Reviews


These two editions were first published by Bobbs-Merrill in the mid-1960s and have been reissued in The American Heritage Series at Hackett. Much of the series remains in print, ranging from early national documents to Randolph Bourne’s War and the Intellectuals and John Dewey’s Political Writings. The series editors Leonard W. Levy and Alfred Young describe the need for a “documentary library of American history …, providing authentic texts, intelligently and unobtrusively edited.” Well-presented and with extensive introductions by the two editors, these two volumes are significant resources for tracing the political patterns of Benjamin Franklin’s thought and the development of the Protestant tradition in the United States.

Protestantism has been neglected recently in favour of a more multicultural approach to fragmenting religious practices, but Ahlstrom’s volume is a reminder of the depth of the tradition. Beginning with essays by Thomas Hooker on Puritan thought and Jonathan Edwards on the Great Awakening, the volume presents key texts from William Channing and Ralph Waldo Emerson in the mid-nineteenth century, to Josiah Royce’s and William James’s attempts to resuscitate the Protestant spirit at the turn of the twentieth century, through to the Social Gospel of Walter Rauschenbusch in the 1910s and the neo-orthodoxy of H. Richard Niebuhr in the 1930s. The separation between church and state arguably makes the Protestant tradition more interesting in America than in Britain, but also more complex at times it has been seen as the enemy of philosophy and social thought, but at other times – most notably with Emerson, James and Rauschenbusch – deeply wedded to one or other discourse. Ahlstrom’s commentary is particularly useful in detailing the various formations of early Protestantism – Presbyterians, Congregationists, Separatists, Baptists and Quakers – to offset reductive accounts of “the New England mind.”

Moving through the seventeenth-century spiritual awakening and mid-nineteenth-century cultural renaissance, Ahlstrom’s 100-page introduction contextualizes the thinkers included in the volume, clarifying notable schools of thought (such as New Haven and Princeton theology) and social trends (the rise of liberalism and the impact of Darwinism). He also provides lists of critical works on each
 thinker (up to 1967) and short biographies. The selections are carefully chosen to characterize key Protestant debates, such as the lengthy extracts from James’s *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) and Royce’s *The Sources of Religious Insight* (1912), which contrast Royce’s idealism with James’s radical empiricism, setting Royce’s notion of an all-encompassing principle by which every empirical contradiction can be resolved against James’s pluralistic cosmology.

The introduction ends with a discussion of the social gospel and the rise of neo-orthodoxy in the 1930s and 1940s, during which time the Niebuhr brothers were developing elements of Swiss theologian Karl Barth’s thought as a more realistic alternative to the idealistic currents of Protestantism. Although Ahlstrom moves forward his discussion into the 1950s, it is a shame that the selections end in the mid-1930s with H. Richard Niebuhr’s clarion call for the church to seek a new stance “against the world.” The volume would have benefited from the inclusion of essays by Reinhold Niebuhr (he was much more wide-ranging than his younger brother, although arguably not as rigorous a theologian), Paul Tillich (Ahlstrom leaves Tillich out for not being a “life-long American”), and Martin Luther King, Jr. (race is barely mentioned in the volume). A postscript for this new edition would also have been welcome to summarize Protestant developments in the last half-century.

*The Political Thought of Benjamin Franklin* periodizes Franklin’s political writings into five phases: the first phase spans 1722–57 and deals with business and civic leadership in Franklin’s first fifty years up to his election to Fellow of the Royal Society; the second, 1757–75, focuses on Franklin’s diplomatic service in England; the short third section, 175–76, leads up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence; the fourth, 1776–85, covers the time when Franklin was minister to France and negotiated peace with Britain; and the last phase, entitled “Sage at Home,” covers 1785–90, taking in his time as President of Pennsylvania and the drafting of the Constitution. Ralph Ketchum emphasizes that Franklin did not write a full political treatise, but that his political views are implicit in his lengthy career in public service.

The broad historical focus of this volume, spanning almost seventy years, suggests a gradual development of Franklin’s political thought rooted in a supreme belief in personal virtue. Ketchum argues against the theory that there was discord between Franklin’s personal and public life, asserting that his political philosophy grew out of his convictions: for example, that government should always be in the public interests with citizens working together for the welfare of all. The documents also account for Franklin’s theory of assembly rights in the 1750s and his belief in the necessity of consent for establishing a just government.

Not all the essays deal explicitly with political ideas: some focus on moral issues, topical debates, and basic freedoms. Where Ahlstrom’s volume deals with the consequences of the separation of church and state, Franklin stressed the need for religious tolerance and his realization that politics and religion are deeply intertwined. In his 1780 document “On State Support of Religion,” for example, he expresses his belief that “when a religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support, so that its Professors are oblig’d to call for the help of the Civil Power, it is a sign … of its being a bad one.” The range of Franklin’s work is remarkable, shifting from national destiny and public service to diplomacy and the need to strengthen international links. Franklin’s political theory may have lacked a systematic base, but the
volume documents the many connections that he made throughout his career between “doctrine and deed”.

University of Leicester

MARTIN HALLIWELL


Cecil B. DeMille was born in Ashfield, Massachusetts, in 1881, the son of a playwright and lay Episcopalian minister; he first worked in the live theatre before joining friend Jesse Lasky, and Sam Goldfish, in forming the Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company. Directing his first movie in 1914, he remained a towering figure in the motion picture industry until his death in 1956. Dressed in characteristic jodhpurs, mounted on a camera boom, he literally and metaphorically towered over the film set and his crew. In The Ten Commandments he twice parted the Red Sea – in 1923 and 1956 – beating the previous record set by God. When asked how many Oscars he had received, he is supposed to have replied, “Eleven! But they only gave me three” (349). In 1925 DeMille suffered a mid-career crisis after falling out with Adolph Zukor of Paramount over the expense of DeMille’s production company. Leaving Famous-Players Lasky he wandered in the wilderness for seven years before returning to help rescue Paramount during the Depression.

While audiences flocked to see his films, critics and academics have not been kind to DeMille. He is the showman, pandering to popular tastes, while his contemporary, D. W. Griffith, is the innovative auteur establishing the grammar of the movies. The world took note of Griffith’s The Birth of a Nation (1915), but DeMille’s celebration of the Civil War, The Warrens of Virginia (1915) goes unnoticed. In their early days both directors drew attention to contemporary social evils and the need for reform, but DeMille turned to Biblical spectacles, marriage dramas, adultery and divorce, all with suspiciously long takes of attractive young women bathing – sex, sin, and Satan. DeMille treated the Christian story with an “odd mix of reverence and ballyhoo” (220), but his other winning formula was calculating with unerring accuracy how to stay on the right side of the censor.

Robert Birchard, film historian, film editor and one-time DeMille archivist, has written a meticulous and closely detailed study of DeMille and the films he made. Determined to erase the “blur of nostalgia” (xviii) he relies heavily on the DeMille papers at Brigham Young University and primary materials in his own possession. Birchard’s sober voice cuts through Hollywood hype and faulty memory to discover, for example, that relations between the Edison Trust and the independents could be cooperative rather than antagonistic; and that even auteurs, such as DeMille, were tightly controlled by the studios.

Cecil B. DeMille’s Hollywood has two important goals in attempting to elevate DeMille’s creative status and explain his popularity and cinematic longevity. Reacting to what Birchard sees as the poor critical reception of DeMille, he promotes his skill
and artistry as a director by pointing to lesser-known movies, such as The Golden Chance (1916). In addition, Birchard asks, “Why did he remain successful when other filmmakers fell from professional and public grace?” (xi) Certainly, no other major director started their career in the Progressive Era and ended it in the Cold War. By this measure, DeMille has the upper hand over aesthetic rival Griffith: when Griffith died in 1948 he had been unknown in the industry for many years.

The book is organized chronologically by film which allows the reader to dip in easily. DeMille made seventy films and there are seventy chapters. Production costs, box office gross, script development, casting, shooting, actors’ performances, film narrative, distribution, and much more are meticulously detailed. The framing of the book around each film means that the broader objectives of the project are sometimes obscured. How his films were made and their particular qualities only partially explain his creative success. Birchard rightly tells us that, “One of his greatest talents was reading the public mood” (56), yet the public’s engagement with the films and the changing zeitgeist remain unexplored.

The First Female Stars pays homage to the lives of fifteen early female stars who made their first movie appearance between 1900 and 1923. Dealt with alphabetically, each has a chapter devoted to them with a useful filmography of their appearances before 1930. Claiming to rehabilitate a generation of young and “gallant” (vii) actresses lost to current movie goers, the reason for their selection is, nevertheless, not entirely clear. We are told that such people as Theda Bara, Sarah Bernhardt, Carol Dempster, and Pearl White, who display the “will power of youth and the temerity of talent” (vii), should be our “role models” (vii). Here we have two problems: first, at least nine of the fifteen are not unknowns; secondly, not all were spring chickens. While Carol Dempster and Dorothy Gish were in their fourteenth year when they first appeared, four were in their twenties, three well into their thirties, and Bernhardt was about fifty five. Here, surely, we have a testament to female diversity.

The trade and fan presses are well culled and the secondary literature has been consulted; although, surprisingly, there is no mention of Shelley Stamp, Movie Struck Girls (2000). While Menefee lovingly recounts the qualities of these stars of the silent screen, there is insufficient engagement with wiser theoretical or historiographic issues to hold the book together.

University of Greenwich

ANDREW DAWSON

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805239580


In 1950 the Republican Party had no Southern senators and a mere two of the region’s 105 congressmen. The GOP constituted a minority of the southern delegation in both the House and the Senate for sixty straight elections between 1874 and 1994. With the “Solid South” as a given, the Democratic Party was virtually assured control of Congress for much of the twentieth century (in the 31 Congresses between 1932 and 1992, the Republicans controlled the Senate in 5 and the House in just 2). The emergence of the GOP as a genuine political force in the South over the
past fifty years has transformed it into a truly national party for the first time, in the process changing the face of American politics.

