
Writing on the post-war Brooklyn Dodgers is dominated by two events. Before *The Great Betrayal* and the team’s move to Los Angeles in 1957, the inclusion of Jackie Robinson in the team in 1947 made racial integration the major controversy in America’s favourite sport. Carl Prince’s subject is the team and its supporters, but the two signposts still dominate. This is an unusual book. It is part social history, part affectionate memoir. Prince, the distinguished historian of early politics, examines the Dodgers and the Bums as a reflection of Brooklyn’s distinctive culture; Prince, the lifelong fan, adds narrative details of outstanding individuals.

There are some fascinating comments on Fifties culture, particularly the highly competitive world of owners, managers and players. Wisely, there is little on the familiar story of Robinson and racial prejudice, but interesting information on Cold War politics (the “Alert America Convoy” in the pre-game parade) and the use made of Robinson’s condemnation of Paul Robeson in 1949. Most of the book probes the identification of Brooklyn’s population of three million with the Dodgers and is less successful. The thousand local teams which used the Parade Grounds in Prospect Park and the Dodgers’ Knothole Club providing free admission show the links between the amateur and professional game.

Prince evades the major question: did loyalty to the club, and the bitter rivalry with the New York Giants, mask deep ethnic divisions between Jews, Italians and the Irish? The analysis of ethnic “isolation” is not very detailed; it misses more effective use of some outstanding monographs, especially on Jews. There is little mention of suburban development, Robert Moses and highway building, and residential change, with increasing numbers of blacks and Puerto Ricans entering former immigrant areas. Other issues are ignored. There is nothing on the financial history of the club, commercial sponsorship, or broader economic changes in Brooklyn. The impact of the radio and television is hardly discussed. That asks for a different book and different sources. Prince makes little use of oral interviews, even published testimony, but reminiscences and newspaper columnists provide him with rich descriptive detail to convey the aggressive bravado of the team and its fans. The book is always enjoyable, original, and sometimes illuminating.

*University of Birmingham*  
*Robert Lewis*

In *Becoming Citizens in the Age of Television*, David Thelen explores the relationship between American citizens, their representatives in government, and the media. His study focuses on the public response to Lt. Col. Oliver North’s televised testimony to the House Select Committee hearings into the Iran–Contra affair in July 1987. He relates how the American print and broadcast media reported an outpouring of public support for North that was dubbed “Olliemania.” The American people, the media concluded, regarded North as a national hero. Thelen, however, analyzes constituent letters, telegrams and other communications sent to Representative Lee Hamilton, Chair of the Select Committee, to reveal that, in fact, a broad range of perspectives on North were held by individual citizens throughout the United States.

Thelen criticizes “opinion managers” in the media and government for using polling and spin doctoring to reduce the complex diversity of individuals in society to a faceless mass. He argues that unusually high numbers of Americans were motivated to write to Hamilton and other Members of Congress in order to assert their rights as citizens. By having each of their unique, individual voices heard, they sought to reshape the public debate on the Iran–Contra Affair so it would reflect the full complexity and diversity of opinion and belief held throughout the nation, thus reclaiming the government for themselves. It is not clear from Thelen’s analysis, however, that the writers regarded their actions as the deliberate expression of citizenship he implies or that they were truly “seizing the political initiative.” Furthermore, if this outpouring of communication represented a “resurgent participatory democracy” it largely failed to eradicate the tendency for politicians and the media to reduce public political discourse to lowest common denominators. Indeed, Thelen reveals telling evidence that, despite receiving a deluge of constituent communications to the contrary, Senators William Cohen and George Mitchell continued to believe that North was roundly supported by the public. In the years since Iran–Contra, as Thelen admits, opinion management has grown stronger rather than being weakened by an alerted citizenry.

What is important about Thelen’s book, however, is that it reminds us that the range and depth of opinion and beliefs held in any society on any subject are likely to be more complex and diverse than opinion surveys suggest. The problem, which Thelen himself cannot fully solve, is how can we measure societal beliefs without losing the complexity of views held by each unique individual? The majority of Americans did not write letters to their representatives in Congress concerning the Iran–Contra hearings, therefore, Thelen’s conclusions are in many ways as limited as the findings of pollsters. Even Thelen finds it necessary to make use of opinion-poll data to indicate how representative were the sentiments expressed in the letters. Perhaps the main lesson of Thelen’s populist work, though, is to remind politicians, journalists, and, indeed, scholars that quantitative surveys often aggregate opinion to a point whereby it is easy to underestimate the
ability of ordinary people to participate intelligently in complex political debates. Such surveys can also mask the full range of opinions held and give the false impression that an entire population is acting as a homogenous mass.

Thelen’s book should prove valuable reading to those interested in understanding American political culture, the role of citizens in forming policy, and the question of whether the media reflects or forms public opinion.

University of Sussex

TREVOR MCCRISKEN


This uniquely original study in cultural and political geography examines the New World imperial structures of colonial Spain and the United States using the basic principles and vocabulary of structural engineering to analyze the theory and practice of empire. The broad histories of colonial Spain and the United States are considered in terms of compression and tension, push and pull, stress and strain.

In spite of obvious differences in time and space, Fifer asserts that both empires shared several characteristics unique in the history of imperialism: they were both intended to be large-scale structures designed to “bear” heavy loads of goods and people, both had to respond to the isolated nature of the American continent, and both included the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans in their earliest stages of design. The greatest difference between the two empires can be described in terms of risk. Spain built a compression structure in which risk due to tension was reduced in nearly every aspect of the building and maintenance of the empire for over 300 years. Important features of this structure were the church, the vice-regal administrative structure, and the rigid control of immigration and trade. This approach was so successful that even after the collapse of the empire the architectural style and structural mechanics of imperial Spain were retained by the successor states of Latin America. The United States, in marked contrast, erected a much riskier tension structure based on the productive management of diversity and social tension in a less ecclesiastical, more secular, form.

In Fifer’s final analysis, the continued maintenance of the United States’ tension structure is dependent upon the successful assimilation of immigrants. She identifies language, and the use of English in particular, as an indispensable structural component. She concludes that the United States possessed the originality of design, resources, and experience to become the most durable imperial structure the world has ever known.

This study presents a unique way of considering the physical and institutional histories of colonial Spain and the United States. However, to this reviewer at least, much of the difference between these empires can be attributed to differences between medieval and enlightenment mindsets. Fifer hints at this issue in her analysis, but does not discuss it explicitly. None the less, this is a well-

In The Barbed-Wire College, Robin investigates the establishment and attainments of American officials’ attempts to re-educate German prisoners of war in the United States at the closing stages of World War II. The re-education programme was, in Robin’s view, a way of “marketing American political objectives through educational projects.” While the Geneva convention specifically denounced indoctrination of prisoners, American officials felt the need to attempt a transformation of captured Germans from supporters of Nazism into supporters of western ideologies so they could help in the reformation of post-war Germany. In the early years, most German POWs in camps were left to form their own “societies” and these often reflected a military structure. The camp newspapers were often run by intellectuals who, while editorializing on issues of Nazi ideology, were too highbrow to have an impact on the bulk of their fellow prisoners’ belief systems. The US military established the Special Programs Division (SPD) specifically to re-educate the POWs. The academic staff of the SPD selected the books and films that were to be made available in the POW camps. Robin’s section on the censorship of camp material is interesting and entertaining. Beard’s Basic History of the United States was banned for its critical approach to American imperialism, while the bulk of the POWs viewing time was spent watching B movies which were held in contempt by the intellectuals in the crowd but proved very popular with the mass of prisoners. By June 1945, the re-education project went public and the officials in the programme established a series of crash courses aimed at non-committed or moderate Nazis in order to expose them to American democratic traditions and American objectives in post-war Germany and then return these selected recruits back to Germany before the release of the remaining POWs. While the original mandate of these schools was to train the POWs as administrative personnel for the US occupation of Germany, the academics in charge of the programme often put the emphasis on academic training rather than the practicalities of producing useful administrative assistants. The Special Programs Division declared their success in the spring of 1946 when they polled 22,000 prisoners and learned that the majority would not fight if they had to live the war over again and no longer felt that Germans were a superior race. Yet over half still believed that Jews were the cause of Germany’s problems and only 30 percent thought the stories of concentration camps were true. Robin is at his best when he relates the details of the establishment and inner workings of the SPD. He has written a good book about a little-known aspect of World War II military history. He is less convincing, and less thorough, when he discusses...
the clash between humanities/liberal arts academics and social scientists in the era, what he calls the “institutional and cultural battles in academia.”

University of Hull


Donald White posits what was, a decade ago, a widely discussed if unoriginal thesis: from the late 1940s until the 1960s, there was an American consensus on the internationalist global role in the United States, which has since collapsed (mostly under the weight of Vietnam) and been rejected as Americans have become less confident about their future abroad and more preoccupied with domestic concerns, leaving a befuddled United States surrounded by rising competitors. The suspicion is inescapable that events since the 1980s are simply omitted since they diverge from the image of an America incapable of playing a leading international role, albeit from a power position relatively less magisterial than in the good old days.

Embracing the years 1945–89, the author traces the origins and growth of America’s global role, its manifestations, crisis, and decline. His sources are countless and wide-ranging, a dog’s dinner of the observations of commentators from George Kennan and Henry Luce to Gabriel Kolko and Bob Dylan. This overly inclusive approach renders the book less a scholarly study of American foreign policy than a hotchpotch of various views relating to the United States as a great power (a problem unmitigated by the infuriating practice of promiscuously listing multiple sources in individual footnotes). The result is not without interest, but the conclusion White draws is grossly premature if not downright incorrect.

*The American Century* invites more than a quibble about the period it covers, which is hardly a century at all, and its subtitle, *The Rise & Decline of the United States as a World Power*, is oblivious to post Cold War realities. The United States has not, as he suggests, rejected a world role, and it is not the case that there is no consensus on America’s purpose in the international arena. Nor did “a majority of Americans eventually disapprove of Reagan’s foreign policy.”

Rather did the United States, after a period during which it was said to suffer from the Vietnam syndrome, re-emerge as a, indeed the, key player in the game of nations. The successful end of the Cold War, the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe towards democratic market economies, the extension of the Atlantic Alliance, and many more developments in the 1990s suggest that the American Century is far from over. It would have been worth the author’s effort to explain the renaissance of United States power and the resumption of America’s international leadership; power remains relative, and however reduced the absolute comparisons of earlier years there is no doubt that as the century closed there was only one super-power whose demise was not in sight.

Institute of United States

Robert McGeehan
Kenneth M. Cameron begins this survey of a century of American historical films with a question: how good are American films as history? At the close he asks: can these films be used to teach American history? Much of the intervening text is concerned then with a judgement on individual historical films, a genre defined by Cameron as films with a “framework of fact” that include at least one real-life person and real-life event, which usually reads like this: a description of the film, one or two brief comments as to how it differs from the events depicted (or how the clothing and guns – Cameron is clearly a gun expert – used are anachronistic). This inevitably concludes with statements like this: *Annie Oakley* (1935) “puts myth above truth in the name of entertainment,” or that a series of films made in the 1950s about the American Revolution “suggest that the reason for doing history has been forgotten,” or that, in a discussion of *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), “history might have been better served by using some of the footage to explore the historical context.”

There are fundamental problems with this. Within the overriding commercial aesthetic of Hollywood that aims fundamentally to offer entertainment that would prove harmless to all audiences (including audiences in other countries), history will almost inevitably be rendered as a backdrop against which stories of individual heroism or love will be set (one needs only to think of a recent film directed by the author’s namesake, *Titanic*, to be reminded of this). “If you have a message,” Sam Goldwyn is reported to have said, “send it through Western Union.” The relegation of history to backdrop in American film is not simply or straightforwardly a commercial issue; history in film is mediated through conventions and through a regulatory framework. Cameron briefly notes a court case brought against the producer of *The Spirit of ’76* (1917) where a federal judge ruled that a “truthful representation of an historical fact” was censorable. Such a decision in fact dates back to 1909, when a judge in the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that even if films represented “the American historical experience” they could still be “immoral and obscene.” Cameron does not include this, or any more details on the 1917 case, but this is crucial for an understanding of the representation of history in American film. Film, by 1915, was distinguished from the press and did not have First Amendment rights; it effectively had to offer harmless entertainment and not stray into the partisan representation of historical or political events or it could be subject to various levels of governmental control. This definition of cinema was further formulated with the Production Code in 1934 and the history of this, and its effect on the representation of history in American film, is a major absence in this book. In short, there is a critical historical dynamic to the representation of history in film elided by this study.

This book will be most useful then as a developing point for further research. In the midst of it a number of interesting issues do emerge – for example, on the shift in subject matter in historical films; on the positioning of women in these films; in the occasional remarks on how historical films have been linked at certain moments to the consolidation of national identity; in the scattered comments on intertextual sources for some of the historical films; and so on.
Perhaps in the end Cameron’s concern at the enmeshing of history and fiction in American film can be seen to have its own historical dynamic, as this becomes an issue for popular and critical debate in an age when images from real life can be seamlessly meshed with fictional material.

