Reviews


In his latest book, Christopher Bailey, an expert on the Republican Party in the Senate between 1974 and 1984, turns his attention to the intricacies of congressional air pollution control activity since 1945. This is undeniably an understudied yet important area, pesticide regulation, wilderness and park designation and the management of public lands in general having attracted the bulk of attention from scholars interested in the recent legislative politics of environmental issues. At the same time, political scientists venturing into this area have rarely transcended the parochialism of the case study. Approaching the “supply and shape” of air pollution legislation as a chance to probe deeper into the “dynamics and limits of congressional policy-making,” this book fills a genuine gap.

Moreover, it fills that gap admirably, inspired by and capitalizing on the author’s inside knowledge gained during his six-month assignment (while a Congressional Fellow of the American Political Science Association) to the staff of Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, with responsibility for environmental affairs. A lucid introduction reveals the limited force of existing explanatory models, and two further chapters of a general nature examine the process of legislative production and the degree and nature of congressional interest in air pollution. These effectively prepare the reader for chapters detailing legislative advance, setback, gridlock and adjustment between 1949 and 1996, and concluding with an unfashionably positive verdict on Congress’s efficacy.

Bailey’s study is refreshingly free from the intimidating jargon and the fetish for theoretical models that mars much social-science writing. At the same time, it is conceptually sophisticated, rigorously analytical, sensitive to historical contingency and context and based on a wide range of sources (from the latest work on environmental politics/policy to congressional hearings and the public papers of various presidents). This dense but engaging book will be of considerable value to those who study the mechanics of congressional lawmaking in other spheres by casting fresh light on the inner workings of Congress and furnishing promising new conceptual approaches. “Congressional norms, procedures and structures have been extensively and properly studied, but few attempts have been made to show how such features affect the substance of the laws that Congress produces.” Highly accessible to the non-specialist, it also vindicates the author’s hope that scholars of government regulatory functions,
public policy formulation and interest group activity will also benefit. Congress and Air Pollution has become the authoritative study that will form the mandatory reference point for all future work in this area. One can only hope that it becomes available in a more affordable paper edition.

University of Bristol


A highly ambitious study, Blackness and Value sets out to analyse the potential relationship between theoretical concepts of “value” (deploying the “border” motif) and “racial blackness and whiteness” in United States culture. Barrett’s focus ranges within the following: critical explorations of New Criticism particularly, and poststructuralist imperatives implicitly, with regard to absent/distorting considerations of race; the manipulation of a diversity of texts to highlight autobiographical and theoretical ambiguities in terms of structures for self/communal representation; an analysis of authoritative value as inextricably embedded in social and historical forces; the conflation of African Americans with “valuelessness”; figurative violence committed by United States society (codified as white) in the demarcation of value systems; the inadequacy of binary definitions to designate race; the problematic role of the “literary academy,” especially regarding the canon; and, racialised access to time (in terms of split past/present/future chronological dimensions). Of heightened significance (and well documented) are the debates concerning orality and literacy, configured in terms of the “signing” (white) and “singing” (black) voices. These are later innovatively aligned in discussions of scopic (primarily white) and phonic (black) economies. Barrett’s theoretical impetus is structured by detailed and, to some extent, sensitive readings of two novels by Ann Petry: namely, The Street and The Narrows.

Extensively engaged in linguistic trickeries, “Bla(n)ckness” to name but one of many, in order to explore aesthetic constructions of race beyond dualisms, this study frequently collapses into a deconstructed whirlpool of fragmented meaning. Central tenets of the main argument, including attempts to theorise “value” in racial terms, remain unresolved. Furthermore, Blackness and Value employs a diversity of white canonical works and Western philosophical writers (including Derrida and Saussure) in order to provide a “new critical approach” for black literature. Thereby endorsing their superior hierarchical authority, Barrett clearly risks committing the appropriative acts of violence which this study ostensibly resists. Such an approach also leads to distorted readings complacently interpreted within a prescriptive ideological framework. This is particularly the case for African-American slave narrators such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs. Their highly literary and sophisticated narratives are reduced in Barrett merely to testimonies of “self-proclamation.” Finally, Barrett’s subtitling the introduction, “In the Dark,” engages, unacknowledged and in a limited manner, with the theoretical premises of Toni Morrison’s groundbreaking text: Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.
The primary contribution of *Blackness and Value* is in documenting, impressively through its limitations, the conflicts currently within black literary theoretical methods – those which aim to analyse intuitively (but often rather narrowly), black discursive strategies of signification.

*University of Newcastle Upon Tyne*

**Celeste-Marie Bernier**


Using primary sources housed in the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abilene and the Israel State Archives, Abraham Ben-Zvi of Tel Aviv University advances the thesis that the perception of the Eisenhower administration as being “invariably and irrevocably hostile to Israel” needs to be revised: it was the Eisenhower era which was “the incubation period in which the groundwork of the American–Israeli alliance was laid, with the Kennedy Administration consolidating and accelerating processes the Eisenhower foreign policy elite had set in motion”. The change in orientation during the Eisenhower administration was not achieved by the Zionist lobby, as that administration was determined to ignore pressure from Jewish groups, but rather by the changing strategic view of the region. In May 1953, a State Department position paper argued that the American role in supporting the creation of the State of Israel had contributed substantially to the lack of progress in strengthening the defence of the Middle East. Ben-Zvi argues that it was with the Lebanon crisis in 1958 that Israel became ‘a de facto partner of the Western powers in their drive to prevent the collapse of the fragile and embattled Jordanian regime.’ In Ben-Zvi’s view the Jordanian crisis was “the ‘trigger event,’ which provided the impetus for completing the swing of the perceptual pendulum from Israel as a strategic liability and an impediment to American regional designs, to Israel as an indispensable asset to American and British strategic plans and objectives.” The extent to which Britain shared this apparent perception is arguable: Britain at this time again refused Israel’s overtures to become a member of the Commonwealth.

Eisenhower’s meeting with Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, on 10 March 1960, raised the possibility of the Israeli purchase of Hawk anti-aircraft missiles from the United States, though at the time concerted pressure from within the United States squashed the move. In December 1962, President Kennedy spoke to the Israeli Foreign Minister, Golda Meir, of the American special relationship with Israel in the Middle East as comparable only to that which Washington enjoyed with London. Although it was the Kennedy administration that concluded the first major arms deal between the United States and Israel, the sale of Hawk missiles, Ben-Zvi asserts that the groundwork for this had been laid during Eisenhower’s second term as a result of the increasing perception of Israel as a strategic asset. A theoretical framework is overlaid on the historical narrative.

*University of Wales, Aberystwyth*

**Ritchie Ovendale**

Robert Bowie, who served as Director of Policy Planning and State Department representative on the NSC Planning Board from 1953 to 1957 before entering academia, and Richard Immerman advance a case that Dwight Eisenhower rather than the Harry Truman–Dean Acheson partnership was the real architect of America’s Cold War policy. Their prodigiously researched book takes Eisenhower revisionism to a new stage and whether or not one agrees with their thesis, there can be little doubt that this work constitutes a major contribution to the historiography of the early Cold War.

In essence, Bowie and Immerman claim that Eisenhower brought order and a long-term vision to “the legacy of disarray” inherited from Truman, particularly the gap between the aims and achievements of the NSC 68 program. Basing their case largely on the period 1952–54, they portray Eisenhower as forging a coherent national security policy that served as an enduring guide through to the end of the Cold War. In outline form, its main principles were: the imperative of preventing nuclear holocaust; the feasibility of deterrence; the necessity of a secure second strike; the rejection of a coerced rollback; defense forces for the long haul; the centrality of noncommunist co-operation from both allies and developing nations; and realistic arms control.

Sensitive to counterarguments that the relatively calm 1950s offered greater opportunity for reasoned analysis than did the initial period of the Cold War emergency, the authors contend that Eisenhower had to exert a high order of leadership to overcome a number of pressing problems. Holding the support of European allies was more difficult in the post-Stalinist era when war threats seemed to recede, while Eisenhower also faced a much more powerful Soviet Union than had Truman. Persuasive though these arguments are, Bowie and Immerman place relatively little emphasis on how Eisenhower shared and built on some of the questionable assumptions of Truman’s policies. In particular, he retained a bipolar ideological view of the world that failed to perceive divisions in the communist camp and his approach to the communist challenge in the Third World was one which ultimately emphasized military power, whose consequences in Southeast Asia were increasingly evident by the time he left office.

Nevertheless, Bowie and Immerman make an interesting and largely convincing case that the differences between Eisenhower and Truman were more important than the continuities. Their work will become indispensable for our understanding of America’s Cold War history.

*London Guildhall University*

Iwan Morgan


Beginning from the premise that the “personal is theatrical,” this collection documents how Martin Scorsese’s “personal intensity, presence, and obsession with craft are always fully felt ... [and] how little these themes change over the
course of the twenty-five year span that this collection covers.” That these themes change so little is both the collection’s strength and its weakness.

The book opens with a chronology of Scorsese’s life—perhaps a nod to the director’s belief that the best art starts from a curiosity about character development—and an exhaustive eleven-page filmography. The interviews that follow proceed in the same chronological spirit, beginning with a discussion of Mean Streets (1973) and proceeding through Taxi Driver, Raging Bull, Goodfellas, to Kundun. These interviews—largely from sources such as Film Comment, American Film, The New York Times, and The Village Voice—emphasize Scorsese’s cinematic influences (Hitchcock, Italian neo-realism, The Wizard of Oz, et al.) as well as his frequently employed techniques, including voice-over, dissolves, freeze-frames, and the combination of rock and classical scoring.

Scattered throughout the interviews are references to Scorsese’s personal influences—his ambivalent Catholicism, his rough-and-tumble childhood as a lower-class Italian-American New Yorker, his sicknesses, and his many marriages. Here is where the book has a tendency to get tiring, although many of these anecdotal reflections are compelling when they reveal keys to Scorsese’s artistry. We learn, for instance, that a sense of embarrassment, not auteurism, prevents Scorsese from producing a sentimental blockbuster. Taxi Driver, he tells Guy Flatley of The New York Times, is (among other things) an allegory of the kind of loneliness he experienced as an asthmatic child, “the perpetual-outsider kind of loneliness that looks for recognition in acts of violence.”

Interesting though these revelations are, and no matter how big of a fan one is of Scorsese, the trinity of asthma, Catholicism, and womanizing eventually wears out its narrative welcome. Few would want to peruse this book cover to cover. This is certainly no fault of Brunette’s, who informs readers that University Press of Mississippi has a policy not to edit interviews. While this can make for repetitive reading, it also gives the collection an air of exhaustiveness, allowing it, despite its flaws, to yield enough insight into the director to satisfy the most detail-oriented film fan and/or scholar.

Jennifer Maher

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee


As co-ordinated by the UCLA Oral History Program, Central Avenue Sounds recalls a time (1920s-50s) when Los Angeles seemed a more hopeful place for African Americans. This series of interviews illustrates how the jazz scene centered around Central Avenue formed an integral part of black community life during the period. After migrating with their families from the American Southwest, early pioneers like Marshall Royal and Lee Young started playing at taxi dances and dance marathons. The thriving club scene of the 1930s and 40s soon provided steady work, and the musicians here fondly look back on all-night jam sessions at places like Ivie’s Chicken Shack and Jack’s Basket Room. The music networks extended through area schools, churches and union halls, causing many of the
interviewees to credit not only the successful touring bands (Ellington, Basie, Lunceford, etc.) but also local music teachers as the source of their youthful inspiration.

Aside from the recreation of black Los Angeles, the work also relates memorable tales told by the musicians about one another. Charlie Parker, who spent significant time in LA during the late 40s, comes across as jovial and a friend to fellow players. Charles Mingus, who grew up in Watts, seems every bit the irascible, but supremely talented figure his reputation suggests. Artists like Art Tatum and Sonny Criss are accorded great respect in the work, as is Nat King Cole, who acquired notoriety first as an LA jazz pianist before attaining commercial stardom. Alongside the lively reflections of nationally known talents such as Buddy Collette and Art Farmer, and of local fixtures like Horace Tapscott and Fletcher Smith, the interviews with Melba Liston and especially Clora Bryant produce some powerful insights on the difficulties of succeeding as women musicians on Central Avenue and elsewhere.

Project co-ordinator Steven Isoardi’s solid background essays – linking the rise and fall of the Central Avenue jazz scene to the larger development of black Los Angeles – set up each of the book’s chronological sections. The question of desegregating the musicians union in the late 1940s initially seems repetitive but later in the work sparks healthy disagreement; the institutionalized racism of both the Hollywood music industry and local politics proved stronger than any one union could overcome. However diverse the explanations of the scene’s decline by the mid-1950s, readers will surely join Central Avenue participants in lamenting the passing of a vibrant era.