In *The Rise of Southern Republicans*, Earl and Merle Black trace this political revolution. They show how Republicans made progress in the peripheral South in presidential politics in the 1950s, before going on to make headway in the Senate and finally the House. Although helped by decisive federal intervention regarding civil rights, it took Republicans more than three decades to finally end Democrat supremacy in the South. Initially, southern Democrats emphasized their own conservatism and distanced themselves from the national party in order to thwart their opponents. Then, in the 1980s, “New Democrats” assembled bi-racial coalitions to win elections. The inability and unwillingness of Republicans to win black votes left them needing the support of an unrealistically large majority of southern whites. Due to long-standing regional hostility toward them, it was only in the 1990s that the GOP was able to win a majority of congressional seats in the South for the first time since Reconstruction. The Blacks argue that Ronald Reagan’s presidential Republicanism played a decisive role in this political upheaval, by helping to legitimize the party among southern whites—in the process realigning white conservatives and, crucially, ending white moderates’ natural identification with the Democrats. Given the nature of Republican Party support and the South’s growing diversity, the Blacks argue that competitive two-party politics, rather than a solid Republican South, is likely to characterize the region’s future.

The Black brothers display an awesome command of southern politics as they explain how the Republican Party transformed America’s political landscape. *The Rise of Southern Republicans* lacks the dramatic flair of Dan Carter’s, *The Politics of Rage*, and gives little sense of the role that ordinary white southerners played in the political transformation of their region. Nevertheless, it is an important book for all scholars of modern American politics, and demonstrates the heavy debt that historians owe to political scientists of the caliber and skill of Earl and Merle Black.

*Leeds University*  

SIMON HALL


This volume is the result of a labour that has stretched through thirty years of an academic career, yet it is as fresh, relevant, engaging and exciting as it is definitive. In the words of the Incredible String Band, “back in the 1960s, we made our own amusement then,” and, in the absence of major grant support, Bryan began to send his students on field trips to town meetings in Vermont, to understand the state’s local political culture, and to help him record the actions and activities of a goodly sample of these local, participatory legislative chambers. Over the next thirty years Bryan and his succeeding classes of helpers recorded usable data on over 1,400 town meetings. The author’s coding chart allowed observers to record data without making judgements—giving a complete record of attendances throughout the
meeting, the number of empty seats, the gender balance of the meeting and of those speaking, the distribution or concentration of the speech that took place – “238,603 acts of participation by 63,140 citizens in 210 towns.”

This powerful database is used to describe and analyse the process of town meetings, and the different ways that business is conducted in different towns. The investigation involves careful analyses of the time series data against town size and various population characteristics taken from the census, as well as factors relating directly to the conduct of the town meetings, and against measures that he constructs to express expected levels of democratic participation. Attendance, debate, and women’s participation are themes that drive much of the analysis, but few stones go unturned, as Bryan looks at socio-economic status, education levels, population density and many other factors in his analysis. Bryan finds that while various factors have influence, size matters more than anything else in accounting for the democratic health of these communities – the smaller the town population the stronger the local engagement in this form of participatory democracy. Bryan makes the comparison with Athenian democracy, and draws on an impressive range of references in making the comparison credible.

It is not just in the discussion of American athenianism that Bryan’s footnotes add strength to this book. In a volume where the depth is provided by a dedicated and careful researcher and his teams of field workers accumulating an unrepeatable and invaluable body of time series data, cross beams of strength are added by the range of scholarly work brought into play with this unique body of information. As Bryan says of the footnotes “I expect you to read them.”

This is not an invitation to ignore. The book is solidly scholarly, but is enlivened with astute, enlightening, touching, funny and occasionally moving observations. The meetings come to life, without the discipline of the analysis ever being lost. Some of these observations are in the footnotes, but here also we find an autobiographical counterpoint threading the volume. We meet the three women teachers who got Bryan and his peer group through eight grades of schooling in Newbury Town Central School; we join a ten-year-old’s fall and winter stay on the McEachern Farm, where “electrification had not yet arrived”; we watch a twelve-year-old hunt partridge “on a crimson blue October afternoon”; we walk with an older Bryan over Mooselocke talking politics with his brother David; we watch the teenager picking stones from Russell Thompson’s fields, when really intending to court the daughter Susan; we observe the fight when Joe McEachern takes umbrage over Bryan’s interest in a girl named Frances; we meet Scott Mahoney when he is the social science teacher in the high school where Bryan graduated in a class of seven, as a regular speaker at town meeting, and, two years before his death at the age of 72, taking part in Burlington’s second annual Lesbian Gay Pride March; we are shocked by the loss of Bryan’s dog when it is shot chasing deer, and worry that the later replacement canine has not learned to ignore cyclists. And we get a brief sight of Bryan home life with Melissa, a dragooned town meeting observer since 1975 in spite of caring “as much for political science as I do for turnip greens,” and a yard where eleven Chevy Chevettes lie, “two for the road and the rest for parts.”

The observational commentaries add depth, and contain the reality of local politics, both charming and less so, with both elements perhaps encapsulated in a couple of lines from one meeting description: “A little old lady who much have
been in her late eighties voiced an opinion. Another woman made a remark implying that she (the little old lady) never helped out on any committees. To this the cute little old lady yelled, “YOU’RE A FUCKING LIAR!” This points out without blinking the significance of who does the communal snow-ploughing, and with what machine; the worth of the elected post of Second Constable; the importance to local traders of local licensing laws; and significance of local democracy to all these and much more.

De Montfort University

PHILIP JOHN DAVIES

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805259583


Challenging the Boundaries of Slavery is an insightful and engaging piece of work. It intertwines macro and micro histories concerning the origins and abolition of the Atlantic slave system and presents a sophisticated and complex historical synthesis that broadens the current debate and suggests new ways of thinking about the factors shaping the course of slavery in American history.

Beginning with an overview of the origins and nature of Atlantic slavery Davis then focuses upon the year 1819, which he describes as marking a “kind of national rite of passage …” during which “… Americans crossed new thresholds of decision that transformed the social and intellectual world of the Revolutionary generation” (35). To illustrate this point he examines the public debates that took place in this year relating to westward expansion and the question of slavery, which culminated in the Missouri Crisis.

Davis isolates two significant case studies occurring in 1819, which he argues further illustrate the national debate over the expansion of boundaries and which both concerned the reinterpretation of texts considered sacred in the American Republic – the US Constitution and the Bible. Chief Justice John Marshall’s decision in the Supreme Court case McCulloch v. Maryland and William Ellery Channing’s “Baltimore Sermon” both represented various sides of an emerging capitalist and modernizing culture that were concerned with moral and economic improvements in antebellum America, an argument that was antithetical to the cherished beliefs of Southerners regarding state rights and slavery. Marshall’s decision, which denied the right to Maryland to tax the Baltimore branch of the National Bank, reflected a broad interpretation of the Constitution presenting a vision of federal government that was centralized, powerful and concerned with “representing the people, not quasi-independent states …” (49). In addition, Channing’s Unitarian beliefs embodied in his Baltimore Sermon, stressed the links between America’s revolutionary ideals and the principles of liberal Christianity, which hinted at the abolitionist potential of religious reform.

Davis brilliantly pulls this analysis together in his discussion of African–American abolitionism, which he argues created such a paranoid obsession amongst southern slave-owners that it led them down a route of extreme rebellion against the federal
government, “that ultimately led to its own destruction,” (62). This book emphasizes the fact that questions regarding slavery were intimately connected to wider debates and discourses in antebellum America concerning issues such as national character, economics and expansion. In incredibly lucid and articulate terms Davis weaves these strands together and impresses upon us the significance of slavery to the American past.

University of York

REBECCA J. GRIFFIN


The jury is still out on President Lyndon B. Johnson’s foreign policy accomplishments and achievements, especially in areas other than Vietnam. His own outsized personality and historians’ preoccupation with his Vietnam policies have tended to preclude any balanced assessment. In the past decade H. W. Brands and Thomas A. Schwartz, among others, have challenged the conventional view that his interest and abilities in foreign affairs were alike deficient, suggesting that, however disastrous his Vietnam policies, in other areas of diplomacy Johnson was actively engaged and often demonstrated considerable skill and sophistication.

Whatever Johnson’s other foreign policy preoccupations, he never doubted that relations with the Soviet Union, above all the avoidance of nuclear war, must be his highest priority. Dumbrell’s model study, a welcome contribution to the continuing debate on Johnson’s foreign policies, concentrates upon the Johnson administration’s most significant international relationship. He shrewdly evaluates Johnson’s existing foreign policy views and experience in November 1963, belying those who would depict LBJ as merely the Southern hick or ignoramus of popular myth, but emphasizing his longstanding commitment to the orthodox Cold War outlook he shared with most other contemporary American leaders. Drawing on enormous research in both primary and secondary sources, including some of the latest scholarship based on Soviet archives, Dumbrell lucidly and expertly navigates the Johnson administration’s tortuous maze of disarmament negotiations and steps toward détente and the protracted efforts to begin peace talks on Vietnam. He also assesses the impact on Soviet–American relations of crises over Cuba, the Middle East, and Czechoslovakia.

Fundamentally, Dumbrell takes a skeptical approach to Johnson revisionism, agreeing with Henry Kissinger that “the very qualities of compromise and consultation on which his domestic political successes were based proved disastrous in foreign policy” (Kissinger, White House Years, 18). On disarmament, Dumbrell especially criticizes Johnson’s tendency to yield to domestic bureaucratic pressures and split the differences among his various advisers. He also demonstrates that, despite their recognition that the Sino-Soviet split was genuine, Johnson and his advisers seriously miscalculated on other intra-Communist relationships, believing the Soviets exercised far more influence over the North Vietnamese and North
Korea than they did, and even suspecting them of inspiring domestic American anti-war protests. His study is, moreover, enlightening on the degree to which over Cuba, the Middle East, and Czechoslovakia, despite genuine rivalries and suspicions Soviet and American officials developed a tacit partnership, one that, during the 1968 Czech crisis, undoubtedly trumped Johnson’s vaunted “bridge-building” strategy toward Eastern Europe. Finally, Dumbrell breaks with Johnson revisionists by plausibly arguing that Vietnam had a highly detrimental impact upon Johnson’s Soviet policies, in terms of delaying détente, limiting American military options elsewhere, and pre-empting the president’s finite energies and political capital.

University of Hong Kong

PRISCILLA ROBERTS


It is a national election year. The campaign had started 13 months before election day. The ruling party holds the White House and both houses of Congress. The government is in the grips of extremists. A repressive act is passed to protect the people from aliens in a potential wartime period. International relations have occupied the presidency for years and remain uncomfortable, especially with the French. The media reports on the election campaign in “sound” bites. And shortly before the election, a president revered by the people dies. The year is 1800.

Ferling has avoided the trap of writing in minutiae and has painted a canvas in broad strokes and vividly coloured personalities. Adams and Jefferson feature heavily in a story of post-revolutionary politics. In addition to the two main protagonists, Washington, Hamilton, Madison, both Pinckneys, Burr and Paine play their parts, as the fortunes of the Federalists and the Republicans ebb and flow.