University of Kent at Canterbury

LEE GRIEVESON


In the teaching of Native American literature, traditional oral narratives are all too often given short shrift. The obstacles which these texts offer to teachers and students alike are well known. Many of these narratives were originally recited and recorded in languages for which there exist neither grammars nor dictionaries, nor in some cases living speakers. In some cases, the only access to these tales is through clumsy translations made by anthropologists. As well, most Western readers are unfamiliar with the cultural traditions from which these texts emerged, and thus perceive them as “primitive” and alien.

For all these reasons, Traditional Literatures of the American Indian: Texts and Interpretations is a welcome contribution to scholarship on Native American literature. In his excellent introduction, “The Art of Traditional Indian Storytelling,” Karl Kroeber (drawing on the work of folklorist Alan Dundes) describes the three parameters that determine the significant forms of oral narrative: texture, or the features of verbal form; text, a single telling of a tale; and context, the specific social situation in which the story is told. It is in the interactions between these three elements that one is able to comprehend the meaning and artistry of the story in question. Such an approach is not unique to Native American narrative; indeed, in the Western tradition, we do the same when we read a translation of Homer.

The essays which follow give the reader a fascinating glimpse into the Native American oral tradition. Jarold Ramsay, in “From Mythic to Fictive in an Orpheus Myth,” examines the literary features of the Nez Perce narrative, “Coyote and the Shadow People.” He points out that foreshadowing, rather than suspense, is the device most often found in Native American story-telling, as the audience would be expected to know the outcome of the tale. The figure of Coyote, the Nez Perce Trickster, is a singularly appropriate one for the ironic prefiguring apparent in this story; after all, the reader, whether Nez Perce or European, is aware that he will not outwit death in the end. In “Narrative Form as a ‘Grammar’ of Experience: Native Americans and a Glimpse of English,” Dell Hymes points out patterns of vocabulary, syntax and word formation that are similar to Western literary conventions such as rhyme and measured verse. Dennis Tedlock, in “The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation in American Indian Religion,” discusses the concept of text and its application to the analysis of oral narratives. In the excellent essay “Poetic Retranslation and the
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‘Pretty Languages’ of Yellowman,” Barre Toelken and Tacheeni Scott describe the reception of this Trickster story by a Navajo audience in order to examine the interaction between the structure and texture of the tale. Finally, Linda Ainsworth discusses the Wintu myth in order to determine the role of myth-making and myth-telling in comprehending particular cultural formations. The book concludes with a useful bibliography for introductory study of traditional oral narratives.

This excellent collection, carefully prepared and painstakingly edited, is an invaluable contribution to Native American studies, and will awaken readers to the beauty and complexity of these often neglected narratives. Karl Kroeber, in his introduction to the volume, states: “It is our scholarship, not Indian storytelling, that is primitive, undeveloped.” His book demonstrates that this certainly cannot be said of his own work.

University of Glasgow

SUSAN CASTILLO


“That Chicano poetry upsets the authoritative lines of American literature and of the American self makes for a type of poetry that requires the consideration of the discourse and power relations that form its context,” Arteaga asserts. Chicano Poetics is, consequently, his attempt to provide this consideration. Employing a critical framework perhaps best revealed in the subsection title “How the Poem Means,” Arteaga focuses not so much on what the poem says but on how it comes into being. Since, moreover, “the poetics of chicanismo are such that they locate the work of the poem in the working out of the individual,” his study devotes much of its time to a meticulously researched consideration of the manner in which the Chicano subject “comes about through the interplay of different social ‘texts’, analogously, through heterotextual reproduction.” Using, as his starting-point, literary selections which illustrate his thesis, Arteaga accordingly examines the numerous hybridities that play out within the “Body, Place, Language” of the Chicano. The (post-)colonial historical and political “texts” which have occasioned the Chicano’s mestizaje are examined, for instance, as are the linguistic “texts” which result in the “polyglot style of quotidian Chicano discourse” and the “texts” of sexual politics—all of which, in the complex life of the borderlands, continually work to “propagate identity.” And the study’s focus cannot, after all, be on the end result—what the poem means—for a point which it is keen to make is that the “poetics of hybridization opposes finalization in principle.”

In creating Chicano Poetics, it is perhaps unsurprising that Arteaga should himself use “a language of languages,” but many readers may find this problematic. Not all of the poems and excerpts which begin each of the book’s four sections are in English, for example, and, whilst pain is taken to provide
translation in the body of the discussion, this does not always hold true for the endnotes. Additionally, the literary style itself alternates between the dense terminology of critical theory and a far more accessible phraseology. That the critical rhetoric could prove daunting is a shame, for ironically it may throw up a border of its own which some will find too complicated to negotiate. None the less, Chicano Poetics is a fascinating addition to the burgeoning corpus of Chicano literature, roving, as it does in its investigation, across an impressively broad sweep of literature and literary genres, from the “chiastic poetics” of protofeminist Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in the seventeenth century to the presentation of “post-pomo” contemporary poets like Juan Felipe Herrera and Alfred Arteaga himself. Certainly the book does its best to ensure that “chicanismo is presented as an active working out of factors, past, present, and future.”

University of Wales, Swansea

CANDIDA HEPWORTH


Although it is difficult to do justice to either of these books within a short notice, it should be said at the outset that both of them amply attest the plural condition of American music studies in the 1990s. That such diversity (of methodology and reception history) was not always the case is a theme softly sounded in Ives Studies, which is a collection of essays avowedly dedicated to the rehabilitation of “a most complex man” and a “stunningly original body of music.” In this objective the book takes its place alongside a significant body of Ives scholarship which has appeared since the mid-1980s. Indeed, as in J. Peter Burkholder’s excellent essay, “Ives Today,” which closes the book, Ives Studies itself provides a superb insight into the scope and purpose of this scholarship.

Ives Studies is divided into three main sections (with the Burkholder essay functioning as an afterword for “Envoi”): “Tradition, revision and chronology”; “Historical and biographical contexts”; and “The Universe Symphony.” Each of these sections, but especially the first one, is more or less concerned with providing a satisfactory context for Ives and his music on two levels. The first of these has to do with Ives’s continuity with the musical past; the second has to do with the physical evidence of Ives’s own music manuscripts. Robert P. Morgan, for example, offers a close reading of the song “The Things Our Fathers Loved” in order to situate Ives firmly in the European tradition by which “Ives, more than Mahler or Schoenberg, grasped the full implications of his historical moment, responding in a way that subsequent history has shown to be prophetic.” Morgan’s persuasive argument would seem to be that the
heterogeneous nature of Ives’s music bespeaks not what Elliott Carter described in 1944 as “a rather spasmodic development,” but instead what Morgan terms a “profound aesthetic orientation,” especially in the context of tonality and the common practice tradition. Throughout the book, indeed, this concern for Ives’s standing as a composer both at home in and radically at odds with his European heritage is strikingly apparent.

In a different but related way, Gayle Sherwood’s exhaustive re-dating of Ives’s choral music, which is explicitly based on the precedent and the methodology of similar studies of Mozart, Beethoven and others, “supports Ives’s reputation as a compositional innovator.” This essay in part repudiates the undermining of Ives’s reputation which Sherwood (along with many other contributors to the book) countenances in Maynard Solomon’s 1987 essay, “Charles Ives: some questions of veracity.” Solomon’s investigations certainly occasioned nothing less than a controversy in Ives scholarship, and the book under review is in large measure concerned to resolve it. The means of doing so is often businesslike and painstakingly demonstrative (as in the Sherwood piece) rather than argumentative or rhetorical: Geoffrey Block’s scrutiny of the *Concord Sonata* and H. Wiley Hitchcock’s pragmatic consideration of editorial techniques as applied to Ives’s songs allow both scholars to respond in an authoritative way to the suggestion that the composer “jacked up the dissonances” of his music or silently modernised his songs in the aftermath of European (musical) modernism. Both, indeed, reject this assertion. Hitchcock concludes as follows: “‘[Was Ives] silently modernising’ his music? Not at all: we are confronting a composer who is restoring in the 1930s details of his original scores of the 1900s, having decided that his arrangements of them in the 1920s had unnecessarily simplified and weakened them.”

I can note only in passing the brilliantly paired essays by Larry Austin and the editor on Ives’s (recently) completed *Universe Symphony*, and the three essays which comprise Part Two of the book. These latter, in fact, might well be a good place to begin for certain readers of this journal, in so far as they widen the discussion considerably to foreground Ives the man, especially in Judith Tick’s biographical and political exegesis on Ives and “direct democracy.” Stuart Feder explores Ives’s “lifelong fascination” with Henry David Thoreau (and not only as a vital preliminary to the last movement of his *Second Piano Sonata*), and Wolfgang Rathert offers a thoughtful reading of “potentiality” as a central idea which redeems Ives’s music from the “enigmatic” status which has been its mixed blessing for so long.

The volume as a whole is extremely well edited by Philip Lambert and it embraces a plural vigour of approaches which can only enhance the reputation of its subject. A note on the contributors (notwithstanding the information contained in the last essay) would have been useful.

Nicholas Tawa, who is mentioned in *Ives Studies* for his expertise on the generation of American composers which preceded Charles Ives, has written an outstanding biographical and critical study of one of these in *Arthur Foote: A Musician in the Frame of Time and Place*. The difference between history now and music then is the musicologist’s stamping ground, and Tawa explores this space to recover for students of American musical culture “one of the most important
American composers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and of the first two decades of the twentieth century.” Foote (1853–1937) was a contemporary of other, better-known American composers including Horatio Parker (who taught Ives), and Edward MacDowell, and of European figures such as Dvořák, Grieg and Puccini. An admonitory sentence in the preface to this book makes it clear that “He shared with these composers the tonal system and common practice developed over three centuries that none of his generation was inclined to reject.”

This observation makes for a useful “advertisement to the reader,” as if Tawa somehow recognizes that Foote’s long obscurity (this is the first full-length study of his life and music) rests in part on his irrelevance to the modernist wave of American composers which followed him. Irrelevant or not, the subject of this study “exemplified the artist who is well integrated into his community.” Tawa traces Foote’s American ancestry, his debt to and immersion in New England society, his boyhood in Salem, his musical studies in Boston and in particular his training with John Knowles Paine at Harvard and, after graduation, with B. J. Lang in Boston.

Thereafter the book establishes with notable clarity not only the genesis of Foote’s maturation as a composer firmly rooted in European traditions of craftsmanship, but also the social context in which this occurred. Nevertheless, the warning note sounded at the outset is never very far away: “It may be that after so much commendation of experiment and excess in the twentieth century, simplicity such as Foote’s is getting to be an attractive alternative for mature and cultivated music lovers… It is not enough to have the works of more recent composers like Aaron Copland and Samuel Barber, fine as they are. We need to go back further to the roots of American art music, roots that we have so assiduously and mistakenly tried to pull up.” I take it that Tawa means by this that musicology has tended to impose on American music a kind of retrospective modernism, or at least an acid-test of pioneering engagement, by which all of its stands or falls. If he diagnoses this tendency accurately, there can be no doubt that this book will do a great deal to correct it. I mean no disrespect when I observe that, like the music of Foote himself, this is an old-fashioned study, in so far as it is well made, impeccably researched and pellucidly written. These are qualities which undoubtedly enhance the heady mixture of American musicology in the 1990s. Even more importantly, the net result of Professor Tawa’s endeavours is that a missing chapter in the history of American musical culture has been handsomely and compellingly restored.


An attempt to contribute towards what the author hopes will be an ongoing project of “queer cultural studies of history,” Queer Fictions of the Past also forcefully argues that it is specifically post-foundational theoretical tools which
are best equipped for such a project. At its heart lies a desire to explore the relation between the “fictive” elements of historical representation and the strains placed on other interlocking forms of identity politics by metanarratives of a common gay and lesbian past. This has implications both for what is described as “queer heterosociality” (the social and political interaction between gay men and lesbians) and for the status of racial and ethnic claims within gay political movements.

After theoretically positioning his own work in relation to some of the most important earlier efforts to address these and related issues (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Diana Fuss, John D’Emilio) Bravmann embarks upon critical readings of two of the most influential aspects of queer historiography. It is at this point that the broader argument comes into focus and the more innovative dimensions of the study become fully apparent. The first of these readings examines and draws out the contemporary political significance of the exalted status of Greece within the lesbian and gay past. The author is troubled by the grip that Greek antiquity – the genealogy of which “is itself a retrospectively fabricated fiction” – continues to exert over the gay and lesbian imagination in the West. The Eurocentric, imperialist and masculinist bias of the Victorian historian–scholars largely responsible for this state of affairs, it is argued, must be more acutely scrutinised given the questions such factors raise for feminist and non-white constituencies within gay movements. Likewise, the point is made en passim, intellectual “access” to ancient Greece has been and remains denied to the bulk of working-class gay men. Numerous other important points are raised, particularly in relation to the attempts by such scholars to desexualise paiderastia or love between Greek males. The section closes with an important reappraisal along similar lines of Sappho and the cult of Lesbos in the wake of the emergence of ethnically diverse lesbian communities in the West.

Bravmann then moves on to explore what he regards as the “surplus of signification” which now informs attempts to remember “Stonewall” (the protests which followed the police raid of the Stonewall Inn during the summer of 1969 in Greenwich Village). In particular this chapter is concerned with foregrounding the tensions inherent in reconciling the specificity of Stonewall as a riot predominantly orchestrated by men, a significant component of whom were non-white, with the desire, expressed via parades and public celebration, to stress inclusivity and unity within a broader gay and lesbian community. The commercial pressures which equally facilitate this general appropriation of Stonewall are also highlighted and situated carefully within an intriguing and important discussion of the democratic public sphere. The discussion of the place of traditional liberal distinctions between private and public within queer political theory is particularly trenchant and suggestive for political theory in general.

