Books on the American renaissance have been known to come in big, so it will come as something of a relief to those trying to keep abreast of the literature that Abrams’s book is a mere 130 pages (plus extensive notes, bibliography and index). In comparison to its longer forebears, from Matthiessen to Buell and Reynolds, Landscape and Ideology in American Renaissance Literature is not just slimmer in size, but also in thematic reach, ambition and, with no disrespect to the author’s intention, in likely effect. Abrams’s book is, rather, a meticulous reading of a restricted number of authors who reveal something of his conception of “negative geography.” By this he means to show that there are significant and as yet unfathomed places in the textual interpretations of mid-nineteenth America that resist any kind of topographical stability. Horizons recede, viewpoints disagree, objects distort in the works of each of the authors that Abrams considers. His archetype, perhaps unsurprisingly, is Hawthorne’s “A,” which figures a shapeless something that emerges into meaning only to withdraw into a mere “rag ... of cloth.” Equally unsurprisingly, perhaps, Abrams spots the same type of literary disintegration in the ancestral landscape of Melville’s Pierre, and in Thoreau’s Walden, whose famous dissolving bank receives a thoroughly convincing reading. Indeed, all of Abrams’s readings are clear and detailed, revealing layers of meaning not always available in the broader brushstroke accounts of the American renaissance. This close reading is his main strength. Some will criticize Abrams here for too much reliance on the text and an inadequate account of historical context, though I must admit to finding this textual approach refreshing (the attempt to historically ground his ideas in Douglass and Chief Seattle are cursory). I was more puzzled by certain omissions, especially Emerson and Whitman, whose synthetic approach and obvious affinity with the landscape and the shape America would have provided a fascinating counterpoint, or, if proved to fit Abrams’s model, conclusive proof of the thesis. However, the inclusion of the often excluded Margaret Fuller is positive. I would also draw attention to Abrams’s rather loose use of philosophical terminology. Words like “category,” “schema,” “concept”, and “appearance” occur regularly but never find a fully articulated philosophical or theoretical home (at least their basis in Kant should have been forefronted). For Abrams these terms, like “skepticism” and “ideology” in the title, suggest only a general picture of an America which should be stable but is not. This vagueness definitely undercuts the rigour and force of his
overall very worthwhile argument, an argument which, ironically, deserved a more sustained presentation.

*The Nottingham Trent University*  
DAVID GREENHAM

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Harvard, for better or worse, has long been the most iconic of American universities, known for a combination of social cachet – now somewhat faded in the age of meritocracy – and academic distinction – still impressive. This reputation/image has resulted in an admissions rate of one out of nine applicants, far surpassing its rivals both ancient (Yale) and modern (Stanford). The number of scholarly works it has inspired in recent years, including two modern histories and studies of its blacks, Catholics, Jews, architecture, and conceptions of manhood, testifies to its centrality to the story of academics in the United States. Exactly how Harvard attained this status is a story that still needs telling. This engaging work is raw material for that endeavor: an in-house, alphabetic and deliberately unsystematic gallimaufry of Harvard lore, told with the combination of learning, pride, and irony that has become an institutional signature. Much of this is arcana aimed at alumni eager for erudite nostalgia (including this ambivalent reviewer), although the latter is disappointed at the omission of the second verse of the Harvard’s band’s trademark dog-Latin theme song, *Illegitimum non Carborundum*, which is sung only with the accompaniment of deafening percussion during crucial passages. Some will be of interest to those concerned with tracking down the sources and proliferation of the Harvard mystique, e.g. entries on Harvard in fiction and in film. (Here Oxbridge is still in the lead; *Love Story* is no *Brideshead*.) Most is illuminating in understanding Harvard’s social and cultural (though not especially its intellectual) history. All in all, an engaging read, suitable both for entertainment during television commercials and as an heuristic goad for new studies of American academe.

*Miami University*  
PETER W. WILLIAMS

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Elisabeth Bronfen sets out to examine the concept of home as it is represented in eight films ranging from *The Wizard of Oz* up to contemporary material like *Batman Returns*. In fact *Oz* is a test case in suggesting the paradigm which Bronfen questions of a protagonist leaving a safe base, travelling to a place of excitement and danger, only to return to that base. She asks, “do films acknowledge the fallibility of any sense of home,
or do they instead devise scenarios of empowerment or control?” (26). Her answer comes down firmly on the first of these alternatives. Throughout her discussion she shows how the idea of home is constantly problematized and rendered ambiguous in her chosen films. With *Rebecca* she draws an analogy between Hitchcock and the “I” who seems to be seeking a house as much as a man. In *Oz* Dorothy romantically rationalizes the constraint of Kansas, at the same time recognizing that home means rejecting the world of fantasy. When she turns to *The Searchers* Bronfen finds a tension between solitude and belonging to a community embodied in the ambivalence of the Western hero. *Lone Star* is interpreted as a continuation of Ford’s debate about cultural hybridity. The use of cuts and dissolves reflects the latter film’s play on borders, a strategy which draws on Ford’s framing symbolism of doorways. One of the main values of Bronfen’s discussion lies in her capacity to give sustained close readings of her films. Her analysis is informed by a sophisticated awareness of cinema technique which she skilfully blends with Freudian theory. Indeed she writes best on works like *Rebecca*, which she glosses as a psychodrama with strong Oedipal undertones. Similarly, Fritz Lang’s *Secret Beyond the Door* explores the trauma of a GI’s homecoming from the point of view of the disoriented wife. Here she finds explicit use of Freudian dream imagery and another case of personal ambivalence. In all the films she examines Bronfen finds a dimension of self-reflexivity. The first view through a car window of Manderley in *Rebecca* is set up like a private film screen and other parallels strengthen her sense of film being used as an “externalized mind screen” (20; Bronfen’s emphasis). *Home in Hollywood* starts with detail and ends rather abruptly with equally close commentary, but that is a minor reservation because her discussion is unflaggingly suggestive and engaging.

*University of Liverpool*

DAVID SEED


*Girls Rock!* is a study of women in the world of rock music and, in particular, of the ways in which female artists have constructed identities for themselves in a musical world which was, traditionally, a male domain. Although the book discusses artists from all eras of rock music, from the ‘girl groups’ of the early 1960s to contemporary “women’s music” performers, the approach taken by the authors is thematic rather than chronological. Each chapter examines a different aspect of women’s relationship with their music – including early musical influences, the creative process, the roles played by sexuality and race in the formation of women’s artistic identity, the significance of image and women’s attempts to maintain ownership of their music in the face of a ruthless, often unjust, industry. The main emphasis of the study is on the music and the self-image of women who have chosen to play rock music of the “harder” variety – women who wanted to form bands and to excel on the guitar, drums or bass – in other words, women who have sought to find a place within a musical world dominated by men. Central to the work are the narratives of women rock artists themselves; the authors interviewed around fifty women for the study, and
the stories and opinions of these interviewees form the core of the book. The majority of those interviewed are not, however, ‘household names’ – the authors state that this has been deliberate, as they wish to include a “broad spectrum” of women performers. The views of the better-known artists, such as Joni Mitchell or Madonna, are represented through previously published interviews.

*Girls Rock!* has evidently been a labour of love for its authors, who are passionate about their subject and eager to celebrate the notable achievements of those women with whom they have worked and talked. There is evident bias in the work. The authors identify themselves as feminists from the outset and, although they recognize that many female musicians dislike not merely being described as feminists, but also having their work viewed through a gendered lens of any sort, the authors are, ultimately, seeking to identify and celebrate the ways in which women have distinguished themselves from their male counterparts and created a different, “women’s,” rock music. The interviews to which most attention is drawn are those of women who do take special, overt pride in their womanhood, broadly defined – artists such as the Indigo Girls, the participants of Lilith Fair, or the proponents of women’s music, all of whom have, in various ways, visibly indicated their interest in gender and its relationship with music. However, there are other women for whom any linkage between gender and music is highly problematic, and the book does not take the time to explore thoroughly that dimension of the equation. The authors’ interests lie principally in artistic activity which has a feminist “flavour” to it, and this reader feels that the work might have been stronger had they focussed more specifically on this principal interest, and dealt primarily with those women who do have strong sympathies with the feminist agenda, and who have fought for their beliefs through their music. Attempting to bring all types of female artist together in a work of this kind results in some unevenness and, at times, in misrepresentation.

There is much in *Girls Rock!* that is admirable; the use of oral evidence, the passion of the authors and the desire to allow female musicians to speak for themselves and their art are all worthy of praise. However, the book tries to accomplish too many agenda. Within the work, the foundations of several sound studies are evident – a study of sexuality and women in rock, a study of women and their relationship with their musical instruments and, especially, a study of feminist musicians and their work. Had the authors chosen to focus on one, rather than all, of these aspects, the work would have been, for this reader, more cohesive and more convincing.