The book is a page-turner. Using a wide range of primary and secondary material, Ferling analyses players’ motives, for example Hamilton’s defamatory Letter from Alexander Hamilton, Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams. He ascribes the letter not to political ineptitude or to ensuring Jefferson’s election but in support of a Pinckney triumph, thereby interpreting Hamilton as a king-maker. There are numerous such interpretative readings of the material, ascribing motives, for example Burr’s attempted grab for the presidency, a volte-face following the Electoral College dead heat. Previously, Burr had assured Jefferson of his role as junior partner in their relationship.

The tale culminates with the election of 1800. The psophology in a pre-Twelfth Amendment America could have been more clearly explained. However, once the dead-heat in the Electoral College is reached, Ferling is back in his stride, detailing the machinations and intrigue within the House of Representatives, culminating in Jefferson’s win on the 36th ballot.

The epilogue brings the story of the two protagonists full circle, their relationship restored. Both men died within five hours of each other on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in an America much changed, substantially as a result of their efforts.
Ferling eschews the current habit of historians who write microscopically on their chosen subject and thereby provide immense detail at the expense of meaningful interpretation. As a result he writes a succinct account of a fascinating period of American history, making the book all the more approachable and enjoyable for the lay reader.

JOHN MATLIN
Brunel University


This book is a detailed study of a collection of over 300 images of Native Americans (each one reproduced) that was assembled just after the Civil War and catalogued by the photographer Antonio Zeno Shindler for what proved to be the very first photographic exhibition ever mounted by an American museum. It is important in its own right, for the information and insights it provides, and it constitutes further evidence that the history of the camera’s relationship with American Indians is now being considered with the depth and subtlety that it deserves. The period of the photograph as an unproblematic record of mostly vanished indigenous faces and life-ways – as exemplified in, for example, The North American Indians in Early Photographs (1986), an earlier but still-useful book by Paula Richardson Fleming – is over. Moreover, though no-one could sensibly ignore the purchase and perspective achieved through increased sophistication in thinking about questions of alterity – and Fleming implicitly acknowledges relevant theories – the profundity of this book is a consequence of following archival leads to their fullest extent. Painstaking research has uncovered new identifications or tribal affiliations for many of the subjects of these images; similarly, it has sometimes attributed credit to previously unacknowledged photographers and studios and has often corrected the recorded dates and circumstances of their production or dissemination.

There are some beautiful portraits here: Nacheninga, or No Heart of Fear, an Iowa who posed for Thomas Easterly of St Louis in 1849 and who, at the request of an Indian agent present, deliberately put on a grimace to represent the look of wisdom deployed formally in council meetings; Red Plume, a Blackfeet wearing a halo-like headdress and paint, captured in an oval daguerreotype by John H. Fitzgibbon in 1851 or 1852; Ta-tow-ou-do-sa, or Prairie Chicken, also known as Gives to the Poor, a Pawnee tribal policeman taken by William Henry Jackson, pistol in hand, as if ready for action; Annie Stidham, 18-year-old daughter of the Creek leader George W. Stidham, who sat for Shindler himself during a delegation to Washington in 1869, soberly garbed in the “citizen’s dress” usually adopted by members of the “civilized tribes” of the Southeast. These images, like the more disturbing ones – such as the posed skulls of dead men and women killed on the plains in the early 1860s – or the photographic copies made of Indian “ledger drawings” or of Indian paintings produced by white artists, never float free of history. Their contexts, often treaty delegations to Washington, are elaborated. Their
institutional roles are fully explored and, wherever possible, explicating. And, in the course of this contextualization, further narratives, sometimes previously told only for their own sake (such as the collecting activities of the Englishman, William Henry Blackmore), unfold in fuller and authoritative manner. Perhaps the most significant of these are Shindler’s elusive biography and the history of the 1869 Smithsonian exhibition. The significance of the latter, of course, is that—which comes with its images of now half-forgotten Native American figures displayed at the height of the plains wars—it is, truly, a national story. Fully referenced and indexed, with its pictorial content adequately reproduced, Native American Photography at the Smithsonian joins a short shelf of previous studies, including the recent Print the Legend (2002) by Martha Sandweiss and Framing the West (2003) by Carol J. Williams, that grant full weight to the cultural work of Indian photography.

Mick Gidley

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805299589


Gannon’s book, Rumors of War and Infernal Machines, “examines how the fundamentally Utopian enterprise of orderly speculation has often produced destructive technologies” (1). Both British and American speculative fiction are scrutinized, from the future wars imagined by William Le Queux before the First World War and H. G. Wells’ technological manifestations of alien invasion and nuclear war to America’s space program and Robert A. Heinlein’s Starship Troopers. Gannon establishes “the existence of a constantly growing literary/political symbiosis that has extended from Victorian/Edwardian Britain into post-Cold War America” (4). Such an attempt to chart the development of the prophetic and ultimately creative literary genre of speculative fiction proves at times to be highly convincing. Examples taken from familiar and striking historical events like Hiroshima and the moon landing remind the reader that science fiction stories that predated them served to inspire and influence those who eventually designed and used the technology needed to explode the nuclear bomb and build the rocket. America’s love affair with technology and the prospects of space travel have literary roots based in the future wars written about by Victorian social theorists and continued in the work of Arthur C. Clarke, Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, and Ray Bradbury. Indeed, Gannon informs us that they were the four “experts” requested by Walter Cronkite to interview on the day Apollo 11 landed on the moon (186).

America’s military is, according to Gannon, the most susceptible to speculative fiction. When briefed about the technical specifications of the new B-2 Stealth Bomber in 1994, generals, industry chiefs and politicians were given pictures of the new weapon which compared its size with the infamous B-52 and B-1 Bombers, the F-117 Stealth Fighter, and the old and new versions of Star Trek’s most famous spaceship—the USS Enterprise. Whether this was meant to be a joke or signalled the military’s attempt at recognizing popular culture, Gannon maintains that it
represents “the ubiquity of science fictional references within the discursive domain of the military and defense hierarchies, as well as the assumed validation and value of these references within those domains” (189). While an interesting read, offering numerous insights into the cultural influence of science fiction, at times Gannon’s prose is overly wordy and dry, when he uses examples such as the Star Trek reference his argument is made clear and concise. However, this book is a timely study – especially since war is top of the agenda in current American politics – showing how America is open to both the progressive nature of speculative texts and the dangerous imagining of deadly new technologies. We have only to look at the war in Iraq to see how dangerous our technological imagination can be.

Lincoln Geraghty

University of Nottingham

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805309583


Philip Gould’s well-researched, but rather colourless monograph charts the intersection between Trade and Abolition. His contention that the rise of commercialism was supported by antislavery ideology is attested to by a variety of examples from Britain and America. He notes how antislavery ideology posits the transatlantic slave trade as illegitimate, aligning it with the vice of gambling. His discussion here uses a variety of examples including a fantastic 1741 illustration of the vice that includes a black figure dressed as a harlequin; however, the analysis stops short of using Robert Young’s work on hybridity or David Dabydeen’s on black figures in Hogarth to fully flesh out the black Atlantic implications of such a juxtaposition. Rather, as elsewhere in the study, Gould layers on examples of the way Abolitionists linked gambling and slavery as means to show the crucial difference they saw between legitimate and illegitimate trade. Despite his reluctance to make the most of his visual examples Gould foregrounds important issues during the study including that “arguments over racial discourse did not neatly align with pro and antislavery positions” (9), and that reactions to the important slave ship Brookes diagram showed how “(A)ntislavery sentimentalism, then, both denounces and requires the rational calculations of market capitalism” (37). Abolitionists are shown to be involved in the conversion of “former African commodities into new African consumers” (42); this was justified by the antislavery activists because the new legitimate trade meant that they would not be cheated. Such faith in the market and its morality was a feature of much antislavery discourse and even makes an appearance in the poetry Gould quotes from in his rather pedestrian survey of antislavery verse which forms one of his major exemplars of the operation of the commercial jeremiad. Here Phillis Wheatley and William Cowper are the major examples used and with the former Gould makes an excellent case for an economic reading of poems such as “On Being Brought from Africa to America” foregrounding it as an antislavery poem par excellence because it “debunks the very notion of Western cultural refinement through the transatlantic economic context the poem unfolds” (66). In his other
example of Barbary slave narratives he shows how the ambiguity of racial difference is explored. There is much good work here too, however, narratives of slave ship captains enslaved, such as James Irving, and of African Americans such as Robert Adams, might have nuanced the argument somewhat. Overall, this study is an interesting addition to the scholarship on the slave trade, despite its somewhat pedestrian style.

University of Central Lancashire  


Democratic theory necessarily posits some version of a “people” (or popular sovereign) as the ultimate source of political power. This book argues that the fundamental paradox of American political science has been that, despite its normative commitment to democracy, the accounts of society rendered in its various democratic theories do not clearly identify any such entity as the “people”. Some theorists claimed that although a people was not immediately visible, it was latent or potential and political science could discern it and thereby serve democracy. Others argued that a coherent people or public will was not necessary to achieve the functions that democracy required of popular sovereignty. Both general approaches, argues Gunnell, have been “accomodationist” by adapting the concept of democracy to the perceived realities of American politics in a given period.

Gunnell examines primarily the internal discourse of academic political scientists and refuses to reduce ideas to their context or attribute causality to reified abstractions such as “professionalization” or “modernity”. He convincingly argues that quasi-Hegelian nineteenth-century “state” theory was in its American version an elaborate theory of popular government grounded on a conception of national community, and not the mere transference of the more mystical German original. Subsequently the Progressive generation’s regulatory impulse transformed the term “state” into a synonym for government, but democratic theory still demanded some semblance of a directing public. Progressives found it in a dormant or incipient community that need only be cohered and instructed, but this vision soon gave way to the pluralist one of competing interests and groups. Their interaction created stability and balance, if not the myth of majority rule, via the Schumpeterian circulation of elites. In the mid-twentieth century a more robust defense of American democracy under the label of “liberalism” evolved partly in response to the challenge of totalitarianism and the thought of such émigré scholars as Leo Strauss, as well as the general attraction the term held for New Dealers. It too was said to be pluralist and tolerant, and to permit freedom, difference, and compromise. Liberalism in turn undergirded the postwar reconstitution of the group and the pluralist vision of democracy, now inflected through a more militant behavioralist scientism, in the work of theorists such as David Truman and Robert Dahl. Gunnell says little about how democratic theory might transcend the
paradox he sees in these developments, although he is clear enough that this is not really his project. He does convincingly argue that any attempt at yet another definitive theory of American democracy is unlikely to persuade absent? an appreciation of the history he recounts.

Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London  
JOHNATHAN G. O’NEILL

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805329586


Nick Halpern’s study traces the emergence in the work of key modern and contemporary poets (many more, incidentally, than are listed in his title) of what he describes as two distinct “voices” or “speech genres”: the “everyday” and the “prophetic”. His declared interest is in the “tension” between these voices – although his discussion tends more towards establishing their coexistence, as for example in the poems of Louise Glück or Jorie Graham, than fully addressing the “tension” that this might engender. Is it correct, in any case, to speak of only two voices in this poetry? Are there not multiple shifting voices and registers? Is there not also, particularly in Rich or Graham, an occasional, self-acknowledged and frustrating failure of voice?

Halpern’s is an enormously wide-ranging, all-encompassing book. This is partly a consequence of his prolific range of reference. Sometimes this works (Stevens to Pinsky to Lowell to Wordsworth in one paragraph), elsewhere it seems a little indiscriminate (Lowell to George Meredith to Synder to Blake to Tennyson to Longfellow to Graves to Rich) and on occasion simply unfortunate, as for example when Martha Stewart Living is invoked as a model of how to blend the “domestic” with the “human”. But the huge scope of the book is also a symptom of the difficulty it has in defining its key terms. Although the introduction seeks valiantly to identify what, precisely, “everyday” and “prophetic” mean, it ends up qualifying the terms to such an extent that their signification risks disappearing from view. Finally we find that what the book claims as “everyday and prophetic” is barely distinguishable from that expansion of focus – from small-scale, private, and immediate to wide-scale, public, and universal – characteristic of lyric poetry generally and widely recognized by readers and critics (although not, perhaps, by those whom Halpern has in mind when he complains: “It is true that literary theorists have stolen some of the energy of prophetic poetry.”)

Halpern is at his best when offering close readings of individual poems. He reproduces long passages of text and reads with generosity and insight. His analytic comparisons of the work of two poets, for example Eliot and Rich, is also of real value. The excellent index coupled with the breadth of reference make this a useful companion to individual poems even if the overall argument of the book does not wholly convince.

Kingston University  
JO GILL
William Handley and Nathaniel Lewis’ collection of fifteen essays sets out to “examine how the concept of authenticity is used to invent, test, advertise, and read the West.” To this end, they divide the collection into four sections on western American literary history, Native American cultures, visual culture and the imagining of place. The scope of the collection is, paradoxically, both a strength and a weakness. The essays cover a wide geography and chronology emphasizing the breadth of interest in Western subject matter. However, the disparate subject areas could easily support a collection of essays on their own. This lends the sections an introductory tenor, which the editors hope “will engender greater dialogue.” On the other hand, the diversity of the west in representation is demonstrated in the range of essays. The connecting concept of authenticity effectively links the editors’ sections. Hyperreality and simulation are productively employed in several of the essays, especially in the Native American cultures section.

The literary history section is split between essays on authenticity in early travel writing, the Canadian West, Willa Cather and Henry Adams. This division between specific authors and genera views on authenticity diffuses the focus on potentially the largest subject area.

Phillip J. Deloria’s work on “playing Indian” is the pivotal theoretical perspective for the essays in the “Native American cultures” section. Nancy Cook’s essay on the authenticity or otherwise of Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, or Sylvester Long is particularly interesting.

The “picturing histories” section eschews film in favour of essays on pictorial and photographic images of the West. These essays are very strong and are deservedly placed at the center of the collection. Of note are Stephen Tatum’s essay on Frederic Remmington’s Coming to the Call and Melody Graulich’s exploration of photographic documentation and distortion in Japanese American internment narratives.

In the “reimagining of space” section, essays examining eco-critical writings of Rick Bass, Wallace Stegner, William Kitteridge and Terry Tempest Williams, explore the political dimension of the human/environment relationship.

This is a very interesting collection of essays organized around an important authorizing concept. The range of subjects is illustrative of the diversity of interests in western studies now.
“the American Century.” Its intended readership is undergraduate students of American studies and/or American history. The book is divided into three parts: “The Progressive Political Order, 1900–1933,” “The New Deal Political Order, 1933–69” and “The Divided Political Order, 1969–2000.” Within each part, the chapters are more thematic, covering topics that run throughout the whole book, for example, “Workers and Women,” African Americans and foreign policy. At just over 300 pages, the book crams a massive amount of detail into very little space. It is thus less cumbersome than similar textbooks like Paul S. Boyer’s The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People (1997) and George B. Tindall and David E. Shi’s America: A Narrative History (2000) but more thorough than slimmer, more compact volumes (viz. Thomas C. Reeves’ Twentieth-Century America: A Brief History (2000)). Neither is it weighed down by footnotes (which, judging by the disparate referencing systems applied in undergraduate student essays, are never looked at anyway) but it does include a useful bibliographic essay and two appendices covering the presidential elections and the party composition of Congress. However, there is one difficulty with the book, one which reflects a wider and long-standing malaise within American Studies in Britain. In his Preface, Heale writes, “this book attempts to trace in particular the changing roles of organized (and disorganized) labour, immigrants, women and African–Americans in the American political system.” How can a survey of twentieth-century US political history still fail to include (to a significant degree) the political contributions of other ethnicities, say American Jews or Hispanics (now the single largest ethnic group in America)? Isn’t it about time that American Studies over here widened its scope beyond a narrow focus on a select few ethnicities/races in America? Nonetheless, having said that, I would recommend the adoption of this book as a core text for a survey course of twentieth-century America.

University of Aberdeen

NATHAN ABRAMS

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805359585


Lincoln’s Avengers presents the gripping tale surrounding the assassination of Abraham Lincoln on 14 April 1865, the subsequent arrest and trial of the main suspects, and the sentences passed on them by the military commission headed by the chief prosecutor, Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt. This narrative is supported by in-depth historical insight, which weaves the drama of Lincoln’s assassination and the “whodunit” investigations into the broader political spectrum of Reconstruction. “The federal government’s ongoing and conflicted response to the Lincoln assassination became inextricably intertwined with the increasingly bitter debate over Reconstruction” (xii–xiii).

Leonard’s discussion begins with a deliciously entertaining account of the pursuit and capture of the primary suspects, detailing the specific roles and motives of these individuals in their alleged crime. Leonard’s central focus however, is the role played
by Joseph Holt, Lincoln’s leading avenger, in the unfolding drama. Holt was a Kentuckian by birth, yet despite his “deep roots in slaveholding Southern society … [he] was widely known above all as a Union man – honest straightforward and firm” (16). His pursuit of justice focused upon the capture and punishment of John Wilkes Booth’s co-conspirators, which eventually led to three hangings and four prison sentences. Yet, he was also driven by a pressing desire to prove that Jefferson Davis, former President of the Confederacy, “stood at the head of the conspiracy responsible for the assassination of Lincoln” (63). Leonard argues that Holt’s belief reflected that of many in the United States who were convinced that the crimes of 14 April 1865, were the bloody culmination of numerous Confederate crimes committed during the course of the Civil War.

Against this backdrop, Leonard explores the bitter politics that shrouded Congress during Johnson’s presidency, the personal vendettas waged between politicians who stood on different sides of the Reconstruction debate, and the eventual showdown which saw the President and the military divided against each other and giving rise to “anxious rumours that violence and perhaps a new civil war was about to erupt in the capital” (279). In the course of this text Leonard articulates the fact that the battle between Andrew Johnson and Joseph Holt in the aftermath of the Civil War reflected the larger struggles within the American nation. Not only in coming to terms with the assassination of their President but also confronting questions such as how to re-establish the Union between North and South, how to translate freedom into equality for the formerly enslaved, and how to overcome the deep psychological and emotional scars that the Civil War had left upon the American conscience.

University of York

REBECCA J. GRIFFIN

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805369581


R. Allen Lott describes the American tours made by five piano virtuosi between 1845 and 1876, a time when the solo piano recital was becoming popular in the wake of Liszt’s introduction of this performing genre to London audiences in 1840. The pianists considered are Leopold de Mayer, Henri Herz, Sigismund Thalberg, Anton Rubinstein and Hans von Bülow. All were celebrated performers and some were also known as minor composers. Lured by the financial attractions of touring North America, they appeared in over a hundred cities east of the Mississippi River. Some also performed in California. At one level From Paris to Peoria is an entertaining narrative account of the trials and tribulations that occurred during their tours, interspersed with anecdotes about travelling westwards through Mexico while escaping the pursuit of bandits and the hazards of performing in makeshift conditions in small Midwestern towns. At a more serious level, this well-researched book documents the transformation of American audience response to classical music and the publicity techniques pursued by pianists and their managers. The
rowdiness and informality of the early recitals featured pianists playing to the gallery by including pieces they had composed or adorned which paid homage to the host country. Thus embellishments of popular American songs or well-known opera excerpts were the norm in recitals. This gave way, by the time Rubinstein and von Bélouw toured, to a more serious classical repertoire and more reverent, educated audiences that patronized such events as an aesthetic and social forum for middle-class and highbrow leisure. Initially, the marketing of recitals included managers and performers paying for their own publicity and newspaper editorials and scheduling sensational performances such as works involving multiple pianos. This graduated by the 1870s to the more sophisticated use of impresarios to publicize the tours of famous clients. Lott’s book is a good account of a significant shift in cultural taste in the United States and, as such, it should be required reading for courses in American musical and cultural history. It is a welcome addition to the literature dealing with the transmission of European high culture to the United States. The book is fully referenced and includes appendices on the itineraries and repertoire of some of the pianists. The author has provided additional online material on the tours (www.rallenlott.info).

Brunel University

KENNETH MORGAN


Scott Mackenzie, Screening Québec: Québécois Moving Images, National Identity, and the Public Sphere (Manchester University Press. 2004).

Scott Mackenzie’s Screening Québec is a complex, detailed exploration of the way in which cinema provided an alternative “public sphere” for the Québécois, thereby helping to shape and inform their sense of identity.