University of Massachusetts, Amherst


This volume is a selection of speeches, each with its introduction, and a brief introduction and epilogue to place the whole in context. The author wished to head the “American Desk” of his Department and his speeches reflect concern about the strength of the domestic internationalist consensus. Early on these speeches try to lead opinion on the substance of policy. After the 1994 elections the tone changes and increasingly the message is that Congress’s desire for American leadership cannot be reconciled with slashing the foreign affairs budget. Christopher is at his most passionate in passages where he berates Congressional parsimony and double standards. Such passion is rare. Perhaps the format restricts the author in this area. It seems also to prevent much reflection on how successful this, or other initiatives he undertook, were.

From the title to epilogue it is clear that the main reference point in Christopher’s world-view remains the 1940s. His war service in the Pacific, George Marshall, Dean Acheson, and the ‘lessons’ of the Truman years are repeatedly invoked from his confirmation hearings to January 1997. This is a key
part of the American Desk message on the need for Americans to lead, but is also frequently deployed in addresses abroad. The American internationalism of the “New Atlantic Community” remains close in ethos and vision to its 1940s precursor. Although Christopher stresses the newness of much that he did: in environmental diplomacy, reviving American commitment to the OECD, giving Africa a higher priority; the contents reinforce a sense of continuity from Bush to Clinton, especially in dealings with Russia, NATO, Iraq, or China.

Christopher highlights the purpose(s) for which he made speeches and their relationship to policy, such as agenda-setting, issue-raising, signal-sending. This is usefully different from a politician’s memoirs, but the approach produces some problems. The book lacks a narrative’s momentum. A memoir might have related the Secretary’s words more effectively to what was being said by others, especially the President. Clinton’s speeches are a frequent counter-point, but we hear too little about them. This is presumably the reason why the Irish peace process, for example, features so little: no Christopher speech, no discussion.

The volume reflects the author: cautious, useful, worthy, not overly exciting or excitable, better at details than trenchant wit. It succeeds in limited objectives rather than risking failure in something bolder and continues his efforts to persuade his countrymen of America’s role as the “indispensable nation” whose foreign policy must be properly funded. The relationship between rhetoric and policy is somewhat illuminated and the collection of pronouncements is useful. Some major issues are, however, ducked or discussed individually without sufficient comparison, notably, why was engagement desirable with China or Syria, not with Iraq or Serbia, if his diplomacy was as principled and consistent as he claims? Indispensable for those studying Clinton-era foreign affairs and rhetoric, the book will probably not greatly enlighten the non-specialist.

Selwyn College

MIKE SEWELL


Campbell Craig’s thesis is ambitious, concise, well-written and engaging. It deals with one of the horrific absurdities of Cold War logic. Basically put, the prospect of thermonuclear war became to Eisenhower, by the mid-1950s, so reprehensible that it had to be avoided; any war would amount to destroying the American way of life in order to save it. As the author indicates, with the titular analogy to the Vietnam War, the prospect of destroying the village so save it was absurd, but, unlike the author’s suggestion, it was probably also criminal. The book, however, is not about Vietnam, and while the title captures the absurdity the analogy is perhaps unfortunate.

Eisenhower realised the utter futility of fighting a nuclear war with the Soviets by the mid-1950s. But this realisation, the process of which is meticulously documented, caught Eisenhower in a dilemma. How could the president appear to maintain US national security with the concurrent realisation that general war in the age of thermonuclear weapons was no longer acceptable? In order to save
the US ‘village,’ war had to be evaded. How Eisenhower worked out this process and fended off the criticism of the Pentagon, State, and particularly Secretary Dulles, is a detailed and fascinating account of the internal process through which US national security policy was constructed. Craig’s research and presentation of the evolution of the various strategies and internal wrangling on the issues strikes a good balance, presenting enough detail to reveal the intricacies and nuance, but not so much as to bore the reader silly, which is often the case with literature on this subject.

Departing from the current literature, Craig demonstrates that the strategy was not just about keeping allies in line, or keeping the costs of US defence down, it was also, primarily, about avoiding war. Eisenhower devised a strategy that eschewed the possibility of limited options, and that guaranteed that if there was war the President would push every button at his proverbial fingertips, resulting in an unthinkable nuclear holocaust. ‘His strategy to evade nuclear war was to make American military policy so dangerous that his advisers would find it impossible to push Eisenhower toward war and away from compromise.’ In doing so, Eisenhower’s opposition to some of his closest advisors is a valuable contribution to our understanding, and demonstrates that Eisenhower was not the habitual golfer of traditional interpretations.

The historical method pursued by the author is praiseworthy. Somewhat traditional in form and content it is refreshingly engaging because agency, in its most immediate sense, is restored to an area that is often glossed over. The book is essential for those trying to understand national security during the 1950s and the shift away from Truman administration logic. The premise, however, for this reviewer remains in doubt. The author may have tackled (with the tact and deftness he demonstrates in this book) the premise that there was no alternative to the politics (if not the actuality) of confrontation that may have been considered through sustained engagement and negotiation with the adversary. It was a poor reflection on US national security policy in the early cold war that it lost sense of the humane ambition to survive, that it took Eisenhower through this strategy of evasion to devise a strategy so horrific war had to be avoided. The premise that there was no alternative that would not have convulsed the ‘international order, unleash political chaos at home, and lead immediately to his removal from office’ is an indictment on the US politics of national security not pursued here. Still, within the parameters of the purpose of the book, it is a valuable contribution.

De Montfort University

David Ryan


Over the last thirty years, the New England town study has emerged as a distinct subsection of the New American Social History, rigorously exploring the experiences of inhabitants of clearly defined localities from first settlement to the onset of Revolution. Elaine Forman Crane’s *Ebb Tide in New England* joins this
distinctive historiographic canon, enquiring into the attitudes and experiences of women in the seaport towns of Boston, Salem, Portsmouth and Newport where the impact of seafaring disaster and colonial warfare produced a disproportionately high ratio of women to men. Drawing on church documents, account books and court records, Crane explores the religious, economic and legal consequences of this demographic phenomenon. While recognising that women frequently manipulated men in authority, at times taking advantage of gender stereotypes, Crane’s emphasis is on the diverse institutional means by which women were increasingly restricted in the roles they played in public life. Indeed, Crane argues that, with widowhood a key causal factor, the feminisation of poverty emerged early in America’s colonial heritage. Crane concludes forcefully that, owing to patterns of colonial development, the Revolution was not, and could not have been, a liberating experience for American women. Crane rightly reminds her readers that the celebration of the oppressed overcoming adversity should not mask the daily realities of powerlessness within societies governed by distinction of gender, race and class.

Crane’s work adds value to the New England canon, which has often neglected the historical significance of gender, exploring, for example, the consequences of the navigation laws and of declining land availability from the perspective of women. By placing her study firmly within a European context, Crane makes strong points on both the transatlantic continuity of patriarchy and the failure of American women to develop a sustained critique of male dominance. Focusing on individual stories, Crane rescues colonial women from their popular stereotypes as witches or religious rebels. However, the ease with which she skips between different towns, centuries and social ranks, raises concerns over the loss of appropriate local contexts, and of periodicity during an era when Puritans transformed into Yankees. Greater quantification of evidence may have undermined the strong narrative flow, but it would have deepened the understanding of the extent and character of the marginalisation of American women during an age when Congress affirmed all men to be equal.

University of Keele

Anthony Mann


C. K. Doreski’s chronological study of race rhetoric in the twentieth century, in terms of the relationship between history and fiction and between journalism and literature, is both expansive in scope and complex in execution. Doreski’s analysis of the intertextual encounters between black authors, historians and journalists pinpoints those events in the twentieth century when African-American writers both negotiated contemporary black national identity and simultaneously reinterpreted their racial past. So, beginning with the decision in Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896, Writing America Black focuses upon the 1919 Chicago race riots, World War II and the rise of Fascism, the Civil Rights Movement and the Bicentennial celebrations in 1976 as they intersect the biographical essays of
Pauline Hopkins, the poetry of Melvin Tolson, Gwendolyn Brooks and Jay Wright, Alice Walker’s novel *Meridian* and divers examples of race-oriented journalism.

Paramount to this study is an examination of the attempt by the chosen authors to construct a ‘present-tense notion of history’ through an aesthetics that would empower and ‘incarnate history.’ *Writing America Black* identifies the profound influence and co-option of journalistic discourse in a range of texts so as to shape African-American race history, to challenge an American national narrative and to interrogate definitions of citizenship and democracy. Doreski’s study reconsiders texts that have received little critical attention, due in part to their seemingly ephemeral and journalistic nature, and consistently re-contextualizes the authors within an evolving African-American literary and cultural history.

Yet, *Writing America Black* remains, as Doreski acknowledges, an ‘eccentric renarrativization of twentieth-century American history.’ This is reflected in the uncertainty of both a clear progressive argument between author-based chapters and any express design in the selection or the exclusion of texts other than, in some cases, relative critical neglect or overattention. Though each chapter provides a penetrating insight into the aesthetic and cultural project of the individual authors and their works, the critical commentary is at its most dynamic in the close textual analysis of the rhetorical strategies used by the authors. Doreski’s prose is dense and at points obfuscating, but this new study does initiate an important reinterpretation of twentieth-century African-American writing that materially challenges accepted and ossified versions of race history. The extensive, thirty-page bibliography also provides an invaluable survey of the critical material on nineteenth-and twentieth-century African-American writing, black poetics and journalism.

*University of Warwick* 

**SARANNE WELLER**


The first half of this book describes how primitive art had made inroads into the hallowed portals of museums like New York’s Metropolitan by 1982, and the second half assesses the reasons for the renovation of heritage sites by Third World regimes. The National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City and the Borobudur monument in Java are deconstructed here. The author’s explanations for this prominence of primitive art verges on the eccentric, however. Her contention is that it is the product of a modernisation drive by an unholy alliance of Western museums, multinationals, the IMF and Third World regimes.

Errington’s description of the transition from high to primitive art in the twentieth century is disappointingly sketchy about policy changes in major art institutions like the *MOMA*. But their subsequent shift in the eighties from solely displaying authentic primitive art (which is not made for sale) to endorsing ‘tourist art’ is much better covered. Once again, though, Errington’s analysis spoils the narrative since it fails to explain exactly why primitive art appealed to
metropolitan art institutions in first place, especially since their willingness to
display it contradicts their supposed adherence to the aforementioned mod-
ernisation drive.

Errington, a professor of anthropology at the University of California, never
satisfactorily explains this paradox. At best, she construes the transition to
primitivism either as greed for a fast buck, or a need to integrate marginal peoples
within modernity. Her suggestion that the doyen of Western museums hang
primitive art on their august walls simply to make money, or to enable them to
cope with the presumably trivial (to them) problems posed by ethnic minorities
seems far-fetched. It becomes apparent that the author is preoccupied with
matters other than the fortunes of primitive art. This is because the trivial is the
leitmotif of her book.

Indeed, for Errington, the trivial supersedes the primitive. She is so intent on
trivialising everything that she even dashes primitivism’s aspirations to the
universal. Errington relentlessly assaults the Aztecs, Buddhism and New Age
spiritualists for supporting hierarchies sanctioned by cosmology. But the author
reveals her own inverted hierarchical agenda during this process: first
primitivism, closely followed by a mystical-sounding ’kinesthetic empathy,’ and
ending with the trivial as paramount. Albeit indirectly, The Death of Authentic
Primitive Art proves its worth by raising the issue of whether the drive to
trivialise can be just as oppressive of minorities as the drive to modernise.

Independent scholar

Elizabeth York Enstam, Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas,
1843–1920 (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1998,

This book at first blush appears to have a rather limited stated objective: namely,
to evaluate, as the author puts it, “what women have done, not in comparison
to or contrast with the achievements of men, but simply within one city’s
development.” This is local history, in other words, of a highly microcosmic
persuasion, dealing with one issue, in one town, over a relatively short timeframe.
And yet within this seemingly restricted project lies an exhaustively researched
text that articulates a universally applicable maxim of the development of cities:
their capacity to energise movements of liberation within a dialectic that operates
between the city and its inhabitants.

The central thrust of the book is that the relationship between women in Dallas
and the city itself was reciprocal. Dallas changed women as much as they changed
it. However, women’s part of this symbiosis operated at both a highly visible and
subtly hidden level. Of the former, there were of course the numerous cultural
offerings with which women have been historically associated in frontier
settlements – dramatic societies, libraries, reading groups and so on. But it is the
latter that concerns Enstam more. By limiting women’s pioneer “achievements”
to the social and cultural, she argues, “historians have traditionally shortchanged
their accomplishments.” It is how women contributed to the “base” of the city,
not just the “superstructure” (for want of a better metaphor) that she finds
important; how their successes were integral, not peripheral, that needs exploring.