Bravmann concludes with several studies of fictional texts which he perceives as efforts to radically reconceive the ways in which queer histories are understood. The arguments and analysis offered in this final section appear more familiar than those outlined previously. *Queer Fictions of the Past* is none the less the most distinctive contribution yet to the widening of queer history as a field of inquiry. As such it also presents – in its stress on the fictive, the contingent and the partial nature of the identities which this project must give voice to – an alternative
With almost every successive word, the title of this book accumulates more problems than it is able to solve. Campbell and Kean seem throughout to be making their remarks in the context of American Studies. Yet they neither set out a rationale for the discipline nor consider its lack thereof. The essence of this discipline seems to lie in its concentration on “popular” as well as “high” cultural products. This democratization of the text, laudable in its way but hardly new, does not constitute a method: it proposes that we read more, not that we read better. In practice, moreover, I didn’t always feel that I was being asked to read more. On occasions, I even wondered whether I was even being asked to read enough.

The central problem with this book is that it seems philosophically opposed to mobilizing its materials effectively. The authors occasionally appear to suspect that ideas and arguments are tools of “dominant discourses.” For the most part, the animating thesis gives way to a blandly episodic treatment of topics and texts. “Culture” is understood in terms of, and approached by way of, artefacts. Without a more sustained sense of “culture” as an ensemble of beliefs, values, aspirations, histories and ideas, “cultural studies” remains merely taxonomic, an intellectually impoverished survey orchestrated by a tedious insistence on “difference.” In Campbell and Kean’s work, “difference” is less a way of opening interpretation than a maxim whose truth must be repeatedly proved, less a way of voicing ideas than a moralistic formula.

It is striking and perhaps significant that “difference” – a commonplace of Clintonism – is here offered as a “radical” critique of American ideology. The authors’ claims to radicalism rest on a number of assumptions, two of which are worth examining in more detail: the first, that one can “see with the eyes of the Other,” emerges in a section entitled “Out of Slavery.” Campbell and Kean write that “what we will show, in the words of Manning Marable, is that this ‘identity is not something our oppressors forced upon us’” (my italics). When does “radically” seeing “with the eyes of the Other” become more like putting words into the mouth of the Other? Following a discussion of Vizenor, Silko and Native American identity, Campbell and Kean write that, “as long as the stories survive and are passed on, the native peoples retain their traditions, history and identity, reminding them of their roots in the land, which…constitutes their sense of self.” Maybe. In the specific context of Native American writing, however, attention should have been given to the often desperately compensatory quality of this rhetorical option. When Campbell and Kean adopt the idiom of
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currently is all very well to celebrate resistant voices, but beyond a certain point the discourse of cultural transmission privileges those who narrate at the expense of the silenced.

Keele University


The outward and temporal form that these “Houses of God” generally adopted conformed to the prevailing aesthetic, whatever traditions for worship took place within them. In this way a Puritan meeting-house, a nonconformist chapel or a synagogue, shared a common design ethos derived from eighteenth-century London. The great exemplar was James Gibbs’s St. Martins in the Fields (1722–26) which was to re-emerge, a generation later, in New York City in the shape of St. Paul’s Chapel (1764 and 1794) and the numerous white-painted timber churches of New England. As fashion evolved and moved on, so America adopted in sequence the neo-classical, the Gothic Revival, Richardsonian Romanesque and Frank Lloyd Wright “modern.”

The great problem for Williams is the sheer scale of his undertaking in relationship to the modest size of this publication. The author has space only to enumerate rather than elucidate. We are offered five sentences on Robert Owens’ New Harmony and two on the Touro synagogue in Newport, R.I. (built 1759–63). Even as a catalogue, stylistic labels are used in such an idiosyncratic way as to severely circumscribe the value of the book. In describing the English school of Baroque of the late seventeenth century and the Palladianism of Burlington as neo-classical, the uninitiated could be led to believe that they are both neo-classical.

Nevertheless a picture emerges which suggests that America’s tradition for transmission was of greater importance than any single architectural idiom. Consequently the few exceptions, in which a stylistic convention or structural necessity has become characteristic of a region, now stand as American icons in an almost literal sense. The board-and-batten churches of the Midwest are celebrated in the background of Grant Wood’s *American Gothic* (1930), whilst the adobe churches of the South West are confirmed on the retina by Ansel Adams’s photographs and Georgia O’Keeffe’s canvases.

In general, the regionalism of America’s *Houses of God* is less evident in its physical features than in the tenets of its people. Although only 74 of the 105 black and white illustrations are of interiors, it is when these are discussed that the author begins to get to grips with his subject, as for example his reference to the four liturgical “stations” of pulpit, communion table, lectern and font of Anglicanism.

Despite the oversimplification of brevity, we are offered some enjoyably recondite details — the use of selenite for glazing, the “biretta belt” of the high

In *Complicity and Resistance in Jack London’s Novels*, Christopher Gair asserts quite reasonably that the subject of his investigation “has never been a fashionable author amongst critics of American literature.” This is true, and Gair’s study is an important early step in developing a new audience for Jack London. In undertaking this task, Gair has decided to present the reader with a number of different critical approaches to London’s novels. While all of these preoccupations share a concern with the representation of social conditions and the rendering of language itself, some investigations are fully realized and other concerns leave further questions that, one can assume, Gair wishes his readers to pursue themselves.

Gair makes the compelling argument that London’s works may be read as vital representations of turn-of-the-century American society. Traditionally, because such an approach to cultural studies has raised related issues of biographical criticism, similar readings have concentrated unduly upon London’s contradictory engagement with the world around him. Gair does not escape this trap entirely here. He apologizes for London’s racism, for example, by pointing out that the novelist never attempted to conceal his shortcomings, these limitations of thought that can be seen to pull equally upon the reputation of other writers like Frank Norris.

More satisfactory, however, is Gair’s discussion of London’s class consciousness. Simply admitting that while London was an ardent socialist, he stubbornly kept servants and rode first class, Gair follows through with a vibrant reading of *The Iron Heel* (1908), his subject’s “most famous revolutionary” work. Discounting the attempts of past critics to read inconsistency in London’s apparent desire to filter his own views through multiple narrators here, Gair establishes that the manipulations of point-of-view convincingly develops class conflict. One can only lament how, on occasion, Gair is so quick to refer to secondary sources that he skimps on plot background, something needed desperately in a study with such breadth.

Throughout, Gair’s concern with language is most convincing. In the reading that is central to this work, that of London’s story “South of the Slot” (1909), Gair highlights how London subverts the naturalistic convention of diminishing the “other” in this case by denying the linguistic hegemony of the bourgeoisie, here reducing them to babble and silence. Such readings that engage the text directly are most satisfying, leading the reader to consider anew the achievement of the American novelist. So, while this study is far from the final word on Jack
London, it is a strong move towards an expression of the American canon that, we are told, first inspired Christopher Gair to adopt London as a subject of enquiry.

University of Lethbridge, Canada

CRAIG MONK


Eric Dean’s book considers one of the central preoccupations of contemporary life: the reaction of individuals to unpleasant events and the “risks” attendant on them. He compares the experience of the Vietnam War with the Civil War in an attempt to elucidate the concept of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He challenges the stereotype – largely promoted by the news media and tendentious motion pictures – of the Vietnam War as a “surreal quagmire.” Typical soldiers of this war are not well adjusted or patriotic, but twisted psychotics, venturing enthusiastically into the jungle to commit their daily atrocity. None of these men are the “boy next door,” unless that door leads into a lunatic asylum. The Vietnam War is unique, so the message runs, because huge numbers of veterans returned after their ghastly experiences with PTSD. Such a portrayal contains all the elements of a ceaseless soap opera: the “agony of Vietnam”; atrocities, futility and miscalculation in a foreign war; and when the troubled veterans return home, they are scorned and spurned. Indeed, there is even a disco version of this sorry tale, which portentously declared that 800,000 veterans are “still at war.”

All of this is the more extraordinary because about 85 per cent of Vietnam veterans served in the support arms and saw nothing more dangerous than the interior of an office. Yet PTSD is a controversial area. Memories of traumatic experiences are nurtured by psychotherapy, and might lead to compensation in a court of law. The debate over “recovered memory” many years later of child sexual abuse indicates how treacherous the ground is. Psychiatrists themselves are far from united on how PTSD develops and to what extent recollections of a traumatic experience lead to a precise disorder. Although Dean has written a book of uncommon intelligence, and handles his diverse themes skilfully, he perhaps does not advance his case by choosing Civil War veterans, rather than those of the Second World War, to contest the uniqueness of the Vietnam experience.

One can see why he selected it. The Civil War has a unique place in American annals: it is picturesque and splendid and is often re-enacted by dedicated buffs; there might be suffering but there is no “agony” here. Civil War veterans, it has been claimed, quickly readjusted to civil life, welcomed back by grateful citizens. Even in the defeated South, the achievements of Confederate veterans were sanctified in the legend of the “Lost Cause.” Dean’s careful research challenges this comforting picture. He makes effective use of the records of 291 Union veterans who are admitted to Indiana asylums after 1865. He stresses the sheer physical burden of Civil War soldiering (which involved 90 per cent of soldiers
in the combat arms), the likelihood of being wounded, or falling victim to disease. He shows that, after exposure to frenzied combat, Civil War soldiers sometimes exhibited symptoms resembling PTSD.

Perhaps this conclusion is not as noteworthy as Dean supposes, except within his contemporary context. His book is really two books in one with only a tenuous link between the dual elements. Civil War veterans are remote in time, and their contrasts with veterans of the 1970s are more striking than their similarities. There are obvious difficulties in comparing armies which expect soldiers to develop PTSD with those which did not even acknowledge it. Dean realizes this, but he sometimes forgets to take such differences into account. Occasionally, his discussion is excessively earnest and prone to special pleading. His belief that some 500,000 deserters were suffering from PTSD is based on no evidence, and terms like “it seems likely,” “probably,” “one wonders,” or “impossible to tell” litter his discussion. Dean’s statistical sample is too small to enable him to draw firm, general conclusions. Yet, though his account might not always persuade the specialist, his real target lies elsewhere. If he forces the purveyors of “instant” stereotypes of war and the veterans that serve in them to think about their glib assumptions, then he will have performed a signal service.

King’s College, London


Beneath the traditionalist surface of this book lie some interesting interpretations of George Washington’s generalship, the nature of the War of Independence in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, and some intriguing (though unanswered) questions about the effects of the Revolution on regional society. Mark V. Kwasny shows that historians have misunderstood Washington’s misgivings about local militia and therefore his military aims and conduct. While Washington bemoaned partisans’ propensities for deserting to plant crops and for occasionally fleeing battlefields, he also sometimes praised them and, moreover, used them extensively, increasingly, and largely successfully throughout the war, never seriously considering European-style exclusive reliance on regular forces.

The covetousness of state and continental powers for control of local militia, and Washington’s careful diplomacy when requesting use of them and when employing them, are the first signs of their importance. Another, also understated by historians, is their demonstrable usefulness in conflict. Mostly, Washington preferred militias to act autonomously in their own or neighbouring states, preventing the Continental Army from becoming overextended. He pragmatically seconded units to his regular forces for military and supplementary purposes when necessary, however. Whether autonomous or attached to regulars, partisans maintained order by policing Tories and protecting patriots, foraging for supplies, spying on, raiding, and generally harassing the enemy, and participating in full-scale battles. They made the middle region a theatre of continuous conflict from 1776 to 1783, contributing decisively to patriot victory, just as their more famous counterparts did in the South.
Reviews

The immensely detailed account of the planning and conduct of irregular warfare in the middle region, the bulk of the book, will delight military historians. Social historians who have lately taken interest in armies and war may be disappointed by the lack of analysis of relations between officers and men at the local and Continental levels, whether relations were or became characterized by democratic inclinations of ordinary militiamen, and whether this had any long-term social or political consequences. To be fair, though, Kwasny promises no such analysis and is certainly entitled to write a traditional military history if he so desires. However, if he is right that ordinary militiamen were vital to the outcome of the war, and that the war was more socially disruptive than hitherto realized, then this book suggests yet further possibilities for research in the already rich area of social–political analysis of the revolutionary middle region.

University of Wales, Swansea

STEVEN SARSON


This book is a comprehensive account of the relations between the United States and Japan, based on American and Japanese sources. Walter LaFeber, a well-known revisionist historian of the Cold War, examines one of the most controversial areas of US foreign relations of the twentieth century in his 12-chapter book. The story starts in 1853, when Commodore Matthew Perry forced Japan to open its markets to American traders, and ends with Clinton’s efforts to make Japan liberalise its trade with the United States. Throughout these 150 years, “the United States had been trying, it seemed forever, to turn Japan outward,” but when Japan did so in 1894–95, 1904–05, 1915–20, and 1931–45, its actions did not in any way commend themselves to the United States.