In discussing the public sphere, Mackenzie utilizes both the original ideas of Jürgen Habermas, and those of subsequent critics who broadened the scholar’s parameters beyond the eighteenth-century world of educated men. Fundamental to Mackenzie’s work is the potential of cinema to create new public spheres within which Québécois people could discuss and formulate their sense of identity. “Identity,” meanwhile, is a very difficult concept to articulate with precision, perhaps particularly vis-à-vis Québec. To attempt to “explain” Canadian identity is a difficult task, and to focus on Québec presents additional, unique problems. In order to render his task manageable, Mackenzie identifies three principal strands in the discourse of national identity – collectivity, community, and the individual. (A “collective” signifies a homogeneous group, while “community” suggests egalitarianism and unity in diversity.) All three strands of this discourse are to be found in the history of Québécois identity-formation, and all three are important to the history of cinema in Québec.

Mackenzie’s work examines chronologically the work of those who have attempted to use cinema to create alternative public spheres, spheres which have often provided “ordinary” Québécois people with a forum to discuss their lives and identity. The study begins with the work of Léo-Ernest Ouimet, whose locally focused films of Québec emphasized the “interactive” nature of film, prompting
both intense debate among audiences, and hostility on the part of the Church. While some filmmakers attempted to appease the establishment, gradually it became evident that French–Canadian culture was not to be so easily defined or confined. Moving images in Québec inevitably reflected this, particularly as the documentary genre of the province following the inception of the NFB/ONF in 1939 and its cinema direct movement. This movement aimed to allow spectators (particularly formerly marginalized groups) “unmediated access” to their own culture. The desire for agency and empowerment for ordinary people was further enhanced, Mackenzie argues, by the rise of video technology which inspired movements such as Societe Nouvelle in the sixties; this afforded working-class people the opportunity to film, view and re-edit images of their lives, thereby promoting the ethic of diverse community over homogeneous collective.

While many Québécois filmmakers were fervent supporters of the postwar separatist movement, ultimately, just as separatism lost ground in the eighties, so too did faith in Québécois cinema as an alternative public sphere begin to fade. Cinema, by the end of the twentieth century, became “internationalized,” and locally produced Québec films were often viewed as “art films” in which cultural distinctiveness was of lesser importance than the significance of the film for a global audience. Nevertheless, there is little doubt, for Mackenzie, of the importance of twentieth-century efforts to create alternative publics around the cinema.

*Screening Québec* is an important, profound and complex work. Although the initial, thorough exploration of the underpinning theories is essential, it is dense and requires some re-reading. It is also unfortunate that a book which focuses on film and the image does not include any photographic illustrations of films or filmmakers. However, this work is highly significant, not only to students of film, but also to the field of Canadian Studies as a whole.

*Journal of American Studies, 39* (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805389584


Tony Magistrale has lectured and published on Anglo-American Gothicism and Stephen King for years, bringing to light the mysteries and motifs of King’s fiction, and in the process making a case for “horror” as deserving of academic attention and critical praise. Here he moves from print to pictures, venturing with the same literary eye (which has established him as King Critic Premier) to view the films which have made King an icon of popular American culture.

In *Hollywood’s Stephen King*, Magistrale ushers his readers through King’s movies and mini-series adaptations, returning to familiar haunts in his previous works, such as the relationship between Annie Wilkes and Paul Sheldon in *Misery* as a reversal of the “gothic male villain/besieged maiden prototype.” But fiction morphs in the passage from page to screen, and King’s lengthy descriptions, leisurely digressions, and complex internal struggles are condensed through setting and scene, lighting and shadows.
Magistrale extends his intelligent readings of King’s metaphors to the movies they have inspired, mixing the two mediums in his own richly suggestive manner. Beginning with familial horrors Magistrale examines the children of King’s fiction and film before moving on to the malevolent maternal and paternal archetypes. Magistrale is at his most meticulous when examining the two-way nature of the creative process of adaptation, focusing on Donna Trenton’s battle against *Cujo*, the embodiment of the male monsters she has struggled against in domestic turmoil (a cinematic battle beginning and ending in a kitchen), or Kubrick’s use of mirrors in *The Shining* to signify Jack Torrance’s dual personalities.

Perhaps predictably—he is after all a literary critic first and foremost—it is the literary qualities that inspired these films and not the special effects that snare Magistrale’s attention. However, it is on the evolution of text to celluloid that he makes his most searching comments. *Shawshank Redemption* and *The Green Mile* may have clung closely to the stories that inspired them, but when grouped with *The Dead Zone* the study becomes less one of similarity in translation than the examination of a “will and capacity to survive” shared by the majority of characters in King’s canon. What emerges is that King’s fiction and films relate more to human interaction than inhuman reaction. The subtleties in his work tend to be overlooked by highbrow critics. They dismiss as a genre writer—and thus a sensationalist—an author who specializes in an understated, insidious everyday evil, by bullying and domestic violence. The horror in the human, not just beyond.

Like many of Magistrale’s books this one offers an interview with his subject. In the hands of another critic this could give rise to a sense of authorial intrusion, but here it acts as a finely crafted trailer to the must-see feature that follows.

University of Glasgow

WILL NAPIER

*Journal of American Studies, 39* (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805399580


This abridgement of the definitive Nebraska thirteen-volume edition of the Lewis and Clark journals was published because, according to the Preface, the original “targeted primarily at scholars and research institutions, does not reach a public who wants a less weighty introduction to the party’s diaries.” This undersells this remarkable collection’s worth because it is an essential addition to the shelf of any Early National period scholar. Many of us—and this reviewer must be included—come to the Lewis and Clark expedition through secondary sources or excerpts from Reuben Gold Thwaites’s now dated *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (1904–5). Reading through this volume reminds one of what the term “epic voyage of discovery” actually means, and nothing can equal the explorers’ own words when it comes to their experiences with the Indian peoples, the ordeal of crossing the Continental Divide and their encounters with then-unknown flora and fauna. As an introduction to the Lewis and Clark expedition, this well-edited
volume omits virtually nothing and will prove perfect for instructors of nineteenth-century America.

Moulton’s introduction is especially informative, being as a concise as it is precise. The planning, the personalities involved, and the most significant events are recounted in such a way as to inform, or remind, the reader precisely what sort of ordeal Captain Meriwether Lewis and (honorary) Captain William Clark embarked upon when following Thomas Jefferson’s instructions to search for a river passage to the Pacific Ocean and explore the regions newly acquired in the Louisiana Purchase. One can understand why, upon their return home, the explorers learned from traders that many people “had given them up for lost, although “the President of the U. States had yet hopes of us.” The work includes excellent maps, a roster of the permanent party, informative (and necessary) footnotes, photographs of original journal entries, and a thorough index. Moulton also includes an afterword, discussing what befell the members in later life and provides a judicious summing up of the expedition’s significance, establishing the truth of his contention that the journals of Lewis and Clark are “a national treasure” and that the achievements of the Corps of Discovery “remains for all time our American epic.”

In any collection such as this, a reviewer usually finds at least one incident or account, omitted by the editor, which he believes should have been included. Not so in the case of this volume. Moulton has chosen wisely and well; this will be the definitive one-volume collection from the Lewis and Clark diaries for many years to come.

University of Wales Swansea

DUNCAN ANDREW CAMPBELL


Musing on the fact that over half the graves at Grafton national cemetery in West Virginia were designated “Unknown,” Ambrose Bierce reflected on “the contradiction involved in “honoring the memory” of him of whom no memory remains to honor.” Still, he continued, “the attempt seems to do no great harm to the living, even to the logical.” Franny Nudelman’s study probes this impulse on the part of Americans not only to honour the Civil War dead, but to derive from them national purpose and meaning, a “process of abstraction that enabled the living to rededicate themselves to the project of war in the face of stunning loss and destruction.” Drawing on the work done by, among others, Gary Laderman and Drew Gilpin Faust, Nudelman challenges the argument that the Civil War represented a form of “regenerative violence” for America, an argument that, she points out, not only obscures “the devastation of war but also the role that war violence played in disciplining a national public.” “The idea that violence breeds national unity,” she suggests, “has allowed U.S. citizens to elevate the violence they inflict on others and imagine that such aggression is the condition of national belonging.” By juxtaposing the image of the dead soldier with that of the suffering slave, Nudelman offers
an alternative account of the Civil War dead, in which violence appears neither transcendent nor foreordained.”

Although the Civil War dead are at the heart of Nudelman’s study, her book is more broadly conceived as an attempt to contextualize reactions to and understandings of violent death within antebellum “conventions for representing, studying, and disciplining African American bodies.” The result is a somewhat erratic – although always provocative – argument that develops in fits and starts via discussions of anatomy, literature, photography and African American soldiers, concluding with the example of the horrific murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi in 1955. Exploring the significance of dissection in the antebellum era as a “form of racial violence used … to terrorize African and Native Americans and justify their continued subjugation,” Nudelman argues that antebellum African American writing, viewed “in relation to the practice of dissection” reveals “a radical literature that identified the practice of enslavement with the production of knowledge.” A different form of violence was perpetrated on the bodies of Civil War soldiers, a violence that was both made visible by the battlefield photographs created and disseminated by Alexander Gardner and others and rendered comprehensible – insofar as it could be – via the writings of Walt Whitman and Herman Melville and in the speeches of Abraham Lincoln. Recalling antebellum post-mortem photographs that served as a source of consolation to the bereaved, Nudelman argues that, by contrast, “photographs of soldiers who died alone and decayed in the open air confronted Northern viewers with their inability to care for their dead,” thereby threatening “to build a national community bound not by common sorrow but by a newfound detachment in the face of mass death.” Yet Nudelman’s evidence shows, quite clearly, that detachment was not among the many responses to the Civil War dead, either at the time or since.

Ultimately, Nudelman’s is an ambitious work that strives to offer an alternative interpretation of the familiar and not so familiar aspects of Civil War violence and death, and of “the power of the dead to produce civic unity out of civil war.” Too much of the argument, however, remains embedded in traditional interpretations of, for example, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, and Nudelman does not always permit her own interpretations of the events and works she is examining to take centre-stage. At times, too, she over-simplifies, for example in discussing the role of the “state” in commemorating the dead. Antietam and Gettysburg were not, as she suggests, created in 1863 as the first national cemeteries for the Union dead; Antietam was established, along with some thirteen others, the previous year, and the role played by the states of Maryland and Pennsylvania respectively, although significant, were matched by the efforts of both the federal government and the army to provide some kind of resting place – however temporary, given that the war was ongoing at the time – for the fallen. Her argument over the unifying power of the dead is also open to alternative interpretation. “Civil War culture,” she suggests, “nationalized a sentimental view of the enduring and benevolent influence of the dead. By way of the “mouldering” corpse, wartime representations of battlefield death expanded on the belief, common to death ritual and reformist discourse, that in sorrow one might discover forms of connection that transcend difference and inequality.” Whether the Civil War dead – indeed, the dead of any conflict – were particularly benevolent, however, is a moot point, and their enduring
influence surely contained a strong element of challenge to the living to validate their deaths, a challenge that could create conflict as much as it could consensus. When Emmett Till’s mother insisted on an open casket funeral for her son, she was undoubtedly, as Nudelman argues, calling “on a journalistic tradition that offered the corpse as a sign of social injustice and on a sentimental tradition that took mourning as an occasion to build political community in response to such injustice.” She was also making explicit the challenge contained in her child’s violated body; a challenge that the US State Department has only recently, and much belatedly, decided to take up by reopening the case half a century later, evidence enough, perhaps, that shared grief is in itself only the start of a process whereby the living come to terms with the dead.


