"specific strand of American intellectual life," against a backdrop of cultural change in which the concept of the intellectual as a social type itself emerged (4). In doing so, Taylor reexamines the problems of identification faced not only by these New England thinkers and writers, but by intellectuals at large. This lends a contemporary slant to the analysis, with lines drawn between Emerson's self-liberating transcendentalism and such recent examples as Edward Said's conception of the alienated intellectual, outside any national culture. Taylor stops short of claiming a simple intellectual genealogy between Emerson and the present, however. Instead, he seeks to unravel recurring, problematic, questions: how can ideas be translated into actions? How should thinkers preoccupied with universal truths relate to entities such as the community, or the nation? The careful choice of writers, texts, and biographical episodes amply justifies this intervention in the long-running conversation about the status of the intellectual. In Thoreau's complex engagement with John Brown as a visionary radical a provocative model of the transgressive intellectual-as-terrorist emerges. Engaging in thoughtful ways with Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1843), Taylor allows her infectious cosmopolitanism and social engagement to come to the fore; if any New England intellectual managed to make the leap from thought to action, surely it was Fuller. James, despite his reputation for a hearty pluralism, is shown to insist upon the *limits* of cosmopolitanism, wary of America's lapse into cultural incoherence. Thus, against many competing characterizations, James is recast by Taylor in a more conventionally Victorian mould, as "a gentleman reformer whose idea of modest hierarchy is always in danger of slipping into cultural elitism" (157). The Spanish-born Harvard philosopher Santayana, who abandoned the United States in 1911, provides a final critical perspective on the intellectual life of New England, ultimately dismissing Emerson's transcendentalism as "a belated romanticism" (173). Throughout the book Taylor sets these five figures into conversations with a parade of more recent thinkers who have covered similar terrain, from Gramsci and Arendt to Bourdieu and (especially) Cavell, among many others. This gives *Thinking America* the feel of a particularly high-powered seminar: sometimes prone to digression, but with a superabundance of critical opinions and insightful interpretations on offer. Some of Taylor's suggestions could have been developed further, particularly about the embedding of intellectual life in a professionalizing university culture which formed the increasingly dominant "scene of instruction." Yet the overall effect is impressive and energizing, and serves as a persuasive reminder of the continued relevance to contemporary concerns of these largely familiar figures in American intellectual history.

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Journal of American Studies, **46** (2012), 4. doi:10.1017/S0021875812001855

Justine S. Murison, *The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, $90.00). Pp. 215. ISBN 978 1 10700 791 8.

As literary scholars navigate a neuroscientific turn, it's worth remembering that we've been down that path before. Now that readers' brains can be imaged by MRIs, new models of neural activity seem to hold out the promise of explaining the processes of literary production and readers' responses. How do we construct narratives or metaphors or images? What mechanisms allow us to "see" verbal worlds, to feel emotionally attached to fictional characters, and to be excited or scandalized by a work of art?

So-called "cognitive" approaches are beginning to draw on the insights of neurology and related sciences in order to answer these questions at the level of the human brain. Even novelists themselves – notably Richard Powers, Jonathan Lethem, and Siri Hustvedt – are toying with making their characters' brains the true protagonists of their art.