Enstam thus analyses the role of women’s employment, including African-American and Latina, as new paid-labour opportunities outside the home created a sense of economic autonomy. Indeed some women, notably Sarah Cockrell, went as far as to become major entrepreneurs. She then addresses the social infrastructure, such as education, clubs and volunteer services, before finally highlighting the major political influence of women in Dallas. As one of the most active sites of the suffragist movement in the West, Dallas was incorporated into the national political scene more by its women than its men, Enstam suggests.

Through a meticulous reading of newspaper and personal archives, census information and also through some oral history, Enstam constructs a convincing case, though the excessive detail may be off-putting for some readers. Her conclusion is that the city and not the frontier played a greater role in women’s emancipation; that women helped shape their environment as much as they were shaped by it. The book would be a useful addition to any course addressing late nineteenth-century urban development or the frontier, and should not be consigned solely to “women’s” studies or history.

King’s College, London

DREW WHITELEGG


David Foster is an ecologist and the Director of the Harvard Forest. He grew up through the 1950s and 1960s in the farming countryside of Connecticut; then in his early 20s, hearing the call of the wild, he lit out for the woods of northern Vermont, there to build himself a cabin and in effect “do a Thoreau.” Appropriately, amongst the books he took with him were Thoreau’s journals. In his wilderness outpost, observing, reading, and contemplating, he arrived at two initially startling realizations: first, that the world Thoreau characteristically described, with its quite numerous inhabitants engaged upon their various, rural activities, was a good deal more like the agricultural world of his Connecticut childhood than that of his present deep-woods solitariness; and secondly, that the apparent wilderness around him was by no means pristine and natural but, with its overgrown paths, remnants of stone walls, and vestiges of cellar holes, was a once cultivated ground that, abandoned by its hewers and tillers, had reverted to forest, to “wilderness.” Romantic nature was historicized for him, the ecological historian born, and the seeds sown of this most enjoyable and re-educative book, which is a work at once of scholarship, of meditation, and of recomposition.

The core of it consists of extracts from Thoreau’s journals, with just one entry each from *Walden* (“the whistle of the locomotive penetrates my woods summer and winter”) and from *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Thoreau began keeping a journal in 1837, but the great majority of the extracts here are from the 1850s up until his premature death in 1862. These were years when, from one cause or another, the process of abandonment was already in operation,
as, lured by gold, “men rush to California and Australia,” so that sometimes already it seemed that “we walk in a deserted country.” The book is organized into five principal sections, Thoreau’s words being interspersed with Foster’s commentary upon them and with information about New England’s rural and natural history from colonial times to the present, the ebb of its agriculture, the inflow of conservation and woodland management. The section, “Losses and Change,” for instance, tells a tale of extinction, by depredation (the passenger pigeon) or disease (the American chestnut), but also of renewal, as deer, bear, and beaver return to forests that once were farms. Throughout in his selections Foster is guided, not by the chronology of Thoreau’s entries, but by general theme or particular country task or seasonal round. Rearranged, the chosen extracts make a fine, new, compact whole, one that is beautifully and plentifully illustrated with line drawings by Abigail Rorer.

The Thoreau revealed or brought forward here is a creature not of primeval wilderness but of a broadly husbanded landscape, a fellow not of frontiersmen but of farmers – and a more respectful such fellow than emerges from the pages of Walden. For the power of Walden is of course the power of myth, the reality on which it was based being, as Foster expresses it, “a cut-over and ‘tamed’ woodlot,” which Thoreau turned into “a symbol of solitude, natural values, and wilderness.” In all, Thoreau’s Country makes for good browsing, rich grazing, appreciative ruminating. Emerson figures little in these pages, but there is one nice, further interchange between them on offer: “RWE [Emerson] tells me he does not like Haynes [a local farmer] as well as I do. I tell him that he makes better manure than most men.”

University of Essex

R. W. (Herbie) Butterfield


This serviceable volume of essays on Charlotte Perkins Gilman grew out of the first international conference on Gilman’s work, held at the University of Liverpool in 1995. The editors of the volume organized the conference, which finds a fitting memorial in this collection. The conference itself was an important event, not only in terms of the attention it paid to Gilman, whose novella, The Yellow Wallpaper, is well established as a classic American feminist text, but for the ways in which it attended to other aspects of Gilman’s extraordinarily wide range as a writer and as a cultural phenomenon. Gilman spent much of her adult life on the progressive lecture circuit in the States, speaking on her utopian topics of socialism and women’s rights. From the 1890s to her death in 1935, she was an indefatigable writer, best known in her lifetime for her book Women and Economics (1898), and attracting interest again in the 1970s and 1980s for fiction which addressed psychological aspects of women’s experience as well as constructing possible utopias particularly focused on women’s needs. The publication of Gilman’s diaries in 1994 sparked further interest in her life and writing.

A Very Different Story reflects Gilman’s own unusual range by aptly featuring
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historical and sociological views on Gilman’s work, along with those of literary critics. Fittingly, the most idiosyncratic of the essays on this idiosyncratic author tend to be the most interesting. Alex Shishin’s delicate speculations on Gilman’s allegorical and economic treatment of trees in “Gender and Industry in Herland: Trees as a Means of Production and Metaphor,” Bridget Bennett’s essay on pockets in Herland, “Pockets of Resistance,” and Jill Rudd’s Joyous consideration of animals in Gilman’s work, “Once There Was a Pig ... Does not Interest,” are all vibrant examples of this kind of originality. Janet Beer’s essay on Gilman’s treatment of women’s health, Mary Hill’s account of Gilman’s handling of the personal emotional conflict attendant on her role as a professional woman, and Anne Cranny-Francis’s survey of Gilman’s self-penned magazine, The Forerunner, all touch on aspects of the writer’s career that are of real interest. The main theme of the volume, however, is Gilman’s utopianism, which is repeatedly analysed in comparison to that of William Morris and Edward Bellamy and repeatedly found wanting. It is extremely interesting to encounter so much criticism of any author under scrutiny in this kind of collection, and the integrity of the contributors in making these judgments is a sign of their commitment to regarding Gilman’s ideas with the kind of seriousness all authors crave and which Gilman’s ideas still clearly elicit.

University of the West of England

KATE FULLBROOK


According to Karen Halttunen, understanding homicide demands a framework derived from New England Puritanism and its liberal antagonists. Drawing upon dozens of long-forgotten murders and the documents that they generated, her remarkable book shows how the concept of the murderer as a separate species emerged from the discourses arising from the most brutal of crimes. In the process, the conventional wisdom that Edgar Allan Poe was the forefather of literary detectives is overturned. Clear, entertaining and ambitious, Murder Most Foul exudes a confident authority throughout.

Halttunen begins with the execution sermon, which presented murder as little more than an extreme expression of sins common to the wider community: intemperance and profanity led inexorably to homicide. After a hanging, God reclaimed His lamb, blessed by the minister who witnessed his or her confession. In print, these narratives proved popular, but demand soon waned. Readers turned instead to the logistics of murder: finding bodies, identifying culprits, dissecting motives. As these procedures took priority, killers were culturally constructed as being far removed from their communities. In Halttunen’s terms, they became the “murderer as mental alien.” Thus the phenomenon viewed as a timeless mortal sin is reworked in more historically specific terms, mediated through concerns with science, gender and the law.

This magisterial survey has its drawbacks. One is its problematic relationship to Michel Foucault, who claimed that Europe’s shift to a comparatively humane
penal system led to a more dehumanising system of social control. Halttunen dismisses him in a couple of lines, even while adopting a similar trajectory in her treatment of New England. Like Foucault, the author disputes Enlightenment rationality, notably for its failure to comprehend murder. This argument draws its strength more from present-day hostility to reason than from the evidence on offer. Thus murder becomes a zero sum game; it either expresses innate human depravity, as the Puritans would have it, or it challenges the belief of “Enlightenment liberalism” in human nature’s intrinsic goodness (hence the need for the murderer as a separate category of humanity).

The possibility of a rational explanation for grotesque and barbaric homicides is rarely entertained. Specificity breaks down because evil is treated as a constant feature of the human experience. In turn, this leads the book to jump from trials in the 1840s to present-day preoccupations with “true crime,” serial killers and even misanthropic movies like Se7en. The proposed solutions, drawn from the Puritan era, are unconvincing.

St. Mary’s College, Twickenham


The concept of cultural mapping, used more and more in contemporary criticism, carries a range of meanings from revisionary cartography, through spatial representations of the body and of culture, to a scrutiny of the suppressions in topographical descriptions. To a greater or lesser extent all these senses figure in Brian Jarvis’s lively new volume, *Postmodern Cartographies*, which falls into three sections: a discussion of culture theorists, analyses of four novelists, and an examination of the landscapes of contemporary films. In the first he considers Daniel Bell, Marshall McLuhan, Jean Baudrillard, and a number of Left theorists. The former’s vision of post-industrial society is modelled on the paradigm of the “scientific estate” and on a revision of occupational spaces (office, university, etc.) as sites of social interaction. Jarvis locates a (wilful?) blindness in Bell’s recognition of the costs of socio-industrial change but refusal to allow those to compromise his utopian vision. Similarly Baudrillard’s description of the USA emerges as a millenarian version of a future-about-to-happen whose representation is only made possible by blanking out whole expanses of industrial wasteland, inner-city deprivation and so on. “Hyperreality” thus proves to be not so much a heightened version of actuality, as a selective account angled to promote a perception of America, not substantiate it. The case of McLuhan is rather more complex. Jarvis shrewdly identifies his blindness to media as practice and the same millenarian enthusiasm for an idealized availability of information. But the mapping analogy is unusually apposite to a writer like McLuhan, whose early *Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Mechanical Bride* ambitiously attempted a lateral cross-referencing between apparently disparate areas of knowledge.

When Jarvis turns to novelists, he produces a series of refreshingly new and suggestive readings. Pynchon’s fiction, he argues, “explores the possibilities of
waste as a redemptive force” by narrating progression into the marginalized spaces of American culture. Although he does not mention it, Pynchon’s latest novel *Mason & Dixon* would substantiate Jarvis’s argument in its foregrounding of surveying as a means of cultural appropriation. Paul Auster’s “City of Glass” is, by contrast, a kind of urban no-space, where the labyrinth of the text disrupts customary forms of inscribing. This lucid commentary opens up suggestive ways of reading Auster’s whole *Dover* and is one of the best chapters, as is Jarvis’s detailed commentary on Jayne Anne Phillips’ *Machine Dreams*. He uses the latter to question postmodern orthodoxies, proposing that the novel pursues an intricate investigation of workspace, workplace, and domestic spaces. For Jarvis, then, *Machine Dreams* demonstrates fragmentation as a process of historical change, not as an achieved state. A consideration of polarized spaces in Toni Morrison concludes the section on fiction.

Jarvis’s chosen films all lie in the area of fantasy, although he insists that they selectively combine images of the past as well as future. *Blade Runner*, for instance, combines both critical dystopia with *noir* pastiche which complicates any generic reading of that film. Most interestingly, Jarvis describes a near-total appropriation of urban space by industrial corporations where not even the sky is exempt from advertising imagery. The last sections of *Postmodern Cartographies* shift the emphasis to the body as the site of regulation, technological modification, and narcissistic scrutiny. So the demonization of the mother’s body is seen as central to *Alien*, and *The Terminator* as dramatizing the ultimate development of technology.

Jarvis concludes with a perceptive analysis of the “corporeal cartographies” in David Lynch’s films. Here the opposition between open and closed bodies suggests a homophobia, while Lynch’s evident gynophobia is revealed in the attempted containment of photography or violent abuse. Lynch’s settings are designated “mediascapes” because they assemble imagery from different periods, but particularly from the 1950s, where nostalgia for an idealized suburban past coincides with the imagery of the American Right. In short, Lynch’s representation of America is “driven by a voracious lust for order, control and stability.” Brian Jarvis’ discussions are balanced and lucid throughout. While it is difficult to see his book as an overall account of the postmodern geographical imagination, nevertheless his case studies exemplify different approaches to the spatializing strategies employed in cultural theory, fiction, and film. That in itself is a considerable achievement.