*University of Wales, Bangor*  
Gillian A. M. Mitchell

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There is always something intriguing about reading stories previously hidden behind statistics. For Conley, however, the twenty-three personal stories of American immigrant experience that unfold within this book are not simply entertaining; they also challenge readers to confront the larger issues surrounding America’s relationship with the rest of the world, post-9/11.
The Chosen Shore: Stories of Immigrants is a surprisingly immediate and unpretentious collection of oral histories, following the daily struggles of a range of immigrants as they integrate into American society. Their narratives tell of night border crossings, searches for work, letters home, landlords, business ventures, girlfriends. Reading, we are confronted with a range of “hyphenated” voices hailing from as far afield as Iran, Bosnia and China. We meet Edeline, for example, a Haitian American who worked and slept on the A-train for a year while studying for a degree; Jorge Murillo Meza, whose father smuggled him from Mexico to pick apples when he was seven years old; My Le, a Vietnamese monk who sells fast food to fund a spiritual centre in Maryland. Each voice contributes to a dynamic portrait of contemporary America.

Most poignant, however, are the three penultimate “charred portraits” of a post-9/11 America from two Afghan Americans and a Pakistani American. The immediacy and economy of their words achieve the near-impossible: a refocussing of the grief and fear generated by the World Trade Center attacks into tangible, useful insights into the complicated business of being an American. “When I was on the Brooklyn Bridge [after the attacks] I was in shock,” recalls Zohra Saed, “We were on the bridge, and everybody was praying together that no one would come and attack us … We were just screaming into space, ‘Can you please not bomb the bridge until I get over?’ And we were all aghast, ‘Please, don’t bomb the bridge.’ I didn’t talk to anybody, but I knew we were in it together”.

Both the New York Times and the L.A. Times have welcomed Conley’s writing as “exuberant,” “wonderful” and “surprising,” and in this, her first fully non-fiction project, she applies the same passion and keen eye for detail. The personal account is a radical tool for Conley, forcing us “to rethink, reconsider, challenge and advance the understanding of the immigrant experience”. As editor, she resists even the slightest comment upon the stories collected; they are left to stand for themselves.

If the book falters, it is in its introductory pages which offer a dense and somewhat laboured crash-course in “context and immigrant identity.” The strength of this book lies in its light touch, and although some kind of context is clearly necessary, the real joy is in dipping into the stories and snatching glimpses of ordinary people’s experience. The Chosen Shore is a thoughtful and often moving book and, as a record, reflects the myriad stories which shape America.

Elizabeth Boyle


The initial thrust of Rachel Connor’s project is to salvage H.D. from the Poundian confines of “H.D. Imagiste” by locating her heterogeneous constructions of the visual within the practices of early cinema and the potency of spiritualism. In so doing, Connor draws fresh attention to the values of community, argued as the foundation of H.D.’s aesthetic, and to the ways in which both her poetry and her prose interrogate hierarchies of power. For Connor, “the complex interplay between the matrices of sexuality, corporeality and identity are always linked back to
her conception of the visual”. She begins with H.D.’s “pluralistic” involvement with avant-garde cinema (as critic, actor and editor) and her association with the film journal Close Up, which provide the basis for her engagement with the moving image in relation to literary texts – editing techniques and the concept of mass spectatorship are examined in her early writings; the experimental novels, Her and Nights, are seen as challenging the ways in which visual culture positions the female body as spectacle; Helen in Egypt is used to display the interconnections between visuality, performance and female corporeality, while The Gift opens up a female visual economy as founded in spiritual experience, itself understood as a collective enterprise. This latter is an especially rich discussion where cinematic spectatorship and visionary wisdom are brought together to question the hegemony of the masculine scopic. Drawing productively on Cixous, Connor promotes a radiance that is opening and dispersive rather than a light that is hierarchical and penetrative, insisting upon the proximity rather than the distance of looking as part of a female collaborative vision as opposed to a masculine gaze understood as singular and invasive. Connor has a good sense of how the economy of the gift collaborates well with the visual economy of the feminine where “intimacy, collaboration and reciprocation challenge both the capitalist market economy and phallocentric notions of the scopic”. A final chapter addresses H.D.’s spiritualist interests more specifically through her writings of the 1940s, in particular the unpublished typescripts of “The Sword Went Out to Sea” and “Magic Ring.”

The unsettlements of H.D.’s work, their interrogations of gender and power, are provided here with an entirely fresh context; no one, to date, has brought the lens of the visual to bear in such detail upon her writings. Not only does that lens offer new means of understanding her awkward, even contradictory, negotiations of modernist avant-garde procedures, invariably elitist, with a strong sense of collectivity (she is presented as both an intellectual appreciator and a fan-like spectator), but it gives a new perspective on the political dimensions of her art where, as Connor notes, her “representations of the visual in her descriptions of revelatory experience are fundamentally political because her positioning of herself as ‘seer’ or receptor of visionary experience in the text becomes a strategic resistance to the scrutiny of the gaze”. Instead of the potentially static nature of the “image,” H.D. is displayed as engaged with process, fluidity and flux. Purposive parallels are drawn here with Eisenstein’s notion of the “creating spectator” where montage and the cinematic image are seen always to be bound up with process exactly, process as fundamental to her textual constructions of self and subjectivity. Connor’s adventure in rescuing H.D. from the imagist trap of the “static” and the “crystalline” is achieved precisely through viewing her productions in cinematic terms which reject linear modes of narration and pay attention to the spectator’s participation: “the image is constructed as a process through which the reader actively engages in the text’s production”. It is here that we find the principal challenge instigated by H.D. – her resistance to the dominant scopic economy of psychoanalysis and science, the hierarchical hegemony of the male gaze and heterosexual desire where phallocentric singularity is displaced by queer variousness and alternative ways of seeing.

University of Keele

IAN F. A. BELL
In this fascinating sociohistorical study, Daniel Thomas Cook examines the growth of a children's consumer culture within the US, focussing in particular on the development of the child consumer. Beginning with a history of childhood and motherhood in the twentieth century, Cook explores the change in sentiment towards children, influenced by such factors as the introduction of compulsory schooling in the 1890s and the cessation of child labour. The growth in the number of factories and technological advantages of the mechanized sewing machine also revealed the possibilities of mass production. Advertisers soon became adept at targeting the mother as a purchasing agent for her family, who would always put the needs of her children before herself.

In 1917 the first trade publication for children's clothing and accessories, The Infant's Department, was established, positing children's clothing as a recognizable industry. By the 1920s Cook reveals how store managers had learnt to start merchandising clothing for infants and other child items together in order to increase sales. In 1926 Children, The Magazine for Parents, ran a column entitled “Mother Goes Shopping,” highlighting new retail lines and innovations. Child and teenage stars such as Shirley Temple, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney all had their own clothing ranges or else endorsed a particular line, thus illustrating a shift in advertising strategy, moving away from the mother figure and aiming now at children themselves as autonomous consumers.

Department stores began to devote entire floors to childrenswear, from infancy through to the high-school years. The emerging category of the teenager in the 1930s and 1940s prompted larger stores to elicit the help of “popular” high-school girls to offer advice on matters of fashion, and this involvement in the selling process led to a flourishing teenage retail economy.

From the establishment of the “toddler” in consumer-commercial terms and the intricacies of the teenager and “subteen” market, Cook traces the rise of the clothing industry up to the end of the Baby Boom years of the 1960s, with insightful flair and meticulous attention to detail. Persuasively written and impressively researched, this is a compelling read and a valuable contribution to the arena of consumer studies.

Anne-Marie Evans
Farmers seem to have been well-meaning, if lousy at financial planning, and willing to put in sixty-hour labouring weeks, and at their worst they merely baulk at doing without meat, tea, coffee and butter during one cash-flow crisis. In the dozens of surviving non-fictional accounts that he draws on, Delano has not found anyone with anything really bad to say about the place, though I note that Emerson, writing in his journal while still refusing to visit this unnervingly challenging place, nastily assumes that the leaders, George and Sarah Ripley, must have become “charlatans.” It’s easy to smile (sometimes in wry recognition): the Ripleys choosing their vacation spot as the site, the ex-minister taking out farming newspapers from the Boston Athenaeum to learn how to farm, elaborately calculating necessary quantities of manure to improve the totally unsuitable soil; changing cowshed clothes before breakfasting (wise); a totally silent pillow fight with Hawthorne; baking fifty to sixty pounds of Boston bread a day for ninety people; and the thirty-seven community meetings in five months when they got their new Fourierist constitution, complete with elaborate bureaucracy (labour cohorts clocking up precise individual totals of between 2,500 and 3,000 hours’ work yearly) and phalanstery (a hugely ambitious three-storey, wooden building, 175' x 40', built to accommodate the entire community with kitchens, dining hall to sit three to four hundred, lecture theatres, chapel and bedrooms for 150). Less amusing were the fire that destroyed the phalanstery and a smallpox outbreak, caused by playing with a fugitive slave child and a failure to vaccinate (“our carelessness”). Delano’s achievement is to make sense of Brook Farm in terms of its aspirations, commitment and a surprising amount of enjoyment – life at Brook Farm becomes imaginable. Sailing bravely into uncharted waters, they sought alternatives for the ills of nascent industrial capitalism: the first Articles of Agreement movingly identify the anxieties of subsistence and securing one’s children’s future, a resistance to consumerism and competition, and a desire for justice, “dignity” and spiritual development. It was always strung out between members with an individualist agenda (a pervasive narcissism, thought Sarah Ripley) and those committed to working together; it was forced to become part of the local economy, making shoes and pewter ware; and unsurprisingly they failed to find solutions. But at least a thousand, and possibly as many as 4,000, came visiting: a roll call of New England’s intelligentsia eager to test their aspirations against it (Thoreau plans Walden within a year of his visit). During its later Associationist days a goodly number of skilled workers, many of them already part of the local reform community and the burgeoning workingmen’s movement, become members (this is the one place where I wanted more analysis from Delano on class roles and class interactions, including those among the women). The pioneering – and money-making – school was exceptionally fine, and some friendships endured a lifetime. A good read.