LaFeber identifies three sources of the clash between Japan and the United States. The first was over China: the two powers vied with each other over trade with, and spheres of influence of hegemony in, China. LaFeber takes 1931 (the outbreak of the Manchurian crisis) as the defining moment in the history of US–Japanese relations. Before that date, the United States had tried to integrate Japan into the “Western system on largely Western terms.” Thereafter, Japan adopted an increasingly independent and militant course, which appeared, in American eyes, to be a desperate effort to free itself from America’s leading strings. LaFeber compares this to a “slipknot”: “the more Japan struggled against it [dependence on the USA], the tighter it became.” In order to sunder the “slipknot” completely, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Another turning-point came in 1972 when Nixon dramatically achieved a rapprochement with Communist China, without any prior consultation with Japan. The incident shocked Tokyo. It “instantly dissipated much of the trust” which Japan had invested in Washington. Ever since, US–Japanese relations have centred on their mutual rivalry over China’s friendship and the penetration of its commercial markets.

LaFeber’s second theme is about the clash between “two different capitalist
systems.” This is a controversial subject and, as such, a more difficult question to analyse than their rivalry over China. Japan is a homogenous and consensus-driven society, whose economy is closely controlled by the government, while the United States is a multi-cultural society which, by contrast with its autarkic practices during the nineteenth century, prefers free markets and open competition. As LaFeber demonstrates, these contrasting approaches to trade are intertwined with the more complex differences between the two countries in terms of race, culture, and ideology. Both societies, of course, possess inner contradictions which further complicate the issue. According to LaFeber, the Japanese have long seen themselves as “a unique and superior people,” but this may be a means of disguising their deep-rooted sense of inferiority vis-à-vis the West. This inferiority complex was sometimes expressed in the form of anti-Western and anti-American sentiments, for example, by Konoe and Matsuoka, the two leading Japanese civilian politicians of the 1930s, who led Japan into challenging the West in 1941. It seems that this dual Japanese attitude towards the West persists today. LaFeber cites a statement by a Japanese executive working for McDonald’s: “If we eat hamburgers for a thousand years, we will become blond, and when we become blond – we can conquer the world.” The United States, while upholding Western values of democracy and liberalism, believes that its “exceptionalism” can be exported to other countries as a means of creating a peaceful world – the so-called universalist approach.

However, numerous post-war US–Japanese trade conflicts, especially over textiles, automobiles, and semiconductors, have often been intensified by disagreements over the history of the recent past. LaFeber suggests that Japan’s inability and/or unwillingness to accept responsibility for the war and the resulting atrocities between 1931 and 1945, has undermined, and will continue to undermine, the trust between the two countries which was supposed to have been established by the post-war US–Japanese alliance. It is difficult to understand why, in 1960, the Japanese Crown prince and princess visited Hawaii merely to attend the “centennial of the 1860 Japanese mission,” while the Royal Family completely ignored Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941. Recently, Prime Minister Murayama made the first official apology to those who suffered as a result of Japanese war-time aggression. Yet, Japanese cabinet ministers subsequently made a “pilgrimage to the Yasukuni Shrine to honour the Japanese soldiers” who died in the war, blatantly ignoring the prime minister’s apology for the horrors those soldiers inflicted during that war.

LaFeber’s last theme is the nature of US–Japanese partnership. Japan is a small but major economic power, whose security depends almost entirely on US protection, while the United States has been, and will remain, a global power which sees Asia only as “part of a larger opportunity.” The relationship is further conditioned by what appears to be irreconcilable disagreements over the recent past, trade practices, and China. Despite these difficulties, the relationship has not been completely undermined – indeed the security ties between the two countries have recently been reinforced. With the end of the Cold War, more Japanese now regard the Americans rather than the Russians as the “greatest threat” to them, while nearly one third of US respondents claim that they have “lost respect for Japan.” On the likely prospects for US–Japanese relations during the twenty-first
This massive book is a lively discussion of the often turbulent relations between the USA and Japan. I wish the author had discussed more about the nature of the US–Japanese alliance since 1951. Did these two powers consult each other regularly during the Gulf War to determine how their respective tasks should be divided during that war? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the bilateral alliance between the US and Japan, compared, say, with a collective security organisation like NATO? LaFeber’s work is perhaps the first vigorous effort to reassess the whole period of US–Japanese relations and will remain an excellent contribution to our knowledge of this subject for a long time.

King’s College, London

S AKI DO CK RILL


This collection of essays on America’s most important industrial union arises out of the Centennial Conference of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), held at the Pennsylvania State University in 1990. As such, it has a slightly celebratory feel to it. Its twenty-two contributions cover various aspects of the Mine Workers’ history – its institutional growth, its key leaders, technological change in the mining industry, occupational safety and disease, the role of women and minorities in the union, and recent events such as the titanic Pittston strike of 1989–90. Despite this broad scope, the book is something less than the “comprehensive” history its publisher claims. While an extremely useful volume that deserves a place on the shelves of every research library, this book, like so many collections of conference papers, is patchy and uneven.

The most provocative set of articles situate the UMWA in an international perspective. The best of these comparative pieces look to the example of British mining to illuminate some of the distinctive features of the American case. Issac Cohen compares the Pennsylvania and South Wales coal industries during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and offers some intriguing structural explanations for the persistence of violence and labour strife in the former and orderly collective bargaining in the latter. Editor John Laslett contributes a masterful essay on the way in which the two-party system in Britain and America shaped the political orientation of miners’ organisations in Illinois and Scotland between 1865 and 1924. And Canadian scholar David Frank broadens this international dimension in a finely argued examination of the experience of the UMWA’s District 26 in Nova Scotia in the first decades of this century. These are solid and, in some ways, pathbreaking articles that make this book a valuable addition to the growing literature on miners and mining around the world.

Likewise the essays on female miners represent new scholarship that significantly enriches our understanding of the mine workers’ experience. Marat Moore, a former editor of the Mine Workers Journal, draws upon a remarkable set of oral history interviews to document the increasing role of women in the coal
industry in the years since World War II. Examining the roots of male prejudice against female miners, the explosive growth of female employment in the last two decades, the changing family economy in the Appalachian fields, as well as the subjective dimension of women’s working lives underground, Moore’s article is a model of engaged oral history. It is complemented by Stephanie Booth’s piece on female activism in the southern Illinois coalfields during the Depression, although here the focus is on the role played by miners’ wives (and daughters) in the struggle between the breakaway Progressive Miners of America and the ruthless machine of John L. Lewis. Both of these articles succeed admirably in extending our understanding of the social and cultural spheres of mining history. Like the essays mentioned above, they mark this anthology as an important one.

The same cannot be said for the way in which this book handles the question of race and the UMWA. This is an issue which has received a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years. Yet rather than present a synthetic overview of the ongoing debate over the egalitarian practices of the miners’ union, or attempt to break new ground by commissioning articles based upon fresh research, editor Laslett has chosen to recycle older material. Thus Joe Trotter reprints a portion of his 1990 publication, *Coal, Class, and Color*; and Ronald Lewis likewise recycles an argument about the “social equality wedge” in Alabama that appeared a decade ago in his *Black Coal Miners in America*. This is a particularly unfortunate shortcoming, for in large measure it is the controversy over the role of African Americans within the UMWA and the nature of their relations with white native and immigrant workers that prompts labour historians to return time and again to the history of this industry and singular union. Moreover, the compelling question which comprises the book’s subtitle can only be answered if the issue of race takes centre stage.

Previously published material appears elsewhere in this collection, but without ill effect. Readers familiar with US labour history will recognise Price Fishback’s article on company towns from his book on the economic welfare of bituminous coal miners, *Soft Coal, Hard Choices* (1993); and Keith Dix’s treatment of mechanisation and workplace control in the hand-loading era is reproduced virtually verbatim from his *What’s a Coal Miner to Do?* (1988). Other contributions are distillations of recent monographs, including Robert Zieger’s pithy portrait of John L. Lewis and Alan Derickson’s essay on the fight against respiratory diseases.

There is little doubt that, for many years to come, study of the United Mine Workers will begin with this collection. Indeed, one wishes that several other important unions – the AFL’s Teamsters and Machinists, or the CIO’s Steel-workers, for instance – were so well serviced by such high-quality scholarship. Yet historians still will have to look elsewhere for important parts of the UMWA’s history. As valuable as this book is, it is hardly the last word on mining or miners.

*University College London*  

RICK HALPERN
Acute argument, compression, and judicious selection are among the refreshing characteristics of this compact study. If the reader is left speculating over poems not considered and the questions they might have generated, then this is a positive effect of a book that thrives on its self-restrictions and expert control. There are three chapters devoted, more or less, to William Carlos Williams (including the introduction) and a further three the focuses of which, respectively, are Denise Levertov, Frank O’Hara, and George Oppen. Each of these poets is discussed in terms of a carefully articulated, historically responsive model of influence, reaction, and revision.

Williams is seen as having a commitment both to “experimentalism” and the “destruction of traditional forms,” and to the linguistic registration of “social difference.” The first concern gives rise to what John Lowney calls “the poetics of descent” and the second to “the poetics of dissent”; although much of the book necessarily involves the intersection of the two. Williams’s “experimental forms contest not only the hegemony of the English literary tradition in American culture” but also “the central position of the New England past for American national identity.” Lowney draws on Bakhtin, without really needing the avatar, to postulate that Williams “dissents” from “any grounds for defining an American poetic language” in ways “that outlaw the heteroglossia of speech types.” The contention is that the poems “incorporate Bakhtin’s ‘novelistic hybrid’” as they insist on a “localist avant-gardism” which “correlates indigenous diction and forms with the rejection of European aesthetic models.”

In a potentially casuistical manœuvre which, ultimately, manages not to succumb to its own ingenuity, Lowney believes that a significant paradox “informs the reception and transformation of Williams’s poetics by postwar open-form poets”: this, transposing what Williams had said about Whitman, is the notion that “the only way to write like Williams is to write unlike Williams.” Levertov, O’Hara, and Oppen, Lowney avers, extend Williams’s “principles of poetic language and form while challenging the American and masculinist assumptions of his stance.” There is a whiff of modishness, however, as these required broadsides are delivered. The totalization of things “American” runs counter to the “heteroglossia” elsewhere detected; and Williams’s “masculinist assumptions” are neither central to the book nor convincingly substantiated. This weakens Lowney’s approach, especially to Levertov and O’Hara. These two, together with Oppen, “represent a different theoretical aspect of intertextuality.” Levertov’s is the “gender politics of literary affiliation,” whereas O’Hara’s is the “postmodern criticism of avant-gardism”; Oppen’s, for Lowney, is a “leftist revision of Williams’s populist stance.” This book has little difficulty in suggesting, if a little obviously, that Levertov writes as a woman; but, less easily, Lowney seeks to map her disavowal of Williams’s threat to her “autonomous female creativity.” Similarly, and as that nervous “suggests” implies, there is little scope here for more than a nominal engagement with O’Hara’s problematic same-sex orientations: “the parodic tone” (of “Poem Read
at Joan Mitchell’s”) suggests O’Hara’s critique of Williams’s “masculinist stance” (Lowney has a tendency to overwork the catch-all proclivities of “stance”). These skirmishes with gender come close to miring the logic of Lowney’s architecture.

Lowney is acutely sensitive to the drama implied in allegiances to a “tradition of the avant-garde.” His concentration, throughout, is on what he identifies as “two periods in which crucial changes in American cultural identity impelled debates on the national canon.” The “early modernist period during and after World War I…marks Williams’s emergence as an avant-garde writer at a time of contested literary nationalism”; subsequently, during the 1950s and 1960s, constructions of Williams’s poetics informed the poetry “anthology wars” and the debate about the “meaning of modernism.” George Oppen’s *The Materials* (1962) and *This in Which* (1965) disclose, for Lowney, a “revision of Williams’s populist stance,” a revision that “compels a reexamination of both the objectivist movement of the 1930s” and “its subsequent postwar absence from literary history.” Oppen’s strategies, especially the offering of “multiple interpretations simultaneously,” powerfully subvert “the dominant us/them mentality of cold-war American culture.”

In targeting Williams and the intertextual provocations of his influence, itself determined in complex ways, together with the politics of canon formation, masculinity, American identity, and the Cold War, Lowney establishes a heavy agenda. The book succeeds not least because it rarely argues stridently. Like the best of the poets he shrewdly reads, John Lowney opens up the issues.

*Kyushu University, Japan*  

PETER RAWLINGS


*Liberian Dreams* renders accessible, for the “first time” since the reprints of the 1960s, four documents written by African American men, relating to the voyage of the *Isla de Cuba* from New York to the West African Republic of Liberia in 1853. These are significant in cataloguing a “variety of heroism,” demonstrating determined efforts by “free” African Americans to gain control of their lives in the ante-bellum period. Brief titles and authors are: *The Looking Glass* by Daniel H. Peterson (1854); *Four Months in Liberia* by William Nesbit, complete with an introduction by Martin R. Delany (1855); *Four Years in Liberia* by Samuel Williams (1857); and, finally, *Five Letters on Liberian Colonization* by Augustus Washington (1851–63). These diversely opinionated and narrated texts are accompanied by a preface (significant for Moses’s defensive posturing, “I am definitely not a black separatist”), and general introduction. This latter offers useful and detailed (in careful sourcing) contextual information on the movement, as well as providing good biographical and interpretative material on the documents selected.