Liverpool University

DAVID SEED


The core of this fine book consists of five stories of law suits, ranging across American history from 1805 to 1981. In each key case, the woman involved as plaintiff, defendant, subject or comparator lost the case directly, or lost an issue of principle concerning her citizenship. Anna Gordon Martin owed loyalty to her alien husband not her native state. Pregnant freedwoman Harriet Anthony was
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A recent advertisement for the Victoria and Albert Museum, devised by the Saatchi brothers, took on a distinctly populist tone by describing the building as a great caf with a nice museum attached. The means by which museums and

sentenced to hard labour as punishment for vagrancy. For claiming “no taxation without representation,” the redoubtable Smith sisters saw their cows confiscated. The exemption of women from jury service to fulfill a different duty as “center of the home and family” was upheld after Gwendolyn Hoyt was convicted by an all-male jury of murdering her husband. Helen Feeney failed to gain employment on merit when she challenged the system of veterans’ preference. And the Supreme Court declined to define the all-male draft as constitutional inequality. Kerber humanises and contextualises the legal events, using a rich range of archives and, for later cases, interviews. Examining the philosophy and history of the broader issues of loyalty, race and labour, taxation, judgment by peers and military service, she then shows that even losing each battle helped sustain a longer war against inequality. This much, thoughtfully and accessibly presented, already makes this an outstanding book.

Kerber, however, also makes an important statement about citizenship. A reader may come from any of the burgeoning literatures on citizenship itself, constitutionalism, or the history of women, and learn something new. These fields are, of course, linked by the truism that citizenship has always been skewed by gender difference in practice, even when presented as universal in principle or law. The best-known historical example has been the deprivation from female citizens of the citizen’s paradigmatic right, to vote. Kerber’s major contribution is to study citizenship in terms not of rights but of obligations. To lack rights is self-evidently diminishing of citizenship. The language applied to women’s relationship to the obligations of citizenship has, when this has been discussed at all, been of exemption from a burden or freedom from a duty carried by male citizens. Kerber destroys the rationale of supposed privilege by demonstrating how the lingering shadow of the doctrine of coverture has shaped the citizenship status of all women, during its formal life and ever after. ‘Privilege’ in fact created duty to a less limited and less accountable authority. Women were never free of civic obligations but owed them to husbands, these ‘public’ duties claimed and enforced through the familial status by which their association with the state was, and sometimes is still, mediated. Kerber’s stories are located as part of a long tale of the constitutional construction of female and male identities which has never quite broken free of a power-full gender ideology. The lesson, as enough taxpayers, defendants, welfare recipients, immigrants, asylum-seekers, draftees know, is that citizenship is a malleable status not a unitary identity. Its obligations, Kerber shows, may be added and subtracted with partiality and with relative impunity so long as they are less well understood than the rights more familiarly associated with the citizen.
heritage sites, from Auckland to Rangoon, exist within complex tourist economies and promote not artefacts but “experience” is one of several themes addressed by *Destination Culture*. The book is concerned with “agencies of display in museums, festivals, world’s fairs, historical recreations and tourist attractions.” Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is a professor of performance studies and has worked on bodies such as the steering committee of the Los Angeles Festival. This gives her a valuable perspective on the “political economy of showing” that she seeks to explore in case studies that include representations of Jews and Judaism at international expositions, the cultural production of heritage at Ellis Island and Plimoth Plantation, and the avant-garde techniques of confusion at the 1990 Los Angeles Festival of Arts. With a rhetorical eloquence and philosophical reach that is at times reminiscent of Susan Sontag, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett offers a sophisticated and compelling treatment of her central question, “what does it mean to show?”

*Destination Culture* is a lavish book, ranging, glossy, and well illustrated. It is split into four sections. “The Agency of Display” is concerned with ethnographic questions of exhibition; “A Second Life as Heritage” explores the production of heritage in terms of its foreclosures and its theatricalised performance; “Undoing the Ethnographic” looks at the self-conscious negotiation of the categories “authenticity,” “ethnographic” and “entertainment”; and “Circulating Value” examines the question and political stakes of taste. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett moves from the general to the particular in a way that grounds her lengthy theoretical excursions in tightly written and well-researched examples. The conceptual vocabulary she is keen to establish never floats entirely free of data and case-specific analysis. The last chapter, “Disputing Taste,” is critically weaker than the rest, spending rather too much time listing conceptions of good (Don Perignon) and bad (shag rugs) taste before making a point about the nature of kitsch and distinction. Nevertheless, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett keeps the pace and tone engaging to the last, right until the kitschy tourist postcard of snow-capped mountains which, after the index, says “the end.” *Destination Culture* is a provocative and insightful book and deserves to be widely read.

*University of Nottingham*


As the author of *Countries of the Mind* explains at the outset, “the present study had its beginnings during an interview with William Carlos Williams at his home … in 1962, in the year before his death. A copy of *The Desert Music*, opened to a poem called ‘The Descent,’ was on his desk.” This was the poem that “he consistently regarded as the most significant one of his career,” to such an extent that, in addition to its existence as an independent entity, it also came to find a crucial place in Book Two of *Paterson*.

The descent, as the informing shape of the latter part of a human life, is to be the central theme of Koehler’s study, together with the attendant motifs of the
journey and of the search for and meditation upon love, “a love without shadows.” The Williams revealed here is therefore less a poet of the image than of the ideal, from which the imagist emphasis is seen as having made for something of a critical distraction; he is less a precursor of Objectivists than a poet of “the subjective, elemental world,” an “inner world that [he] found lacking in Eliot and Pound;” and Paterson is less a public statement than “a poem of essentially private nature.” The objective, the outer, and the public are not ignored by Koehler, but merely relegated in the order of attention. Certain familiar particulars have no place here; there is no “Young Sycamore,” for instance, nor “Great Figure,” no Elsie, no grandmother. Overall, as necessarily befits the time of descent, the focus is largely upon the later poetry of Williams’s sixties and seventies, upon Paterson, The Desert Music, and Journey to Love, whose culminating or presiding poem is “Of Asphodel, That Greeny Flower,” the great, retrospective contemplation of love, its kind and meaning.

Koehler’s perspective is broadly Jungian, it being his contention that Williams derived his term of “descent” from Jung’s use of the figure in “The Stages of Life:” “At the stroke of noon the descent begins. And the descent means the reversal of all the ideals and values that were cherished in the morning.” Thus Williams: “The descent beckons / as the ascent beckoned,” where the ascent represents the ante-meridian path through life’s youthful, active challenges, and where the descent is a means not of renewal but of initiation and onward discovery. He further surmises that Williams may also have read, around this time of the 1930s, The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life, for the English translation of which Jung wrote an introductory commentary. Certainly, it is an altogether more “Oriental” Williams who is presented to us here, in some contrast with the poet we more readily recognize as a celebrant of American grain in an American idiom. Nevertheless, in whatever guise he appears Williams is still, according to the words of his that conclude this interestingly distinctive and variant reading, a seeker after “truth, the / exceptional truth of ordinary people, the extraordinary truth.”

University of Essex

R. W. (HERBIE) BUTTERFIELD


Suzanne Mettler, Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998 $49.95), Pp. 239. ISBN 0 8014 8546 0.

Recent attempts to “reform” welfare and “save” social security hover over these politically astute, theoretically sophisticated, and historically informed investigations into the two-tiered system of social provision that emerged from the New Deal. Suzanne Mettler and Robert Lieberman exemplify the institutional approach to American political development, locating in eligibility for and administration of social policies the key to persistent gender and racial inequalities. Concerned more with the unintended consequences of apparently
neutral policy than with outright discrimination, both rely on the concept of “policy feedback” to describe how institutional arrangements changed politics itself by empowering some citizens at the expense of others. Each judges federal programs with standardized procedures as superior to localized and discretionary ones.

Mettler investigates gender differentiation, but recognizes that the citizenship of non-white men more closely resembled that of women. Lieberman offers a brilliant analysis of the “divergent development” of New Deal programs that shifted “the color line.” Taken together, they illuminate the ways that the welfare state maintained and reconstructed social inequalities from the 1930s into the 1960s – not because it fostered dependency and laziness, as conservative critics claim, but rather because it activated some constituencies while isolating others from resources, reputation, and power.

In focusing on the institutional setting of policy, Mettler complicates previous discussions of gender and the state. Lieberman, in a parallel fashion, enriches William Julius Wilson’s structural explanation for “the underclass,” while undermining the culturalist interpretation of Charles Murray. Lieberman depends upon an ingenious manipulation of quantitative data to prove this outcome. Mettler, in turn, historicizes recent theoretical debates over citizenship to produce a highly readable study.

The “belated feudalism” that distinguished labor law before the Wagner Act, Mettler persuasively argues, persisted in a non-liberal realm of governance formulated by liberal reform and institutionalized through the structure of federalism itself. Those who qualified for uniform, federal programs, predominately white men and their wives, became independent bearers of rights. The rest suffered under the discretionary lens of state-based policies that relied upon ascriptive, personalistic criteria to judge eligibility. Though recognizing the centrality of normative notions of male breadwinning and female domesticity, Mettler stresses the significance of political factors: preference of entrenched policymakers in the Children’s Bureau for state-level administrative authority, Congressional attempts to maintain “states’ rights,” and “the dynamics of policy implementation in a highly decentralized governing system.” Lieberman sharpens these criteria by revealing them to be race-laden even when not directly propelled by white supremacy, as were most battles over states’ rights.

Both authors interpret key provisions of the 1935 Social Security Act – Old Age Assistance (OAI), Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), and Unemployment Insurance (UI). These offered a divided citizenship based on the design of benefits, mode of financing and administrative structure. OAI passed Congress with a national administration and equalitarian benefits precisely because exclusion of agricultural workers and domestic servants omitted most African Americans from coverage. Women in 1935 also lacked the labor market commitment to qualify for OAI or UI. Because neither policymakers, unions, nor the general public judged caretaking as work, pregnancy and family responsibilities stood outside the criteria for unemployment. Minority men also failed to meet UI’s work test, which depended on subjective evaluations of behavior.

Nothing in the law necessarily curtailed black eligibility for ADC. Because African Americans were over-represented among potential beneficiaries, Con-
gress opted for federal funds but local control. While oai gained an independent board and merit-based personnel, adc came under patronage-appointed officials beholden to local elites. General revenue financing further subjected it to political whims, including later revolts by middle-class taxpayers against its “undeserving” poor solo mothers. In contrast, oai built political support among contributors, who promoted the expanded coverage that would lower payroll taxes while maintaining benefits.

These contrasting institutional structures explain Lieberman’s paradox: despite initial exclusions, policies underwent different evolutions – oai from statutory exclusion to nearly color-blindness; adc from statutory inclusion to administrative exclusion to racial degradation through identification as a “black” program. The localism that allowed white Southerners to refuse coverage propelled Northern machine mayors to provide adc to black migrants after 1950, but then led them to block War on Poverty community development programs in the 1960s, which challenged mayoral control, exacerbating racial fissures within the Democratic party.

U1 represents a middle ground, a hybrid of federal and state responsibility with no institutional imperative that demanded racial inclusion. By separating African Americans from more privileged workers, it furthered race-based divisions. Moreover, its very goal to stabilize employment rather than create full employment failed African Americans. As Lieberman points out, it “accomplished nothing for those without jobs.” Similarly, U1 never confronted the employment issues most important for women’s labor force participation.

To their credit, both authors consider politics in its social and economic context. Mettler situates her story in terms of social movements, including grassroots initiatives that threatened in the late 1930s to transform old age assistance (oaa) into a more popular program than oai. She underscores the role of organized labor in Roosevelt’s Democratic coalition, comparing the Fair Labor Standards Act (flsa) with state-level protective legislation to further test her thesis. Like oai, exclusion of female dominated occupations from flsa (both directly and through restricting coverage to “interstate commerce”) left women to the vagaries of state-level regulations, to be “protected” as dependent-mothers rather than entitled as citizen-workers.

Class functions as a less explicit term of analysis for Mettler than Lieberman, but each emphasizes the central and privileged position of full-time, long-term wage earners in the American system of social provision. Over time these became less male and less white, but exclusionary policies still relegated African American women to an increasingly stigmatized adc. The current shift from support of mother care to workfare for mothers demands a scholarship that more strongly accounts for the workings of racialized gender in the construction of the welfare state than either of these fine studies offers.

Much recent work on the treatment of indigenous New World peoples in travel writing has tended to focus on textual representation and the discursive relation between the narrative eye/I and the observed other. Liebersohn breaks new ground in two respects: he uses his chosen travel accounts as much to illuminate the historical background and political positioning of their authors as to comment on the depiction of the Native American Indians; and he concentrates on specific national groups rather than examining a generalised European perspective. He treats nineteenth-century French and German aristocratic or upper-class visitors to North America, arguing that these travellers, taking a distinctly Romantic view of ethnic nobility, transposed on to a native “savagery” those qualities and values which they desired either to restore or to develop anew in their own post-revolutionary societies. Discussions of how representations of the “noble savage” (and a brief reference to Rousseau contextualises the commentary here) frequently coexist with a more ethnocentric and racially prejudicial attitude are of course familiar in postcolonial criticism; Liebersohn’s approach is rather to show how certain perceived Indian traits, particularly bravery and martial skills, were foregrounded in order to suggest that this kind of nobility was “the natural condition of man before the turmoil and decay of historical time.”