*Lancaster University*

ALISON EASTON


This short but delightful book is the published version of the William E. Massey, Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization given by John Demos at Harvard in
In these three lectures Demos presents an overview of the patterns that life assumed for ordinary people from the early days of Anglo-American colonial settlement in the seventeenth century, through the Revolution, to the mid-nineteenth century, tracing a transition from circular to linear forms. Demos argues that the earliest colonists experienced the world in the predominantly circular patterns of diurnal, lunar and annual cycles. Patterns like the annual peak of marriages following the harvests, and the laws limiting a labourer’s wage during short winter days, show the extent to which ordinary life was shaped to fit natural cycles. Even accusations of witchcraft had a diurnal rhythm with “accidents” like soured milk occurring in the daytime and more spectral horrors at night. This traditional cyclical outlook was increasingly challenged in the course of the eighteenth century, because of technological change such as the rise of clocks, and the political invention of the “new nation,” but people “averted their eyes from the novelty that was steadily infusing their lives”. Jefferson and other Revolutionaries curiously echoed the early Puritan settlers in claiming to seek the restoration of a right order, rather than being willing agents of change. But by the early nineteenth century linear ideas of progress and even a cult of “the new” were taking hold. The linearity of the railroad and westward expansion found cultural parallels in the rise of autobiography, with a focus on “incidents” rather than “providences,” and the growth of notions of “self-improvement” and personal progress.

Demos’s identification of the transition from circular to linear is not new; his contribution is in shifting the focus from intellectual thought to the evidence of “ground-level” behaviour and experience. Demos brings “personal documents,” such as letters and diaries, into dialogue with matters as diverse as dietary patterns and changes in town planning, and then sketches out connections with intellectual and literary movements, often using explorations of semantic change, for instance by asking when “revolution” lost its cyclical connotations. This weaving together of threads from different realms of investigation, in a very accessible style, makes *Circles and Lines* a rewarding read suitable for historians, literary scholars and the general reader. The book does not offer a systematic, in-depth study but paints a vivid panorama of early American life, drawing on a wide variety of useful sources (most of which are footnoted), including Demos’s own major publications on witchcraft and “remarkable providences.”

*University of Cambridge*  

AMY M. E. MORRIS


Dittman’s book fulfils the premise of the *Greenwood Biography Series* – to provide “challenging yet accessible” biographies of individuals who have influenced American and/or global culture. The series is aimed at student use and this particular volume provides a comprehensive, chronological study of Jack Kerouac’s life, covering ground which more academic studies may take as given knowledge.
As in Kerouac’s most celebrated text, *On the Road*, Dittman’s narrative reflects the haphazard, unstructured movement of the writer’s early life. As well as his road travels across America, we hear of Kerouac’s wartime travels in the merchant marine. The life appears both redolent of its time yet anticipatory: Kerouac’s conscious apeing of hobo travel appears as an expression of the restless movement of returning veterans, yet his often solitary hitch-hiking or freight-hopping – while other Beats such as Allen Ginsberg took the bus – set a blueprint for twentieth-century backpacking youth.

Kerouac’s less celebrated travels were those with his mother across small-town and suburban America, which Dittman considers as a need to return to mythologized familial roots and to escape the public scrutiny that came with fame. Despite his far-reaching Beat surrogate family, Kerouac was never able to untie the apron strings and Dittman describes the fraught mother–son relationship.

Dittman notes the writer’s early transgressive behaviour, while not shying away from the uglier aspects of mental disintegration and alcoholism as Kerouac increasingly took on the colours of introverted, small-town conservatism. Therefore Dittman avoids the reductive glorification often associated with work on Beat writers, and in fact explores Kerouac’s alternate embracing, rejecting and manipulating of the Beat label.

Dittman highlights the various experimental directions Kerouac’s writing took beyond *On the Road*, featuring chapter breakdowns and outlining the drafting process of lesser-known or problematic texts such as *The Town and the City*, *Visions of Cody* and the *Book of Haikus*. Dittman refers to contemporary debates within Kerouac criticism regarding race and gender studies, but unfortunately without actually naming theorists.

Perhaps Dittman could have engaged all levels of his audience, through a more thorough academic annotation. Other flaws are due to sloppy editing and fact-checking; for example, the author Joyce Johnson is erroneously named as Kerouac’s “second wife.” Moreover, there are repeated discrepancies between dates and events featured in an introductory timeline and those within the body of the text.

Overall, Dittman has provided a reader-friendly introduction to Kerouac’s interconnected life and writing. The dichotomies and difficulties are discussed, pointing towards future debate of a writer whose place in American letters and cultural history will benefit from attention to his wider body of work and regard to his life as a whole.

*KATIE STEWART*  
*University of Glasgow*


Ariel Dorfman’s provocations are often gentle ones, but they are no less provocative for that. His central theme is disappearance both real and metaphorical. The trope encompasses, among others, the actual disappearances of peasants under Pinochet’s regime, the disappearance of young Muslims in Guantánamo Bay, the elision of the
referent “Latin America” from the signifier “America” and, significantly for Dorfman’s role as commentator on both Americas, the “double homelessness” (xv) which allows him to be both and neither Chilean and American, both exile and insider. Other Septembers, Other Americas takes advantage of the chronological coincidence that both the attack on the Twin Towers and the violent overthrow of President Salvador Allende occurred on 11 September to warn the United States against “the plague of Amnesia” (12). Wilful forgetting begets the most damaging disappearance of all, that of memory in a nation traditionally partial since the arrival of the Puritans to ahistoricity and the idea of the tabula rasa. Thus Dorfman actively deploys remembering as a political tool in these essays, enabling him on a personal level to attempt a reconciliation between memories of his two homelands and thus in a wider arena to assert that any foreign policy ultimately has to recognize humanity’s fundamental interconnectedness.

Nowhere is this aim more plangently and powerfully achieved than in the piece entitled “Cold Waters.” Extrapolating the far-reaching from the anecdotal, Dorfman describes watching an obnoxious, blonde American kid playing next to a pool in Chile, his mother asleep on a deckchair nearby. The writer’s intense annoyance stems from a vague feeling that the mother and son’s perceived proprietorial attitude stands synecdochally for the United States colonial-style political and cultural dominance of Latin America. When the boy plunges into the icy water, Dorfman’s momentary “ pang of indifference” (17) leads to a feeling of horror and some profound reflections not only on his own attitudes to the USA’s monstrous aggressions, but also on the current widespread, knee-jerk hatred of that country. It is an honest, intensely affecting and thought-provoking piece on the dangers of passivity.

Throughout this collection of “provocations,” an impressive range is displayed within a consistently compassionate vision. From expounding on the transgressive potential of bilingualism (“languages,” we are told, “have themselves also always been maddeningly migrant” (181)), to arguing that the novelization of E.T. suggests that strangers need to be “infantilized and Americanized” to gain acceptance (81), Dorfman pulls accepted notions of otherness in different directions in order to open up their fissures. Formally the book covers both prose and poetry, and the eclecticism of the selection participates in the obvious diversity of the writer’s investigations and observations. Cemented together by intellectual rigour as well as by an overwhelming sense of humanity, these observations promulgate an ideal of universal solidarity without sententiousness but with compelling readability.

