Constitution and American Pluralism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, \$45.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper). Pp. 294. ISBN 0 8078 2399 6, 0 8078 4674 0.

The First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom marked the United States as a distinct society, very different from its contemporaries. In England, the Established Church was one of the central pillars of the Constitution. It enjoyed extensive power over the private lives of individuals and a nominal membership of 90 per cent of the population. Religion in its broadest sense, as systems of belief, categories of association and ways of locating individuals in the political community, was if anything even more important in America than in England. Establishments largely disappeared, but most states retained the principle that adherence to Christian principles, construed broadly, was essential for the exercise of the rights of republican citizenship. In a predominantly Protestant nation in which the states were the primary units of social and political activity and their governments were the principal legislators, these arrangements were more or less tolerable, and the First Amendment applied only to Congress. The religious structure of the United States became vastly more complex during the ensuing centuries, yet active affiliation to churches of one form or another remained high. Thus the political and legal treatment of religion remained a matter of major concern, and, once the Bill of Rights was extended to cover the states as well as the federal government, the Supreme Court was charged with responsibility of ensuring uniform application of principles throughout the country. Ms Evans examines the development of the Court's jurisprudence during the twentieth century and particularly during recent decades and demonstrates how difficult the task of constructing a uniform and consistent

policy has proved to be. Her incisive and commanding analysis ends with a plea for a pluralist approach. She concedes that it cannot resolve all conflicts but argues that, in being messy, it mirrors American society. The problems lie far less with the major denominations, whose customs in key areas tend to define the standard in such matters as public holidays, as with churches with distinctive teachings and practices that come in conflict with positivist government policies on education and public health. The boundaries between permissible action and religious discrimination require constant refinement, and on occasion there can emerge a logically irreconcilable conflict between two groups. Thus one group may insist that omission of its tenets from public education is discriminatory, while another may insist that inclusion of religious references infringes the principle of separation of church and state.

*Keele University*

COLIN BONWICK

Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, £25). Pp. 326. ISBN 0 520 20723 8.

Insightful and engagingly written, *The White Scourge* draws on personal papers, union and business sources, government records and newspapers in its study of race relations and south-central Texas agriculture between 1820 and the early 1940s. It focuses on the development of cotton cultivation from small farms manned by white tenant families, and white, black and Mexican sharecroppers to agribusiness in which nonwhite workers predominated. In the process, white racial identity fractured. Whites initially regarded tenancy as a ladder towards land ownership, but increasingly it became a permanent condition and even a step towards the degradation of sharecropping. The white middle class began to regard white tenants as the scourge of whiteness imbued with the shiftlessness they also falsely attributed to blacks and Mexicans. Consequently, white tenants lost the status once conferred by their skin colour.

Most white Texans did not recognise nonwhites as American. They regarded as “Mexicans” those born in Mexico and the American-born of Mexican descent. “Mexicans” occupied an indeterminate status between whites and blacks. They were subject to segregation but the lighter-skinned, culturally assimilated or middle class might be accorded honorary white status. Unlike blacks, “Mexicans” could become enfranchised citizens.

As rising land values, expensive credit and falling cotton prices drove whites into tenancy and sharecropping after the turn of the century, some turned to socialist political alliances with their “Mexican” counterparts. White tenants could not overcome their racism to align with blacks, but they attenuated it sufficiently to allow segregated “Mexican” locals, even as they feared “Mexicans” as economic competitors. Texas socialism foundered on the Red Scare stimulated by the First World War.

Even before the war, landowners had often preferred “Mexican” workers as cheap and supposedly compliant. During the 1920s, the tractor and mass

migration from Mexico made the consolidation of large industrial farms possible. Farm managers evicted white tenants and replaced them with “Mexican” cotton pickers. New Deal acreage reduction programmes accelerated the trend. The organising efforts of the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union in response failed because of the different class interests of the tenants and farm workers it recruited. “Mexican” farm labour remained essential until the invention of the cotton picker in the 1950s.

Foley’s nuanced study increases our understanding of the complexity of American race relations and confirms the mutability of racial ideologies. Its faults are limited to a bibliography that includes primary materials among secondary sources.

*University of Derby*

MARK NEWMAN

Lawrence J. Friedman, *Identity’s Architect: A Biography of Erik H. Erikson* (New York: Scribners, 1999, \$35.00). Pp. 592. ISBN 0 684 19525 9.

From his experiences in Vienna in the late 1920s and early 1930s as teacher and trainee child analyst under the tutelage of Anna Freud to his status as eminent American psychologist in the 1960s and 1970s, Erik Erikson persistently sought different ways of bridging the gap between the close empirical study of human behaviour and his interest in an individual’s creative inner life: a technique which would enable him both to passively record and actively reconstitute his patients’ histories in potentially therapeutic ways. Following this double focus, the American historian Lawrence J. Friedman’s intellectual biography of Erikson combines a decade of painstaking research into family documents and clinical records with a wonderfully written and deeply engaged study of Erikson’s personal and professional growth as family man, child analyst, psychologist and intellectual. Friedman argues that Erikson’s “disposition toward constant revision of terms and concepts” prevented him from becoming a systematic thinker, but enabled him to refine a more holistic picture of human activity which was often closer to an aesthetic perspective than to a strictly scientific position.

Written with the working title “Becoming Erik Erikson,” *Identity’s Architect* focuses on the development of Erikson’s own identity, which Friedman argues is the hidden dimension in his formulation of the “identity crisis” as the crucial structuring device in his case studies. Friedman’s interest in Erikson’s ethnic and transatlantic identity, particularly in relation to his change of name from Erik Homburger to Erik H. Erikson in the late 1930s, develops and, in part, defends him from the charges of Marshall Berman who, in the *New York Times Book Review* (March 1975), dubbed Erikson “the man who invented himself” because he ignored his Jewish roots in favour of an acceptable Americanized identity. Although he occasionally indulged in stereotypical notions of Jewishness and “the German mind” in *Childhood and Society* (1950), Friedman argues that Erikson was alone neither in changing his name nor embracing “geographic mobility” and “cultural multiplicity” over “dogmatic” Judaism (a relativistic position shared by Otto Fenichel and Bruno Bettelheim).

Friedman perceptively examines the relation between Erikson's Central European roots and his adopted American identity as a set of "border-crossing inclinations" which may contain irresolvable tensions but also facilitate in his work "the excitement and freedom of shifting ideas, moods, vocations, religious proclivities, geographic settings, and more." Not only did such a position impact centrally on Erikson's four decades of publications but, as Robert Coles states in his foreword to *Identity's Architect*, enabled him to create "out of the ambiguities, mysteries, confusions, of his own past a singular (and publicly as well as professionally intriguing) identity." In tracing the wider cultural, ethnic and historical implications of the theme of identity in Erikson's life and work, Lawrence Friedman's fascinating book represents a major contribution to the scholarship of twentieth-century transatlantic intellectual history.