Restricting his analysis almost exclusively to content, however, Moses’s readings of these texts are deeply problematic. He neglects to consider the
powerful implications, for the ultimate shaping of authorial voice and ideological positioning, of specific forums (politically charged journals, newspapers, and pamphlets), and sources of funding (whether from an individual, abolitionist or colonisation organisation). For example, there are clearly links between Peterson’s eulogistic narrative and the fact that its research was funded by the American Colonization Society. Similarly, the two most interesting letters by Washington (expressing dichotomous views) found contrasting publishing venues. The letter in favour of colonization practices appeared in *African Repository* (the journal of the movement), while that which was against, in sinister allusions to the “dark chapter that has never been written” (a black historical absence which tormented Frederick Douglass himself in his novella, *The Heroic Slave* in 1853), made its debut in *Frederick Douglass Paper*. Thus Peterson’s statement, “I feel myself bound,” and his metaphor of the “little bird” (set free by the emigrants on their trip only to die soon after), no less than Washington, in his focus on a country offering African Americans “nothing but chains,” becomes of much greater significance in understanding a radical voice distorted by contextual constraints. Similarly fraught with complexities of narrative sincerity, Nesbit’s and Williams’s texts (linked intertextually both by choice of title, *Four Months* and *Four Years*, and internal evidence, in Williams’s appended “Answer”), reveal their fundamentally conservative impetus (regardless of Nesbit’s avowed radicalism). Their interest was in securing the approval of a white audience: as demonstrated by their reiterated internalisation of structures for “Christianising” and “civilising” the native population of Liberia.

This collection furnishes insight, not only into the “Back-to-Africa” movement, but also concerning questions of narrative genre. Each writer variously negotiates white structures of writing, often partaking of the oral, (including the slave narrative, anthropological writing, oratorical invective, the sermon, and the epistolary form). Taken together, they provide an excellent way into understanding multifarious (primarily ironical) black processes of signification within a tradition of white nineteenth-century literature.


In 1934, in a letter to a young admirer, Hamlin Garland wistfully compared his career with that of his old friend, William Dean Howells: “‘I have outlived my vogue,’ he said and it was a sad moment for me. He had a vogue, I have never enjoyed a boom much less a vogue, but I am in the midst of finding out that I am an old fellow of seventy four and that people are no longer interested in what I say or do or write.” Garland’s melancholy old age, during which he became progressively alienated both from the formal experiments of contemporary literature and what he saw as its regressive pornographic tendencies, prompted some of the most moving letters collected in this handsome edition of his selected letters. The University of Nebraska Press and the editors have served Garland’s
memory well in the production of this volume which should stand as the definitive collection of the correspondence of one of America’s most significant local colourists.

Hamlin Garland is remembered today largely for two of his forty books: his fictional representation of farming life in the Midwest in *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891) and his first volume of autobiography, *Son of the Middle Border* (1917). A disciple of Whitman, and a lifelong crusader for the development of a truly American and democratic art, Garland distanced himself from what he saw as the depravity of European realism by calling for the development of “veritism,” a more wholesome variety of literary transcription of the artist’s perception of the real which, in his view, corresponded more faithfully to the experience of the common man and woman in America. Garland’s letters, from his rather sycophantic and idealistic youth to his disappointed old age, chart the success of his pursuit of this vision. This collection is fascinating in the record it provides of a writer finding his voice and deploying it in the service of his beloved cause. But it is also valuable as a record of a writer’s all too common professional exasperation as Garland wrangles, over the decades, with publishers and editors, agents and critics over the publication and reception of his writing. Garland’s letters to notable writers from Whitman to Sinclair Lewis provide another strand of interest in the collection, as does his correspondence covering a number of sometimes unfortunate passions, such as his many letters to Theodore Roosevelt regarding the renaming of Native Americans, and those touching on his long-term psychic interests which culminate in an obsession with a collection of mystic crosses in the last years of his life. Garland the husband and father, Garland the literary committee man, and Garland the conservationist are also represented in this collection which not only serves as a fine record of Garland’s life, but works well as a part of the history of the development of a modern American cultural identity.

*University of the West of England*

KATE FULLBROOK


This pathbreaking study of a British–American slave society analyses the structures and internal dynamics of a world in which both masters and slaves were also imperial subjects. The coexistence of slavery and colonialism in the pre-Revolutionary South has tended to be accepted without question by historians of the southern colonies and of early American slavery. Robert Olwell breaks new ground by demonstrating how the eighteenth-century South’s status as *colonies* influenced the development of slavery and also how the presence of slavery altered English ideas and institutions within a colonial setting. Olwell examines the complex relations among masters, slaves, metropolitan institutions, officials, and ideas in the South Carolina low country from the end of the Stono Rebellion through the turmoil of the American Revolution. He identifies an ongoing “tug-of-war” between masterly power and slave resistance in four key sites of the
colonial social order: the criminal law and the slave court; conversion and communion in the established church; market relations and the market-place; and patriarchy and the plantation great house.

Everything in colonial South Carolina was determined largely from British precedents. This was much more than playful mimicry by displaced English gentlemen; Old World precedents were carefully adapted to meet the peculiar demands of a semi-tropical plantation society which relied on unfree labour. This was particularly evident in the development of the colony’s forms of domination (or “culture of power”). The colonial assembly drew directly from English law to construct a slave code which enforced a strict racial hierarchy and sought to ensure that the colony’s enslaved workers were “usefully and constantly employed.” Selected slaves were indoctrinated by their masters in the Anglican faith in order to prevent the emergence of a dangerously monolithic and hostile slave community. To this same end, many planters allowed their chattels limited access to the market through the sale of garden produce. In each arena, however, slaves sought to use these institutions to suit their own ends. Those slaves allowed the “privilege” of Anglicanism, for example, did not always become loyal intermediaries and supporters of the social order. Some rejected the subordinate and submissive implications of Christian doctrine and took their own subversive message to the slave community. “Insolent” and “abusive” slave women came to dominate proceedings in the market-place at the centre of the slave society’s metropolis, Charles Town, providing a very public challenge to white authority. In every aspect of life, Olwell demonstrates how slaves used institutions which were designed to oppress them in ways which would allow them a measure of control over their daily lives.

In his final chapter, Olwell views colonial slave society during the chaos of the American Revolution and closes by assessing the degree of British influence in South Carolina after 1782. In the democratic republic of the United States, slavery would come to be regarded as a “peculiar institution,” but Masters, Slaves, and Subjects demonstrates that for most of the eighteenth century it was an integral and seldom questioned part of the British empire.

Jesus College, Cambridge

SEAN MOONEY


Researching in the field of jazz studies is made so much easier by comprehensive collections such as this. Robert O’Meally gathers together some of the best post-war writing on the interrelation of jazz and American society into one fat volume (35 essays in all). He uses these essays to discuss a wide range of forms which are influenced by jazz, from literature through architecture to dance, sculpture, photography and painting. That I can think of at least another book full of important contributions he is unable to utilise shows just how difficult his choice was. He tends to be biased against the Free Jazz experiment in his choice of texts ignoring such valuable essays as those by Larry Neal, Frank Kofsky, Kimberly
Benston and A. B. Spelman or any of the work of the incisive British critic Val Wilmer. The book is, in fact, relentlessly American, which means there is little reference to jazz’s world role, in the Paris of the twenties or as liberation music in Eastern Europe, Nazi Germany or indeed South Africa. A section on this would have revealed jazz’s duality as a prime mover in Americanisation at the same time as having revolutionary potential. I feel that a “jazz and politics” section would have been useful to bring together some of the outstanding writing on these issues which are of course relevant to American Culture in its widest transatlantic dimensions.

Theoretical approaches are rather thin on the ground, too, and Ingrid Monson’s wonderfully astute work on jazz and conversation which uses Henry Louis Gates’s theory of Signifyin(g) is a stark omission, as is a section from Paul Berliner’s voluminous work on the multifarious function of improvisation. Gems here, though, include Gerard Early’s wonderful essay on the intersection of black and white in early jazz, Stanley Crouch’s astute correlation of jazz and American democracy read through the Constitution, Eric Lott’s wonderful materialist reading of the Bebop revolution and Scott Devaux’s stunning deconstruction of jazz historiography. Inspired links are made throughout between different forms so that Charlie Chaplin’s resilience and improvisation, New York’s “air-mindedness” and Michael Jordan’s “hand time” are all seen as products of a jazz cadence which underpins much of American culture. As O’Meally says in his introduction: “The predominance of the jazz factor may make it the master trope of the twentieth century.”

University of Central Lancashire


Theodor Dreiser has typically been viewed by critics as a primary representative of American Naturalism. Novels such as *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *An American Tragedy* (1925), according to this view, dramatise the individual’s determination by forces – hereditary and environmental – beyond his or her control. Paul A. Orlov’s exhaustive study of *An American Tragedy* is an attempt to counter this unproblematically naturalistic reading of Dreiser, arguing that, whilst the novel’s premises are apparently naturalistic, close textual reading reveals “an animaturalistic statement about the self’s intrinsic importance.”

The book is divided into two parts, the first of which will no doubt prove useful to students and teachers of the text, providing as it does a chronology of Dreiser’s life and work, along with brief accounts of the historical context and critical reception of the novel, as well as a consideration of its place in the wider Dreiser corpus. The substantial critical work of the book, however, is to be found in its second part. Orlov begins his reading of the novel by tracing the extent of the author’s debt to naturalistic ideas, which he acknowledges to be considerable. He shows the influence of Balzac’s realism and Herbert Spencer’s mechanistic sociology on the author’s thought, as well as, interestingly, Jacques Loeb’s
physiological psychology. The latter’s view of the “heliotropic instinct” in insects and animals, which impels them blindly toward “light-like goals,” is reproduced in Dreiser’s “psychological treatment of individual lives.” Having established the novel’s naturalistic currents, however, Orlov goes on to excavate those currents of antinaturalism which he believes to be more definitive of its outlook on the self. These take two main forms. Firstly, shadowing Dreiser’s naturalistic perspective is an equally strong current of romanticism, manifest in his compassion for his characters and an inchoate yearning for beauty. The latter tendency is illustrated by the semi-mystical awe with which Clyde Griffiths invests material objects, evidence for Orlov of a displaced religious impulse. The second manifestation of antinaturalism Orlov locates in the latter part of the novel, which reads the climactic “murder” plot and episode not simply as an index of Clyde’s subservience to sexual and material lust, but as a complex interpenetration of determinism and moral will: “the novel suggests that the self’s desires are in some sense creative and not simply responses dictated from outside by inscrutable forces.”

The first problem with Orlov’s approach is that he provides neither compelling scholarly evidence nor any kind of theoretical framework to bolster his “antinaturalistic” reading, relying instead on imprecise allusions to an “authentic self” which “modernity” “distorts.” There is no sustained attempt to define what this authentic self consists in, other than the displaced religious impulse invested in materialism, which can be as easily read as illustrative of the inauthenticity of the Dreiserian self. The second problem is the narrowness of the book’s range of reference, itself expressive of its outdated conception of criticism as the task of simply offering alternative interpretations of individual texts. The Tragedy is barely situated in the context of the Dreiser corpus, let alone the broader literary, intellectual and cultural history of the twenties, and a brief glance at the bibliography suggests research has consisted largely in reading articles and monographs on the novel. Anyone doing serious work on the Tragedy, scholarly or pedagogic, is likely to find its argument worth attention. Whether such an argument warrants an entire monograph, however, may be questioned even by serious Dreiser specialists.

Goldsmiths College, University of London

JOSH COHEN


In The Other Henry James, John Carlos Rowe aims to revitalise our understanding of James’s fiction by shifting attention from questions of “difficulty” and literary style to his engagement with the changing gender structures and sexual roles of his age. Drawing on feminist ideas, gay studies and queer theory, Rowe, who has previously considered James’s relevance to critical theory in The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James (1984), hopes to sketch a James who is more readable, more teachable and more relevant to our times. He succeeds in many ways. Rowe’s James is appealingly modern – he is even more baffled by the complex
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Rowe wisely avoids too much biographical speculation about James’s own homosexual impulses. This area has already been tentatively mapped by, for example, Fred Kaplan, to whose Henry James: The imagination of Genius (1992) Rowe refers, and has been pushed to extremes by Sheldon Novick. Instead, Rowe’s emphasis is firmly on gender issues and sexual innuendo in James’s writings, in particular in his relatively neglected fiction: a few “minor” short stories, The American, The Tragic Muse, What Maisie Knew and In the Cage. Rowe’s reading is mostly developmental. He traces a shift from James’s 1870s work, which is so firmly entrenched in patriarchal ideology that it fails to conceive of any viable alternatives, to an increasing openness to more flexible sexual identities in the fiction from the early 1890s onwards.

One of the most intriguing readings is his account of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls “homosexual panic” in two stories of the 1890s, “The Middle Years” and “The Death of the Lion.” In both stories, the homoerotic tension between an older male artist and his young admirer is aestheticised and deflected away from carnal passion. Rowe’s readings can be rather digressive, constantly postponing their own fulfilment by venturing down theoretical sidestreets, but he makes his point clearly enough here, reimagining two rather dry stories as hotbeds of suppressed desire. His accounts of gender instability in What Maisie Knew and of female independence through the forces of modernity in In the Cage work even better; they are well sustained, and contain some revealing connections with autobiographical events.