James Peacock

University of Edinburgh


In the post-World War II period, Japanese Americans struggled to come to terms with the internment they had experienced as the American government’s method of
containing those perceived or classified as enemy aliens. The experiences of the Issei (first generation) and Nisei (second generation) during the internment have already been well documented but Fugita and Fernandez focus more specifically upon the impact, psychological and socioeconomic, upon Japanese Americans as traceable within the post-internment period. Their book circulates the results of the Densho project’s attempts to preserve data from former internees and provide source material not otherwise available in quantifiable form (cf. www.densho.org). The management and organization of this project have clearly been carried out with care, the survey group being limited to 183 members, and the expected issues resulting from intergenerational tensions have been fully explored with the book divided between Chapters 1 to 5, which explore the chronology of the internment, and Chapters 6 to 8, which take the specific areas of marriage, occupation, and the contrast between Buddhism and Protestantism in internment and post-internment memory as their themes.

Transcriptions of first-hand testimonials have been effectively integrated into what might otherwise have condensed into dry statistical compilations, and one of Fugita and Fernandez’s accomplishments is their ability to recount well-established historical facts in a refreshingly authentic style which succeeds in its aim of introducing observations that belie the model minority image attached to Japanese Americans from the Cold War onward. Some of the results of the survey are unsurprising, such as the observation that those with higher pre-incarceration ambitions experienced incarceration more negatively than those with lower aspirations, while others, like the higher success rate of those who resettled outside the Pacific Coast area in terms of occupational status at the end of their careers (130), are certainly unexpected and illuminating. Throughout, the reader is given clear explanations of why certain questions were posed to interviewees and of the working method of the interviewers in attempting to strike a balance between data categorization and capacity for broad responses.

Photographs, often from family collections, form a welcome addition and the appendices clearly document the Densho survey’s methodology. Many of the insights open new avenues of potential (re)search and the worth of Altered Lives, Enduring Community lies not in any single substantial conclusion but more in its broad compendia of observations that will surely become necessary source material in future Asian or Japanese American scholarship.

Purdue University

DANIEL MCKAY


Colin Gray’s central purpose is to rationalize the involvement of America in worldly security matters and to offer justification for its continued participation. That motif is accompanied by Gray’s belief that foreign policy conducted for philanthropic reasons is fictitious because American policymakers are concerned only with national interest. Gray says this is nothing to be ashamed of, though.
According to the publisher, this book is “groundbreaking.” Nothing in it is groundbreaking. Throughout the book it is clear the author bleeds American even though he breathes in England. He presents only one side of the argument in convincing readers that his semi-strategy for American involvement in worldly affairs is satisfactory and that America is needed to ensure world order. The “sheriff” analogy he uses to describe America as the world’s police has been widespread since the early 1990s, and it is not as interesting and popular as the similar construct in which America is portrayed as an empire. None of this is inherently bad; none of it detracts from the overall worth of the book. Indeed, there is just one deficiency in it.

A greater discussion is needed on why the United Nations and America cannot act together as the world’s sheriff. Gray does broach this topic on six pages but only with the equivalent of three paragraphs. Essentially a whole chapter needs to be dedicated to this US–UN relation. He refers to this topic as a “second-order matter,” a “minor interest,” or a “polite fiction” but most scholars would not dismiss this subject so readily.

Gray repeatedly writes that America is the only country that can act as sheriff. While his argument is credible, should he not also consider that other countries just do not want to be sheriff or they do not believe the world needs one? He oversimplifies the issue further by writing that America is too wealthy and too strong militarily to be hampered by smaller polities.

The 2003–4 American action in Iraq, a military venture involving the UN and the US that Gray practically ignores, necessitates further explication with his sheriff analogy. Perhaps the abrogation is due to the book being published coincidentally with the first use of George W. Bush’s preemption doctrine? Perhaps it is because the military action, spearheaded by Bush, dents Gray’s argument? In any event, Gray’s justifications for, rather than exhortations to, taking unilateral action under a likely guise of world order are unconvincing.

Colin Gray’s Sheriff can certainly be used in a homeland-security seminar. It can also be placed on an undergraduate reading list because of its brevity. However, such a seminar or reading list will have to be balanced with works that explain why America should not be the world’s sheriff … a contention that is incredibly absent in this well-written book.

PATRICK FAGAN

College of Southwest, NM


At a time when cognitive issues are fashionable both as scholarly and popular subjects, when books such as Mark Haddon’s The Curious Incident of the Dog at the Night Time still hang on in UK’s bestseller lists, a study dedicated to the cultural representation of mental disabilities is certainly timely and instructive. Images of Idiocy is a stimulating overview of the depiction of so-called idiots in literature and film. Halliwell’s study of ‘the idiot’ – a pervasive figure greatly neglected by comparative

As a linguistic outsider, the idiot occupies a unique ontological space offering specific challenges in terms of representation. Halliwell’s first chapter tackles well the knotty issue of idiocy as a medical and social category. Providing a thorough introduction of the meanings behind the concept of idiocy and taking into account different cultural and scientific contexts which have became associated with the notion, his first main argument is that idiocy is a state, trait or position which cannot be really specified or narrowed down as a condition. For Halliwell, “when it comes to ‘idiocy’ it seems there is no adequate alternative as a term that strikes the right balance between psychological, neurological, psychological, behavioural and social malady”. Given the scope of discourses across which idiocy has been constructed there is certainly a need to reinforce the analytical unity of a comparative analysis such as this. Although each chapter is highly informative, the volume could do with a separate final chapter or conclusion clarifying what are the differences and links between the different images of idiocy portrayed, providing a synthesis of the main challenges shared by these authors in their attempt to depict the idiot mind or underlining what are, more precisely, for Halliwell, enabling images of idiocy.

Each individual chapter offers, however, a generously informative and insightful analysis, making a careful balance between close reading and sociohistorical contextualization. The readings are particularly well informed by psychoanalytic references whilst also relying, to a certain degree, on cognitive approaches. The conclusion (“Idiocy in Contemporary Film”) deserved to be expanded into a longer separate chapter or developed into a volume of its own. Here, Halliwell’s critical eye moves from Hollywood films such as Robert Zemeckis’s Forrest Gump to the experimentalism of Lars von Trier’s The Idiots, without missing the opportunity for witty comments on the exquisite idiocy of Homer Simpson or the folksy persona or G. W. Bush. Images of Idiocy opens, thus, an inspiring path to more specific studies of the relations between identity and language, fiction and cognition.

Sussex University

Susana Araujo


In Horatio Alger fashion, Alexander Hamilton rose from an unlikely start as an illegitimate West Indian emigrant, becoming first US Secretary of the Treasury. Harper’s study concentrates on Hamilton’s role as foreign policy adviser to George Washington, ascribing to Hamilton the navigational role patterned by Machiavelli in Florence.
Harper views Machiavellian measures as realistic state-building, eschewing their arguably moral cynicism. Harper’s Machiavellian Hamilton is regarded as shrewd, subtle and an excellent judge of the national interests of the new American nation in the turbulent 1790s. The reader is offered a detailed description of the Founding Fathers’ differing opinions in constructing US policy towards warring European powers. Personal rivalries ensued between Hamilton, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Harper regards Hamilton’s contribution as indispensable in designing and putting in place a foreign policy adequate to ensure survival, with consequent criticism of Adams and Jefferson.

Harper’s central premise is that historians will better understand Hamilton by accepting his identification with the political philosophy and diplomacy advocated by Machiavelli. For example, the chapter dealing with the Nootka Sound crisis credits Hamilton as advising Washington to consent to the British forces crossing American territory, when Jefferson held a contrary view. Hamilton’s rationale was that America lacked the ability to bar the British, an example of Machiavellian pragmatism. Jefferson, Harper suggests, would have attempted to bar the British, with disastrous consequences.

While Hamilton may share unconsciously a Machiavellian world view, Harper’s evidence of direct influence is limited to an unattributed “discerning scholar’s observation” that Hamilton probably read Machiavelli. In a book linking Machiavelli and Hamilton, this is a remarkable omission. Harper provides painstaking scholarly detail, perhaps at the expense of dramatic narrative pace. In addition, the thin index is less than helpful in locating the details of a book replete with factual analysis. Karl-Friedrich Walling’s treatment of Hamilton in Republican Empire: Alexander Hamilton on War and Free Government, which Harper praises in an endnote, does not elevate Hamilton to quite the level offered by Harper, who ranks his subject as “second to none in the national pantheon”. For Harper, Hamilton dwarfs opponents; in doing so, he argues that Jefferson often stands for “reckless optimism”.

Herein lies the problem. In order to raise Hamilton to the heights, Harper is forced to denigrate Hamilton’s opponents, to the book’s detriment. However, the work is a provocative study of Hamilton’s controversial actions in foreign policy. Hamilton, himself, may not have identified with Machiavelli but, Harper records, he displayed many of the Italian’s views on the nature of leadership and statecraft.