*De Montfort University, Leicester*

MARTIN HALLIWELL

William A. Gleason, *The Leisure Ethic: Work and Play in American Literature, 1840–1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, £37.50 cloth, £11.95 paper). Pp. 446. ISBN 0 8047 3399 6, 0 8047 3434 8.

Compendious in coverage of its subject, massive in its scholarly apparatus, William A. Gleason's book bears the traces of heavy labour rather than leisure. Although concerned with images of play during a century of American culture, the volume only occasionally attempts ludic performance itself and is marked instead by a professionalized, unremitting production of knowledge. Nevertheless, the reader derives pleasure as well as illumination from this earnest enterprise. For, conceiving of leisure "as serious business – as, paradoxically, the culture's most vital work," Gleason painstakingly reconstructs a discursive formation otherwise known only by specialists: namely, the American play theory which sought, through recreation, to regenerate a nation increasingly subject to mundane, standardized regimes of work. From the archives, Gleason retrieves not just formal manifestos of play, but also scores of magazine articles, advertisements, photographs, even toys, bringing to all of them a detailed critical attention.

By setting their discourses in antithesis to thirteen literary texts from *Walden* to *Native Son*, Gleason seeks to show that the play theorists were actually complicit in the racial, class, and gender biases of the corporate America that they officially opposed. The book proves again the advantages of such familiar modulation from literary to broader cultural study. It is genuinely enlightening, for example, to read Temple Drake's frenzied motion, in Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, as a critique of contemporary burlesque. At times, however, Gleason's drift away from the specifically literary is more troubling: connecting "The Yellow Wall-Paper," say, to details of women's working and recreational practices, he drives out consideration of the imagistic power and surreal surfaces that we might take to be the text's own, anguished forms of play. Yet the energies of *The Leisure Ethic* throughout are frankly centrifugal. Gleason is surely alluding also to his own dispersive procedure when he notes that, for the play theorists, recreation



entailed consideration of “urban slums, racial conflict, industrial labour, ethnic assimilation, mass production, juvenile delinquency, the new woman, the loss of the frontier, illicit amusements.” Indeed, this volume contains several smaller, more disciplined ones – narrowly on the gender politics of recreation, say, or on race and images of play. But Gleason’s digressive method justifies itself wherever it achieves unexpected new combinations of discourses, texts, writers (James Weldon Johnson paired with Fitzgerald, for example, or Gilman with the Girl Scouts): such reconfiguring of American culture represents the book’s own distinctive work – and, after all, its play.

*Loughborough University*

ANDREW DIX

Susan Goodman, *Ellen Glasgow: A Biography* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, £29). Pp. 308. ISBN 0 8018 5728 7.

Despite achieving high book sales and considerable critical acclaim during her own lifetime, until recently Ellen Glasgow was remembered by posterity chiefly as a second-rate regional writer, whose importance lay in paving the way for greater Southern literary talents. Susan Goodman’s biography arrives as a well-timed contribution to the increasing academic interest in re-evaluating Glasgow’s work. Goodman carefully documents Glasgow’s life, from the troubled family background to which Glasgow herself attributed much of the pessimism which characterised her novels, to her final days as a pillar of the literary establishment. Glasgow emerges as an oversensitive, somewhat irascible individual, whose morbid self-dramatisation made her existence outside of her art unbearable. Goodman handles Glasgow’s neurotic disposition with great sensitivity, paying due attention to its very real causes – in particular, the progressive hearing impairment which afflicted most of Glasgow’s adult life – without ignoring the self-indulgent element of Glasgow’s melancholia. She emphasises the contradictions of her subject’s personality: Glasgow was a harsh critic of the nostalgic myth of the Old South who marketed herself to her reading public as a Southern belle, and treasured her connections to Virginia’s aristocracy; a suffragette who tried to conceal her hearing difficulties for as long as possible, fearing that deafness would impair her femininity; a notoriously shy woman, whose refusal to accept her loss of hearing increased her dependence on others, yet who terrorised her publishers into acquiescing to her invariably well-calculated advertising strategies.

Given that Goodman’s greatest strength lies in her ability to relate the events of Glasgow’s life to her development as a writer, it is a pity that she does not devote equal attention to the contradictions of Glasgow’s society, and of Glasgow’s position in that society. For instance, Goodman asserts that Glasgow’s “greatest contribution to literature lies in her frank treatment of race,” yet restricts her discussion of Glasgow’s own racism, the more strident racism then current in the South, and the treatment of race by contemporary Southern writers, to a few scattered observations. Fuller contextualisation is perhaps required if the reader is to arrive at a fair estimation of Glasgow’s life and work. This minor criticism aside, the book is extremely thorough and well researched.

Its only other drawbacks are that it is badly edited, with sentences occasionally stretching syntax to the point of obscurity, and that Goodman's sensitivity to her subject is not always matched by her sensitivity to language.

*University of Essex*

RUTH FRENDON

Cyril M. Harris, *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Norton, 1998, \$42.50). Pp. 370. ISBN 0 393 73029 8.

It would not be hard to be mistaken by the title of this book. Rather than representing an encyclopedic guide to American architecture *per se*, Cyril Harris's new book is an A–Z guide to American architectural *terms*. Following on from the author's previous books, this work is primarily concerned with defining the various construction materials, techniques, devices and decorative elements that have appeared in America. In addition, the scope of the work is itself impressive, spanning the period from Spanish settlement, up to such contemporary architectural concerns as Neo-Eclecticism and New Brutalism.

The main problems with books of this sort lie within the overtly repetitive and technical information on display. There are, for example, definitions for seventy different types of roof (amazingly, the section on the gambrel roof is longer than that of the Chicago School). Yet, often aided by good, clear illustrations, this work is more interesting than tedious. Much of this is due to the uniformly excellent "style" entries. These entries make up a fascinating catalogue of over two hundred building "styles" that have found a home in America. Each entry includes an introduction followed by brief examples of treatment: façade and exterior, roof, window and doorway. Harris's delineating of the various forms of American Gothic (neo, collegiate, revival and steamboat), for example, is precise and devoid of pedantry. Much the same could be said of the many different forms of American Classicism, in addition to many other "styles" such as Mission, Jacobethan, Shingle and Second Empire. Again the illustrations are of great help.

Problems with the work are those typical to any encyclopedia, namely those of selection. It is doubtful whether we really need such definitions as "kitchen: A room intended for the preparation and cooking of food; often, also where meals are eaten," or "door: A barrier (usually solid) that swings, slides, or tilts to close an opening in an entranceway, cabinet, or the like." Further, the New York Crystal Palace is given much room and two illustrations, yet none of America's great railway stations are mentioned. Harris provides information on the covered bridge, yet nothing on the suspension bridge, a form which, to many, inhabits as significant a place in the canon of American architectural icons as the skyscraper. In contrast, skid row receives an entry when, in actuality, it is more of an urban space than an example of architecture. These, though, are criticisms of taste. The work is, against the odds in my opinion, both absorbing and effective.