Over two decades ago, Michael O’Brien set about rewriting the intellectual history of the ante-bellum South. The main obstacle to a proper understanding of that history, he contended, was the idea, perpetuated by W. J. Cash and other white liberal historians, that the post-Enlightenment South lacked a tradition of complex thinking. Where the ante-bellum Southern intellect was activated, it was concerned to fend off challenges to slavery from outside – and occasionally from within – the South. Otherwise, the region was an intellectual wasteland, provincial to the core and plagued by evangelical emotionalism and complacent Episcopalianism. Overall, its intellectual traditions were devoted to self-justification rather than self-analysis. Indeed, nothing is more convincing in O’Brien’s two volumes under review than his demolition of this liberal view of the ante-bellum Southern intellectual life.

The Old South had an active and often energetic intellectual life; its educated classes were in constant contact with mainstream currents of thought, through both reading and travel; and it had interests other than defending slavery, defaming blacks, and figuring our intellectual justifications for secession.

There was another major interpretation of the ante-bellum South that O’Brien also needed to counter. It came from (then) Marxist historian, Eugene D. Genovese, who claimed in a series of works from the mid-1960s to around 1980 that the South’s slave economy and, by extension, its culture were pre-modern. For Genovese, the Old South was reactionary and seigneurial, everything the modern world was not. But O’Brien is not having this either. The South, he insists, was not only in but of the modern world. It was “deeply implicated in modernity” (I, 17). Indeed, it was hard to find among O’Brien’s cast of characters anyone whose thought had the flourish of the aristocrat; nor were there many possessed by neo-medieval visions. They are a pretty sober bunch, if anything, too much dogged by bourgeois earnestness. Theologian James Henry Thornwell was an immensely learned and sophisticated thinker but his thought remained confined to theological matters, including spiritual
slavery and freedom. George Fitzhugh, whom Genovese identified as the chief ideologist of the master class, emerges as surprisingly genial in O’Brien’s pages. He was “no unreconstructed reactionary but a moderate progressive” (II, 979). Similarly, John C. Calhoun is treated as a constitutional theorist of the vital Southern center, at heart a nationalist and a reluctant reactionary.

Some of O’Brien’s most astute and interesting pages are devoted to talented women writers such as Louisa McCord, Augusta Jane Evans, and especially Mary Boykin Chesnut. But none of them ever really publicly questioned the Southern order of things, much less betrayed their class or race or stood up for their gender. It would hardly have entered their minds. In comparison, South Carolina’s James Henry Hammond, whom O’Brien introduces for a few pages, offers a welcome relief from the bleakly respectable – and stifling – thinking of the ante-bellum Southern intelligentsia. The phrase “cat amongst the pigeons” keeps coming to mind in this context.

Especially curious is O’Brien’s failure to deal with dissenting thinking in two areas – the question of states’ rights and the matter of slavery. One can only assume that O’Brien thinks the liberal assumption that the South’s pro-slavery argument was addressed as much to internal dissenter as to Northern abolitionists is cant masquerading as analysis. That there was simply no dissident tradition worth mentioning seems to me the best explanation for O’Brien’s omission of it. But if this is the case, then O’Brien would seem to agree with Cash that the South stifled or expelled dissidents and dissonance on issues that counted. The mind of the South was a “captive mind,” not to something as crude as Cash’s “savage ideal” but a captive mind nevertheless. Thus the various figures O’Brien seeks to understand make up a cadre of organic intellectuals for the Southern ruling class, to be anachronistically Gramscian about it. Still, it is strange intellectual history of the post-1810 South that omits from its pages the first Cassius Clay or Hinton Rowan Helper, an outspoken and influential critic of the way slavery “underdeveloped” the South and just as ardent a racist. For O’Brien, there is no “other South.”

In some ways, O’Brien’s defense of the Southern cultural elite is almost too successful. In demonstrating just how much they resembled their contemporaries in the North and across the Atlantic, he runs the risk of losing what was distinctly Southern about them at all. Indeed, though O’Brien insists several times that slavery was central to the world view of the Southern intelligentsia, I didn’t quite get that feeling while reading Conjectures of Order. My sense rather is that they were clearly an anxious group, as he insists, but they were bothered rather than troubled by slavery. In general, these “minds” of the South seemed to think and react pretty much like their counterparts elsewhere, except on one aberrant matter, slavery.

Central to O’Brien’s understanding of Old South intellectual history is the conviction that its thinkers and writers were profoundly shaped by a romantic cast of mind that emphasized the South’s cultural exceptionalism. But he also approaches them from an historicist perspective which attempts to understand them in the terms they understood themselves rather than in the terms we think should have been important to them. Perhaps this explains why the political and constitutional debates along the road to War scarcely come into play in Conjectures of Order. Of course, we hear the various theories of states’ rights and O’Brien supplies a lucid explication, for instance, of the “moderate” Southern notion that the original
compact forming the United States was a dual one among states and among individual Americans. But, for example, I found no index entry for the Dred Scott case and how Southern intellectuals reacted to it. Put another way, O’Brien keeps pulling back or stalling out when he approaches 1861. The drama doesn’t quite unfold. The War just seems to happen.

What all this suggests is the failure of an historicist perspective to do justice to the past thoughts and motives of historical actors or thinkers. Of course, intellectual history must try to understand past thinkers in their own terms, but it must also bring a critical perspective to bear on that past reality and engage in some sort of virtual dialogue with it from the present. To adopt an historicist approach is like choosing to fight a boxing match with one arm. It is quite a feat but it seems needlessly self-denying. By way of contrast, Conjectures of Order is never so engrossing and lively as in the brilliant first chapter when O’Brien tells us what he’s going to do and how we might think about the South from our vantage point, as, for instance, “nationals” “post-colonials,” and “imperialists” (I, 2–5).

Despite these very general criticisms, O’Brien’s massive 1,202 page work is a great achievement. It is hard to imagine anyone matching it for depth, scope and subtlety of analysis as a whole or in its parts. O’Brien is not a sentimentalist about his Southern intellectuals:

For playing the game of power and losing, they do not invite pity. For replaying the game in 1875 and 1900 with equal brutality, still less do they invite sympathy. Still, they do invite understanding ... (II, 1199)

Indeed, though one must honor O’Brien’s prodigious act of historical understanding and imagination, his complex explication of thinking of the ante-bellum intelligentsia does not convince me that we have much missed their influence or underestimated their value. One can hardly imagine American thought without Emerson and Thoreau, or literature without Melville or Hawthorne. But I doubt that anyone would say the same of these ante-bellum Southern intellectuals. Calhoun was once very influential; Fitzhugh remains perversely “interesting”; and many feel Mary Chesnutt was a near great writer. But beyond that, it is hard to see what else there is.

Richard King

University of Nottingham


These three qualified editors have combined nine instructive essays into one book on the effects of incarceration on the family unit and the community in general. The first portion of the book deals with the effects of imprisonment on the overall parental bond; on “unskilled men” or a low-income father’s inability to bond with his children; on the social consequence of juvenile fathers and those who have been recently paroled; and on children whose parents are or have been imprisoned.

The second and final portion of the book is focused on how communities are affected by the incarcerated. Among some of the aspects in the studies are various
community processes, like involvement in voluntary associations and in neighboring; community wellbeing, measured in part by vacant housing units and high school dropouts; the effects of incarceration on “social control”; narrative and research about voting rights of felons; the hiring of former felons; and the proportion and type of employers who use criminal background checks and who hire former felons.

In spite of the cartoonish cover, this book is based on rigorous, credible, and scientific research and it has been copyedited well. Overall there are only annoyances in it rather than real criticisms. For examples, several of the authors discuss infants, children, juveniles, juvenile fathers, young men, or young fathers with the presumption that readers know the age of these subjects. Readers ought to be given age ranges of the research participants in order to enhance clarity and precision. The authors Uggen and Manza give more significance to the “political consciousness” of felons than to political action. The supposed importance of former felons being allowed to vote is specious, although their chapter overall is important and intriguing.

In the chapter offered by Ann Nurse, the reader sometimes gets confused as to whether she is talking about young men who are released from prison and then return home to their fathers, or whether she is talking about fathers who become incarcerated as juveniles, or whether she is talking about both. More often than not, she is discussing juveniles who are parents who have been imprisoned, but some clarity of subject is still sorely needed for her otherwise informative chapter.

In the face of the 2004 publication date, many – and seemingly most – of the sources and data used for these former conference papers are pre-2000. Too many are pre-1998. Although taking away freshness from the research, the earlier sources and data do not detract from the erudition of the overall work.

Indeed, the value inherent in the scientific and methodical rigors of these research essays makes this book useful for a few devoted doctoral students and mostly for the faculty researcher.

College of Southwest, NM

Patrick Fagan

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805439584


With this broad-ranging, insightful, and highly readable book, Alan Rice makes a fine contribution to Black Atlantic studies. Of course, it would be difficult now to conceive of American, African, transatlantic, or cultural studies without recognizing the importance of the Black Atlantic, and Rice makes reference to much of the work that has followed in the wake of Paul Gilroy’s seminal The Black Atlantic, both favourable to it and otherwise. In this sense, perhaps, this study does not break particularly new ground, taking Gilroy’s emphasis on “routes” over “roots” as a central tenet and running with it.