Brunel University

JOHN MATLIN

Reviews 559


William C. Harris perpetuates the tradition of Lincoln hagiography, as already witnessed in his two previous studies, With Charity for All: Lincoln and the Restoration of the Union (1997) and Lincoln’s Men: How President Lincoln became Father to an Army and a Nation (1999). The present study isolates Lincoln’s final six months, beginning with
the re-election in November 1864 that “marked the beginning of Lincoln’s apotheosis as an American icon” (42) – an apotheosis that Harris is determined to reaffirm rather than to challenge or interrogate. This is not to say that Harris passes no judgement on Lincoln; he observes with appropriate sternness Lincoln’s general neglect of Native American welfare, and notes other areas in statecraft where Lincoln “could have done better” (189). But, for the most part, Harris aims to show how Lincoln’s moral stature and his dedication to Union and emancipation mushroomed through a final period of great physical and emotional stress. The tone of Harris’s conclusion is indicative of his general approach to Lincoln: “In death he became a martyr to humanity, to the Union that he had saved, and to the democratic ideals that he had expressed and lived” (246).

While Harris is uniformly thorough in his access of primary material and convincing in his re-creation of the pressures under which Lincoln operated, his reluctance to adopt greater critical distance between himself and his subject threatens to compromise the book’s value for readers hoping for more than a month-by-month narrative. Harris’s treatment of Lincoln and race is the greatest disappointment. As he argues, Lincoln’s “moral and political opposition to slavery” grew “during the last part of the war” (143); thus any “judgment regarding Lincoln and black Americans must be based on his actions and policies, particularly during the last part of his presidency” (215). Many will of course argue that Lincoln’s final acts and utterances cannot wholly erase his assertions of white supremacy and his initially compromising approach to slavery. Harris, then, needs to make his case through more than mere assertion, for while he claims that Lincoln’s “faith in emancipation was critical to the congressional passage and ultimate ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment” (134), he shows us very little of Lincoln’s part in the political rough-and-tumble on behalf of that amendment, whatever general claims he makes to Lincoln’s leadership. Consequently, he misses the opportunity to refute convincingly the charge made by Lerone Bennett, Jr. in Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln’s White Dream (2000) that the amendment ‘was authored and pressured into existence not by Lincoln but by the great emancipators nobody knows, the abolitionists and congressional leaders who created the climate and generated the pressure that goaded, prodded, drove, forced Lincoln into glory’ (19). In failing to engage critically with Lincoln’s critics, Harris ultimately lets his subject down.

University of Central Lancashire

WILL KAUFMAN


Formed in Jonesboro, Louisiana in 1964 to protect civil rights workers, the Deacons for Defense and Justice sometimes receive brief acknowledgement in civil rights histories as a small, short-lived organization. By contrast, Lance Hill argues that the Deacons developed twenty-one affiliates with three hundred members, located mostly in the South, primarily in Louisiana and Mississippi. His study is part of a
new wave of scholarship that emphasizes the role of armed resistance in the black freedom struggle and challenges historians to rethink its significance, as well as the supposed efficacy of nonviolent direct action and voter registration.

In the absence of any Deacons records, Hill relies primarily on interviews with former Deacons, FBI files, the records of major civil rights organizations and media reports. The result is an engrossing, well-written study which, despite its obvious admiration for its subject, maintains academic rigour.

Like some other historians, Hill contends that the civil rights movement primarily served the interests of the middle class. By focussing narrowly on the movement, rather than adopting a broader conception of the black struggle, historians, he argues, have missed or minimized the participation of the black working class, especially men who were unwilling to follow the nonviolent strategy of the movement which they regarded as “devoid of racial pride, masculine honor, and self-reliance” (267). Nevertheless, by their willingness to defend civil rights workers with arms and by meeting white violence with their own, as in the Birmingham, Alabama riot in 1963, working-class men (and women) participated in the struggle in the Deep South and made its greatest successes possible. According to Hill, only African American violence or its credible threat induced federal authorities from 1963 on to sponsor and implement civil rights legislation and intervene effectively to protect African Americans. In the case of the Deacons, their willingness to fight back inspired hitherto fearful and passive black communities to challenge oppression, hampered the Ku Klux Klan and forced the federal government to act against it, and pressured local white officials to concede many black demands in several protests.

Hill makes a strong but overdrawn case. He concedes, almost parenthetically, “Moral appeals to the conscience of America were indispensable to the success of the movement” (272) and ignores the role of the Cold War. He also underplays the nonviolent movement’s use of coercion, such as boycotts, to try to force change.

University of Edinburgh

MARK NEWMAN


The first point to make about Michel Holt’s new book is that it is weighs much less than its predecessor, a mammoth 1268-page study, published in 1999, charting the rise and demise of the American Whig party. The Fate of their Country, by contrast, is slim, focussed and accessible, of value to scholars and students as well as to the general reader seeking guidance on the political trajectory of sectional conflict before the Civil War. To the core narrative the author has appended eight important primary documents, each helpfully introduced; these include letters and speeches by such key actors as Cass, Clay, Seward and Lincoln, as well as two Whig Presidents, Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore, whose roles in the late antebellum drama Holt is uniquely equipped to evaluate. The book’s organization contains no surprises; its
heart consists of three chapters devoted to the crises surrounding the Wilmot Proviso of 1846, the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854. Each event is subjected to detailed forensic examination by a historian clearly at ease with his topic and, while the story is familiar, its retelling in such a crisp and authoritative manner justifies publication.

Holt has a broader purpose in mind, however. Themselves indifferent to or even contemptuous of current politics, modern historians have profoundly misread the tea leaves of Civil War causation. “Eager to celebrate the ‘agency’ of those without formal governmental power,” he insists, “they denigrate the significance of past public policies, deny that everyday Americans paid serious attention to politics, and deride historical analysis of the actions of governmental officeholders as decidedly old hat, elitist, and inconsequential compared with more faddish interests in seemingly any group except the white male politicians who exercised formal political power in our past” (xii). Holt protests too much, of course. He not only errs in his characterization of current historical writing but during his narrative sometimes strains to disentangle the responsibility of politicians (a blundering generation?) from that of the public at large. If, for example, writing about Kansas–Nebraska, politicians “made decisions from short-term-calculations of partisan, factional, or personal advantage rather than from any long-term concern for the health, indeed, the very preservation of the Union” (97), the same can surely be said of their constituents whose appetite for expansion, with or without slavery, was equally self-interested and equally inconsiderate of the greater good.

Keele University

MARTIN CRAWFORD


The bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase inspired a small boom in publications on the subject. In 2003 publishers in the United States brought out at least four major related titles. With the notable exception of James E. Lewis’s The Louisiana Purchase: Jefferson’s Noble Bargain?, published by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello, most of these have been uncritical narratives that celebrate the American acquisition of the Louisiana Territory which they attribute to the perspicacity of Thomas Jefferson and/or the expansionist impulses of the early American republic. The Nation’s Crucible, by Peter J. Kastor, is an antidote to such celebratory narratives. Indeed The Nation’s Crucible is much more than an account of the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory – which Kastor deals with in relatively few pages, challenging the notion that the purchase was part of “an unbroken chain of expansion” and more the result of opportunism driven by the needs of France (40). Rather, Kastor is concerned with how the United States absorbed and incorporated the various peoples of Louisiana – Europeans, creoles, free and enslaved Africans, Native Americans, and Anglo-American settlers – into the new republic’s polity.
Kastor is interested not only in the geographic expansion of the United States but also in its demographic expansion. The Louisiana Purchase marked the first time that the United States acquired territory occupied by substantial numbers of peoples and institutions that it was obliged, by treaty, to respect and accommodate. Prior expansion, into the Old Northwest, for example, had been as a result of (nominal) military conquest and the occupants were Native Americans who, by their armed resistance, justified (in American eyes) their subsequent displacement. In 1803 the Louisiana Territory was an unstable place riven by political and racial unrest, uncertain borders, and international intrigue. By 1820, according to Kastor, Louisiana was a much more stable place, integrated politically with the United States. This was the result of negotiation and resistance, on the part of its myriad residents, with the United States over the meaning of fundamental concepts such as citizenship, rights, and obligations. To simplify a very complex story, which Kastor tells expertly, citizenship for white Louisianans – Europeans, Creoles, and Anglo-American migrants, came at the expense of the territory’s non-white residents, especially the free African population which had under French and Spanish enjoyed a degree of autonomy rule unique in North America.

The Nation Crucible is an outstanding book which looks beyond the hoopla and flag-waving associated with the Louisiana Purchase to examine just how the expansion of the United States – geographic and demographic – worked on the ground. Rather than assume a narrative of national expansion Kastor introduces an element of contingency into the story and considers how all of those concerned dealt with the challenges and opportunities that faced them after 1803.

University of Edinburgh

FRANK COGLIANO


John A. Kirk’s study achieves its aim of contextualizing King’s contribution to the civil rights movement and evaluating his career. Written clearly and concisely, this introductory text has a helpful bibliographical essay but limited discussion of historiography. As might be expected, it does not provide new insights or evidence.