Rowe’s strength is the equal ease with which he navigates the waters of critical theory and James’s œuvre, but one does occasionally wish that he would focus more consistently on the issue at hand. The (interesting) section on race in What Maisie Knew is only tenuously linked with his main project of rereading gender and sexuality in James’s work. Rowe’s concluding comments about the educational implications of his approach are more to the point, explaining in practical terms how his ideas could be used. Whether or not one accepts his thesis that James’s writings are homosexually charged and test the boundaries of traditional gender roles, which is perhaps not completely new to a reader who is attuned to the emotional perplexities of the Jamesean text, his book certainly makes one hunger for the actual works. Let us hope that he achieves his aim of tempting more young readers back to James, to work it out for themselves.

University College London

MADELEINE MINSON


The psychological imperatives of external validation have rarely been so well expressed and explained (in the American colonial context) as in Rozbicki’s concise and clinical exploration of the theme of cultural legitimization. Rozbicki opens by asking the sort of questions that have troubled American historians for
decades: what use in the coffeehouses of Williamsburg would William Byrd II have had for his diligently practical Greek and Hebrew? Why did Jefferson extol simplicity and egalitarianism while putting so much energy into living like a European aristocrat, complete with sophisticated European paintings of which sixty-three were shipped to Monticello following his stay in France? Why would Washington, leader of the revolt against monarchic corruption and a symbol of republican virtue, become involved in obtaining armorial bearings from the Herald’s College in London? And why would Benjamin Franklin, not a landowner but a practical businessman, laud virtue and condemn the corruption of commerce? What unfolds is a deeply layered analysis of the cultural context that both these icons and their lesser brethren operated within and the identification of the contemporary criteria of what constituted gentility. It is, as the author claims, “not a narrative, causal account of the pursuit of the European genteel model by the provincial elites but a rather modest and rigidly circumscribed discussion of how and why certain select facets of this model made sense to them ... and ... how transnational gentility, with its ethos and aesthetics, functioned in the context of colonial provincialism,” and it is precisely for this reason that the work succeeds where more ambitious scholars might have failed by overextending their reach. An example of this is the way Rozbicki articulates the link between the construction of a provincial elite based on their sense of gentility and their providing a “cultural catalyst and intellectual resource for revolutionary ideology.” The fact is that there could not have been one without the other. The fundamental character of the struggle for independence had well established roots in the rich moist soil of an increasingly secure cultural and national identity which had been nurtured by some of the very gentlemen who framed the constitution of the early republic. This is a stimulating and thought-provoking piece which deserves the attention of serious scholars.

University of Nottingham

JEFFREY BROWN


In her new critical study of Tennessee Williams’ later plays, Annette Saddik suggests that the playwright’s reputation has less to do with his actual achievements, than with the assumptions and biases of his critics. She charts the decline from the pinnacle of his career when he was viewed as “America’s greatest living playwright” to his last plays of the 1970s, which the critics wrote off as weakened by sentimentality and over-reliant on the influences of Beckett, Albee and Pinter.

Saddik’s premise is that the critics accepted Williams’ work only while it stayed within the safe limits of Aristotelian structure, abandoning it when it moved towards a Pirandellian pattern with the drama of the 1960s. She pays attention to Williams’ growing attraction to antirealist techniques, which failed to endear him to his critics, and to his belief that “sometimes the truth is more accessible when you ignore realism.” Saddik creates a sympathetic portrait of Williams who, she
suggests, was thwarted at every turn by his critics. They attacked his antirealist plays as “rambling discourses with little or no movement toward a climax” and yet also rejected his attempts to placate them with a return to realism in plays such as *Vieux Carré*, which they described as self-indulgent and sentimental.

If criticism can be made of Saddik’s professionally researched and interesting study it is that it does not do what the title proclaims it will do. Only two of her five chapters deal with contemporary critical responses to Williams’ work, with the rest of her book being used to address antirealist tendencies in his critically acclaimed plays and to offer a thorough analysis of the experimental nature of his last work. On one or two occasions she does seem to stray unnecessarily far from her main focus, spending a considerable time on the early reception of the plays of Pinter and Beckett, which does not always cast further light on Williams’ own drama. At times Saddik is also highly subjective in her readings of Williams’ work, describing *The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* as “a structural mess with little merit,” a view which I am sure that a number of critics would want to dispute. The study does contain some excellent and original analysis however, including a particularly useful comparison between Williams’ style and that of Thornton Wilder, which will make this text a valuable one for scholars of Williams’ late work.

*Suffolk College*

**Kate Rhodes**


This is a valuable collection of essays, and Stanley’s introduction is a valuable essay in itself since she situates “women of color” as a category and their writing as a feminist script within the “grand narrative” of American feminism in which “first wave” women of color critique the “second wave” of the white feminist movement. She provides a critical overview of literature and criticism from the 1960s to the 1990s and includes the usual four groups of “women of color” (African Americans, Native Americans, Chicana and Asian Americans) in her survey. My only criticism involves a wish that Stanley might have included a wider range of community groups, what Chandra Mohanty has called “new immigrant groups” (Arabs and South East Asians, for example) in her politicised definition of “women of color.”

Stanley divides the volume into three sections which focus primarily on theoretical engagements, issues of gender, class, race and sexuality and finally reconfigurations of theory in literature. The most useful essays for critics in the field occur in the first section where multiple and enabling theoretical premises and debates are explored and established. Each of the writers interrogates the cultural basis and biases of the critical paradigms they employ; Kimberly N. Brown, for example, assesses the predominance of poststructuralist theorising in African American literary criticism (Gates and Baker versus Christina and Joyce) and Donna Espinoza discusses what she reads as a dialogic encounter between Norma Alarcón, Diana Fuss and Judith Butler on situatedness and multiplicity
Reviews in the realm of the social. Renee Moore Bredin’s essay, “Theory in the Mirror,” in the second section, examines how Native American writers critique Euro-American constructions of white racial identity through what she terms an enactment of “guerrilla ethnography” and, in the final section, Cecilia Rodríguez Milanés provides an example of autobiographical criticism as testimonio which pushes out the boundaries of traditionally academic discourse.

In each section, the essays are carefully arranged to promote dialogue and debate, to record “part of an ongoing conversation that is multiple, hybrid and ever evolving.” This book exemplifies the burgeoning scholarship in this academic field in the 1990s; it develops ideas explored in Zinn and Dill’s Women of Color in U.S. Society (1994) and is indebted to the groundbreaking work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Chandra Mohanty among others. In seminars, this selection of fourteen essays will support courses which focus on anthologies like Anzaldúa’s Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras (1990) which underpin the kind of work Stanley does here, continuing the project to decolonise white feminist paradigms for the purpose of coalition building and acknowledging the multiple subject positions within women’s cultural studies.

University of Nottingham

SHARON MONTEITH


This collection of essays by Madeleine Stern (with brief contributions by two others) sketches the authors’ lifetime preoccupation with Louisa May Alcott; from research undertaken in the 1940s for Stern’s biography (1950), through the discovery and reprinting of Alcott’s anonymous and pseudonymous thrillers (1974), to more recent (at times esoteric) work, such as that which has produced one of the best, and certainly most intriguingly titled, chapters in the book; “Louisa May Alcott Had Her Head Examined” (1995). Stern proposes that what unites these essays is an interest in Alcott’s “professionalism” – a quality which is inadequately defined, and which tends to be used as a synonym for prolificity. However, we are clearly in the presence of a passionate and knowledgeable Alcott scholar, and, when she admonishes us to share “the thrill of the chase, the joy of the find, and palpitations throughout,” we can do little more than hang on to her coat tails and enjoy the ride.

The apparent historical and biographical origins of Little Women, Alcott’s relationship with the women’s suffrage and anti-slavery movements, and her role in contemporary periodical publishing, are well-defined. The latter particularly so, ironically rendering Stern’s comment on Will’s Wonder Book (that “its history is more interesting than its contents”) applicable to many of the other works she mentions. Stern’s selection of letters to reprint is pertinent, including, for example, Alcott’s complaint on attempting new fictional forms; “I shall try to
have it unlike the others if possible, but the dears will cling to the Little Women style.” However, this, along with many of the other letters and each of the discrete chapters, has already been published elsewhere. The lack of new material will be a disappointment to Alcott students. A further unfortunate consequence of this coralling of essays from various sources and decades is that there are regrettable duplications of substance and style (for example, comments about the influence of Alcott’s adolescent play-acting on her later fiction, or descriptions of her: “[Alcott] sat at her desk, an old green and red party wrap draped round her as a ‘glory cloak,’ dipped her pen into gall, and produced a succession of shockers”). More judicious editing would have corrected this and would also, perhaps, have improved the sequence of the chapters, which sees the best introductory essay (“Louisa May Alcott at 150”) relegated to the end of the book.

Barbara Wiedemann combines thematic and chronological approaches to the neglected author Josephine Herbst’s even-more neglected short fiction. Wiedemann’s somewhat schematic approach is to take each story in turn (grouped by decade), indicate its origins (often in Herbst’s own experience), its main themes (“secrets” or “lack of communication”) and her understanding of its wider significance (for example, in questioning the “roles of art and the artist” or as “an exploration of gender roles.” As groundwork, this is thorough and enlightening, but it lacks the real, analytical engagement with the texts which a study longer than this introduction of 156 pages might have allowed.

Wiedemann is at her best when, if not analysing, at least contextualising. She draws on an impressive range of references to inform her discussion of the relationship between Herbst’s work and that of other writers of her period (Hemingway, Katherine Anne Porter), and of the impact of political developments, particularly in the 1930s (“The Radical Years”) and 1940s (“Years of Retrenchment”). While Wiedemann is good on the “Times” of her subtitle, she is less sure on the “Life.” She is at pains to demonstrate where fictional elements derive from Herbst’s biography; however, her account lacks a sense of Herbst’s personality (such as the kindness and courage so warmly described by Ben Cheever in his edition of his father’s letters (1988). Wiedemann closes with a somewhat depressing summary of how little of Herbst’s work remains in print. It is a mark of the success of her study that its informative insights may motivate the reader to discover Herbst’s stories afresh – although bibliographical skills to match Madeleine Stern’s may be required to trace them.

Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education


Mary M. Stolberg’s account of George Edwards’s term as Detroit Police Commissioner between 1962 and 1963 is based on his unpublished memoirs, supplemented by interviews and the author’s research in manuscript collections,
public records and newspapers. Stolberg’s highly favourable interpretation centres on Edwards’s advocacy of an integrated, well-paid, well-trained police force, community policing, and fairness in law enforcement. She praises the commissioner for his willingness to confront malcontents within the police hierarchy and organized crime.

Clearly in sympathy with Edwards’s liberal intentions, Stolberg, despite her efforts, does not present a convincing case for his effectiveness. She claims that, because of his work, crime fell in 1963, but if, as Edwards himself believed, crime arose from poverty and despair it was hardly within his power to address such entrenched problems. Stolberg justifiably praises Edwards for his sensitive handling of a march led by Martin Luther King, Jr., and a mass meeting of Black Muslims addressed by Malcolm X. She credits him with achieving his aim of preventing a race riot, but, since there is no evidence that a riot was ever likely or imminent during his administration, her assertion cannot be proved.

Edwards’s attempts to end police brutality, harassment, and falsification of evidence, particularly against African Americans, won praise from local black leaders. Reported incidents of police brutality declined. With some success, Edwards ordered his officers to treat the public politely. Nevertheless, he faced hostility and defiance at all levels of the police department. High-ranking officers forced an acquittal in an internal trial of a brutality case, with Edwards as the lone dissenter. The commissioner also secured only minimal advances in minority recruitment and promotion.

The theme of good intentions but disappointing results also dogged Edwards’s pursuit of the Mafia. He secured the arrest of Detroit boss Anthony Giacalone for bribing police officers, but the trial ended in a not guilty verdict. Despite his public support for civil liberties, Edwards infringed them when, protected by immunity as a witness, he named suspects in testimony before a US Senate committee investigation of organized crime.

Edwards’s immediate successors abandoned his reform efforts. Although Stolberg concedes that “he did not leave a long-term legacy,” she argues that, in the aftermath of Detroit’s riot in 1967, city officials implemented much of Edwards’s reform agenda and, more dubiously, that his ideas pervaded the thinking of America’s police chiefs in the early 1990s.

University of Derby

Mark Newman


Sylvia Plath’s life and writing have generated such a colossal amount of critical material that it seems anything worth saying about her must surely already have been said. Al Strangeways, however, makes a stimulating contribution to the area of “Plath studies” and her book illustrates the continuing significance of the issues which Plath’s writing raises.

Plath has frequently been characterised as a poet of emotional and political
extremes and her poetry, more than most, has been viewed in terms of her turbulent personal life. Strangeways seeks to redress this imbalance by contextualising Plath’s poetry in relation to her academic and intellectual background. Using Harold Bloom’s theory of anxieties of influence, Strangeways argues that in order to understand Plath’s poetry one must explore her “literary family.” This is a formidable task, given the range of different authors who influenced Plath’s poetry, but Strangeways argues persuasively for the importance of the Romantics in Plath’s writing. She focuses on William Blake, Thomas De Quincey, Emily Bronte and D. H. Lawrence as significant influences, particularly in terms of the way Plath struggles both consciously and unconsciously to find a balance between the subjective and the objective and between intellect and emotion. This conflict is particularly significant given the accusations of many critics that Plath appropriates the horrors of Auschwitz and Hiroshima unjustifiably, to represent her own personal dramas. Plath’s awareness of history and politics was long-standing rather than solely a product of her late poetry and as Strangeways points out can be found in her journals, letters, academic essays and in her early poetry. Like Jacqueline Rose, Strangeways argues that the personal is political, although she takes issue with Rose’s strategy of moving away from Plath’s life and reading her in “abstract” terms, purely at the level of fantasy.