But what running! Rice takes the critical possibilities opened up by Black Atlantic discourse and applies them to a wide range of materials: oral, written, visual,
memorial – each radically different from the others, each differently radical. The book’s nine chapters work very well as individual essays on particular foci, but they are ordered in a way that both enables a logical progression and lends a circular sense to the whole: we both begin and end with reflections that eloquently bring home the importance of these various narratives to the way Atlantic peoples continue to conceive of themselves and others. Beginning with accounts of black presence in a supposedly homogenous imperial Britain, Rice goes on to consider various types of narrative usually ignored, denied or shoved to the margins in “official” discourses of the Atlantic. Chapters on narratives of the Middle Passage, the continuing legacy of the slave trade in more recent oral narratives such as the “Titanic toasts,” tales of “flying Africans,” and contrasting, intertextual black and white myths of cannibalism, are finely drawn and persuasive, and continually fascinating. When the book moves into more regularly critiqued territory such as the experiences of Frederick Douglass and Paul Robeson in Europe (especially Britain), the representation of the Black Atlantic in films such as King Kong and Amistad, and particularly the novels of Toni Morrison, the investigation is inevitably a little less fresh, though the discussion is no less incisive in itself and these radical narratives are placed convincingly in the context of those considered earlier. Along the way, a huge array of white and black voices of the Atlantic are heard and discussed, as are many theorist of the Black Atlantic and logical antecedents to such dialogic practice, such as Bakhtin.

Having begun with oral testimony from the author’s own (white) grandfather in early twentieth-century rural Sussex, the book ends with a beautifully uncynical account of the painted stones recently placed by schoolchildren on the grave of a slave who died soon after his arrival in northern England. A fine line is trod, here and throughout, between analysis of relevant radical narratives, and the need to remember the human stories that suffuse them. Rice manages to avoid the mawkish sentimentality which can sometimes accompany such necessary acts of memorial, but also the stultifying dryness that afflicts so many works convinced of their own critical importance. This book presents a narrative of radical narratives that is at once intellectually rigorous and appropriately moving, and this is entirely to its credit.

University of Essex

OWEN ROBINSON


David Ryan has written an effective and useful textbook on the relationship between the United States and Europe. The definition of the latter is not, as too often, confined to two or three major powers, and the synthesis is not marred by oversimplification. Decked out with a generous sample of nearly forty extracts from primary sources, a glossary, a “who’s who” section, a guide to further reading, and a clear chronology that is neither too detailed nor too short, this book will serve admirably as a textbook for A Level and undergraduate students. Their teachers will also benefit from reading a clearly written and well-presented narrative that
synthesises recent scholarship with older accounts. The deeper history of the relationship is not made unduly subservient to transient present-centred concerns, and we are presented with a multi-faceted transatlantic relationship that will be familiar to those who know the many books whose authors have pillaged acronyms for “ambivalent” for their subtitles.

I enjoyed reading this narrative, and the familiarity of the story never overcame the freshness of the perspectives advanced. The absence of a single over-arching interpretive framework strikes this reader as an advantage. Economic, strategic, political and ideological forces are all considered part of a complex explanation of developments; nothing is deemed inevitable, variables are complex and interdependent, yet the overall impression is of clarity. Sensibly, Ryan makes no effort to privilege either American or European agency even if the latter is sometimes under-emphasised. Nor does his analysis stress co-operation and shared interests over tensions. Instead, he demonstrates how they have consistently co-existed and have frequently exhibited a mutually reinforcing relation to one another. Shared interests could produce policies that, unintentionally, generated tensions. Rows within NATO could produce a stronger alliance (compare the Warsaw Pact), and old animosities can lead to newer solidarities (such as the pro-NATO, pro-American orientation of many formerly Communist states).

All textbooks are necessarily open to criticisms of selection. The documents are useful, but many are readily available online or in print. Including some more that would be harder for the student readers to find might have been worthwhile. The accounts of some episodes, for example American policies towards Europe’s war, 1939–41, might have been stronger had there been more Reynolds and Doenecke, less LaFeber and Gardner. As in all textbooks, there are some slips of detail and some questionable generalizations. Yet these are small concerns when considered in the context of what is a valuable addition to the Seminar Studies series.

Selwyn College, Cambridge

MIKE SEWELL


John Wood Sweet’s brilliant micro-history of the tangled web of race relations in the North dynamically juxtaposes Native American, African American and Anglo-American experiences through a series of case studies that show that colonial and immediately post-colonial America is “marked by hybridity, paradox and constantly shifting strategies for claiming respect power and citizenship” (8). Case studies range from leading Narragansetts and their descent from power through the eighteenth century to African slaves only remembered through their gravestones or court records. The African American cases studies allow Sweet to describe how Jim Crow began in the North so that the “occupational, geographical and symbolic segregation begun in the North developed in the South after the Civil War” (11). These African Americans were “on the one hand excluded from social recognition and,
on the other, a constant point of reference” (63), literally a means of defining whiteness. The weight of evidence adduced to illustrate the way race worked is formidable and the case studies are colourfully drawn with the narrative power of a master storyteller rather than a dusty academic. As narrative history this book succeeds wonderfully, however, it fails to engage significantly enough with radical historians such as Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, anthropologists such as James Clifford or literary/post-colonial theorists such as Hal Roach, Peter Hulme, Richard Dyer, Mary Louise Pratt, Sander Gilman, Robert Young, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Werner Sollors or W. T Lhamon all of whom could have nuanced his arguments at different stages of the book and/or widened it beyond American shores. Homi Bhabha makes a fleeting appearance but this seems rather tokenistic and although this book is informed by postcolonial/literary theory it is in rather an attenuated, narrow context. For instance, the discussion of Phillis Wheatley describes how her “proponents were selling not just her poetry but also a story of cultural metamorphosis” (130), however, Sweet fails to use Henry Louis Gates’s seminal cultural studies article on Wheatley’s emergence, a serious omission. Also, despite printing some wonderful illustrations, there is little extended discussion on them that describes fully their dynamic function as Marcus Wood, for instance, has recently ably done in his study *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery 1780–1865* (Manchester University Pres, 2000). Sweet, then has written a dynamic, incredibly timely historical monograph; it is for interdisciplinary scholars that follow to use his sources to show the multivarious implications his case studies engender.

*University of Central Lancashire*  

**ALAN RICE**

*Journal of American Studies, 39* (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805469583


Oddly, those wanting to read a one-volume history of American higher education, a system that pioneered mass higher education and dominates the world of academic research, have had to rely on the same text for four decades. Frederick Rudolph’s *The American College and University* (1962; reprinted with new introduction in 1990) has seen off all competitors and continued to provide the basic narrative. Those teaching courses on the subject kept returning to Rudolph’s charming volume, complaining mightily when it temporarily went out of print in the 1980s, and knashing their teeth at some of its vestigial interpretations.

Always enjoyable to read, Rudolph’s book obviously did not reflect the scholarship of the last generation. Now John Thelin has written the first successor that synthesizes the modern scholarship across the whole of American history. Two surveys written in the 1990s performed useful services. Christopher Lucas’ *American Higher Education* (1994) offers excellent coverage of the European sources of American practice and the colonial period. Arthur M. Cohen’s *The Shaping of American Higher Education* (1998) provides extensive post-World War II coverage and includes institutions of mass higher education. But neither covered all periods
well. In particular, both relied on out-of-date interpretations of the period from the founding of the Republic to World War I that were past their shelf life.

Thus Thelin’s greatest contribution is to provide a revised narrative on the “long nineteenth century” by synthesizing a generation of rich scholarship that is rarely noticed by non-specialists. The discredited narrative portrayed a promising start to higher education in the Early Republic that was derailed by an antebellum retrogression dominated by stagnant denominationally based colleges and only redeemed by the emergence of German-inspired research universities. Tellingly, Thelin bookends his chapter on “University-Builders, 1880 to 1910” with ones on “Resilience in American Higher Education, 1860 to 1890” and “Alma Mater: America Goes to College, 1890 to 1920.” Thelin synthesizes the scholarship which demonstrates that nineteenth-century colleges, usually housed in multi-purpose institutions, were often vibrant responses to localism, ethno-religious identities, and a thirst for knowledge. In that context, the fin de siècle collegiate resurgence can be understood as the logical continuation of a strong and uniquely American heritage, and not merely as the aping of romanticized images of Oxbridge.

The sections on the pre-1789 and post-World War I eras also synthesize modern scholarship, though Lucas or Cohen should be consulted by those wanting more thorough treatments. Thelin’s “Essay on the Sources” provides an excellent update of the one Rudolph wrote four decades ago, which has been the starting point for a generation of researchers.

Non-specialists seeking a one-volume overview of American higher education, especially for the period from the Revolution through World War I, should consult this volume. If that happens, naïve misconceptions about the “old-time college” and the rise of the university will finally be replaced as the conventional wisdom by the fruits of a generation of scholarship. And John Thelin will have provided a valuable service.

State University of New York at Brockport

W. BRUCE LESLIE


In The Business of America Graham Thompson takes on the tricky task of literary criticism and critiquing the discipline of American Studies: employing literature to critique culture and culture to critique literature. But this is an oversimplification. Initially, the book sells itself as a critique of American literature’s uneasy relationship with business with an emphasis on white male literary culture. The seeming emphasis on white male literary culture is promoted in part by a series of sub-titled sections in the detailed introduction that trace the roots of business’s involvement in American government to the creation of American Studies. Oddly, a discussion of the business of literature is conspicuous by its absence. However, criticism of white male culture is only half the story because the book moves on in Part Two to address how writers who fall outside the perimeter fence of white male American authorship have responded to the cultural discourses
of business. Thompson’s split highlights a faultline between the two groups, one that reveals an important contrast in authorial concern. For Thompson, writers such as Salon Wilson, Joesph Heller and William Gibson suggest that business is antithetical to American values, leaving them to ponder: where has the American nation gone? Conversely, the authors gathered under the heading “The Difference of Gender, Race and Sexuality,” such as Chang-Rae Lee or Gish Gen, see America as a transnational space and their work points not to the disappearance of America but a kind reclamation of nation from the machinations of American business, one that, according to Thompson, “change(s) the very contours of nation.”

The book reaches this convincing conclusion through a varied set of readings of texts and plays that are, in places, incisive and engaging. Pushing the debates along is Thompson’s confident authorial register, so the occasional abandoning of his front running style in favour of lengthy excursives of the ideas of other literary critics at times undermines the reader’s confidence in the final analysis. This is especially noticeable in the dissection of Microserfs where too much time is given over to Nick Heffernan’s critique of Coupland. The last word goes to Thompson, of course, but I learnt more about Heffernan’s reading than I did about Microserfs and business. Other novels suffer the disgrace of not being given enough time, for example, American Psycho receives little more than a cursory glance in the grand scheme of the book. This suggests to me that fewer novels/plays might have generated the consistency of critique that the book lacks at certain points.