In six chapters Kirk divides King’s public career into four stages: the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955–56; King’s unsuccessful attempts between the boycott and the Birmingham campaign in 1963 to develop “a coherent strategy for social and political change” (p. 4); the years of King’s greatest successes between 1963 and 1965; and King’s last years, when he struggled to apply nonviolent direct action to urban ghetto problems, became an anti-war spokesman and envisaged nonviolent civil disobedience to apply pressure on the federal government to tackle poverty effectively.

Like many other studies, Kirk argues that the Montgomery bus boycott thrust King into a leadership position he had not sought or prepared for. Nevertheless, King soon displayed the oratorical skills, inspirational qualities and ability to forge a consensus that became his hallmarks. Yet, to a large extent, others shaped King’s
ideas and the founding and strategy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) that he led with skilled man management.

As historian August Meier argued in a 1965 article, King’s religious rhetoric earned him significant Southern black support, and the SCLC’s direct-action approach elicited white violence at key media-reported moments that brought federal legislation against discrimination. Urban ghetto riots and national white resistance to genuine racial equality sensitized King to the pervasiveness of poverty and discrimination, while America’s war in Vietnam convinced him of the interconnectedness of capitalism, racism and imperialism. While Peter J. Ling’s *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (2002) praised King for heroically risking his popularity, Kirk pragmatically comments that King’s increasingly radical stance undermined his ability to achieve practical change.

Kirk’s conclusion argues that the civil rights movement, already declining, died largely with King, although recent scholarship notes the persistence of local movements. While Kirk discusses David J. Garrow’s argument in *Protest at Selma* (1978) that King had switched from a strategy of persuasion to coercive nonviolence by 1963, Kirk does not address Adam Fairclough’s counter-argument, in a 1986 article, that coercion had always been part of King’s approach. Kirk argues for King’s appeal to non-Southern whites but neglects consistent white majority opposition to movement protests.

*University of Edinburgh*  

MARK NEWMAN


From the 1850s to the 1950s there was remarkably little to say about the Republican Party in the American South. Mostly, except for a short but painfully artificial nascent during Reconstruction, there was just the smothering, one-party dominance of Southern Democrats. This is the world captured in the immediate postwar years by V. O. Key, Jr. in *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. After Key, scholars of Southern politics, while noting that the old order was breaking up around them, largely continued as their attempt at a theoretical explanation with his crucial mantra, “Whatever phase of the southern political process one seeks to understand, sooner or later the trail of inquiry leads to the Negro.” (Key 1949, 5) While this literature iterated and reiterated, a Republican majority actually arrived.

At long last, there are the beginnings of a “revisionist southern politics,” in which evidence is being mobilized to test alternative explanations of this great and consequential change, possibly the greatest single shift in the structure of American politics in all of postwar history. The radical revisionists focus on economic development and a politics of social class as crucial, causal elements. David Lublin’s *The Republican South* seeks its niche in between. Lublin does not back away from the centrality of race in the great change, but he differentiates and sophisticates its role in a fashion not previously seen. Where so many use a simplified “racial threat
hypothesis” to organize their explanation, in which whites move toward the Republicans as blacks move into the Democratic Party, and where these predecessors do not even bother with elementary tests of that hypothesis, Lublin tests it and largely rejects it.

Instead, he argues that what broke up the old order was deliberate reform and institutional change, by way of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But what they did, in effect, was free the region to move toward the economic issues and welfare politics of the rest of the New Deal party system. Only later did racial issues come into their own in this new politics; by then they had to share the agenda with newer social and cultural issues. Along the way, constituencies changed in their ideological balance, while generations aged and were replaced. Along the way, the continuance of the direct primary and, most especially, the creation of majority–minority districts provided crucial if accidental assistance. And in the end there was that historic Republican majority. Lublin closes by speculating on the further evolution of Southern politics. In the process, he has staked out – and claimed leadership of – one of the principal positions in a reinvigorated debate.

BYRON E. SHAFER
Hawkins Chair of Political Science
University of Wisconsin, Madison


Fictions of the Black Atlantic explores the metaphoric and literal function of the Atlantic Ocean in early American literature from 1789 to 1861. Central to the author’s argument lies the use of the critical term “ambivalent American postcoloniality” to express the ideological contradictions of an emerging nation “that was postcolonial and colonizing at the same time”. Further, Mackenthun’s study reveals how the language of imperialism becomes inscribed within foundational American literature and analyses the representational strategies of narratives that both criticize and embellish the nationalist project through the trope of slavery. By framing her readings with extensive historical research, Mackenthun establishes material and figurative transoceanic connections between the Americas, Europe, Africa and the Caribbean.

Structured chronologically, each chapter is devoted to the “founding fathers” of American literature. (Rather curiously, the author does not remark upon the gendered connotations of her male-authored study and it would have been interesting to see what Mackenthun thought about the relationship between gender, literary typology and nationalistic rhetoric.) The second chapter brings together Olaudah Equiano’s Interesting Narrative and Royall Tyler’s Algerine Captive and teases out the contradictions within their use of discourses of colonialism and liberty. The next chapter focusses on Charles Brockden Brown’s novel Arthur Mervyn, or, Memoirs of the Year 1793 and James Fenimore Cooper’s The Red Rover and introduces a compelling analysis of the “nexus between the language of disease and theme of
colonial slavery”. In Chapter 4 the study moves into the antebellum period and, in this longest chapter, considers the work of Herman Melville, Frederick Douglass, Edgar Allan Poe, Martin Delany and the Caribbean writer Maxwell Philip. By interfacing between oceanic history and fictional/non-fictional works, Mackenthun, following Paul Gilroy, argues that the ship and the ocean function as ambiguous sites of liberation and (re)colonization. In the fifth chapter the author reads the fictional Pacific of Melville’s and Poe’s work as a metaphoric Atlantic that imports narratives (or cultural memories) of colonial domination.

Mackenthun’s interdisciplinary method produces enriched readings of canonized and emergent texts, although this reader hoped that the author would develop more fully her analysis of aesthetic tropes (in particular, her proposals surrounding the imagery of the sublime). Equally, an elaboration of some of the complex theoretical terms, such as “postcolonial mimicry,” would have avoided possible confusions about its meaning and strategic application. However, Mackenthun’s study is an important contribution to current debates around postcolonialism, transnationalism and Atlantic American studies and applies theoretical concepts borne out of these studies in innovative and productive ways. The book would be of keen interest to scholars and students engaged in the culture and literature of early America and responds with fresh insight to charges of an “ornate absence” of scholarship about race and slavery in this period of American literary history.

University of Sheffield

RACHEL VAN DUYVENBODE


New books on the publications of the New York intellectuals are always welcome, particularly when they take as their subject magazines as little written about as Dissent. As far as I can tell, apart from several other volumes of collected essays – with titles like Voices of Dissent, Legacy of Dissent, and Radical Imagination – only one book on the magazine has been written: Lou Anne Bulik’s Mass Culture Criticism and Dissent: An American Socialist Magazine (New York: P. Lang, 1993). But there is no general history of the magazine. When compared to the amount that has been done on Partisan Review, this lack of focus on a magazine every bit as important, in many ways, is almost scandalous. Fifty Years of Dissent is not a history of the magazine, unfortunately, but rather a collection of essays culled from the journal, covering its first fifty years, from its founding in 1954 to the present. In addition to the essays, which are compiled in a chronological fashion (that is, decade by decade) there are introductions to each section from the sort of people that used to write for Dissent. I have long wondered what the purpose of such collections is beyond nostalgia, celebration or commemoration – in this case, the fiftieth anniversary of the magazine. Are such collections in general designed to introduce new readers to the magazine because those familiar with such publications will surely be already well acquainted with the key articles from them? I suppose there are two benefits to this collection in particular. First, it demonstrates how wrong Woody Allen was
when he quipped (probably only semi-ironically) in his 1977 film Annie Hall, “I heard that Commentary and Dissent had merged and formed Dysentery.” Yes, the magazines may have shared many writers and concerns over the decades but having just read fifty years of Commentary, and after comparing it to this new collection, I see that Allen was far off the mark, particularly once Commentary had taken its neo-conservative turn. Second, the collection also compounds my feeling that although the New York intellectuals and their publications have been much written about, there are still large gaps in the historiography for no good reason. It is time, then, that someone took on the task of writing a general history of Dissent magazine.

University of Aberdeen

NATHAN ABRAMS


For those who study American culture, the genre of autobiography has often been concerned with placing the subject-author within a time and place. When we read F. O. Matthiessen’s European travelogues, or the oeuvre of Joan Didion, we are in no doubt that we are reading considered historical studies, despite their subjective interpretations of the beginnings of the Cold War, or counterculture California. These reminiscences aspire to belong to this tradition, but in this James Morrison is ultimately unsuccessful. The author has won many military honours during extensive service with the US Army, at the same time earning a history doctorate from Columbia and teaching at both civilian and military institutions, including West Point. Here he has set himself the task of recording his long life, giving equal weight to its pedagogical and soldierly aspects, although occasionally becoming bogged down in the niceties of military procedure and drill. Morrison’s experiences as a young man in Virginia in the 1930s have given him a unique perspective into the many courses he has taught on race and racism, and in the book’s later chapters much space is devoted to discussing the relative merits of textbooks and studies Dr Morrison has used for the classes he has taught in his long career.