*University of Leeds*

RICHARD HAW

M. J. Heale, *McCarthy's Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935-1965* (London: Macmillan, 1998, £45). Pp. 370. ISBN 0 333 69833 9.

If the title is ambiguous, the sub-title sets it straight; this is a richly researched, deeply informed study of a movement that both preceded and outlived the man whose name it so often and so confusingly carries and "the purpose of this book is to look beyond the McCarthyites of Capitol Hill to their counterparts in the states." For the author their attack was on three fronts: Exposure by way of Investigating Committees; Patriotism through Loyalty Oaths; Regulation by Communist-Control Laws which he examines in a general overview.

Then he considers three states, Michigan, Massachusetts and Georgia. The first "illustrates the complexity of McCarthyism." It could be elitist; an attempt to roll back the march of the New Deal, the Democratic party and industrial unionism. Equally it could be populist, Eastern Europeans, Catholics and southern white incomers providing a receptive audience. Contrastingly, "If in the industrial Midwest class was initially the mainspring of the anticommunist cause, in Massachusetts it was religion." Again, "in some states a Democratic victory would have strengthened the barriers against an antiradical crusade, but the reverse obtained in Massachusetts." Here it was often McCarthyite Yahoos versus Brahmin nobs, especially Harvard professors. In this respect, the ending of the Korean War did not weaken the attack as in other states; that had to await the 1960s and the passing of the traditional world of the urban ethnic for "Imbedded in red scare politics was a last anxious hurrah for an old order." Similarly, in Georgia, "the guardians of white supremacy were to use anticommunist prejudices to discredit the proponents of change." Still, "perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the anticommunist persuasion in Georgia was the extent to which it was directed at forces external to the state."

Inevitably, there were moments of black humor; the solitary communist in Monterey County, California enthusiastically signing an oath against violent overthrow of the government because it would "collapse from its own rottenness"; the Detroit police commissioner implying that "Soviet agents entered this country recently through Canada disguised as Jewish rabbis"; the Georgia legislature's call for the impeachment of six members of the Supreme Court. Yet overall, as the author persuasively argues in his Conclusion, "McCarthyism was clearly a protean creature"; it is his achievement to illuminate so tellingly just how much.

*University of Liverpool*

JOHN KENTLETON

Lawrence Howe, *Mark Twain and the Novel: The Double-Cross of Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press – Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture, 1999, £37.50 cloth). Pp. 265. ISBN 0 521 56168 X.

Howe takes the disruptions, repetitions, and contradictions in and between Twain's narratives to suggest the problematic relationship between American individualism and the constraints of society. An important element here is Howe's belief that we should place Twain's texts in dialectical relation. Romances

are set against novels. A romance such as *The Prince and the Pauper* “either falls back on the authority it seeks to challenge or buys into the fiction of its own power.” *A Connecticut Yankee*, on the other hand, is a novel to the extent that it “signals its critical skepticism about the authority of the literary enterprise itself.” Other romantic–novelistic pairings include “Old Times on the Mississippi” and *Life on the Mississippi*, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The American Claimant* and *Pudd’nhead Wilson*. Twain’s more demanding texts present us with a “double-cross”: each swindles the reader with the promise of a literary gratification that cannot be delivered.

Those of us, then, who thought *Life on the Mississippi* flawed because Twain was padding out a series of sketches to make a full-length book for the subscription market, are invited to re-read the longer text as a deconstructive challenge to antebellum romanticism. The unitary nostalgia of “Old Times” is replaced by the unravelled heterogeneity of *Life*. Similarly, the unevenness of *Huckleberry Finn* is not so much to do with Twain as a self-described “jack-leg” novelist, but rather is symptomatic of Twain’s wish to demythologize his hero. Howe makes use of Miller’s notion of the “discontented” narrative, whereby the factors that allow the story to happen are not resolved, but are made to appear so via a process of narrative repression. Twain’s novel is more openly discontented, however, and this is the ultimate historical truthfulness of the otherwise unsatisfactory closing chapters: “although Twain invalidates the motivating conflict of Huck’s *Adventures*, he suggests, by including Tom’s ‘evasion,’ that the narratable condition of racial injustice in the story of American culture is insidiously alive, not only in the novel’s antebellum setting but in the postbellum Reconstruction era in which Twain wrote it.”

Howe’s arguments can seem quite familiar, or they can seem to be “stretchers,” but he always makes a thorough and detailed case. The question of authority, in relation to Twain’s doubles, repetitions, impostors, and narrative disruptions, is quite well-worn. Bakhtinians, and those of a sociably deconstructionist persuasion, have found a great resource in Twain, and perhaps the best recent work has been in this area (one thinks of Sewall, Marotti, Gillman, Michelson, Messent, Lowery, and Knoper). There are significant moments at which Howe offers something different. His dialectical approach allows him to bring in otherwise somewhat neglected texts, and in itself this model offers a way of thinking through the fact that Twain’s work is, by turns, so tiresome and so unusual. The reader may yet feel, though, that this study does not quite emerge from the shadow of work of a similar bent.

*Queen’s University, Belfast*

PETER STONELEY

Burt Kimmelman, *The “Winter Mind”: William Bronk and American Letters* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1998, £30.00). Pp. 211. ISBN 0 8386 3790 6.

William Bronk is eighty years old and has passed most of those years in the small town of Hudson Falls in upper New York State, a few miles from the border with Vermont, living there in the white-painted, wooden house where he grew up. For

much of that time he ran a lumberyard, inherited from his father. "I was not much of a businessman. I got along." Three centuries before his own birth his first American ancestor was farming further down the Hudson river at "The Broncks' Place," familiar to us now as the Bronx. About a man who has been termed an "antibiograph" and who finds interviews "false and abominable things," that is enough to say, apart from the fact that he is a great poet, to several of his discerning readers the greatest living American poet, and to Henry Weinfield, the editor of his *Selected Poems*, "one of the great American poets of our century."

His work, though, remains relatively little known. It has been the subject of a number of essays, and Special Issues of magazines have been devoted to him, notably of *Grosseteste Review* in 1972 and of *Sagetrieb* and *Talisman* shortly after his seventieth birthday. However, Burt Kimmelman's *The "Winter Mind"* is the first book-length study, the intellectually strenuous tribute of a whole-hearted admirer, who has been committed to the cause since he "first set eyes on Bronk more than thirty years ago," when a college sophomore. In four chapters, entitled with appropriate plainness "Geography," "Solitude," "Presence," and "Worldlessness," Kimmelman provides an excellent introduction to Bronk's poetry and prose, to his poetic and philosophical antecedents and kindred spirits, to his connections with locality and region, to the conceptual and formative importance for him of European music and painting and of twentieth-century physics and mathematics, and thus to the rare cast of his mind and of the poetry which speaks that mind. For newcomer to Bronk and old hand alike, this is a thoroughly informative and enlightening guide.