This thesis is more successfully applied to the French travellers, whose activities during the period 1685–1848 are surveyed before a detailed concentration on the writings of Chateaubriand and de Toqueville, than to the Germans who receive briefer treatment; the sense of nostalgia for a golden age of aristocratic virtues clearly has more pertinence to writings from early nineteenth-century France than to those from a more economically oriented Germany, whose travellers regarded the United States as a place either for adventure or for emigration. The chapter on Maximilian, however, introduces illuminating additional material by including discussion of the illustrations to his text.

The work certainly opens up new areas of interest within the subject; it is also highly informative and well documented, although rather too much material is relegated to the footnotes, and the absence of a separate bibliography makes follow-up of cited secondary sources a somewhat laborious task. As a whole, however, the study cannot fully sustain the application of its central thesis. Some of the background historical material remains unassimilated into the overall argument; and at times this argument is unconvincing – for example, the claim that de Toqueville’s parallels between Native American Indians and French aristocrats are based on his belief that they are two “barbarian” races resisting the inroads of bourgeois civilization. Its omission of British travel writers, too, on the grounds that they had not known the kind of social upheaval and persecution experienced on the Continent and would therefore respond differently, while understandable, glides over the fact that many British observers (Anna Jameson, Basil Hall, Susanna Moodie, for instance) make similar contrasts...
between native Indian nobility and corrupt “civilization”. It is also notable that only one women visitor to the United States gets a mention. There must surely have been others, such as Ida Pfieffer?

As a historical study, this is a very useful work, but the reader who expects close analysis of the actual textual representation will not find it. It is also worth noting that, despite the cited review on the back cover that the book combines approaches “from history, anthropology and critical theory”, the last is notably absent: the absence of reference to any of the excellent recent work of postcolonial theorists such as Pratt, Hulme and Greenblatt, to name but a few, is a significant limitation.

University of Sheffield  SHIRLEY FOSTER


Locating American Studies brings together seventeen of the most influential essays to appear in American Quarterly between 1950 and 1996. In order to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the journal which she currently edits, Lucy Maddox has reprinted each original essay alongside a commentary from a contemporary scholar in a related field. Thus, Eric Lott salutes Alexander Saxton’s 1975 article on “Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology,” which, Lott says, “offered a crucial model” for his own work on racial masquerade, while Robert B. Stepto comments on Houston A. Baker’s 1987 piece, “Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance,” and so on. The historical significance of these articles hardly needs emphasizing. Margaret McFadden tells an amusing story of visiting her university library to find out how many times Nina Baym’s “Melodramas of Beset Manhood” has been cited since its first appearance in 1981 and having to hand over what she calls a “staggering” sum for the database printout which the library cannily charged by the item.

Oddly enough, if there is a theme running through these essays it is probably the general inadequacy of conceptual paradigms of American Studies. Again and again we are told of the need to interrogate boundaries, to challenge prevailing assumptions. The first essay in this collection was originally published in 1950 by Henry Nash Smith, who had been awarded the first Ph.D. degree in Harvard’s History of American Civilization programme ten years earlier. Yet Smith always remained cautious about making claims for the interdisciplinary area he himself helped to invent, his essay concluding modestly that “no ready-made method for American Studies is in sight” and so the “best thing we can do . . . is to conceive of [it] as a collaboration among men [sic] working from within existing academic disciplines but attempting to widen the boundaries imposed by conventional methods of inquiry.” The final essay, by K. Scott Wong on Chinese views of America, is more obviously conversant with agendas of cultural diversity and transnationalism, but it reaches conclusions that are not altogether dissimilar to Smith’s. In this sense, Maddox’s choice for the book’s subtitle – “The Evolution of a Discipline” – is both interesting and provocative, since so many of these
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contribut...own right.”

Yet the overall sense of “discipline” in these essays emerges from a cumulative willingness to interrogate the parameters of academic scholarship, together with an acknowledgment that the kind of answers we produce are linked inextricably to the questions we ask and the contexts we adduce. Few self-respecting English programmes today would be likely to dismiss theories of representation as altogether irrelevant to their enquiries, and the same thing would be true of History departments in respect of historiography; yet work focused around what Maddox calls “the interdisciplinary study of American history and culture” is still too willing to brush off methodological issues as foreign to its more immediate concerns. Locating American Studies addresses these challenges directly and, as such, it should be seen as indispensable for university libraries. While the book seems a little dry and abstract when read from cover to cover, it will be more often used as a reference work by postgraduates in this general area. Libraries may already have back copies of the individual numbers of American Quarterly where these essays first appeared, but the shape of Maddox’s anthology enables us to see much more clearly how the subject has evolved since the middle of the twentieth century. The responses by contemporary scholars are also an invaluable addition, since they provide a critical and explanatory framework for each of these famous arguments. However, the usual “Notes on Contributors” section is mysteriously absent and, particularly for an audience outside the United States, a fuller identification of these commentators would have been most helpful. In another example of penny-pinching, the articles have simply been reproduced in their original American Quarterly typeface and format, so that the date of publication is irritatingly absent from each of their title pages. These are, though, minor quibbles, and they should not deter any interested party from acquiring this dense but intellectually rewarding volume.

University of Cambridge


During the early eighteenth century, Mark Catesby, an English gentleman interested in nature, horticulture and gardens, journeyed to the American East Coast to observe the flora and fauna of the New World. From his travels, Catesby produced a Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands (1747), the first illustrated volume on nature in the American colonies of any significance. The book, replete with 220 hand-coloured etchings, took twenty years to complete, and was issued in installments to 155 listed subscribers. A recent travelling exhibition of Catesby’s work (appropriately visiting Britain and the United States) provided the first look at 52 original sketches since their last
display in the 1730s. Complementing the vintage artistry, Empire’s Nature, a collection of essays by art curators and historians, offers a fresh textual consideration of the English naturalist. Eclipsed by William Bartram and John James Audubon, and largely forgotten in the nineteenth century, Mark Catesby has been rediscovered on the 250th anniversary of Natural History.

The five chapters (along with an impressive introduction) in Empire’s Nature range from discussing Catesby’s place in eighteenth century natural science and his views on environmental interchange to examining the subscribers to Natural History and cataloguing the plants he introduced to English gardens. As the latter topics suggest, the book can appear quite specialised, although the fine footnotes and lavish illustrations invite a wider audience to make their own forays into eighteenth century natural history. Catesby meanwhile emerges as an interesting and somewhat complex character. In the spirited interplay of creatures and plants found in plates such as the ‘Blew Jay and Smilax,’ Catesby showcased his ability to enliven static pictures and denote interdependence between flora and fauna. In his conception of bird migration, Catesby proved capable of arriving at ground-breaking ideas concerning what would later be called ‘ecology.’ At the same time, Catesby resisted establishing grand theories of nature to compete with his contemporaries, notably the Swedish naturalist Carolus Linnaeus. The English naturalist shied, almost in an act of humility, before the complexities of the natural world, yet happily meddled and experimented with nature’s components on both sides of the Atlantic. Perhaps another sign of ambiguity or ‘indeterminent’ assessment, Catesby never spoke out for Africans despite his ‘occasional sympathy for poorly nourished slaves,’’ remaining too much the privileged ‘English gentleman.’ Hence Catesby’s ‘new world vision’ appears more a fluid mixture of time, place, and nature than a coherent desire for an ecologically and racially harmonious new world.

University of Bristol

JOHN WILLS


Few have had more influence than Philip D. Morgan on our present understanding of early American slavery. His work on gang and task systems sharpened our focus on slave culture, and on the wider ramifications of different labour regimes. Now, in Slave Counterpoint, he provides a splendid account of eighteenth-century slaves’ experience that builds on and extends his earlier work. The book will be essential reading, both for its wealth of information and for its perspective on the distinctiveness of eighteenth century plantation systems.

There were critical differences between Chesapeake and Lower South slavery that had important influences on black lives and cultures. With care and precision, drawing on a great array of findings and source materials, Morgan traces these differences in slaves’ origins, crop regimes, labor systems, patterns of skill, demography, family formation, household structures, material culture, and
language. He examines gender difference, the relationships between Africans and creoles, and slaves’ interactions with rich and poor whites, with free blacks, and with Native Americans. He reveals the often subtle variations of pattern that different regional contexts produced, apparent for instance in African influences in slaves’ lives.

There were similarities of pattern, too, that gave slave experience an increasing commonality. Morgan addresses the changing character of eighteenth-century slavery, and shows clearly how it differed from the patterns of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. He convincingly sustains his contention that the “counterpoint” between Chesapeake and Lowcountry enables us to understand each region more clearly: this is comparative history at its best.

Complementing the newly published work of Ira Berlin and others, Morgan traces the role and significance of imported African slaves in the early-eighteenth century Chesapeake, and in South Carolina until mid-century; he discusses the contrast with smaller, creolized late-seventeenth century populations, and with the resurgence of creole slave numbers as natural population growth took over in the eighteenth. He traces the separation of white and black cultures in the eighteenth century, but also notes the facets of slave life that were to change again in the nineteenth, with the introduction of cotton cultivation and the rapid westward expansion of the plantation system.

As a contribution to our understanding of eighteenth-century slavery, Slave Counterpoint at least matches what classics such as Eugene D. Genovese’s Roll, Jordan, Roll and Herbert G. Gutman’s Black Family in Slavery and Freedom once achieved for the nineteenth. Morgan extends backwards Gutman’s focus on slaves’ own perspectives and his attention to change over time. He also takes Genovese’s more rounded approach to slave culture, but pays closer attention to structural issues.

Yet Morgan’s focus on slaves themselves means that he does not follow Genovese in making a broad statement about master–slave relationships. He accepts, rather than challenges, the now-orthodox contention that patriarchalism at some point gave way to paternalism, but does not make this central to his argument. Those seeking a direct analysis of power relationships in eighteenth-century slavery will turn to other works, such as Robert Olwell’s new Masters, Slaves, and Subjects. Moreover, although Morgan implicitly counters the view of Mechel Sobel, in The World they Made Together, that black and white cultures became increasingly intertwined in the eighteenth century, he does not directly debate the issue. On such a matter, with its profound implications for our understanding of race relations in early America, Morgan might have mounted a more vigorous assertion of his position.

University of Warwick

Christopher Clark


Billed as “the first study of music in the United States to be written by a team of scholars,” this book is the first volume in the new Cambridge History of Music
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series. It is divided into two roughly equal parts; the 9 chapters in part one cover the period up to 1900, and the 11 chapters in part two deal with American music in the twentieth century. Each chapter is by a different author, except for two brilliant overview chapters, one in each part, by the composer and musicologist William Brooks; these alone are worth the price of the book. Extensive bibliographies are given for each chapter, running to a cumulative total of 40 pages. There are no illustrations and only four music examples.

A shortcoming of surveys of this nature is that they offer a bit of information about many things, but not a lot of information about anything. In this volume, for instance, even major figures such as Stephen Foster, George Gershwin, and Duke Ellington are dealt with in just a few pages. Musicians who are primarily performers rather than creators receive even shorter shrift; Frank Sinatra, for instance, is mentioned only twice in passing.

American music is treated here in all its astonishing diversity, from hymnody to hip hop, from the Met to “Meet the Flintstones.” The music of Native Americans is dealt with in the first chapter, segregated from the rest of the narrative just as Natives themselves have historically been segregated from the rest of society. The reference to “American” music in the book’s title refers to the United States, rather than the Americas. The total references to Canada amount to less than a page, and, aside from a paragraph on secular music before 1800 in Quebec, these references are mostly inadvertent, when Canadians are mistaken for Americans.

The approach here is mostly factual and uncritical. Exceptions include the chapter by Stephen Banfield (who is the only British contributor, aside from the editor David Nicholls) on popular music on stage and film, which offers a lengthy section of analysis in addition to the historical account of the subject, and the final chapter by Jonathan W. Bernard, who is understandably exasperated by much recent neotonal art music. Bernard dismisses the music of Alan Hovhaness, for instance, as “pap”; such refreshing candour would have been welcome elsewhere in the book.