Judith Butler has suggested that in wartime the need for the mind-broadening functions of humanities education becomes paramount. Morrison seems to share Professor Butler’s viewpoint, and believes an accurate grasp of history gives both “service school” and civilian students the ability to see their own times more clearly. Morrison’s final chapter is a personal reflection on the world today. It is unfortunate, in that it gives a reactionary end to a book that has, up until this point, led to one questioning many of one’s assumptions about the US armed forces and their personnel. Whilst apologizing for being an aged male WASP, Morrison, in a moment of unyielding exceptionalism, expresses conviction that the modern US is the greatest society the world has ever seen. Whilst we might be somewhat reassured by the fact that he sees reality television as being as much of a threat to this society as al Qaeda might be, Morrison is fundamentally a soldier who sees the American
nation as worthy of the unquestioning defence of both its military personnel and educators, and thus, as a historical study, this book has its limitations.

University of Sussex

JOE KENNEDY


Making Americans is one of those books which has something to say and firmly pursues its argument. It aims to show “how first- and second-generation American Jewish writers, composers, and performers used the theatre to fashion their own identities as Americans”. Moving from the 1920s to the 1950s, from early musicals such as Jazz Singer, Whoopee and Crazy Girl to the less forgotten musical worlds of Oklahoma!, South Pacific and The King and, this study encompasses “three chaotic decades of economic depression, war and social upheaval”.

The experience of assimilation and acculturation is at the core of many of these-shows. For Most the above musicals attempted to reframe the Jews as a white ethnic group, disconnecting them from the image of the non-white racial other. This thought-provoking idea, reinforced by Most’s analyses, nevertheless raises the question of authorial intention which could be backed up with the use of further sources.

It is, however, extremely insightful to see how Broadway directors of Jewish descent did project – even if not deliberately – many of their anxieties regarding acculturation onto other usually more racialized groups such as Asian or African Americans. Most shows how, in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s musicals, the use of Asian and black characters is particularly problematic; although participating in plots which pleaded for inclusion, these characters were nevertheless framed as racial stereotypes – something which was clearly avoided in the representation of Jews themselves. This becomes particularly clear in the presence of stereotypical black American traits in Oklahoma! and Babes in Arms, which stood for a shared project of acculturation whilst also representing a negative or passive other to the Jewish identity.

Most might tend to overplay her main argument at times. She sees, for instance, the ending of South pacific, where the final song is performed by the male character rather than by a family chorus, as a sign that interracial marriage is doomed: “family who cannot sing together cannot stay together”. The fact that the female protagonist, Nelly, becomes somehow silenced at the end of the play no doubt raises feminist questions worthy of further exploration, but to see the lack of a final chorus as an interracial crisis seems rather far-fetched. Yet Most certainly deserves acclaim for the brave way she attempts to connect the ethnic or racial dynamics of these plays with various social and political issues (from McCarthyism to local politics or feminism). Overall, Making Americans is a challenging read which uncovers surprising ideological nuances in the supposedly frothy stuff of musicals.

Sussex University

SUSANA ARAÚJO
What defines a “city of knowledge” is simple enough – a physical community, anchored by a respected research institution that is able to capitalize on the symbiosis created by the university (seeded with federal research grants) and small innovative companies able to convert theoretical research into applied technologies. Such communities should be easy to foster and replicate based upon successful models such as Stanford University and Palo Alto, California. But the reality of the city of knowledge is that for every successful example there are many other attempts that fail to capture the dynamism and iconic status of Silicon Valley. O’Mara looks at the relationships that transform the local economy, landscape, and demographics of cities of knowledge as government-funded university research translates into technologies primed for entrepreneurial exploitation. O’Mara’s research into the success of Silicon Valley as a paragon of the city of knowledge reveals how these model communities, through a combination of Cold War-era military research dollars, land-planning models, and access to property maintain their status as engines of prosperity and desirability.

By examining both successful and less than optimal examples, O’Mara reconsiders the postwar American suburb and research park as more than simply a case of sprawl and a metaphor for chronically disposable culture. Contemporary discomfort with the propagation of suburban sprawl is somewhat at odds with O’Mara’s conclusions concerning the success of these cities at creating a pool of similarly trained and educated researchers and entrepreneurs that are able to form successful synergistic partnerships between business and academia. O’Mara’s research also provides cautionary tales of the failure of using high-tech community development as a means to public policy ends rather than fostering high-tech industry for its own sake. Central to the narrative of cities of knowledge is the function of the research university as a strong actor able to take a leadership role in the development of high-tech communities. Ultimately, the institutions cited here had some fortuitous preconditions that contributed to their success (such as ownership or control of large parcels of land) that may not be easily replicated in other environments. The requirements for developing successful cities of knowledge O’Mara prescribes may set the bar for future Silicon Valleys a bit too high for most prospective universities to manage.

University of Michigan

DAVID VURYK
foreign policy. The book offers a comparative study of two elite private organizations – the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations and London’s Royal Institute of International Affairs – during the crucial years of the Second World War. In addition to analyzing the history and social construction of these Anglo-American institutions, the bulk of the text assesses the influence of the organizations in making US and British foreign policy, and their role in the mobilization of public opinion. Finally, the book considers whether the elites represented the heart of a growing Anglo-American establishment.

The book goes far beyond a simple narrative history of the wartime activities of these organizations, comparing the evidence to a number of theories in an attempt to explain not only “how power works,” but also to develop “a theory that better explains the power, influence and roles of such organizations”. After testing the evidence against pluralist, corporatist, Marxist and statist theories, Parmar concludes that a Gramscian model offers the best explanation for the wartime relationship between the state and these private organizations in both countries. Such a model offers a theoretical middle way in acknowledging the connections between the state and private organizations, containing elements of both corporatism (but without dominant private interests) and statism (without the all-powerful state). The key that brings the state and private spheres together is the Gramscian concept of “state spirit,” which allows private groups to work with the state because they believe that they are as one, that they are “the embodiment and makers of the state”.

The argument is clearly organized and persuasive, although further work will be required to see if a Gramscian analysis is as convincing beyond the exceptional wartime years. Does state–private unity survive beyond the Second World War? Will the views of the private organizations (which appear to speak with one united voice) always coincide with those of the government? Will such an analysis fit other private organizations concerned with foreign affairs? Nevertheless, the book will certainly be of interest to all scholars of international relations, and it succeeds in its aim of showing how, “in the making of a new world order, the British and American governments were powerfully influenced and assisted by an Anglo-American establishment”.

University of Birmingham

ANDREW JOHNSTONE


In this book Silva shows how during the course of the nineteenth century a small group of white American Congregationist missionaries and their descendants gradually accumulated economic and cultural power in the Hawaiian Islands. This small group of Americans is often referred to as the “oligarchy”. In the early 1890s Queen Liliuokalani sought to reduce the power of this oligarchy. They responded by overthrowing her in 1893 and lobbied for the annexation of the islands by the United States, which they achieved five years later. Silva argues historians
sympathetic to the oligarchy subsequently dominated Hawaiian historiography for much of the twentieth century.

During the last three decades a number of native Hawaiian historians have emerged to contest this historiography. While they have provided valuable new perspectives on the history of Hawaii their work has often been based on oral tradition rather than more conventional historical sources. However, Silva uses nineteenth-century newspapers in the native Hawaiian language, which corroborate many of these new perspectives. They show that resistance by native Hawaiians to the process of American colonialism was much stronger than the historians sympathetic to the oligarchy have suggested. Silva also refers to an anti-annexation petition, previously overlooked by historians, that was signed by the overwhelming majority of the native Hawaiian community in 1897. She suggests that the knowledge that their ancestors signed this petition inspires supporters of the modern Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

Silva has a much more favourable opinion of the last two Hawaiian monarchs, Kalakaua and Liliuokalani than the historians she opposes. She shows that Kalakaua's revival of traditional Hawaiian learning and performance art is evidence of his resistance to white American colonialism rather than of his profligacy. She also reassesses the role of Liliuokalani as a leader of the resistance to the oligarchy and American annexation during the 1890s to show that she was a competent and effective leader.

This book is a major new interpretation of the history of the Hawaiian Islands. However, Silva understates the divisions within the native Hawaiian community. These divisions undoubtedly undermined native Hawaiian resistance before and after the 1893 coup. She also overlooks an important source of information on native Hawaiian resistance during the 1890s – the British Foreign Office papers.