Bronk's closest contemporaries, by intellectual affinity and literary friendship, have been Oppen, Olson, Corman, and Creeley; the initially overshadowing elders were Frost and Stevens; the venerated predecessors are Thoreau, Melville, and Dickinson. His relations with these various figures Kimmelman examines in penetrating detail. They are New Englanders, most of them, by birth or adoption; or they are North-Easterners, all of them. That's where Bronk is from, as inescapably as Faulkner was from Mississippi. "This is where I am, this is home," where "I stay ... and bitch about the weather." So, whilst he is neither puritanical nor transcendental, his lineage is altogether Puritan and Transcendentalist, his life's work a kind of spiritual autobiography, both contemplative and probing, the poetry evincing, in Kimmelman's words, "a progressive tendency towards imageless statements," declarative and unornamented, Yankee-laconic and wry, simultaneously straight-talking and tongue-in-cheek. Plain truth is what Bronk's about, though plainly there is no truth, except as we make and unmake it. "All of it will disperse. Do not believe."

If the North East is Bronk's region, winter is his season, and Kimmelman's title aptly chosen, to mark the number of poems in which winter sets the tone of things or assumes the irreducible quality of being. "We see light but we live in the cold and the dark." Bronk's mental landscape is indeed characteristically wintry-bleak and bare of comforting superfluities, the setting for an insistent, unrelieved scepticism, a refusal of both faith and knowledge. "I plead the permanence / of ignorance, that we acknowledge it. / It goes where we go, gets there first, and waits / to be the find we make wherever we think / to have

gone.” “Ignorance” is the title of one of Kimmelman’s sub-sections; others are “Abnegation,” “Loss,” “Silence,” “Solitude,” “Emptiness,” and “Worldlessness,” way-stations along what elsewhere has been called Bronk’s “*via negativa* of the mystical tradition,” though at the end of Bronk’s way it is “plain that there was never to be / the City of God ... / and here we are. Nowhere to go.” So, “despair is all,” but in the same small poem, “I am joy,” the two inseparably dancing together. And certainly Bronk’s “worldlessness” entails in no respect a rejection or denial or transcendence of whatever is “the world,” whose very beauty may almost, briefly, endure: “I can be glad in my death that, selfless, / the beauty of the world goes on; and then more: / even worldless, that beauty still.”

Paradoxical, solipsistic, tautologous, Bronk’s mode of vision may seem altogether postmodern, post-religious, post-tragic. But he may also and more significantly appear to be the latest in an ancient line, as he does to Weinfield, for whom he is “essentially a religious poet, in the sense of one committed to ultimate things, a poet of severe beauty and sudden tenderness”; just as, for Gilbert Sorrentino, he is the spokesman of “a world that is tragic, a world of which there is, indeed, nothing to say.” In these ever more babbling, prattling times, Bronk is all the more essential reading, and Kimmelman the necessary interpreter. “The arts speak in private to the silent world. / They stay unanswered for centuries.”

*University of Essex*

R. W. (HERBIE) BUTTERFIELD

Paul Kruty, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Midway Gardens* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998, \$44.95). Pp. 352. 218 photographs and 20 linecuts. ISBN 0 252 02366 8.

Sometimes statements of grandeur are not delusional. Though Paul Kruty hubristically claims that “here ... is the complete history of Midway Gardens,” he cannot be far from the truth. At 352 pages and some 238 illustrations (including many new prints from original glass negatives) this is the most comprehensive and definitive study of one of Wright’s most dramatic and least understood public buildings. Built in 1914 and demolished just fifteen years later, Midway Gardens has long remained an enigma even though it has long been recognized as a masterful and important work. Sited at the edge of the Midway Plaisance, the most popular and boisterous part of the Columbia Exposition of 1893, and built at the far edge of Wright’s first period, Midway Gardens is a crucial monument not only to Wright’s architecture, but also to the developing urban culture of Chicago.

The book will activate the salivary glands of all Wright lovers, since it contains such a wealth of illustrations and documentary evidence about Midway Gardens, a detailed history of the building’s construction, its links to a European and American “architecture of pleasure,” and a wise unraveling of the reasons for its demise so soon after construction. There is also ample adoration of Wright and a consistent awestruck tone in describing this, one of “the most extraordinary monuments in the history of American architecture.”

Especially impressive are Kruty's attempts to place Midway Gardens in a larger context, not just of architectural influences, but the "architecture of pleasure," European modernism, and the social and cultural setting of Chicago. In this project, he is helping to bridge the gap between social historians and architectural historians. In general, architectural historians have stubbornly resisted changes that affected so many other fields of history, and have preferred to continue producing narrowly focused studies of individual buildings and their architects. While this work – like Jack Quinan's study of Wright's Larkin Building – still shines the light on one great architect and his work, it considerably widens its scope. By showing the German roots of the pleasure-garden form, and highlighting the speculative energy behind entertainment enterprises in Chicago, we suddenly see a broader logic behind Wright's complex creation.

Kruty rescues Midway Gardens, if not from the wrecking ball, at least from scholars' simplistic interpretations which have rested on a lack of information. By uncovering long-obscured documents and illustrations, and interpreting them for his readers in a clear and compelling manner, Kruty shows this to be a remarkable work of architecture, revealing of both Wright's architectural genius at the moment of transition and urban culture in the midst of war and Prohibition-era Chicago.

*Georgia State University*

MAX PAGE

Valerie L. Kuletz, *The Tainted Desert: Environmental Ruin in the American West* (New York: Routledge, 1998, £45). Pp. 336. ISBN 0 145 91770 0.

The focus of this thoroughly researched and erudite text is the social and environmental impact of nuclear colonialism by Euroamerica, on the landscapes and Native American peoples of the American West. The use of an ethnoecological methodology enables the writer to regard the Native and Euroamerican perspectives on nuclear colonialism as of equal importance. From the unique position of an "insider," the writer, in Part One of the book, undertakes to map the nuclear landscapes of the study region as a means of increasing the visibility of the consequences of the unrelenting despoilation of the western landscape – the homeland of many Native American groups – by the alliance between the Euroamerican scientific, industrial and military communities. From the point of view of the Native Americans, whose cultural and economic homelands provided the land for the nuclear activities discussed in the text, it was to prove a deadly alliance. The painstaking, meticulous and innovative research which is manifest throughout the text identifies the location of the many elements of the Euroamerican exploitive complex, and describes the nature and characteristics of each location and its impact on the Native American groups affected. As it examines the politico-social aspects of the study, the Euroamerican cultural perception of these places as empty wilderness areas is shown to be a contributing factor in the justification for their wanton exploitation as nuclear dumps, testing grounds and outdoor laboratories. The writer elegantly demonstrates that the Euroamerican perception of these places as vacant and

valueless is one of convenience and not due to ignorance, but representing not only a deliberate attempt to legitimise their exploitation, but also a most cynical disregard for the cultural and economic significance of these sacred lands for the Native Americans. In Part Two, the main themes established in Part One are minutely examined in a detailed and articulate study of the Yucca Mountain Project, in which not only are the geographies of exploitation and exclusion revisited, but a new dimension to the study is introduced through an in-depth analysis of the group dynamics involved and the exercise of power politics in the manifestly unequal situation which exists between the nuclear colonists and the anti-nuclear colonist both Native American and Euroamerican. This text represents for the author a major *tour de force* and for the rest of us a most compelling and apposite contribution to the nuclear debate both in and beyond the United States. It is also a most welcome addition to the growing literature on the theme of science, technology and society in American Studies. An eminently commendable read for all Americanists.