University College Dublin

ROBIN ELLIOTT


Henry Kissinger, Michael Schaller tells us, found the Japanese, well, kind of inscrutable, even to the point of tedium. Similarly, Richard Nixon, although he had more in common with the yakuza than was apparent at the time, failed to get beyond the stale stereotype of duplicitous orientals cloaked in self-serving ambiguities and indirections; this despite – or, more likely, because of – his extensive experience as a commercial traveller for Pepsi Cola in Japan. Both men eventually preferred the much less taciturn, nuclear-bomb flourishing Chinese; there, at least, interpreters were often an irrelevance. Not for Nixon and his likes was the expensive vagueness he encountered in Japan. From the outset, Schaller concedes that his own perspective on the Japanese, in a book whose primary
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concern is with US motivations, has a slighter evidence base; where this book is restricted, I would suggest, it is not only by the paucity of available primary material in Japan, but also by its forms of emplotment and its occasionally absurd characterizations of the Japanese as easily shocked, ever cringing, and lost in passivity in the face of superior American machinations. Of course, it all worked out well for the Japanese in the end; the impression, though, is of a healthier kind of failure for the US. The very terms of this contest, however, and as Schaller's “Epilogue” attempts to anticipate, have been challenged by post-bubble economic crises in the Far East and the return of the dollar everywhere else.

Altered States is organized around a double axes of chronology and topic, this resulting in a fair amount of repetition and recursiveness. The principal post-Occupation nodalities are here: the 1946 Japanese Constitution, the Korean and Vietnamese wars, Japan’s cold-war predicament in a world besotted with Eisenhower’s dominoes, the rise and fall of legions of Japanese and American politicians (a list of protagonists would have helped), the US’s shifty dealings with China and Japan’s peripheral role therein, Okinawa, the security treaty, trade frictions, yen and dollar problems, and so on. Schaller also deals with the US’s financing of the LDP in the 1950s and 1960s and CIA sweeteners to the Japanese press during the Vietnam years; all this, alas, seems typical rather than revelatory.

One of the main problems arises over Schaller’s strategy for dealing with this disparate mass by selecting for his narrative a Pyrrhic-victory plot (one often claimed for Germany, too, of course). Iterated here is the argument that the United States, the law of unintended consequences applying, suffered a hollow victory at the hands of the Japanese; the screw turns a little when Schaller asserts that post-Occupation Japan was made in the US of A. The legacy of the Occupation was less in superficial constitutional reform, more in Japan’s being limited to possessing a merely defensive military capability. Under the umbrella of the US’s protection, Japan was able to thrive as the US continued to regard a weak Japan as vulnerable to communist absorption. Until at least the mid-1960s, US–Japan relations were dominated by Washington’s strenuous efforts to exhort, cajole, and threaten Japan into expanding its forces as an outreach of the USA. The bewildered Japanese were treated to the spectacle of a Nixon who announced to the Japan–American Society, in 1973, that the 1946 disarmament was simply wrong: “I’m going to admit right here and now that the United States did make a mistake in 1946.” The Americans believed, and many Japanese politicians were later openly to concur with them, that Japan’s pacific protestations enabled its unparalleled economic imperialism. What Schaller overlooks is that for many Japanese, then and now, the monstrosities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the fire-bombing of Tokyo and elsewhere, had a tendency to mute any clamour for rearmament. It remains the case that an America committed at the level of talk to world peace is the only country ever to have used nuclear weapons and that Japan is the only victim of such weapons. These facts, and the perceptions engendered by them, have coerced all post-Occupation governments in Japan. It would be preposterous to maintain that Japanese self-interest, and that alone, was the determining element in its refusal to rearm.
The wars in Korea and Vietnam, for Schaller, benefited the Japanese economy in ramifying ways which he traces assiduously. These benefits were not confined to GDP growth. Toyota and Mitsubishi, among many other Japanese companies, received American training in management and production skills, and the investment and markets necessary for effective innovations. In moving from army trucks to cars in the 1950s, Toyota took its first step towards its near-domination of the industry. Japan became dollar rich and prospered indirectly as GI’s, for example, flooded into the fleshpots of Japan. The unpleasant sensation in all this is of a US exculpated by Japan’s accessory guilt. Without Okinawa as a base, leaving aside that it was under American sovereign control at the time, the war in Vietnam could not have been prosecuted.

Schaller’s attention to detail, and a narrative whose control is admirable given the easily contestable and often inflammatory nature of its objects, belies the simplicity of a conclusion whose thin irony fails to protect it: Japan’s independence from its unconditional conqueror, he maintains, and the position of both countries as “normal [sic] nations in a multipolar world” can be “counted as a spectacular achievement of US foreign policy since 1945.” Undeniably, Japan has certainly profited from supplying the US with body bags.

Kyushu University, Japan

PETER RAWLINGS


In the settling wake of the *Titanic* phenomenon, it is clear to see just how circular the film and pop music industries have become. The release of Céline Dion’s love theme from *Titanic* contributed considerably to the film’s box-office splash, while the film’s own release in turn sent Dion’s record sales soaring. In the public mind (and thanks in part to MTV’s endless broadcasting of the *Titanic* music video) Cameron’s film and Dion’s song are now inseparable. But how exactly does the commercial and artistic cross-pollination between these two media industries work? In *The Sounds of Commerce*, Jeff Smith takes us behind the scenes in Hollywood to examine the history of popular film music “in terms of its relation to economics, culture, and film form.” In so doing, Smith successfully untangles pop music’s complex role in the development of American cinema and its markets. The result is a compelling and refreshingly clear account of popular film music’s place in the wider history of American popular culture and its media of representation.

Smith’s discussion divides loosely into two parts. The first looks at the historical evolution of the film and music industries. In particular, it focuses on collaborative interactions between the two, from the era of the silent film and live piano accompaniment through the golden age of the Hollywood musical to today’s multi-media blockbuster craze. The second part looks incisively at how pop music scores function at narrative and symbolic levels in films since 1950. Smith is at his analytical best here, and the skilful way he combines watching and
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listening to films makes for original and surprising interpretations of such cult classics as Breakfast at Tiffany’s, the James Bond series, Sergio Leone’s “spaghetti westerns,” American Graffiti, Star Wars, and Pulp Fiction. Smith concludes this book with the suggestion that the field of film music studies would “positively benefit” from more of the same “stress on historicity” that informs his thinking. Though it may sound a little self-serving, the proposition is entirely earned. The Sounds of Commerce not only leads the way for the future of film music studies, but also charts exciting new terrain for the interdisciplinary study of American popular culture.

Edinburgh University

CHRISTOPH LINDNER


With Epistemology of the Closet (1991), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick changed James studies for ever. Alongside John Carlos Rowe’s The Other Henry James (1998), the book here under consideration (a thoroughly persuasive account of James’s complex relation to the changing culture of sexuality in Victorian England) consolidates a now dominant queer reading. Stevens’s central claim, ably sustained, is that James’s work forms two separate “discursive regimes.” Before 1890, same-sex affection is explored with considerable freedom but plotted on the basis of tragedy. After 1890, tragedy gives way to anxiety as James negotiates and occasionally disavows a now socially constituted homosexual subject position. In spite of some overextended plot summaries, Stevens is an acute close reader and a skilful theoretician. The chapter on Roderick Hudson is superb. Stevens is particularly alert to James the sexual carnivalist: there is a tour-de-force passage on the names recorded in the Notebooks as well as a later, rather moving evocation of the older James as camp performer, a “humourous and passionate” correspondent who “goes beautifully on.” Stevens rightly subordinates the question of whether or not James did have sex with other men. He also lays to rest the idea, put about by Edel, that erotic subtexts in James’s work are the products of “bland unconsciousness.”

There are a few reservations. Stevens adeptly employs touchstone thinkers for queer theory (Barthes, Foucault, Sedgwick, Butler) but is less illuminating with Freudian and Lacanian material. The book’s roots in queer historiography (Weeks) are solid, but evidence from women’s social history is less substantial, though both Smith-Rosenberg and Poovey are referenced.

I have a particular quarrel with Stevens’ reading of The Bostonians. Discussing the question of the availability of a constituted lesbian identity in the Boston of 1880, Stevens’s “yes” suddenly seems to come, not from the epistemic historiography he ostensibly espouses but from the empiricism he deplores in the “naive historicist argument” adopted by those who answer “no.” The resultant reading of the novel is, for me at least, seriously adrift. Protecting James from accusations that he pathologizes lesbianism, Stevens adopts a benign view of Olive Chancellor. In effect, he accepts Olive’s estimation of herself as heroic virgin rather than Ransom’s view of her as morbid spinster. Surely the truth of
the matter is somewhere between? Stevens argues that James’s ability to imagine the “painful intricacies” of Olive’s situation supports the benign reading. Yet this is to forget that James also convincingly imagines what it feels like to be the recipient of Olive’s desire.

The picture of James which emerges from this book (a writer resolutely committed to aesthetic and erotic possibility in the realm of the individual subject) is in outline a fairly familiar one. But one cannot deny Stevens’ achievement: this is one of the most exciting books on James in recent years.

Keele University

T. J. Lustig


In *Imagined Empires*, Eric Wertheimer examines representations of South American civilizations in works by Freneau, Barlow, Prescott, Melville, and Whitman. Focussing on how these writers depict the Incas and Aztecs, Wertheimer explores such topics as the growth of American exceptionalism, the development of literary and political nationalism, and the origins of American imperialism. Wertheimer contends that, in imagining past South American empires, these writers helped American readers imagine the United States as an imperial power decades before it became one. Moreover, by showing how American authors gradually erased the Aztecs and Incas from the historical record, Wertheimer restores a sense of the histories that had to be forgotten for the United States, and the United States alone, to become “America.”

Wertheimer’s introduction acknowledges theoretical debts to Lacan and Benedict Anderson, locates his work in relation to studies of the American frontier, and explains his particular use of such terms as “imperialism,” “New World,” and “National Imaginary.” In the following two chapters, Wertheimer reveals how Barlow and Freneau celebrate Aztec and Inca civilizations as indigenous New World precursors of Jeffersonian republicanism. As Wertheimer convincingly shows, such celebrations are complicated and, in Barlow’s work particularly, undercut by worries about positing Indian civilizations as the “classical origins” of Anglo-America. Such worries reach crisis point, Wertheimer contends, in Prescott’s histories of Mexico and Peru. Prescott downgrades the achievement of Incas and Aztecs alike and constructs “nationalist and racist hierarchies” designed to bolster his claims for Anglo-American exceptionalism. Wertheimer next reads Melville’s “Benito Cereno” and “The Encantadas” as condemnations of emergent American imperialism and critiques of the new natural history practiced by Darwin and Lyell. Pointing to the role of silence in Melville’s stories, Wertheimer locates the radicalism of Melville’s position in a refusal to assume to speak for the Indian Other. According to Wertheimer, Melville may be the one American author able to examine South American histories and critically reassess American identity. For example, whereas Melville confronts American imperialism, Wertheimer argues that Whitman recoils from it. Revealing the limits to Whitman’s famously inclusive
poetics and politics, Wertheimer shows that Whitman’s vision of national identity depends on blindness to America’s pre-Columbian past.

While Wertheimer deserves applause for casting light on a previously unstudied topic, *Imagined Empires* is marred by inelegant writing and occasional slipshod editing. Unlikely though it is to win awards for clarity of prose, *Imagined Empires* should nonetheless provoke reconsideration of how American identity developed.

*Milwaukee, Wisconsin*     

GARETH EVANS


Self-consciously theoretical and adopting an interdisciplinary approach in this study, Yamamoto ambitiously covers film, the short story, poetry, autobiography and the travel narrative, in order to counter the rigidity of genre boundaries. Her interest is in material written both by and about three generations of Japanese/Japanese American women writers. Integral to analyses of language and its racist/racialised ambiguities for Asian American representation is the formulation of selfhood via “psychological, narrative and metaphoric” forms of masking. A figure for empowerment, the mask textually and ideologically releases “Oriental” identity construction from othering tropes of passivity and appropriation. Discourses of difference prescriptively defined by self/communal alienation are thus critically and imaginatively undermined. This is primarily via shifts towards an alternative textual space beyond “Western” strategies of marginalisation and provides a model for dramatising multifarious slippages of Asian American subjectivity. Those which subvert strategies of essentialism can be understood in the interstices of “historical, social and material realities.”