University of Wolverhampton
RICHARD A. HAWKINS


Our grasp of how racism operates in the United States is greatly inflected by our understanding of when the African American civil rights movement began, and when, if ever, it came to a stop. The conventional civil rights story begins in Montgomery in 1955, triumphs with President Johnson’s 1964 Civil Rights and 1965 Voting Acts, and dissipates by 1970 amid urban crisis and black-power slogans. But to see organized movement before the McCarthyite marginalization of the antiracist left, with its articulation of labor and racial questions, is to link critiques of white supremacy to those of international political economy.

In Black Is a Country, Nikhil Singh underscores the politics of periodization. He warns that conventional emplotments cast the assault on white supremacy as a series of events that proceeded as a peaceful, legalistic struggle against the South’s aberrant system of racial rule. This chronology assumes American racial universalism, liberal
color-blindness, and a nation state that constitutes democracy’s limits. Countering this triumphant account, Singh argues both that white supremacy has been a perennial, ubiquitous feature of US liberal nationalism, and that the “long civil rights movement” began during the New Deal and continued through the Nixon years.

Singh describes a Depression-era United States where government involved itself in the economy in novel ways, and where intellectuals and activists of the emergent black “counter-public sphere” generated “new universals from the forcible enclosures of racial stigma”. Defending Ethiopia from Italian invasion, participating in “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” campaigns, drawing attention to the poverty and racism at the root of the Harlem riot of 1935, and organizing sleeping-car porters were expressions of this counter-public sphere during the 1930s. The critical disposition motivating these actions continued on into the war through the March on Washington Movement.

Against much historiography that also situates the movement in its Cold War context, Singh stresses continuity. He acknowledges anticommunism’s predominance in the 1950s, but avoids narratives of declension. Instead, he reminds us that black internationalist visions of freedom, always wider than those of the state and its ideological apparatus, continued to point toward something more inclusive, more universal. From here, Black Is a Country moves from the liberatory paradigms of SNCC and Martin Luther King, Jr. to those of the Black Panthers and the solidarity movements of the 1970s. Nikhil Singh has revealed a treasure of politically insightful ideas and organizationally successful campaigns, while providing noteworthy lessons for contemporary struggles for racial justice.

University of California, Santa Barbara

JOHN MUNRO


Smith’s book centres on W. E. B. Du Bois’s Georgia Negro Exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition, particularly the 363 photographs on black life in Georgia he assembled to show a global audience “what the negro really is in the South.” The many photographs from the exhibit reproduced in Smith’s book, originally uncaptioned and unattributed (although Smith has identified Thomas E. Askew as the producer of several), present a fascinating archive, both in the frequent formal brilliance of their composition and in the complex politics of identity which the collection maps out. Attending as much to the agenda of the archivist as to the images themselves – many of which feature light-skinned subjects from an emergent black middle class – Smith discusses Du Bois’s archive as both a critique of contemporary racial typology and a celebration of the patriarchal family he saw as the bedrock for African American progress.

In order to do so she reads Du Bois’s exhibit as a “counterarchive,” contesting dominant conventions of the visual representation of African Americans such as the police mugshot, the race-science typological portrait, “comic” cartoons and
sketches and lynching postcards. The exhibit also engaged with the aesthetic of the middle-class portrait, or cabinet photograph, and Smith convincingly argues that Du Bois’s famous formulation of African American identity as characterized by “double-consciousness” is a consciousness formed primarily in the field of vision. The undoubted strength of the book lies in bringing these archives together; even if the arguments about counter-representation often go over familiar territory, the juxtaposition of these carefully selected images demonstrates just how subtle and multiply engaged Du Bois’s exhibit was.

However, this argument is sometimes over-stretched. In positioning Du Bois as a racial anti-essentialist, for example, Smith never really gets to terms with his reliance on typological and eugenic thinking. Similarly, it sometimes seems tenuous to argue that lynching photographs represent a dominant archive which helped shape the Georgia exhibit when all the lynching photos Smith includes were produced after 1900. Consequently, the inclusion of lynching photography seems inspired more by the recent interest and controversy surrounding them than by their organic connections to Du Bois’s exhibit. Nonetheless, the way this book shows the importance of photography within both Du Bois’s career and African American traditions of social commentary and representation, its suggestive and broadly applicable theoretical apparatus, and its fascinating range of images which demonstrate the centrality of visual culture to the constitution of racial identities all make it worthy of attention.

University of Exeter

MARK WHALAN


It was Andy Warhol, that eminent twentieth-century American materialist, who famously stated that he hoped to discover more about a person by watching them buy underwear than by reading a book that they wrote. The contributors to Willa Cather and Material Culture would no doubt be in agreement. Touring the “object world” of her literary career we wonder whether Willa Cather, a figure cut in stark contrast to the pop materiality of Warhol, had in fact been the “cultural participant” it is widely assumed she had no interest in being. Wide-ranging and often provocative, Janis P. Stout has edited a collection of essays that not only suggestively map Cather’s in-built ambivalence towards the burgeoning commercialism and cultural commodification of her new century, but also reconfirm the value and significance of material culture in the study of American literature.

With her 1922 essay “The Novel Demeublé,” identifying the novelist as the “remover who removes” (Mary Ann O’Farrell), Cather ensured her more common association with an anti-materialist aesthetic. But is the modernist preoccupation with material culture and objecthood not most acutely expressed in this desire “to throw all of the furniture out of the window”? Two Willa Cathers then appear on the material horizon. The first quietly insists on the centrality of objects made by
women (crucially, Native American women) (Deborah Lindsay Williams) in the history of American art. This Cather is so enchanted by “the communicative possibilities of material culture” (Sarah Wilson) that a commitment to American cultural diversity resonates in the very quilts, telephones, bicycles, gloves and Native American artefacts furnishing novels such as The Song of the Lark (1915), My Mortal Enemy (1926) and Death Comes for the Archbishop (1927). The second is haunted by an elitist and conservative suspicion of mass-consumerism and the desire for a return to traditional premodern modes of American living, where the role of women no matter how “rugged” or “heroic” remains gently pastoral if not decidedly conventional. Cather’s discomfort, for instance, at embodying the paradoxical form of the “New Woman” (agitating for reform amidst the confusion and anxiety of female fashion and consumer trends) while editing Home Monthly Magazine (where the New Woman was frequently portrayed as a high-minded troublemaker “doomed to unhappiness”), must have been profound (Jennifer L. Bradley).

Yet Janis P. Stout and her contributors project one important message: that while fearing for the destruction of authentic American culture at the hands of an undiscerning commercialism such as “Nature Tourism” (Anne Raine), Willa Cather celebrates a potential community of memory tangible in objects created and used by women. An interior landscape made material, where “quilts should be carefully read” (Ann Romines), gloves speak of suffering and suspicion (Robert K. Miller) and “words can ... be things in themselves” (O’Farrel).

DUNCAN WHITE

Kingston University


Taylor’s book is, in effect, a travelling musician’s journal with a theoretical component tacked to the beginning. A long-time guitarist with American punk outfit False Prophets, Taylor maintained a diary of the band’s itinerant experiences. A subsequent spell in graduate school deepened and enhanced his perception of the construction of the modern subject, particularly in its opposition to authority. The central thesis of the book is the “punk paradox of non-identity,” which arises from the immersion of the self into a refusal of the commodification of types by appropriating a multiplicity of signs of being. Acknowledging his dual role as “at once informant and ethnographer”, Taylor describes how the quintessential punk “identity” exploits that multiplicity while refusing to be reduced to categorization. A main problem for this, he acknowledges, is the appropriation of youth culture, along with any antisocial element, into mainstream, corporate culture: “the more revolutionary the product, the greater its potential for serving reaction”. The strength of the anarcho-punk “scene,” for Taylor, is the cohesiveness inherent in its non-identity. In this (and ultimately in this alone) it repels attempts of forced assimilation. There is a strong sense of confusion that arises in the book, notably in the manner in which Taylor confuses the refusal to assimilate with...
actually overturning and replacing the dominant culture. This aside, though, he does
give a good account of the ways in which identity is constructed and produced, and
that includes “alternative” subjectivities. It should come as no surprise, then, that
punk styles, especially dress, are foregrounded in the fight against appropriation. The
punk mode of dress, according to Taylor, “maintains a gap, proposes an alternate
order” that becomes problematic in the stabilization of identity. A question arises
here, namely does this show of defiance through dress not merely confirm identity,
in all its ostentatious alterity, to the despised masses? When he shifts from such
surface matters Taylor’s account has more theoretical significance. Drawing on the
work of critics such as Adorno, Kristeva and Foucault, he has much more impact.
Of Adorno’s assertion that the “identity fetish” gives the effect of individuality to
standardized commodities, Taylor recognizes that “the rock star is the identity
fetish par excellence”. Some oversimplifications of the countercultural impact of
rock on social and political life aside, the core of this book is an interesting use
of sociological theory as applied to a minority sub-group.

University of Exeter

Gary Blohm