*University of Wolverhampton*

PETER MCLEAY

Robert S. Levine (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, £37.50, \$59.95 cloth, £13.95, \$17.95 paper). Pp. 305. ISBN 0 521 55477 2, 0 521 55571 X.

Robert Levine acknowledges that his contribution to the series of "Cambridge Companion" volumes comes along at the end of two decades of canonical revision of nineteenth-century American literature. These reconsiderations have touched, too, upon the work of Herman Melville and resulted in notices from critics Levine characterises as either "traditional" or "newer." *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville* accommodates a wide range of such views, including discussions of enough works to make this a valuable supplement to Melville studies at the undergraduate level.

Students desiring insightful readings of individual novels will be drawn immediately to Samuel Otter's "Race in *Typee* and *White-Jacket*" and, especially, John Bryant's "*Moby-Dick* as Revolution." Readers more concerned with the wider implications of Melville's work will be interested in Paul Giles' "Bewildering Intertanglement: Melville's Engagement with British Culture." Giles wishes to account for the current nebulous standing of Melville's works within the British academic establishment by tracing the author's problematised connection with British culture itself. As a result, Giles considers not only the history of Melville's reception, but also the manner in which the author came to view the British and the use to which these views were put throughout his fiction. Giles observes that the relatively brief attention afforded Melville by British critics today contrasts the standing he gained with British bohemians in his time. He argues that trends in the American criticism of Melville throughout the first half of the twentieth century encouraged narrow, insular lines of inquiry that distanced works from their British readership. These subsequent developments do not diminish the importance of British literary models for understanding Melville, however, nor do they limit the profound effect his travels in Britain had



upon him. The furthest extension of Melville's "cross-cultural" perspective can be seen in *Billy Budd*, as the Handsome Sailor is drawn to the bosom of the British establishment aboard the ship the *Bellipotent*. Giles emphasises the comparative function of this text: Melville uses analogous American circumstances to reflect back onto American society the significance of the events that confront the doomed seaman.

Melville's last and, in some sense, still his most contentious text is addressed in more than half the essays in this volume. And, not surprisingly, *Billy Budd* is central to Robert Martin's "Melville and Sexuality." Martin points out that Billy's beauty is a disruptive force on the high seas, problematising the "mutiny" with which he is accused. Indeed, *Billy Budd* is rife with uncomfortable categorisations, illustrating the new suppleness Melville's texts have found within the contemporary critical community. In some sense, this realisation is crucial to the appreciation of a volume of essays like this one: opening the door to the sorts of reconsiderations Levine chooses to include here.

University of Lethbridge, Alberta

CRAIG MONK

Joan Pong Linton, *The Romance of the New World: Gender and the Literary Formations of English Colonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, £35.00, US\$59.95). Pp. 268. ISBN 0 521 59454 5.

This well-researched book focuses on the period in history when British colonial activities in America began to have an impact on domestic social structures, accelerating the transition from a feudal society to one increasingly governed by commerce. Linton gives us significant new insight into the exchange between colonial narratives and popular romances dating from 1575 to 1625; her work analyses how men tried to stabilise their own identity amidst shifting social and cultural values by displacing their fears onto literary constructions of inconstant and morally inferior English women and American Indians. Establishing important links between romances and colonial literature, like Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana*, the study brings to light how their heroes captivated audiences by tapping into masculine desires of upward mobility outside the court, yet in the service of the nation. Male heroes of colonial narratives, however, often fell short of the romance ideal of the bourgeois entrepreneur, portrayed in Richard Johnson's *Tom A Lincoln*. As one might expect, the empire at home and abroad did not always go unchallenged; included in this study are a few female critiques of empire, like *Jane Anger Her Protection of Women*, which are outweighed by stronger male voices, foremost that of the Catholic Thomas Lodge in *A Margarite of America*.

A central part of the book reveals how the relationships between the sexes and between English merchants and Indian consumers were shaped by the exchange of commodities. A particularly engaging discussion centres on the cloth trade. In her reading of *Jack of Newbery* by Thomas Deloney and Drake's voyage to California (taken from Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*), Linton demonstrates how the trade became a vehicle for male fantasies to become masters of women and Indians, equating the domestication and dispossession of English women

with the civilising of Americans. Similarly innovative readings can be found in chapters on the tobacco trade and on anxieties originating in a market economy. While there is not much new to be said about the role of Protestant agrarianism in colonial discourses, this study puts a new slant on an old theme in a reading of *The Tempest* and narratives of the Virginia colony, exploring the intertextuality of husbandry and rape.

America did not only become a place to disseminate British goods and values at the turn of the sixteenth century, but it transformed Englishmen's identity at home and abroad – an unsettling new reality which writers sought to contain and control in the language of romance and colonial narratives. As Linton persuasively shows, history and fiction, colonialism and romance intertwined in the emerging capitalist society, exchanging a language and symbolism which men used to redefine themselves by dominating others.

*St. Catherine's College, Oxford*

ASTRID WIND

Adam Lively, *Masks: Blackness, Race and the Imagination* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998, £20). Pp. 295. ISBN 0 7011 6244 9.

Adam Lively's readable study concerns the idea of black identity as a mask imposed by society, constructed of images drawn from European imaginings of blackness, but also deployed knowingly within a black aesthetic in which fluidity of identity and the ability to play to a situation constitute the cultural dowry of blacks to modern – and particularly modernist – culture. So far (for those who have read their H. L. Gates) so unsurprising. Indeed, the broad sweep of the volume makes it something of a roll-call of famous men and movements, particularly in the second part (on twentieth-century literature) where Conrad, O'Neill, the Harlem Renaissance, Larsen, Toomer, Primitivism, Chesnutt, jazz, Ellison, Senghor, Césaire, Sartre, Genet, Baldwin, Ellison, Mailer and rap all come in for attention. But there are some real surprises too. Part One explores eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideas of blackness, especially as regards the decline of Christian cultural hegemony, the naturalisation of the novel from romance to "true story," the image of the black as close to nature (either as "authentic" or as evil) and above all the exaltation of victimhood by evangelical Christianity. Lively argues convincingly (and with command of scholarship on both sides of the question) that histories of racial attitudes overestimate the esoteric researches of racial "theorists" and neglect the influence – still pervasive – of the popular culture of abolitionism. This influence runs forwards, from a host of popular works on slavery in the 1780s and 1790s, to Conrad (*The Nigger of the Narcissus* as attack on philanthropic sentimentalism), Richard Wright (the famous example of bankers' daughters weeping over *Native Son*) and even John Travolta (reversal of roles in *White Man's Burden* compared to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Empsaël*). The struggle between Sentimental and Gothic (Little Eva in the white corner, Simon Legree in the black) continues into the violently apocalyptic concerns of Mailer and Baldwin, culminating in the Grand Guignol effects of Updike's turn towards tricksterism in *Rabbit Redux*. For Lively, Rabbit is emphatically not racist. Rather than buying into the myths, Updike notates