Justine Murison's terrific book returns us to the first cultural formation surrounding the scientific and para-scientific study of the brain and the nervous system. If today's approaches run the risk of naturalizing cultural processes – flattening out cultural difference by appealing to supposedly universal neural mechanisms – the nineteenth-century version was quite different. The forerunners of neurology conceived of the nervous system as the network that "knit the body and mind together through their interactions with the world" (3). What Murison calls the neurological "open body" was thus vulnerable to political change and environmental pressures, but neural mechanisms could also be manipulated to *produce* change (3). In tightly constructed readings of works by Robert Montgomery Bird, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, S. Weir Mitchell, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, she shows the deep saturation of nerve-discourse in American culture from roughly 1830 to the turn of the twentieth century. Particularly strong are her readings of the different ways that the rhetoric of nerves, and nervousness, structured the discourse of race and slavery. Bird's surpassingly strange (and recently republished) novel *Sheppard Lee: Written by Himself* (1836) tells the story of a lazy, hypochondriacal failed farmer who finds – upon dying – that he has the power to reanimate other corpses. When Lee inhabits the bodies of a radical abolitionist and then a slave, he gives his author occasion to ponder ways in which nervous organization defines character and race. Additionally, as Murison shows, Bird reads abolition as promoting a pathological form of sympathy, surpassing the natural limits imposed by biological limitations. While Poe disputed Bird's notion of character as entirely dependent on bodily sensation, Murison shows penetratingly how much Poe was drawn to neurological models of the embodied mind. In particular, the conception of a "reflex arc," developed by Scottish physician Marshall Hall, provided an analogue for Poe's own studies of reflexive behavior that bypasses conscious will (46). "Hop-Frog," "Some Words with a Mummy," and "Instinct vs. Reason – A Black Cat" all circle around the problem of automatic responses to external stimuli, responses that in the extreme undercut the foundational democratic assumption that humans are capable of governing themselves. To my mind the strongest chapter, on Stowe's *Dred*, reveals how Stowe – and like-minded abolitionist ministers like Charles Grandison Finney – exploited these automatic nervous responses for the ends of reform rather than reaction. Enthusiastic religion, Murison shows, was frequently interpreted by alienists and neurologists as both productive and symptomatic of nervous disorder. Yet Stowe's depiction of a highly charismatic, religiously inspired rebel slave both accepts the diagnostic framework of nervous disorder and suggests that his neurological predisposition toward trance states can indeed be a vehicle for genuine clairvoyance and prophecy.

Murison concludes with perceptive but too-brief reflections on the relevance of her study to contemporary metacritical debates. I think she errs by placing too much weight on post-Freudian affect theory, which she says has privileged a concept of "anxiety" that both depends on and disavows a prehistory of nineteenth-century nerves. (This explains her curious use of "anxiety" in the title, despite the term's anachronism to the period under study: "nervousness" would have been better.)

Certain strains of affect theory (notably Brian Massumi's and Sianne Ngai's work) do indeed reach out to cognitive models, so the circuit between soma and psyche may not be as broken in critical discourse as Murison implies. More intriguing are Murison's claims that the new cognitive approaches share with historicist approaches a desire to ground subjective literary readings in hard-and-fast evidence; she favors instead a "surface" reading for cultural pattern that does not count as "evidence" of something else. This idea is rather underdeveloped, but could certainly prompt other scholars to reflect on the significance that the history of science has for models of literary analysis. In the meantime, we should celebrate this exemplary case study of how writers of an earlier time grappled with a set of intellectual and social problems we mistakenly call contemporary.

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Journal of American Studies, **46** (2012), 4. doi:10.1017/S0021875812001867

Robert Harrison, *Washington during Civil War and Reconstruction: Race and Radicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, $90.00). Pp. ix + 343. ISBN 110 7 00232 X.

Ruminations of the Civil War and Reconstruction typically involve an assortment of long-bearded West Point graduates, the astute political maneuverings of Abraham Lincoln, droves of enslaved African Americans determined to transform what began as a war to preserve the Union into a death knell for the institution that held them in bondage, hundreds of thousands of men cut down by armament and disease, or a narrow opportunity for Republican-led racial progress foiled by white supremacy. Despite service as the nerve center of the Union military effort and of radical political policy in the postwar period, the District of Columbia – alias Washington, DC – is generally (and unfortunately) lost in the shuffle. Historian Robert Harrison appropriately sets out to remedy this neglect; his posthumously published *Washington during Civil War and Reconstruction* contends that the oft-overlooked capital city had actually functioned as the prime testing ground for Reconstruction policy, interracial democracy, and African American citizenship.

Two underlying assertions are fundamental to the portrait of Washington, DC that Harrison painstakingly pieces together with Freedmen's Bureau records, congressional records, government documents, media accounts, and myriad correspondence. First, the city, unlike New York, Boston, or even Atlanta, was born of political convenience rather than financial necessity. This seemingly "genetic" characteristic accounted both for the city's lackluster appearance (which Harrison offers as a metaphor for the fractured state of the Union in 1860) and for the fact that the District's federal overseers did not answer to a state government. Second, Harrison is adamant from the start that antebellum Washington was essentially a southern city – replete with kinship ties to Virginia and Maryland, linguistic drawls, racial animosity, and the very visible presence of slavery. Collectively, these traits explain how the capital city found itself uniquely qualified to serve as a congressional laboratory in the early phases of Reconstruction.

According to Harrison, the Civil War literally altered the face(s) of Washington. In addition to an influx of federal soldiers and white northern entrepreneurs, an explosion in the free black population permanently changed the city's demographic breakdown. Given the exponential growth of the African American population during