Yamamoto’s study discusses the following: Japanese American women as racial and sexual others, evident in discourses of infantilisation and feminisation; a privileging of the visual economies of gender and race above sexuality and class; the social politics of orientalism, including the “geisha stereotype”; masking as an autobiographical trope producing subversive “encoded narratives”; mother–daughter intersubjectivity and maternal absence; finally, poetic manipulation of the “figure” of the Japanese-American woman for individual aesthetic agency. In general terms, Yamamoto’s approach is problematic in attempting to cover, with comprehensive precision, enormous amounts of material within a critically ambiguous framework. The masked/masking dynamic is unsatisfactorily explored in relation to theories of subjectivity. Clearly it fails to negotiate the perils of essentialist identity construction. Yamamoto’s strength is in her analysis of the literary texts which is interesting, wide-ranging and stimulating. Furthermore, she successfully destabilises binary definitions of the “West” and the “Orient” in order to engage more generally with the racialised nature of this debate. However, comparisons of African-American slave narratives to contemporary Japanese American autobiographies, in terms of their similarly “moral purpose,” involves a distorting conflation of complex racial and aesthetic
(literary) paradigms, restricting to both genres. Equally, Yamamoto's combination of personal anecdote with dispassionate analysis produces, at times, an uneasy polemical undertone to her work.

Denied critical force by a rigorously obtuse style and a piecemeal discursive practice, *Masking Slaves, Making Subjects* nevertheless groundbreaking provides complex explorations of Japanese-American female literary subjectivity. Yamamoto successfully embraces the ideological and aesthetic tensions crucial to this evolving literary field.

*University of Newcastle Upon Tyne*

CELESTE-MARIE BERNIER


Some years ago, a survey of scholarship in the United States unearthed the unsurprising fact that, of all individual authors, William Faulkner was the one most exhaustively discussed. That this remains the case is, at least, open to debate. What this remarkable series of volumes shows, however, is just how sustained critical discussion of Faulkner has been. From his beginnings to his evolution into a cultural icon – a reluctant ambassador for the nation he had once criticised and, in part, still detested – he was the object of close and often admiring attention. He was, in fact, never really neglected by the reviewers and critics; it was the public that ignored him, until the Noble prize and his elevation into “Faulkner,” the public face of American literature.

The earlier comments and criticism selected here fluctuate between different kinds of mystification and misreading. There is, for instance, F. R. Leavis, complaining in a review of *Light in August* that “Faulkner’s ‘technique’ is an expression of – or disguise for – an uncertainty about what he is trying to do.” Such merit as the book possesses, Leavis insists, stems, not from the author’s obsession with being “modern” or resorting to the odd “Gertrude-Steinian trick,” but from setting and background. “The Old South is the strength of this book,” Leavis concludes (somewhat oddly, since *Light in August* is set in the twentieth century); at its best, in this novel, “one gets intimations of a mellow cultural tradition,” he adds. No Nashville Agrarian could have said it better; and, for good or ill, this view of Faulkner as a traditionalist mythmaker – sometimes accused, into the bargain, of straying after the false gods of modernism – was at first the prevailing one.

The criticism that began appearing after the 1949 Nobel prize did not necessarily ignore this view. What it did was refine and interrogate it. Critics like Cleanth Brooks, Olga Vickery, and William Van O’Connor focused their critical skills on the major modernist novels of the late twenties and early thirties and, with a clearer sense of how traditionalism and modernism are both at work and at stake in this fiction, they produced the first significant, and still influential readings. What has happened since then is too dense and conflicted to chart properly in a brief review, although it is amply documented here, but two determining factors in Faulkner criticism of the last three decades are worth
noting. The critical and cultural debates that have transformed the way we think about writing have also transformed debates about Faulkner—so that, for instance, it is now impossible to talk about a book like *Light in August* without engaging with issues of history and language. And the critical outline of Faulkner’s career formulated by the New Critics, which traced a journey from triumph to decline has been contested, even erased. It is now possible to see that Faulkner gradually moved from modernism to modernity, with all the new social and aesthetic commitments that implies. The later work is, quite simply, more interesting and important than the New Critics assumed.

This is an absorbing, finely judged selection of Faulkner criticism. It is, of course, inevitable that any individual reader will regret one or two absences; I, for instance, would have liked a little more recent criticism from feminist critics like Susan Donaldson and Dawn Trouard, African-American critics like James Snead, and critical theorists such as John T. Mathews. But anyone can find gaps and absences, given the sheer volume of Faulkner criticism. Few, if any, could select as wisely as Henry Claridge has done. The result is a series of volumes that may be beyond the reach of the individual reader but should form an essential part of any college library, or any library where there are enough people interested in the man who is arguably—in my view, definitely—the greatest of all American writers.

University of Essex

RICHARD GRAY


A. D. Coleman has been an influential figure in American photographic culture for many years. His reviews in the *New York Times*, the *Village Voice* and more specialist journals and his interventions in public debates on the need for media education, the policies of publicly funded institutions and other issues, together with his lengthier essays on particular figures, historical movements and genres, have contributed to the emergence of a photographic discourse *per se*. In fact, it could be argued that, despite Coleman’s sometimes moralistic individualism, his career is both co-extensive with, and a sign of photography’s coming of age as, more than an investment opportunity. In this respect, his early work, first collected in *Light Readings* in 1979, and now reprinted by the enterprising University of New Mexico Press with a preface by Shelley Rice, was especially significant. It bucked the then-prevailing tendency to venerate only “straight” photography at the expense of pictorialism and other forms of “manipulation” in the medium. And it *both* promoted rigorous aesthetic standards and insisted that photographs are—and have always been—cultural documents inscribed with some of the assumptions of their times. Some photographic critics have the capacity to analyse single or groups of images in such a manner that you truly see
how and why they function. Coleman’s gift is more a matter of openness to all kinds of work, for placing it accurately, and for judging its significance. This may seem a journalistic approach – one reliant upon a catholic awareness of the whole scene – and it is. (He himself speaks of it as “journalism in the diaristic sense of the word”.) The essential value of this approach is that it is cognisant of the nature of photography as a mass medium: we need means of redaction (a favourite Coleman term) to begin to understand it. His essays are one such means.

*Light Readings*, a chronological arrangement of pieces of varying lengths and intensities, contains some commentaries which helped to establish reputations of the then young (experimentalist Robert Heinecken, to name just one) or the hitherto ignored (such as African-American photographer Roy DeCarava), some deliberately polemical articles (diatribes against particular acts of censorship, for example, or the castigation of the famous “Harlem on My Mind” exhibition), and some interesting first reactions (to the closure of *Life* magazine, to the suicide of Diane Arbus, or to holography). It also reprints reportage, interview-type pieces, and, of course, commentaries on a host of important figures, from “straight” Wright Morris to avant-gardist Les Krims. Among the review material are some enduring, more considered essays, including “The Directorial Mode: Notes Toward a Definition” and a penetrating introduction to Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo. This appropriately illustrated reprint edition also includes four previously unpublished pieces, one of them a sustained attack on Susan Sontag’s *On Photography*, which was originally published during the same photographically eventful period.

As their punning titles indicate, Coleman’s *Depth of Field* is, as he says, “more scholarly than the running commentary” collected in *Light Readings*. Its essays help to answer some big questions: “Where did photography come from? What has it meant to us until now? What have we scanted. … Where might we be heading with it?” Sometimes they do so by providing penetrating definitions, as in “Documentary, Photojournalism, and Press Photography Now” or the piece on kinds of photocollage. Sometimes they do so by examining more fully previous over-zealous repudiations by the photographic establishment (if that is the right term), as in the well-researched essay on the Gothic pictorialist William Mortensen or the calmly balanced study – if of the images alone – of the photographer and ethnographer of Indians Edward S. Curtis, both of which are judiciously illustrated. At the same time, this book can seem irritatingly self-regarding, as in its insistence on telling – and retelling – the publication and reception history of each essay. It is also sometimes self-indulgent, for example, in its use of non-essential quotation and other too-obvious stylistic flourishes. Nevertheless, like its companion volume, it illuminates an aspect of American culture and should be welcomed and assimilated by serious students of photography.

*University of Leeds*  

MICK GIDLEY

Robert Cook’s *Sweet Land of Liberty?* is a commendable work, detailing the efforts of African-American people to realise the freedom denied them by a society and culture built on racial divisions, intolerance, and xenophobia. Based largely – but by no means exclusively – on secondary sources, *Sweet Land of Liberty?* claims to be more than simply a narrative of the civil rights movement(s), and to a certain extent it lives up to this premise: Cook strikes a balance between the chronology of his subject, and the analysis of issues which even today remain unresolved.

While *Sweet Land of Liberty?* articulates a belief in the need for visible leadership to push for substantive change, this belief is countered by an equally strong conviction that grass-roots activism and the mobilisation of community support are essential for securing such change. This is particularly true when the opposition to the civil rights movement is examined. In Washington DC, at state level, and on a wider community level, Cook depicts the opponents of the movement as entrenched, often demagogic individuals with an overriding concern for political expediency and little interest in changing the status quo. For these people – often in positions of social or political power – legal and extralegal violence was a viable (if sometimes counterproductive) tactic in the suppression of a movement professing non-violent beliefs, and Cook identifies this conflict between opposing ideologies as one of the main causes of the fractured consensus within the broad civil rights movement. The development of black nationalism is seen as an almost inevitable response to the schism within the movement, as the intransigence of the Federal government weakened the earlier commitment to Gandhian pacifism and interracial cooperation. As Cook concludes, the “indisputable lesson of the civil rights movement ... is that freedom will not come without a struggle,” and these struggles are as likely to occur between those with shared aspirations as between polarised opponents.

Although he neglects some of the civil rights movement’s thematic and organisational forerunners – such as the Brotherhood of Timber Workers and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, which challenged the southern caste system by promoting class interests and racial solidarity among working-class people – Robert Cook gives a worthy account of the dynamics involved in the quest for equality. Spanning several decades, and encompassing the efforts of great leaders and unheralded heroes and heroines alike, *Sweet Land of Freedom?* contains few surprises, but still provides the reader with a valuable insight into events which have still not run their course.

University of Ulster at Jordanstown

Mark T. Fannin


Neil Cornwell’s new book on Nabokov appears as part of the “Writers and their Work” series, published by Northcote House in association with the British Council. It falls into the category of those works traditionally classified as
“useful.” This is a short work, with eight chapters of only about a dozen pages each, though it does have the virtue of being modestly priced. There is also a five-page “Biographical Outline” and a thirteen-page critical bibliography, both of which will be valuable for reference purposes. But the commentary on Nabokov’s writing is abbreviated in the extreme, consisting mainly of descriptions of how the various works evolved, plot summaries and maps charting the directions taken by previous interpreters of Nabokov’s fiction. It is not difficult to imagine, with a sinking of the heart, the kind of standardised student essay to which these truncated discussions will inevitably give rise.

No doubt this is just what the British Council wants, and at times Cornwell himself seems ruefully to acknowledge the imposed limitations of his approach. “This is a convenient point at which to introduce an extremely brief and simplified summary of the evolution of Nabokov criticism,” he says near the beginning; while in his “glance” at Lolita he admits: “There is no space here for a survey of its reception; neither, for that matter, can anything amounting to an overall analysis of the novel be attempted.” Appropriately enough, for a Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature, Cornwell’s most illuminating insights come in his discussions of Nabokov’s work in Russian. As he says, Nabokov is “all but unique in western culture” in being a major writer in two quite distinct languages, and this book has some interesting things to say about Nabokov’s study of Gogol, about the differences in the Russian and English versions of The Gift and about the author’s own attempts to translate Lolita into his mother tongue. The 1990s have witnessed a new growth in Russian Nabokov studies, following the publication of his works there during the last years of the Soviet regime, and Cornwell is particularly well placed to comment upon these developments.

All in all, then, this is a “useful” volume, even if it does seem to be trying to squeeze a quart into a pint pot. While it is unfortunate that the book’s more original moments have to be smuggled in under the rigid textbook formula prescribed by the British Council, one feels that this is an irony Nabokov himself would have appreciated.

University of Cambridge

Paul Giles


Silent Witnesses opens with the contention that “working-class people have been misrepresented, manipulated, and silenced in order to fit the expectations of a middle-class audience.” Ellis focuses on the 1930s, and the creative work of five contemporary women (three photographers and two authors) in order to account for the absence or silence of the working-class (and in particular female) subject.

Ellis critiques the work of Dorothea Lange, Marion Post Wolcott and Esther Bubley and offers a detailed analysis of key, even iconographic photographs (such as Lange’s “Migrant Mother” (1936)) — many of which are reproduced, albeit
faintly, in the text – in order to support complementary arguments about how ideologies are sustained, and about the assignation of certain participative and viewing positions.

Ellis looks to the human and private dimension implicit in the production and reception of these photos (and, in passing, makes some tangential points about the ownership of, or rights to, an image) and also records the political context within which photography was commissioned, published and interpreted (that is, under the auspices of the Farm Services Administration).