their display in the character of Skeeter, a conscious composite of stereotypes old and new. It is only a pity that he did not extend this analysis to *Rabbit at Rest* and the hero's encounter with black Florida and the labour on which the Disneyfied society of the spectacle is built. Criticisms? It would have been better to have precise attributions rather than references to "at least one commentator" or "one recent history." And the brisk pace makes for some bald statements. (Lively takes Stowe's temperance at face value, though she wrote largely fuelled by Catawba wine. Was jazz completely banned in the post-revolutionary Soviet bloc? Why was I dancing to it with Young Pioneers in Leningrad in 1964?) But the account of the sentimental cult of the victim strikes an uneasy chord with today's enthusiasm for accounts of domestic violence, child abuse, trauma – and perhaps, even, of race?

University of Nottingham

JUDIE NEWMAN

Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (London: University of California Press, 1999, £24.95). Pp. 568. ISBN 0 520 21427 7.

Wherever he went as house-guest, Whitman used to tie the curtains in knots to let in more light. His biographers and critics have been tying themselves in knots for decades in an attempt to illuminate the life that led to the poems; but this latest biography promises to be the leading light in the field for some time. For the pioneering thoroughness of Allen's *Solitary Singer*, the panache of the lives by Kaplan and Zweig, and the inspired doggedness of Reynolds's cultural portrait, Loving substitutes a non-partisan study strong in pungent common sense. It is a timely approach, given that Whitman studies have featured so prominently in the *kulturkampf* of contemporary America. However, as Loving confirms, it was always thus. Not for nothing did William Sloane Kennedy entitle his 1926 study *The Fight of a Book for the World*. Over recent decades, though, it has become more of a case of the fight of the world for a book. Every faction in America, it seems, wants a piece of *Leaves of Grass*.

Loving's is an admirably sober study, carefully understated in tone, drily conservative in its treatment of key issues (most evident in balanced reflections on Whitman's sexuality), and never overriding the facts. He is as effective at taking the heat out of current debates as he is at taking the wind out of Walt's more voluminous billowing sails. He takes the exact measure of Whitman's self-serving subterfuges without presuming he thereby reduces the scale of the poet's remarkable achievements.

This biography excels in several respects. It includes new disclosures (e.g. a new early poem); it illuminates several of the shadowier periods in Whitman's life (e.g. his months in New Orleans); it casts reasonable doubt on the authorship of some materials (e.g. reactionary editorials in the *Brooklyn Daily Times* previously ascribed to Whitman); and it incorporates important recent scholarship (Folsom on the messy compilation of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*; Klammer on slavery; Stansel on New York Bohemia; Ceniza on women reformers; Murray on Pete Doyle; Loving himself on George Whitman, O'Connor, and the Whitman–Emerson relationship). Above all, it is very well informed, judicious, and a work

of scholarly integrity. Who touches this does indeed touch a man; and yet – and this is the strangest of this book's strengths – we are left feeling that the poetry may still be another story.

*University of Wales, Swansea*

M. WYNN THOMAS

William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999, \$24.95). Pp. 444. ISBN 0 252 06696 0.

William Mahar's important study of the development and composition of the minstrel show in the two decades prior to the Civil War treads a difficult path with a great deal of agility. Without seeking to downplay the assumption of white supremacy which motivated many of the sketches and burlesques during what was often a lengthy evening's entertainment, Mahar questions those accounts and histories which have focused exclusively on the racial issues of minstrelsy. While acknowledging the force of Frederick Douglass's comment that minstrels were "the filthy scum of white society," Mahar notes that Douglass was unfamiliar with the non-racial elements of a typical repertory. Based on the examination of a large number of songs and sketches, and careful reconstruction of the practice of performance, Douglass's influential but narrow focus is broadened by Mahar to embrace many of the pressing cultural and social questions of antebellum America. He demonstrates how tensions surrounding the increased presence of women in public roles, for example, found an outlet in blackface parody of reform lectures. Similarly, suspicion of the transient enthusiasms of revivalist religion was articulated in burlesque sermons.

This form of mass popular entertainment also participated in the same anxieties over European cultural influence that were preoccupying those American writers keen to establish a national literature. In a fascinating chapter charting the appropriation of Italian opera into the minstrelsy shows, Mahar discusses how, for example, Bellini's *La Sonnambula* (1831) underwent a process of Americanisation which was both a critique of a socially exclusive art form and a celebration of an indigenous and accessible vernacular. "Minstrelsy exploited class distinctions so often," Mahar writes, "that Italian operatic music was as much a part of the whole burnt cork routine as any borrowed plantation dance."

Central to the ability of minstrelsy performers to ridicule aspects of society without posing a threat to its survival was the blackface make-up. Mahar is convincing on the ways in which the temporary inhabiting of the "other" behind a protective mask shielded the performer from direct connection with the views being satirised. Creative freedom of this kind encouraged the growth of a topical spectacle which, while certainly reflecting the fear of racial difference prevalent in a society which was rapidly becoming less homogenous, found its targets just as frequently in other varieties of difference – sexual, economic, and geographic. Mahar's book is a brave addition to (and adjustment of) a historiography which has been unwilling to consider minstrelsy's wider implications and more far-reaching impact.

*Cambridge University*

ANDREW TAYLOR

Michael Manheim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Eugene O'Neill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, £37.50 cloth, £13.95 paper). Pp. 256, ISBN 0 521 55389 X, 0 521 55645 7.

Considering the weight of existing O'Neill criticism, pound on pound, it might be thought difficult to justify adding more ounces to it, but if you want a comprehensive, and carefully selected, set of articles that will inform and nigggle general and student readers, this collection will serve. The volume offers backgrounds in O'Neill's upbringing and literary and theatrical influences, studies of the plays and their performances, and a series of essays on such topics as inter-war America, O'Neill's representations of racial and religious minorities and of women, and the plays O'Neill left unfinished or unwritten.

Student readers of the volume should be warned, however, not to imitate its writing. It is often difficult to discern any critical criteria on the basis of which O'Neill's work is here being judged. There are some hot flushes of an ageing kind of writing. Ronald Wainscott writes of "great or near-great productions of the most exciting and influential plays." James A. Robinson classifies O'Neill as an "artistic playwright." Margaret Loftus Ranald is of the opinion that "one cannot explain the workings of genius." Stylistically, some of the scholars are in the thrall of their master, linguistic inflation producing effects whose sound is greater than their meaning. Kurt Eisen's prose, for instance, rings with excited adjectives and adverbs, dissuading one even further than one might otherwise have been dissuaded from seeing O'Neill's plays on screen.