Strangeways attacks the problem of the extreme pathologising of Plath which has been perpetrated by several psychoanalytic critics. She emphasises Plath’s own interest in psychoanalysis as a “tool for writing about ‘real things,’” and as a way of exploring her “family romance.” Strangeways concludes that Plath is most crucially concerned with transcendence and memory and that neither of these was unproblematic for her. Transcendence of the personal and physical which seems to be the driving force of so many of the “Ariel” poems also exists in tension with the moral responsibility of cultural remembrance. Strangeway’s book is valuable for the way it takes the tensions and ambiguities of Plath’s poetry into account and demonstrates that Plath continues to be a source of lively and illuminating critical discussion.

University of Warwick

LUCY FRANK


Turley’s anthology sets out 181 “primary sources” from Whitaker (1613) to Halsey (1987), in three lavishly produced hardback volumes. Protestantism is strong, with sections on The Colonist as Chosen People, The Covenant People, The Great Awakening, The Second Great Awakening, and Modern Evangelism. Catholicism makes an appearance, but only in vol. 3 under New Immigrants: Catholicism – perhaps losing sight of earlier Catholic settings like Maryland. Amidst valuable entries on Poles and Italians, the more significant Irish-American Catholic community is underplayed. Eastern Orthodoxy, in its Greek and Russian
immigrant waves is absent. There is interesting material from heterodox Christian sects like the Shakers, but others like the Amish community, or the millenarian Jehovah's Witnesses are rather overlooked. While nineteenth-century Mormonism does appear in vol. 2, as an "American" phenomenon it deserves more coverage.


There are some weaker areas. Native American Religion attracts just four entries in vol. 2. Moreover, these entries are all outsider testimonies. Black Elk comes to mind as the type of Native American Indian figure that could have provided such insider authenticity. Further afield, the sections on Eastern Religions in America range from Kawakami (1911) to Cox (1977). Yet there is a relatively long gap between Watts/Mercer in 1961 and Cox's academic musings in 1977, which misses out the 1960s counterculture explosion, and does not bring in the problems of authority that faced Eastern traditions in the 1980s. Still, any anthology involves selections and thereby inherent limitations. Its strengths outweigh the weaknesses and so the trilogy is to be recommended – though its cost of £22.5 puts it out of the reach of students, many academics, but not libraries.

Brunel University

DAVID A. SCOTT


Jenny Bourne Whal's book presents us with a new way in which to view the relationship between slavery and the legal system of the ante-bellum South. Applying the same neo-classical economic tools used to assess the impact of modern public policy, Wahl is successful in distilling nearly 11,000 court cases from both federal and state courts into a clearly written, accessible monograph. Her book addresses a wide scope of topics including the hiring of slaves, the social control of slaves, and the physical treatment of slaves by their owners and overseers. Her overarching thesis is that the southern courts acted in an economically efficient manner, thereby reinforcing and preserving the southern way of life.
Echoing Nobel Laureate Ronald Coase and other policy-minded economists, Whal posits that court rulings were “efficient” if they reduced social costs on two levels. First, efficient decisions tended to lower the costs of conflict resolution. Whal demonstrates that southern judges tended to fulfill this requirement by ruling in such a way as to encourage individuals to use private contracts to prevent and resolve disputes. On a second level, efficient court rulings also tended to encourage behavior that limited the costs for resolving and avoiding actual and potential conflicts. For example, those who hired-out their slaves faced higher monitoring costs than the hirer did. With the slave off the owner’s property, it was expensive to observe the care taken for the slave’s well-being. Whal reasons that this asymmetry in the comparative ease of monitoring work explains why southern judges usually sided with the owner when he or she complained that his/her slave was injured while performing tasks that were not clearly outlined in the work contract. Although judges may have viewed their decisions in terms of “fairness” or legal doctrine, and not as a micro-economic cost/benefit model, Whal argues that most outcomes nevertheless tended to be economically efficient and buttressed the slave system of labour.

A point Whal suggests which is of interest to a wider audience is that slave-law predated and served as a basis for regulatory laws that protected women, children, workers, and animals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She explains that laws protecting slaves were developed first because legislators and the courts recognized their value as well as their potential for rebellion. Consequently, laws were established that attempted to protect slaves from excessive work and violence in order to protect slavery. These laws not only helped preserve the wealth of individual slaveholders, but also protected society from bearing the catastrophic costs of disgruntled and rebellious slaves.

The strength of this book lies not only in the fact that it opens up a new area of slavery studies, but also in that it shows how recent trends in economic theory can provide a non-quantitative framework for analyzing the policy decisions of the past. Historians have long been aware of these court cases as a source, but this book is the first to assemble this massive information into a complete story. Furthermore, unlike most economic histories, Whal’s book is not bogged down with complex statistical methods. In fact, the book has only three tables, making it appropriate reading for both a cliometric and noncliometric audience.

Brunel University

DAVID BECK RYDEN


Edward Watts has a twofold goal: to introduce the early republic to the field of postcolonial studies and to introduce postcolonial studies to the early republic. American post-revolutionary literature is construed as exhibiting postcolonial characteristics, in a series of case studies of representative texts: Irving’s *Knickerbocker’s History of New York*, Brown’s *Arthur Mervyn*, Murray’s *The
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Gleaner, Tyler’s *The Algerine Captive*, Brackenridge’s *Modern Chivalry* and Watterston’s *The Lawyer*. What links the six is that in each a fictional author attempts to write, using the language and genres left over from the colonial period, fails and thus subverts the colonial culture, decolonising American writing by freeing it from vestigial British conventions. So far so good. As a study of these texts, the volume is full of interest, with Watts proving an astute and sophisticated reader. It has to be said that the interest of the texts themselves will vary for most readers. *The Algerine Captive* (slavery domestic and foreign, Orientalism on the model of Montesquieu, pirates and a wonderfully feeble hero incongruously called Updike) is both as layered as filo pastry and as meaty. But the pleasures of Brackenridge are more debatable. None the less, Watts makes a good case for their postcolonial qualities – bases upon their attacks on “redcoating” (Robert Lawson-Peebles’ term for Anglocentricity), their resemblance to “found” texts (letters, journals, stories which are framed or bifocally narrated) and their concern with exploring ways of imaging which place the reader rather than the author at the centre of American experience, rather than on the margins of British culture. Watts understands the process of abrogation – the refusal of the categories of imperial culture – as primary to “Second World” postcolonial countries, i.e. settler colonies like New Zealand, Canada or Australia which are both colonised and colonisers, and therefore escape the binarism of much postcolonial theory, which retains a “them and us” quality. The problem with this is multiple. Firstly, there are plenty of Third World writers who seem to have escaped binarism, too, and who also employ fictional authors, letters, framed texts, found journals and intertextual readers. My own study (*The Ballistic Bard*, 1995) covers a variety of non-settler examples; a swift comparison of *Pale Fire*, say, with *Guerrillas* or *Heat and Dust* would show American-Russian, Indian Caribbean and Polish-Jewish-Indian writers all using these techniques, which cannot be so easily pigeonholed in First, Second or Third Worlds. Secondly, it is striking that American critics have chosen to apply postcolonial theory not to contemporary postcolonial browns and blacks, but to early American white writers. There is a subtextual hunt for authenticating origins here which sits ill with the supposed interest in polyphony and the challenge to binarism. Thirdly, a colonised imagination is not quite the same as one which is hegemonically dominated, or merely conventional. Lastly, we hear a lot about the reader, without much sense of who these readers were, economically, or in terms of class and gender. The relation of American literature to the postcolonial paradigm is probably one of the great themes of the next decade (witness pioneering work already by Amy Kaplan, Peter Hulme, Gesa Mackenthun and Eric Cheyfitz). Watts has made a fine contribution, but there is a lot more work to be done.

University of Nottingham

Judie Newman

Despite the confines of an oppressive social system, ever since the first African slaves arrived on the North American continent, black Americans have developed a unique cultural aesthetic at variance with the dominant racial group. This is the argument of Australian scholars Shane White and Graham White in this excellent study of African American expressive culture from slavery to World War II. The authors consider the myriad ways in which black Americans have presented their bodies in public through their clothing, hairstyles, facial and bodily gestures, dances and other forms of public display. The book is meticulously researched, making judicious use of the available primary sources ranging from runaway slave advertisements to oral histories, from contemporary journalism to the autobiographies of leading figures in black American history. Some sixty black-and-white illustrations and photographs are reproduced to add visual evidence to the vividly descriptive narrative.

In the strongest section of the book, the authors dedicate three chapters to the development of African American style in the ante-bellum south. White and White show how black slaves often embellished their clothing and hairstyles and styled their posture in ways that contested and undermined white sensibilities and social codes. Slaves also utilised dance and music as a form of escape from the drudgery of their lives and as a way to disorient whites. The authors then address how emancipated black Americans in the North and South deliberately tested the boundaries of their freedom by dressing colourfully and extravagantly, organising parades and balls and presenting themselves in public by displaying their aesthetic on the streets of American cities. The book concludes with chapters on how black Americans promoted pride in their appearance in the first half of the twentieth century through beauty contests, fashion shows, “strollin’” in public, and attending jazz dances.

White and White argue convincingly that black Americans have a long tradition of developing an aesthetic in appearance, music and dance that emphasises “vibrant and provocative displays of color, pattern-breaking variations in movement, and a general privileging of improvisation.” In all its forms, African American style has been markedly different from the dominant white culture and holds great political significance as it has tended to subvert the accepted values of the dominant social structure. The authors’ analysis also reveals, however, the gender and particularly class divisions that exist within black American society that are all too often ignored in discussions of African American culture. They also emphasise the hybrid quality of African American style in that it has always drawn upon a wide spectrum of influences, both African, European and American, to create an aesthetic that is uniquely African American.

One significant aspect of African American expressive culture, however, is largely overlooked: the extent to which the black aesthetic has influenced and been appropriated by the dominant culture in the United States. This study does address how public displays of black style could cause whites to react violently
or develop derisory cultural responses such as the minstrel shows. But, aside from a brief discussion of white interest in black jazz culture, there is little consideration of how, although remaining in many ways a separate and unique culture, African American style has had a profound effect on the development of mainstream American culture. Such nitpicking aside, however, this is a rich study that comprehensively situates the role of expressive culture in the development of black American history.

University of Sussex


“What do we mean when we describe someone as having a sense of humor?” What a daunting task, attempting to answer that one. Daniel Wickberg makes the attempt in an extremely wide-ranging and well-researched study, which he calls “an extended answer to that question.” What makes his work valuable to students of American culture is the fact that his answer is an “unpacking of the meaning of a term and value within a particular culture.” This “unpacking” takes the form of “a history of the idea and meaning of the sense of humor within Anglo-American, especially American, culture.”

Critics of American exceptionalism might well wish to close the book at this point, but they would be making a mistake; for Wickberg’s study is an exploration of the degree to which assumptions of cultural exceptionalism define human concepts of the “natural.” Indeed, Wickberg begins with the sense of humour’s rooting in “medieval medical characterology,” and charts its shift away from that physiological base in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to the point where it is seen as a “personality attribute.” This shift prepares the way for an understanding of the term as the mid-nineteenth century inherited it, both in Britain and America – an inheritance grounded on the presumption of humour as a particularly English trait, based on particularly English “institutions and character structure.” As Wickberg writes, “the distinctiveness of ‘humor’ as a term in the English language gave rise to a doctrine of Anglo-American exceptionalism, founded on a link between political liberty and humor … English liberty is offered as an explanation for the preponderance of the eccentric characters associated with the idea of humor.”

By the third chapter the study is focused squarely on eighteenth-century American ideas of the sense of humour as both a moral value and “a capacity for perception.” From there the interrogation is routed through the paradox of American “bureaucratic individualism” and the supposed American colonisation of the joke as a national commodity, in a dramatic sweep that takes in Twain’s stand-up primer, “How to Tell a Story,” the foundations of American vaudeville and radio, and the co-optation of the jocular sound-bite as a defining feature of American political discourse in the twentieth century.
In its entirety, *The Senses of Humor* is a rich exploration of Anglo-American cultural and linguistic connections, bringing Hobbes, Jonson, and Shadwell into discussion with Mark Twain, Max Eastman, and Nancy Walker (among many others). Perhaps because he is not so foolhardy, Wickberg never attempts to declare what the sense of humor *is*; but he goes a long way towards explaining what, in the Anglo-American context, it has meant.

