Geology, New School reforms, and the picturesque aesthetic: one finishes the book with the understanding that these disparate responses to grief are complex resistances to nineteenth-century Protestant and societal norms of grieving. Balaam's fresh perspective on mourning in this period reveals that for these authors, at least, "grief is something harder and stranger and, ultimately, more important than their contemporaries necessarily knew" (9), making this densely written study an excellent companion to Karen Haltunnen's now classic book on American nineteenth-century sentiment, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*.

Fordham University ELIZABETH CORNELL

Journal of American Studies, **44** (2010), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875810000174

Noel Polk, *Faulkner and Welty and the Southern Literary Tradition* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008, $50.00). Pp. xii + 207. ISBN 978 1 934110 84 3.

Noel Polk's latest volume is another collection of essays of the kind that has, along with his vast textual and bibliographic work, been the hallmark of his career as a major scholar of United States southern literature and culture. This book is different, however, for these essays do not just unravel original readings of William Faulkner's and Eudora Welty's texts; they are also powerful essays on large issues. With this volume, Polk takes a step toward becoming not just a scholar but an essayist.

Before elaborating on that assertion, let me take a moment to address the scholarly content of the book. It is difficult to summarize, partly because a group of essays naturally lacks the kind of coherence found in a monograph. Furthermore, the title is tenuously appropriate – the book does discuss Faulkner and Welty and even the southern literary tradition somewhat (mostly to show how fraught the idea of such a tradition is), but the title implies a comparison of the two writers within a tradition which the book does not bear out, with the exception of the first essay of the same title that argues that Welty does not just copy Faulkner but presents her own unique vision of the South that requires particular insight for the reader to see. The fact is that the book is more a Faulkner one than a Welty one: eight of the twelve essays are on Faulkner only, with no mention of Welty, and Polk ranges over much more of Faulkner's canon than of Welty's.

Certainly the scholarship is there, and it is original and excellent, focussing on small and often unnoticed details to draw out large readings of texts. Polk offers lucid readings of Welty which serve primarily to show that her engagement with place is much more complicated and less clichéd than scholars' tendency toward overly simplistic readings of her extra-fictional comments on place has allowed. The Faulkner essays are richer: Polk's recognizing meditations and comments on communism in *The Unvanquished* is provocative; his locating homosexuality as a central ghost haunting the McCaslin ledgers in *Go Down, Moses* is illuminating; and his reading of Quentin's ideas about his sexual orientation when he sees Shreve's genitals tightly framed in his own pants is brilliant. If there is a binding thread in the book it is Polk's gentle yet insistent pointing to things that scholars miss in their zeal to apply the latest hot theories to Welty's and especially Faulkner's *oeuvre* while in the process perpetuating the same readings, with their blind spots, that have persisted

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875810000174 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for years. Not that Polk is anti-theory (his customary Freudian psychoanalytic critical approach is well balanced by Judith Butler's body theorizing, for instance), but he assumes the role of one who respects the primary text, too, and reminds readers to look there and see what can be found in its richness. Polk is, in a sense, somewhat like the grandfather Lucius Priest who tells his story from a position of much experience and learnedness in Faulkner's final novel *The Reivers*. And all young Faulkner and Welty scholars would do well to listen, for Polk opens very important but overlooked doors in the texts.

Beyond even this grandfatherly role, though, Polk emerges as a writer with something of his own to say beyond the texts he deals with. He expounds on topics from the failures of masculinity to the problems of sentimentalizing war, either for it or against. It is as if Polk has reached a new stature – that not only of a scholar showing the world what Faulkner and Welty have to say but also of someone who uses those texts as the starting place for stating his own views, standing alongside these paragons of literature with his own message. The high point of the book, from this perspective, is the essay "Scar," for it most successfully blends Polk's scholarship, mentorly guidance, and individual comment. This is a wise book – one to be read by someone seeking to grow not only as a scholar but also as a person.

Florida Atlantic University TAYLOR HAGOOD

Journal of American Studies, **44** (2010), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875810000186

Melvin L. Rogers, *The Undiscovered Dewey: Religion, Morality, and the Ethos of Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, $45.00). Pp. 328. ISBN 976 0 231 14486 5.

The American philosopher Morton White wrote that after the death of John Dewey in 1952, "a great change came over the face of American philosophy as it used more and more refined logical techniques, squinted its eyes, and peered into smaller and smaller places." After several decades with eyes wide shut, a renewed focus on Dewey and classical Pragmatism evolved, due in part to Richard Rorty's recuperation of Dewey for neo-Pragmatism, the completion of the thirty-seven-volume *Collected Works of John Dewey*, and the exhaustion of post-structuralism and other highly theorized models of academic critique. As Cornell West rightly suggests, the renewed appeal of Dewey's philosophy of experience, conflict, inquiry and experimentalist resolve stems from its progressive, democratic tenor, matching a meliorist quest for relevant social responsibility in reaction to the privatized culture of Reaganism and a faith in the sanctity of "free-market" norms.

Besides the work of neo-Pragmatists such as Rorty and West, landmark scholarship in the Dewey revival includes the critical biographies by Robert Westbrook (*John Dewey and American Democracy* (1991)) and Alan Ryan (*John Dewey and the High Tide of American Democracy* (1995)), both worthy introductions to Dewey's life and thought. Melvin Rogers's *Undiscovered Dewey* belongs on the shelf alongside them, offering an authoritative, coherentist account that integrates Dewey's political, ethical and religious thought in the context of his engagement with American democracy in a post-Darwinian, post-Christian – and now postindustrial – world.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875810000174 Published online by Cambridge University Press