Too many of the writers seem to be under the impression that a mere statement that they are impressed is sufficient to impress the reader. Absorbed in their material, most seem indisposed to question its value, although the editor bravely places the one negative appraisal of O'Neill and his followers last in the volume, running the risk that Matthew H. Wikander's cool demolition may sound conclusive. Readers of Wikander may indeed feel that there is no discrepancy between his contempt for O'Neill and Manheim's enthusiasm. O'Neill may be pre-eminent as "America's leading playwright" and still be a bad playwright who only seems good because the others are even worse. If this were true, of course, there would be an even greater need for a volume such as this to keep the industry going.

University of Essex

ROGER HOWARD

Ian Marshall, *Story Line: Exploring the Literature of the Appalachian Trail* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998, \$55). Pp. 284. ISBN 0 8139 1798 0.

In *Story Line: Exploring the Literature of the Appalachian Trail*, Ian Marshall, a Professor of English, combines his passions for literature and hiking into a charming combination of personal journey and literary exploration. As he hikes the 2,150 mile Appalachian Trail, winding from Mount Springer, Georgia to Mount Katahdin, Maine, Marshall follows "a path of verbal creations on the land." *Story Line* represents a literary trail-guide in which the author interweaves his own experiences of the places and people he encounters with an accomplished

exploration of various works of non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and myth set in locales along the trail. The book begins with a discussion of Cherokee creation myths, and moves on to discuss the perceptions of nature and place within works by Bartram, Murfree, Jefferson, Whitman, and Melville, amongst others. Marshall also finds time to discuss broader issues such as religion and nature, ecofeminism, and wilderness as a cultural construct. The book concludes with a eulogistic chapter on Thoreau's essay "Ktaadn," not just representative of the end of the trail, but also symbolic of Thoreau's place at the literary pinnacle of American nature writing.

*Story Line* is imbued with Marshall's own love for wilderness and wild nature. Walking the trail signifies treading on "sacred ground," and symbolizes a spiritual journey to bond with the land and others who have been inspired by it. Marshall urges that stories need to be connected with places, to be brought "back to earth." The concept of blending the material and literary landscapes of the past certainly offers fertile ground for further studies. Arguing that "literary critics need to get out more often," Marshall admirably demonstrates how nature represents far more than a simple background setting to the human story. Although Marshall intends to take literature outdoors and extend its natural habitat beyond the confines of the library, occasionally the real trail in *Story Line* gets lost in his literary rambles. The book's in-depth critical commentary is also more suited to "thru-hikers" of literature, and those familiar with the works will most appreciate Marshall's insights. Nevertheless, "day hikers" will find themselves wanting to explore further. *Story Line* inspires the reader to take to the hills and seek out the library of the land.

*University of Bristol*

KAREN WILLS

Jill Matus, *Toni Morrison* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998, £35.00 cloth, £9.99 paper). Pp. 208. ISBN 0 7190 4447 2, 0 7190 4448 0.

Jill Matus has produced an introduction to the work of Toni Morrison that is highly engaging, because of both its sure-footed textual analysis and its knowledge of the vast body of criticism which now surrounds the author's work. The text addresses all of the major works, including a postscript on *Paradise*, which was published while the study was at press.

The study places at its centre the motifs of history and memory that Morrison constantly addresses. In her opening chapter, Matus analyses some of the key influences upon Morrison, pausing over the exhortation of W. E. B. du Bois for African Americans to challenge colonial history: "while you can't blame the conqueror for writing history his own way, you can certainly debate it." It is the nature of Morrison's debate with the dominating American mythopoeia which Matus tackles in her subtle book. She considers the testimonial dimension of Morrison's fiction, and the possibility that her novels may be seen as "ceremonies of proper burial" for the traumas of the past. She warns, however, against the danger of viewing her work as an expiation of historical wrongs. For Morrison, she argues, remembering is "never simply curative," and the most painful aspects of the African American past often remain unassimilable.

Matus's text refers to psychological theory frequently, comparing for example the effect upon the reader of Morrison's traumatised fictional characters' testimony with that of Holocaust survivors. She returns to the difficulty of transforming painful memory into narrative as a recurrent theme, suggesting that the typical unwillingness of the Morrison narrator to observe linearity has a symbolic function, reminding the reader that "trauma often expresses itself in a dysfunction of memory."

The study skilfully interweaves references to many of the main scholarly works on Morrison. Matus's detailed notes explore the legacy of criticism from the last two decades, and a chapter is devoted to a typically clear and detailed critical overview. She reflects on the diversity within Morrison scholarship, ranging from critiques of her use of the folktale to investigations of the post-structural concepts of division and dissolution. Against this dizzying array, Matus's own book seems relatively simple. She tackles the issue which rests at the centre of Morrison's work with admirable lucidity and scrutinises the criticism which already exists with the same clear-sightedness.

Rollins College, Florida

KATE RHODES

Joyce McDonald. *The Stuff of Our Forebears: Willa Cather's Southern Heritage* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1998, £21.95). Pp. 142. ISBN 0 8173 0920 9.

Joyce McDonald's text foregrounds Willa Cather's ambivalent relationship to a Southern literary tradition which, she argues, is evident throughout her work in the complex deployment of pastoral modes. These are paradoxically rooted in both mythical and historical aspirations, signifying Cather's attempts to resist industrialisation (associated with the North) in a preferred heroic and retrospective focus. This is emblematic of a desire to find order in and recapture an "edenic" past (linked to the South and the plantation myths of slavery) and inspired in Cather by an intertextual relationship with Virgil's *Eclogues*. Such an interpretation is discussed via thematic preoccupations considered typical of a Southern literary imagination: namely, class consciousness and the convention of "noblesse oblige" in benevolent power hierarchies and their "dark underside"; aesthetic motifs (not only the pastoral but also African American conventions of orality in stories within stories, highlighted only to be almost entirely glossed over); a sense of place (complete with exile and loss); and, finally, historical context (slavery and migration to the West).

McDonald illuminates the discrepancies and contradictions inherent in her basic premise in the lack of explicit references to the South in Cather's *œuvre*. The fact that the South is only obvious in the content of one of Cather's novels provides an irreconcilable tension throughout. McDonald's analyses of a "typical" Southern "collective imagination" is impeded by little to no debate concerning the strategies of Cather's Southern contemporaries. However, extra-textual evidence supplied by the study of scrapbooks, interviews in newspapers, letters and partially destroyed manuscripts, is interweaved knowledgeably; the fragile nature of conclusions drawn from such material (often demanding a

different interpretative framework to literature) is conscientiously signposted. The intellectual force of McDonald's book resides in the notion of Cather as a writer of opposites or "doubleness" (representative of a "dichotomous nature") and that it is in these shifting paradigms that her ironical Southern identity emerges. McDonald's work does suffer, however, from a prescriptive desire to make Cather politically correct with regard to minority cultures, and a disinclination to fully explore her ideas. Offering an under-developed reading of *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*, McDonald aligns the consciousness of Sapphira with Till only to ignore the radical possibilities implicit in equal racial juxtapositioning.