With the exception of brief references to Bakhtin and Roland Barthes, Ellis prefers to steer clear of abstraction. This makes for a clear and straightforward historical materialist account (drawing largely on previously published sources), but also leads to missed opportunities. In the chapters on photography, a consideration of recent feminist theories of gender and visuality (Irigaray, Rose) would have widened the scope of Ellis’s argument, and strengthened her conclusions. So too, her otherwise convincing points about the relationship between “textual expression and bodily feeling” in the work of Meridel Le Sueur and Tillie Olsen would have benefited from reference to relevant work by, for example, Hélène Cixous.

That said, Ellis makes some concise and convincing points about feminism and postmodernism. She suggests that the working-class struggle which Olsen’s Yonndio exemplifies and the moments of textual fragmentation and opacity in her Tell Me A Riddle “radically complicate [contemporary feminist theory’s] eminently accommodating progression from modernist unity to postmodern fluidity.” She concludes in the fine polemical style characteristic of her subjects by advocating the angry reclamation of silenced voices in place of any easy acquiescence to postfeminist disintegration.

Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education

Joanna Gill


In this engagingly complex study, Erdmans gives a detailed picture of the political organisations within the Polish-American community in Chicago during the late seventies and eighties. She especially concerns herself with their relationships with (and reactions to) the rise, persecution and eventual triumph of the Solidarity movement in Poland itself.

The great strength of the book is the care Erdmans takes to distinguish between “Ethnics” (Polish-Americans of the third to fifth generations) and “Immigrants” (Poles who have entered the United States during the period under discussion, often Solidarity members fleeing the communist regime). It is the tension between these two groups that drives the book, illustrated neatly by this example: during the Polish Constitution Day parade in Chicago in May 1988, the new immigrants “wore buttons supporting Solidarność rather than ones that said, ‘Kiss Me I’m Polish.’”
After an initial chapter covering “Polishness in Twentieth-Century America,” Erdmans devotes the rest of the book to examining the various machinations of the groups concerned, which at times comically resemble the “Judean Peoples Front/Peoples Front of Judea” sequence from Monty Python’s Life of Brian. What emerges is that these variously defined “Poles” are not, despite their differences, “opposite” and – certainly by the time of the partially free elections in Poland in 1989 – they are able to find ways of complementing each other while working for a common cause.

The main problem with the book is that Erdman’s dry sociological style manages to turn what should be a dramatic and compelling story into a stale, dispassionate exercise. In the introduction she declares her “preference to use no personal names because, as a sociologist, I want to emphasize social categories ... cultural identities ... and organizational positions,” but it is precisely when, in the later stages of the book, actual figures do emerge that the text comes alive. Erdmans conducted many interviews with the people involved, but she has made far too sparing a use of this material in the text itself for the book to be fully engaging. Indeed, a glance at the table of “Polonia organizations in Chicago related to the study” reveals that Erdmans herself was a “participant observer” in many of the organisations involved, yet none of the passion and commitment she must surely feel regarding these issues is felt while reading the book.

Erdmans succeeds in exposing the complexities within the Polish-American community in Chicago at the time, and by doing so distinguishes herself from many less subtle scholars of American ethnicity. It is a shame that the style of the book serves only to detract from the story it has to tell.

University of Exeter

DAVID R. KENNEDY


Dennis A. Foster has written a quixotic, eclectic study of “perversity” in American literature and culture; the unlikely provenance of Sublime Enjoyment is Southern Methodist University. Equally unlikely is the inclusion of an English writer, J. G. Ballard (he is brought forward on account of his “appalled fascination” with America). The overall argument is marked by a certain eccentricity. At its heart, this is a study of a number of writers: Poe, Henry James, DeLillo, Burroughs. But it also includes commentary on films such as Dead Calm or The Hitcher, and there is a running debate about how the national culture expresses, polices and represents “enjoyment.”

My sketch perhaps makes the book seem like a perverse embodiment of the perversity it addresses; but Sublime Enjoyment is at the same time a reasonably familiar, even conventional study. Foster follows a critical tradition attuned to the darker tones of America, to the ironic, Gothic and satirical narratives embedded in what sometimes seems a naïvely progressive culture. His forebears
are Leslie Fiedler or the Harry Levin of *The Power of Blackness*. But, whereas these critics worked solidly within a literary framework (charting the verbal textures of dissent), Foster maps perversity across a range of cultural practices, including film and rock. His argument has a more capacious critical vocabulary; he draws on the psychoanalytical work of Lacan, and the postmodern theory of Baudrillard. Here is the strength and weakness of *Sublime Enjoyment*. To couple Kurt Cobain with William Burroughs is to create a suggestive juxtaposition; but the manifold energies of Foster’s discussion also overload the critical circuit. It is, quite simply, difficult to create a coherent critical idiom out of such disparate registers. Foster’s best passages are nimble, sprightly literary analyses of DeLillo and Burroughs; the worst, awkward composites of psychoanalysis, cultural criticism and a confessional testimony. Foster might legitimately reply that his approach incarnates a postmodern awareness of the competing languages of criticism at the end of the century. My own suspicion is that *Sublime Enjoyment* attempts to cover all the critical bases, but sometimes sprawls between them.

*University of Kent at Canterbury*  
**Guy Reynolds**


Although perhaps still best known as one of America’s foremost labour historians, Leon Fink for several years now has been researching into the work of intellectual activists of the Progressive Era. This volume is the product of a decade’s work in the field. It sets out to examine the lives of a number of influential intellectuals who sought to engage with issues of concern to working people and the public at large at a time in which, so Fink claims, there appeared to be “a more intimate and permanent connection between ideas, organization, and power” and in which “the scholar might even serve as a leader of the people.” There is more than a hint that this notion is an attractive one for the author, for at the end of his introduction he poses the question: “Can the American intellectual community act (once again) as a rallying point in defense and extension of popular self-rule and mass welfare?” One suspects he would like to answer affirmatively.

In the first section of the book, Fink looks at the broader issues of the relationship between the progressive intellectuals and the democratic public who they were hoping to reach and help educate. The work of familiar figures such as Lester Ward, Edward A. Ross, and John Dewey is reviewed here. What united this disparate group was their passionate belief in the potency of education as builder of a truly effective democracy. But much of their optimism was destroyed during the years surrounding World War I. Fink then explores the ideas of the so-called Wisconsin School of Labour History, paying particular attention to Richard Ely, John R. Commons, and Selig Perlman. The focus then switches to the work of Charles McCarthy, head of the Wisconsin Legislative Library and author of *The Wisconsin Idea*, who believed in the state as an important agent for “rational and judicious social change.” Interesting chapters follow on the
evolution of the thought of William English Walling and the struggle of his wife Anna Strunsky Walling to maintain a life in the public arena after marriage and family. The various leadership styles adopted by Asa Philip Randolph during his long career – the development of the strategic vision of labour leader W. Jett Lauck, John L. Lewis’s policy adviser, and Wil Lou Gray’s crusade for basic adult education, particularly while she was State Supervisor of Adult Schools in South Carolina, 1918–46 – then come under scrutiny in turn. Fink concludes that the record of the early twentieth century “provides due warning of the internal contradictions and bitter disappointments facing the idealist determined at once to serve and uplift the People.”

There is much to admire in this book. The writing is fluent and the ideas are cogently expressed. The brief biographies are neat and instructive. Fink demonstrates with clarity (and sympathy) the dilemmas and difficulties facing the idealistic intellectual reformers on whose lives he focuses. The work also serves to remind us of the diversity of opinion and philosophy among those we call “progressives.” Perhaps, most importantly, he rescues a number of these intellectuals from relative obscurity, most notably Selig Perlman and Wil Lou Gray. One wonders, however, whether all the characters he has examined were sufficiently important to merit the attention he has directed toward them. That said, however, this book represents a particularly useful addition to the library on progressivism. In particular, it sits very well with other volumes which have taken a biographical approach to the reform tradition such as John L. Thomas’s Alternative America, Robert Crunden’s Ministers of Reform and Steven Biel’s Independent Intellectuals.

Liverpool Hope University College

J. F. Lennon


Like its fellows in the series, The Cambridge Companion to Henry James provides a collection of twelve, mostly topical, new essays by respected American and British scholars. The goal of the editor, Jonathan Freedman, is “to reinvite the reader” to engagement with James, in defiance of an inferred scepticism about James’s relevance to “the critical insistences of our own decade … postcoloniality, critical race studies, the study of sexual dissidence.” The unconverted will find James fruitfully open to examination in these areas, following Freedman’s insight that James “possessed the ability to see to the core of arrangements naturalised by his culture.” Thus Hugh Stevens’s introduction to the study of “queer Henry” distinguishes conclusively between fatuous biographical revelation and productive critical understanding of James’s examination of “the workings of sexual identity within culture.” Like an exemplary case in point, Eric Haralson shows Lambert Strether exploring “masculinity” beyond the encroachments of categorisation and the social and critical gender police. This contrasts with a disappointingly tendentious account by Martha Banta of an implied challenge by James to Rooseveltian prescriptions of masculinity in The Golden Bowl and The
Reviews

American Scene, undermined by a cavalier manipulation of chronology (and who is the “Principesso” on p. 36?).

Millicent Bell’s lucid reading of ‘The Pupil’ relates sex, money and a prophetic glimpse of postmodernity, revealing, as do Margery Sabin and Ross Posnock, the prescience and subtlety of James’s cultural criticism. Sabin reads The Golden Bowl (again but more convincingly) as James’s tentative but pessimistic modelling of America’s postcolonial cultural development. Posnock proposes the James of The American Scene as a practitioner of a “pragmatic pluralism,” which could resist both the cultural imperative of homogenacy and the “immutable ethnicity” of later cultural pluralism—linking him interestingly with Du Bois and Ralph Ellison. There is a sprightly invitation from Philip Horne to discover, in textual variations and revisions, Henry James “most intimately ... at work” and a densely argued but ultimately illuminating discussion of James, Bakhtin and novel theory by Dorothy M. Hale, to name but two more contributions. It is perhaps inevitable that the Last Three Novels get a chapter each while the early work goes virtually unremarked and The American Scene is the text to quote. The bibliography is certainly select—where is the indispensable Maqbool Aziz, for example?—but it seems that, over all, James criticism is alive and in good hands here.

Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge


Guthrie’s frankly biographical study is written very much against the grain of current critical predispositions. He is by no means unaware of the problems inherent in any reading of the poetry to reconstruct the life story, but contends that there are sufficient grounds in the conjunction of Dickinson’s known optical illness of vision with images of sight and pain in the poems, to hazard the attempt none the less. His argument, briefly stated, is that Dickinson used writing as therapy, in the sense that it gave her intellectual tools to deal with her situation, and that reading this back into the poems reilluminates the significance of many obscure images. The argument is hampered (as are so many arguments which seek explicatory power about Dickinson’s work) by the paucity of documentary material on the illness; Guthrie is thrown back on too many statements of the type “Emily Dickinson wished desperately to believe that ...” Specific links are made to bear a heavy burden at several points in the narrative: Dickinson’s astonishing burst of poetic creation in the early 1860s, for example, is attributed specifically to the privations and fears enjoined by her illness at that point. That is as may be, but it is a thesis as difficult to prove as it would be pointless if proven, an “explanation” that explains nothing about the nature of creativity or the (highly variable) quality of the poems from this period. In general, the impulse to explain blunts the perception of multiplicity or ambiguity, and the poems emerge in a peculiarly flattened form from this kind of thesis-driven analysis.
However, there is no denying that sight and its metaphorical developments are potent and prevalent in Dickinson’s writing; Guthrie does well to draw our attention to another dimension in the elaborately arabesque patterns of her play with perception. And, however sceptical one might be about eliding the symptomatology of the poet’s illness into her aesthetic, his discussion of “compound vision” does cast new light onto some of the more obscure quasi-astronomical poems. On the other hand, Guthrie’s discussion of the “snow” poems and their relation to issues of publication would have benefited from a reading of Joel Porte’s elegant and subtle analysis (along just these lines) of Emerson, Whittier and Dickinson, in *In Respect to Egotism* (1991). And the final chapter, “Law, Property and Provincialism,” is related in only the most tenuous ways to the rest of the book.

The argument of *Emily Dickinson’s Vision* would have made a suggestive article of an identifiable psycho-biographic kind; its monocural view does not reward expansion to book length. If there is one thing Emily Dickinson’s poetry does not have, it is tunnel vision. Too much explicitness puts the book’s readings in jeopardy of naïveté, and one wishes that the author’s style did not suggest quite such confident access to the poet’s views and intentions.

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*SUSAN MANNING*