*University of Central Lancashire*

Charles B. Wordell's very scholarly study traces the various and ever-changing images of Japan in the eyes and imagination of the United States from the dawn of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the Pacific war. What he reveals is an often unhappy, sometimes highly amusing, situation in which popular conceptions of Japan had much more to do with the ambitions, both commercial and territorial, of an emerging US with doctrines like Manifest Destiny, than they had to do with the realities of the history, society and institutions of their highly developed but utterly alien Pacific neighbour. The development and manipulation of such misapprehensions led, of course, to the catastrophes of the middle twentieth century. Given his intentions, this study reaches a natural conclusion in 1941, but the history of East–West relations since shows that the West, and the US in particular, still finds it exceptionally difficult to comprehend such a different culture free from its own overbearing ideologies which are so powerfully Puritan and commercial.

The book studies six cycles of Japan–American interaction using such disparate sources as geography books, magazines, newspaper articles, history books, plays, Yellow press newspaper articles, short stories, novels, spy fiction, China novels, and fictionalised journalism. 1800–53 is a period of exclusion. The Tokugawa Shogunate was still vigorously closed to the outside world. 1884–88 is a period of reception during which Commodore Perry’s gun-boat mission coupled with the Meiji Restoration saw Japan begin the process of opening up. 1889–1910 was a period of imitation for the Japanese in the eyes of the US; they might not be falling over themselves to accept Christianity on a big scale, but industrial and commercial insights and endeavours seemed to demonstrate appropriate directions. This is the era that read the romances of Lafcadio Hearn, became familiar with Madame Butterfly in several forms, and could hum the lyrics to “Behold the Lord High Executioner” and “Three Little Maids from School” from Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Mikado* of 1885 (English, of course, but wildly popular in the US).

The following three periods, from 1910 to 1941 mark a dramatic change in attitude, first registering threat (1910–23), both from Japanese immigration into California and Japan’s own imperial movements in China and Korea, and then a
period of neglect (1924–31), when the US was coping with its own self-inflicted
boom–bust shambles. Finally, and ominously, between 1932 and 1941, Japan
came to be seen as a challenge to the US’s own integrity, culture, and imperial
ambitions. The image of Japan becomes deeply coloured by the US’s attitudes of
racial, cultural, technological, and moral superiority. This book is a must for
anyone with interests that extend to the colonial and post-colonial, orientalism,
comparative literature, and, of course, Pacific Rim studies. It is both scholarly and
engagingly entertaining.

University of Essex

Gayle Wurst and Christine Raguet-Bouvart (eds.), Sounding the Depths: Water
as Metaphor in North American Literature (Université de Liège: Liège, 1998).


Conferences are not always biddable; they take on their own shapes. The editors
of this collection drawn from papers for a workshop at the 1994 European
Association for American Studies conference clearly expected a rather theorised
response to their call for papers but did not get it: “Consequently we have chosen
not to problematise or theorise the concept of metaphor, in the belief that our
contributors’ preference for detailed textual analysis reflects an abiding interest in
close reading” in the field. A result of this wrong-footing, which obviously
involves some loss, is that there is much here that will be helpful to
undergraduates and others principally involved in studying canonical and less
familiar American literary texts.

Most papers do, of course, go beyond tracing the signification of river, sea,
swamp, mud and rain images through texts, and reach out for cultural readings,
as does the excellent brief opening piece by Alessandro Portelli on how water
focuses an articulation in Melville and his contemporaries of complicated,
ambivalent responses to the achievements of American democracy. David
Roger’s scrutiny of “The Perversity of Water” in Faulkner facilitates a
recognition of what is distinctively post-modernist rather than just high-
modernist in his œuvre. Cecil Brown teases out a very detailed relationship
between water (especially “middle passage”) symbols, folkloric and musical
traditions, and the “coming through” tradition of spiritual conversion in
Baldwin. A very strong cultural reading of ordeals by water in Neal, Melville and
Hawthorne is offered by Francesca Orestano, and, in an elegant, sophisticated and
articulate essay, Gayle Wurst untangles the threads of (self)mythologising,
intertextual reference and real and fallacious autobiography in Sylvia Plath’s late
radio presentation, “OCEAN 1212-w.” A relaxed, thoughtful paper by Bruce
Michelson traces and interrogates the way Huck’s river has been distorted in the
critical tradition by cultural romanticisation.

Two papers, on Jean Toomer’s Cane by Françoise Clary and on Lolita by
Christine Raguet-Bouvart, engage the topic at a more theoretical level, and with
some persuasiveness seek to establish the cognitive/literary status of water
metaphors in each work, but in the course of these enterprises both commentators
also offer some suggestive and detailed “explication de texte.”
Although the editors claim that “crossing large bodies of water” is of seminal importance in the American national narrative, there is no real attempt here to determine whether water functions differently as a signifier in America than in other cultures. Nor is there adequate recognition of how much some authors – Melville, for one, and Twain and Plath – knew about water as part of lived experience as opposed to imaginative elaboration: it is central to the meaning of Moby Dick, for instance, that water is both inevitably metaphorical and irreducibly material.

These things aside, water is pervasive and of infinitely elastic signification in American letters. It can constitute a channel into the heart of many texts and this gives the present volume its accessibility and utility. More than just a conference collection, Sounding the Depths offers interesting readings and positionings of almost every text treated.

University of Wales, Swansea

Andrew Varney


The Usable Past offers itself as a comparative study of American literature in the “hemispherical sense,” focusing on “recent” US and Latin American texts. The unbalancing energy of the book is for Hispanic fiction; that, certainly, is the site of its most trenchant analysis. Taking Bloom’s “anxiety of influence” as her departure point, Zamora contends that in American writers the “impulse is to create precursors rather than to cancel them,” their “anxiety of origins” being productively connected to “narrative energies that constitute usable histories and traditions.” In rejecting the New World myth, fostered by Hegel among others, that the American freedom to create history releases it from the burden of the past, Zamora’s authors relish the particular burden of synthesizing history, symptomatic of which is a “narrative complexity and linguistic exuberance” described “in terms of the New World Baroque.” Zamora’s cartographical industry is boundless and entirely free of grand narrative angst; it is accompanied by a diverse and impressive range of primary and secondary material. But why, oh why, is the reader deprived of a list of the works cited?

The first part of the book, “Anxiety of Origins,” examines Carlos Fuentes and Willa Cather, and Jorge Luis Borges and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The contrasting “historiographic traditions impelling literary realism” are at issue with Fuentes and Cather, whereas a comparison of “Latin American magical realism and the U.S. romance tradition” co-ordinates Borges and Hawthorne. Rejected by Cather is the “undeniable conversion of German idealism into a facile doctrine of progress in the U.S.” The Song of the Lark celebrates “intuition and imagination” as the “bases for historical understanding” and dramatizes the attraction of the old and the new as it undermines the privileging of the future posited by progressive notions of history. In Latin America, so her story runs, “German historiography” was “rejected in favour of more scientific modes of French positivism,” a tradition opposed by Ortega who drew on Vico and Bergson to
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develop a sense of history as a phenomenological process “specifically located in geographical and political space.” Ortega’s presence in Paz, in particular, created an “intellectual medium” within which Fuentes can abandon progressive models of history. Cather and Fuentes have disparate heritages, but a congruent interest in the “expansive flow of individual and historical experience in expressive forms.” Zamora goes on to read Borges and Hawthorne as counter-realists as she maps intersections between magical realism and romance. There is a sense in which this reversal of literary history is an exercise in time travel: however crude the model, Hawthorne as a precursor of realism cannot be said to counter it. In any event, overlooked here is a romance–realism dialectic everywhere visible say, in James and Dreiser.

“Intertextuality and Tradition,” the second part of *The Usable Past*, has Zamora exploiting what she sees as her synergies with Ortega. Harnessed here is his concern with “inclusive narrative strategies” and an “awareness of historical discontinuity,” a concern which tenses “universalizing fictions” and the “competing awareness” of the “historical discontinuity that inspires them.” For Borges and others, “reading comes to symbolize the writer’s imperative to adapt previous works of literature to local use, to integrate them into a usable tradition.” Foregrounded in this process is a recognizably American preoccupation with the “writer’s function as receptor of multiple cultures, histories, and texts” as she seeks “precursors and cultural sources rather than avoiding or denying their influence.”

This conceptual arc is segmented into three chapters: “Synchronic Structures” (Mario Vargas Llosa and Julio Cortázar), “Fragmentary Fictions” (Angelina Muñiz-Huberman and Sandra Cisneros), and “Clichés and Communities” (Manuel Puig and Luis Rafael Sánchez). Both Llosa and Cortázar “self-consciously include narrative mechanisms to deconstruct their own inclusiveness,” a process akin to the “indivisibility” of “structural synchrony and cultural syncretism in Carpentier’s New World Baroque.” In Muñiz-Huberman and Cisneros, the “fragmentary status” of their fiction is “flaunted” as characters rehearse the “difficult … process … of combining fragmented cultural meanings in order to constitute usable structures of being.” Clichés, for Puig and Sánchez, “become a means of proposing communal values that operate within the texts and reflect outward onto the cultures that contain them.”

Throughout, what determines Zamora’s thesis is Carpentier’s belief, further developed in Paz’s *Children of the Mire*, that in “Hispanic literature and culture, the tradition of the Baroque is primary, whereas in English, German, and French literature and culture the Romantic is primary.” It is suggested that this is the main source of American amplification and inclusion, and that the “most influential writers” both in the US and Latin America “are those exploring and cultivating areas of uncertainty created by cultural contact.” *The Usable Past* conducts a guerrilla war with a “postmodernism” flattened for attack. Zamora’s main anxiety, and well it might be given her occasional predilections for both, is over the postmodernist disavowal of totalization and its conflation of “tradition and oppression.” The conclusion is that “to the extent that theories of postmodernism privilege inclusive structures of difference and challenge European structures of rationalism and positivism in specified cultural contexts,
they are usable in America.” In a familiar strategy, Zamora works hard to complicate the texts and the traditions she analyses and constructs, but settles for a monolithic monstrosity, “European structures of rationalism,” she enfeebles to oppose.

Kyushu University, Japan  


A critic who claims of Henry James that if he “were writing today, his work would look more like *Blue Velvet* than it would like Merchant and Ivory’s ponderously reverent period ‘re-creations’ of his novels” and who sees the “Mr America” contest as “raising questions about how heterosexual a chorus line of bikinied beefcake can ‘really’ be,” clearly promises a generative exercise in the “ridiculous”—used in the sense developed by Charles Ludlam’s queer theatre of the 1970s and 1980s to suggest what Michael Moon calls “the unresolved contradiction ‘tragical comedy or comical tragedy’” which, he argues, is a crucial aspect in the epistemology of queer childhood. This epistemology provides the subject of Moon’s contribution to Duke University Press’s “Series Q,” his analysis of “gay men’s contributions to modern culture,” where, prompted by Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen’s claim that “Desire is not oriented by pleasure, it is (dis)oriented by mimesis” and orchestrated by the central terms of Barthes’ *A Lover’s Discourse* (“scene” and “ravishment”), he focuses on “a series of instances of an adult artist’s productive revisitation of a remembered scene of himself as a proto queer child” in which the artist is “ravished by images of his own desire, experiencing such ravishment and gradually learning to exploit various aspects of the fantasised/remembered initiatory scene for his subsequent work.”

Moon begins with James, with the disorienting effects of imitation on the dynamics of “perverse” desire in “The pupil” where the wittily troped pun of “pupillary capture” is read through Freud’s “The Uncanny” and Hoffman’s “The Sandman” in relation to David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet* and Kenneth Anger’s *Scorpio Rising*. James’s “initiation into style” is pursued with especial astuteness through the scene of his visit as a twelve-year-old to the Louvre and its display of the male-homoerotic paintings associated with the French Revolution and the First Empire. Nijinsky and the 1960s film-maker and performance artist Jack Smith are then joined together to explore “modes of both imitating and resisting the fascinated and witholding altitudes” of their respective audiences. Here, Smith’s negotiations of the closet are observed revealingly before Moon goes on to Warhol’s abandonment of mimetic images in favour of his eroticised cartoon figures, and to a diagnosis of male prostitution through a comparison between *My Hustler* and Schlesinger’s *Midnight Cowboy*. The disorienting of desire emerges again in a particularly vibrant discussion of Joseph Cornell’s imitating of female performances (supplanting the “high art” readings of Cornell to claim his “eloquent provocations to thought and desire”), before Moon returns to James
and *The American Scene*, making a case (rather strained at times) for continuities with Yiddish and queer theatre.

We are provided here with a rich set of bedfellows. Moon’s analyses are shrewd and compassionate about their subjects, and give powerful evidence to the value of queer theory for criticism in general – the value of an open generosity of attention that is becoming increasingly rare within straitened and specialised academia. One of the slogans of the gay liberation movement in the 1960s (the period so close to Moon’s heart and critical apprehension) was “Our Freedom is Your Freedom,” and it bespeaks precisely a patience of reading, an appreciation of otherness, that we can learn from projects such as this. Moon summarises his sense of James in the following way: “In attempting to understand the significance of queerness for James’s writing, I suspect that the search for the supposedly ‘missing’ male object of James’s desires ... is substantially less important than acquiring an understanding of how mobile, various, and in some ways not definitively object-directed the desires of someone like James may have been.” It is exactly such mobility and variousness that queer theory contributes to the critical act, maintaining always a dissatisfaction with binary thought and schismatic oppositions – itself the great Jamesian lesson.

*University of Keele*

IAN F. A. BELL