Drawing attention to the odd anomaly does not, however, undermine what is a complex and multifaceted project because, as with all things not straightforward, there are gaps and critical dropouts. In the end, Thompson’s book is a brave and intelligent attempt to untangle the troubled and perhaps irresolvable relationships that exist between American business and American identity, nation and nationality.

University of Nottingham

MARK RAWLINSON

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805489586


The study of the Seven Years’ War in American has enjoyed something of a renaissance over the past few years, with an ever-increasing number of historians turning their attention to the cataclysmic conflict to explore its multi-faceted dimensions and crucial importance. Matthew Ward’s contribution to this literature pulls together several strands of this developing historiography to emphasize the centrality of the often overlooked Pennsylvania–Virginia backcountry, where the war began. Combining a well told narrative tale with fresh insights into the political and social history of the conflict in this region, Ward’s wide-ranging study illuminates the complex competing interests and struggles facing the people engaged in the conflict, and tells the tale from multiple perspectives. From backcountry settlers to provincial politicians via Native American diplomats and warriors, the
book explores the grim realities of frontier war, and its consequences for participants and posterity alike.

Indeed, at the heart of the book, based on extensive archival research, are stories of people’s struggles for survival in an escalating and increasingly brutal conflict. Amidst the larger tale he tells, Ward is particularly to be commended for his insistent focus on particular places and people, and for not reducing any of the various cast of characters to nameless, faceless, and irrational actors on either side of the border. Ward is especially good at drawing out the details of particular campaigns, the grievances of participants, and even the motivations of soldiers who joined the provincial forces. Crucially, too, Native Americans are central players in this conflict, and Ward aptly demonstrates the independence of various Indian groups from both English and French imperial officials during the conflict. As Ward shows, the diverse stories of these different peoples ultimately collided with catastrophic and transforming consequences. In making the Virginia–Pennsylvania backcountry central to the larger story of the Seven Years’ War, Ward is keen to point out the transformative nature of what amounted to a decade of conflict.

If Ward ably explores the minutia of backcountry relations, he is unafraid of making connections between the so-called small politics of war and the larger geopolitical consequences of the conflict. Not only did the war greatly increase the powers and activities of the colonial governments, but it also forever changed the relationships between those colonies and Great Britain, and relationships between colonists and their Native American neighbours. It did all of this, in part, because the conflict also fundamentally transformed the backcountry itself, from an economically weak, socially fragmented, and culturally diverse area that had little in common with the coastal parts of the colonies, to a more integrated but troublesome region in which settlers were increasingly likely to protect their interests by lashing out at both provincial and imperial authorities, and friendly and unfriendly Native American groups. Ultimately, then, Ward’s book reinforces current interpretations that see the Seven Years’ War as the beginning of the end for many Native American groups who had maintained a modicum of independence until the middle of the eighteenth century, and the beginning of the end of the first British empire.

University of Sydney

MICHAEL A. MCDONNELL

Journal of American Studies, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805499582


Relatively little has been written about the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church’s intellectuals and Progressivism during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Thomas E. Woods Jr., has attempted to remedy this deficiency in The Church Confronts Modernity. In it he argues that Catholics “had to reject the very spirit of the Progressive Era, as well as many of its central principles” (158). While Catholics were able to support those progressive causes which did not conflict with their beliefs, often they found themselves in fundamental disagreement with progressive ideas. The author supports his position by suggesting, in turn, that the
most influential philosophy underpinning progressivism was pragmatism which, contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church, “scorned the very idea of eternal or absolute truth and made no pretensions to possessing epistemological certitude” (28). In contrast, in the early twentieth century, the Church in America was enthusiastically embracing the neo-Scholasticism promoted by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical Aeterni Patris (1879). The Church, so the author contends, was also very suspicious about Sociology whose luminaries, such as Albion Small, appeared to have a purely secular outlook. It was concerned further that “social science, emancipated from the Christian natural-law tradition would advocate remedies offensive to Catholic belief” (78). Works of charity, which the Church supported wholeheartedly, should always have a spiritual dimension. Woods also suggests that the Church was opposed to the tendency of progressive educationists to promote “a national, secular, non-dogmatic ethic of social democracy” (86) and remained committed to its distinctive school system. In seeking justice for working people, the Church insisted that emphasis be put on the spiritual benefits which would accrue for the workers. In the final chapter, the author asserts that the Church rejected syncretism: “As Progressives were promoting a non-sectarian creed – indeed, a humanistic religion of sorts – on the national level, and on the individual level encouraging an experimental approach to creedal systems, Catholics continued to insist on the universal and exclusive validity, for the nation and for individuals, of a creed based on the teachings of Christ” (156).

As might be adduced from the foregoing, this book is not a light read. It is, however, a relatively easy one for, despite some annoying repetition here and there, it is written with great clarity and fluency, making the complex philosophical and theological concepts approachable. It is well researched although, rather surprisingly, it makes little reference to some of the leading historians of the Catholic Church in America such as Philip Gleason and Jay Dolan. As for the thesis itself, it has certainly been argued with energy, clarity and conviction. It relies, arguably, on rather too precise a definition of progressivism on the one hand and rather too narrow a range of Catholic intellectuals on the other. It provides, nonetheless, a challenging argument which other historians must continue to test. It may not have the last word on the subject, but this is a very important book which will be indispensable reading for scholars interested in the history of religion in general and of the history of Catholicism in the United States in particular, as well as for those seeking a more complete understanding of the Progressive Era.

Liverpool Hope University College

FRANK LENNON


Although there were those who saw George W. Bush’s 2000 campaign rallying call for “compassionate conservatism” as a mere marketing ploy, it did lead to signing of an executive order – just nine days after Bush took office – that established the
White House Office of Faith-Based and Community initiatives. The Office was charged with building upon the Charitable Choice provision that had been incorporated within the 1996 welfare reform legislation and leading a “determined attack on need by strengthening and expanding the role of faith-based and community organizations in addressing the nation’s social problems.” However, there were difficulties. John Dilulio, the Office Director, resigned after only six months. Some religious organizations feared a loss of autonomy if they accepted taxpayer funding. There was also a protracted controversy about the rights of churches to be exempted from anti-discrimination legislation that included “sexual orientation” as a protected category. The Senate failed to agree upon a bill and the initiative therefore took only a limited and partial form. There were, nonetheless, still some hopes that there would be a shift in the character of social policy.

However, those who shared these hopes did not look closely at the experience, culture and resources of the different congregations and religious agencies. To what extent do they offer a credible vehicle for the provision of social programmes? Wuthnow seeks to answer the questions that should perhaps have been addressed by administration strategists at a rather earlier stage.

*Saving America?* considers the experience of congregations and faith-based social service organizations — such as the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and Lutheran Social Services — as providers of aid. His sympathies lie with the small congregations and the forms of activity undertaken by their membership. They are “caring communities” that can offer spiritual comfort and some forms of assistance. They organize volunteering activities and have instigated projects such as AIDS ministries and tutoring schemes. In contrast, many of the larger faith-based organizations and agencies are, he argues, less overtly spiritual and more task-oriented.

However, the congregations face a significant challenge if they are to extend their community role. Many are — despite the emergence of the “megachurch” — too small to be involved in the provision of specialist social services. They often help other organizations supply services rather than organize their own projects. Their work is often not targeted at those most in need. And, as Wuthnow records, there is “little evidence” that the large-scale faith-based organizations operate more effectively than those without religious ties.

*Saving America?* is an important text that places the rhetoric and politics of “compassionate conservatism” in its broader context.

Copenhagen Business School  
EDWARD ASHBEE


To argue that Nabokov was so interested in film that he applied its methods in some of his novels is not an original insight, though it cannot be stated too often. Alfred Appel’s 1974 study, *Nabokov’s Dark Cinema*, began the work in this area. Barbara Wyllie’s book builds on Appel but extends his discussion importantly. First, she shows that, although in the 1950s Nabokov became convinced that US culture
was being shaped by film images, from the very beginning of his career Nabokov was a keen cinema-goer and in early works like *The Eye* (1930) he was applying representational techniques drawn from German expressionist cinema. At this point another valuable aspect of Wyllie’s study needs stressing, namely the quality of her close discussion of scenes. The detail of her analyses of point of view, montage and motif are consistently interesting and steer a middle way between moralistic interpretations of Nabokov and ludic readings of his fiction as engaging in self-referential play. She demonstrates that Nabokov was remarkably attentive to cinema styles by identifying again and again the scenic allusions in his novels to specific films.

Wyllie also shows that Nabokov discovered and engaged with American culture years before he took up residence in the USA, through film noir. *King, Queen, Knave* is presented as one of several early narratives which incorporate noir scenarios. Indeed it is a slight pity that the term “America” is missing from Wyllie’s title because the vast majority of comparisons she draws are with American works: with *The Maltese Falcon* and *Sanctuary*, for instance, to show how scenes are visualized and choreographed. Much of this works well, especially when she is considering works by writers like Hammett, Chandler and Cain whose narratives have a clear cinematic dimension. Occasionally the links with Nabokov are left rather implicit. The book’s coda focuses largely on the “cinematic hyperreality” of *American Psycho* which follows on from the discussion of Nabokov, but with some of the post-war comparative material which Wyllie introduces there are signs of a potential second book covering the culture as a whole rather than an individual writer.

Not surprisingly, *Lolita* receives more sustained discussion than any other work and Wyllie avoids reducing Nabokov’s use of cinema to one of parody, as Appel argues. Here and elsewhere, film is used by Nabokov to complicate issues of autonomy and perspective. Thus Humbert and Lolita are both shown to be acting out guises drawn from contemporary cinema and key episodes in the novel (Humbert’s first sight of Lolita, the Enchanted Hunters motel, the hunting down of Quilty) are constructed on cinematic lines. Wyllie shows that film is ubiquitous in this novel; there is no point where we can afford to drop our awareness of artifice. But a crude contrast between appearance and reality would not even begin to engage with the complex shifts of tone in the novel, like those between noir Gothic and comic Western in Humbert’s final confrontation with Quilty. Questions of control and deception reappear in *Ada* where the latter is represented visually through the motif of blindness. Wyllie’s last text for analysis, *Transparent Things*, emerges as Nabokov’s most intricate application of film techniques, in the layering of objects or the protagonist’s perception of esoteric patterning in images. Here Wyllie draws helpful and suggestive comparisons with DeLillo and Kosinski; and also relates Nabokov’s novel to the methods of the New Hollywood of the 1970s. All in all, *Nabokov at the Movies* offers many new insights into that writer’s methods and further extends the growing body of criticism on film techniques in American fiction.

*Liverpool University*  
DAVID SEED