This book combines good close textual readings (such as in the politicised symbol of the "garden") on a number of texts with interesting (often quirky) biographical and contextual information. Nevertheless, this is in some measure undermined by the critical need to problematise McDonald's symmetrical correlation of the fictional with the historical. Ultimately, the conflict between Cather's "aesthetic vision" and "ideological position," characterised in her "narrative ambiguity," is raised by McDonald only to remain fundamentally unresolved.

*University of Nottingham*

CELESTE-MARIE BERNIER

Perry G. Mehrling, *The Money Interest and the Public Interest: American Monetary Thought, 1920–1970* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, Harvard Economic Studies, Vol. 162, 1998, £29.95). Pp. 283. ISBN 0 674 58430 9.

Mehrling has provided a useful account of the development, eclipse, and recovery of American monetary thought in the twentieth century, by analysing the careers of three important economists, Allyn Young (1876–1929), Alvin Hansen (1887–1975), and Edward Shaw (1908–1994). Young, a student of Ely, became a professor of Economics in Harvard in 1920, and at the LSE in 1927. His major work was his *Analysis of Bank Statistics for the United States* (1928), but his regular contributions to Ely's *Outlines of Economics* summarised the development of monetary thought between 1908 and 1923. His great interest in the 1920s was the Federal Reserve's control of the business cycle – a subject still of some interest. Hawtrey had shown how the Bank of England controlled the British trade cycle, but Young argued American big business was less responsive to interest rate changes than British commerce, and advocated better theory and statistics. He died in March 1929, just before the depression proved the impotence of monetary instruments in the face of a major disaster.

Hansen was also a student of Ely, and a professor of economics at Harvard, 1937–1956. By 1927, building on Mitchell's data and Schumpeter's ideas, he had decided that technical change and capital spending rather than money determined the cycle. Initially, Hansen thought the depression was a severe but self-correcting Kondratiev made worse by monetary abnormalities. However, the 1937 recession led him to question automatic recovery in his *Full Recovery or Stagnation* (1938), and to suggest forceful remedies in *Fiscal Policy and Business Cycles* (1941). Hansen is usually portrayed as the American Saul, to Keynes'



Messiah, propagating rather than inventing the Keynesian message, but Mehrling argues Hansen grasped the essential countercyclical ideas – the need in his term for “New Frontiers” – independently, but copied Keynes’ superior presentation. The Keynesian paradigm dominated post-war theory, and most leading American economists rapidly adopted formidable mathematical modelling techniques. Shaw therefore, trained as a monetarist institutionalist in California in the 1920s, had to struggle nearly all his career against a dominant orthodoxy. Nevertheless, his three major books, *Money, Income and Monetary Policy* (1950), *Money in a Theory of Finance* (1960), written with John Gurley, and *Financial Deepening in Economic Development* (1973), helped fire the monetarist counter-revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and made important contributions to economic history and economic development.

Mehrling’s approach is a good alternative to the single great name biography, or the outline survey collaging many contributors. He has sufficient room to relate Young, Hansen, and Shaw’s characters to their careers, to their contributions, and to the general trend. All three were institutionalists using historical, or European, insights to develop and publicise theory in the hope they could advance the public interest. The Hansen chapters on the Keynesian revolution will probably be more interesting and accessible for general readers than the more technical monetary chapters, but all contain interesting insights.

Leeds University

JOHN KILICK

James R. Mellow, *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, £16.50). Pp. 684. ISBN 0 801 85900 x.

One of the difficulties which Henry James felt himself to be confronted with when writing about Hawthorne in 1879 was the scarcity of biographical material pertaining to his subject. Hawthorne’s life, he wrote, “was probably as tranquil and uneventful a one as ever fell to the lot of a man of letters.” With the reissue of James Mellow’s lengthy account of Hawthorne’s career (the book was first published in 1980), James’s judgement of provincial emptiness seems increasingly wide of the mark.

Mellow charts with dogged thoroughness Hawthorne’s childhood in Salem and Maine, his less than distinguished academic career at Bowdoin College, the anonymous appearance of the early tales and sketches in the burgeoning (and precarious) world of magazine publishing, the relative success of *Twice-Told Tales*, and the phenomenal success of *The Scarlet Letter*. He is particularly strong when detailing his subject’s successful attempts (*pace* James) at securing federal government posts and financial security through his association with the likes of Franklin Pierce and George Bancroft. Yet there is a sense in which the accumulation of such detail is finally unsatisfactory, impressive enough in archaeologically reconstructing the contours of Hawthorne’s day-to-day life but unable to offer any fresh insight into the Hawthorne sensibility and, especially, the Hawthorne canon. This is partly the fault of Mellow’s decision to include in his book what he calls “the circumstantial details” of his subject’s culture, a strategy which results in obtrusive and inadequate digressions on the lives of

some of the prominent figures of the time. Elizabeth Peabody's employment as Bronson Alcott's assistant at his Temple School, for example, is an interesting encounter between two contrasting minds, but the story's relevance to a Hawthorne biography is tenuous. Similarly, Margaret Fuller's eventful career, from her employment at the New York *Tribune* in 1844 to her drowning off Fire Island six years later, is summarised in less than five pages. It is as if James's estimation of biographical paucity is suddenly and anxiously remembered, and the supporting characters are introduced and their stories told to bolster the central narrative.

As literary criticism, Mellow's book is perfunctory, to say the least. Often a summary of a particular tale is all that is offered (the account of "Rappacini's Daughter" is a striking example of the *précis* technique), and throughout the concern is with constructing an unproblematic connection between Hawthorne's life and his texts, allowing Mellow not to have to worry too much about the many intractabilities within the texts themselves. As literary history, his work has been surpassed by more recent books. For example, the depiction of the stable and fulfilled nature of the Hawthorne marriage has been challenged by T. Walter Herbert's *Dearest Beloved* (1993); and Mellow's inability to engage with the roots of Hawthorne's Puritan, anti-Emersonian darkness renders Michael Colacurcio's *The Province of Piety* (1984) all the more valuable. Yet as a general introductory biography, with some of the limitations such a genre may possess for the literary scholar, there is no doubt that Mellow's book is perfectly adequate. Back in 1980 he had intended it to be one of a series of interlinking volumes on mid-nineteenth-century writers, an aspiration retained in the Author's Note to this reissue. Such an ambitious project, should it ever appear, might offer Mellow the luxury of avoiding the twin problems of biographical diffuseness and critical simplicity which characterise this book.

*Selwyn College, Cambridge*

ANDREW TAYLOR