

## Reviews

Jeanie Attie, *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the Civil War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998, £27.95). Pp. 294. ISBN 0 8014 2224 8.

This fascinating study deserves to be widely read – and not only by practitioners of women’s history. As so frequently happens these days, the book’s title is unhelpful, designed as much for promotion as illumination. *Patriotic Toil* effectively comprises a history of the United States Sanitary Commission, the centralized agency established in 1861 to manage Northern wartime relief operations. By this yardstick alone, the book makes a serious contribution; Attie probes deeply into the values, leadership, logistics, and grassroots ethos and activity of this important body, materially revising the accepted, and self-promoted, view of the Commission’s character and achievement. If women’s endeavour provides the heart of the narrative, students of elite culture generally in nineteenth-century America will benefit from the fresh and imaginatively contextualized discussion of such familiar figures as Henry Whitney Bellows, Frederick Law Olmsted, and George Templeton Strong. These were men, Attie concludes, who “insisted on their right to ideological authority over a nation in crisis.”

The author explores the conflicts and accommodations that resulted from the large-scale mobilization of female labour in the Northern relief effort. She argues that the war was a “testing ground for the gendering of political rights and the ideological separation of men’s and women’s domains of work and influence.” Bellows and his colleagues were determined that the Sanitary Commission fulfil their vision of strengthening American nationalism by harnessing the voluntary energies and resources of local communities. However, they failed to foresee how much this agenda – to be pursued naturally under their guidance – would collide with the recently acquired prerogatives of female benevolence and of household labour in general. Attie convincingly demonstrates that the traditional view of female mobilization needs reassessment: by 1862 the Sanitary Commission’s expectations were far from being met as women throughout the North, but especially in urban areas, proved reluctant or practically unable to reorder their domestic priorities at the nationalizers’ behest. Matters picked up in the following year, but the Commission’s leaders never overcame their hostility to female autonomy.

The remaining chapters chart in detail the Commission’s rocky history, its warding off of corruption charges, the competition from rival organizations, notably the United States Christian Commission, and the post-war denouement. Especially fine is Attie’s examination of the elite-run Metropolitan Fair. Held in

New York in April 1864, the Fair promoted a romanticized view of women's wartime patriotism and labour, and contrasted sharply with the majority of sanitary fairs which "highlighted the decentralized, local, and female sources of social welfare." The analysis throughout is cogently argued and judiciously expressed, and only occasionally does the author overstretch a point, as in the parallel she draws between women's resistance to demands for their unpaid labour and men's violent opposition to the draft. Impressively researched and exemplary in its organization, *Patriotic Toil* is a major study, which only requires a more exact, more informative sub-title.

Keele University

MARTIN CRAWFORD

Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896–1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, £30.00 cloth, £12.95 paper). Pp. 325. ISBN 0 520 21167 7, 0 520 21168 5.

The present liberal consensus is that racial categories and *perceptions* are cultural and political constructs – subject to revision and change. Lee Baker's stated purpose is to examine the role played by anthropology in the American discourse on race relations between two landmark Supreme Court decisions, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which upheld and then overturned racial segregation. These seminal rulings, he affirms, reflected prevailing anthropological perceptions of and pronouncements on the capacities and capabilities of people of colour.

In the late nineteenth century, anthropologists and ethnologists like Daniel G. Brinton, John Wesley Powell, Lewis Henry Morgan, and Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, echoed and amplified the earlier contentions of apologists for slavery in pronouncing "coloured" peoples as inherently and "racially" inferior to Europeans. In particular, these "anthropological Social Darwinists" helped sway public opinion against Negro suffrage, implicitly endorsed the institutions and practices of Jim Crow, and gave "scientific" justification for the sterilisation and anti-immigrant laws of the 1920s. But a new paradigm in anthropology, the creation of such notable scholars as Franz Boas and W. E. B. Du Bois, championed cultural relativism, and provided ammunition for the campaign of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) against segregated education.

The broad outlines of the symbiotic relationship between anthropologists, lawyers, the media, and the opponents and proponents of civil rights for African Americans will be familiar to most readers. Baker is most informative in his descriptions of the (mis)representations of Native Americans, Africans and African Americans at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and the links between the intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance and anthropologists at Columbia University during the 1920s. He also notes the significance of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944), and the ways in which Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund carefully utilised the "new" anthropology in their briefs against segregated schools. A concluding chapter summarises the contentions and consequences of Richard Herrnstein and Charles

Murray's *The Bell Curve* (1994), and takes issue with Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's attempts "to reinvent U.S. social science to bolster a conservative political agenda" – the dismantling of affirmative action programmes and majority–minority voting districts.

*From Savage to Negro* is a useful if slender addition to the growing literature on American racial classifications and their fluidity. More care should have been taken over its references and syntax: Herbert Spencer's famous essay, *Social Statics*, is mis-titled, as is Du Bois's doctoral thesis and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. And, as *any* anthropologist will verify, there is no such word as "predominately."

University of Hull

JOHN WHITE

Annemarie Bean (ed.), *A Sourcebook of African-American Performance: Plays, People, Movements* (London: Routledge, 1999, £15.99). Pp. 360. ISBN 0 415 18235 2.

Offering much at an introductory level, this "sourcebook" presents a variety of material from the Black Arts Movement and the Free Southern Theatre of the 1960s. Further, it includes work on alternative performance and contemporary African American women playwrights, directors and performers. Structured to develop an understanding of black performance as part of a historical continuum, Annemarie Bean selects theoretical and imaginative work by such key figures as Amiri Baraka, Ed Bullins, Larry Neal, Adrienne Kennedy and Suzan-Lori Parks. In addition, Bean includes an essay by James Hatch to demonstrate how the historical tradition of black theatre can be understood in terms of "African roots." This collection extends discussions of black theatre and black performance to a wider context: including plays (not only scripted but improvisational), dance and movement (both within and without a theatrical framework), the institutionalisation of the Step Show, and explorations of the Gospel Musical in terms of generic innovation. A pivotal concern throughout (and dexterously handled by most contributors), is the dialectical relationship between dramatic content and audience identity, participation and interpretation. Adjunct to this, is a sensitivity to the formative influence on black drama of contextual pressures: not only questions of audience, but political climate and funding availability.

The Black Arts Movement is powerfully represented via a good range of plays, interviews and essays that clarify its focus on the relationship between "activism and aesthetics." Reprinted material from the 1960s is well chosen as Bean includes Larry Neal's landmark essay, "The Black Arts Movement," as well as plays by Baraka and Bullins. However, essays commissioned specifically for this anthology are weaker in detail excessively obscure for the targeted "general reader." They include critically dubious biographical pieces which favour a eulogistic tone. Conversely, John O'Neal's essay introducing material (mainly interviews) on the Free Southern Theatre, is insightful for understanding its "key role" in the Black Arts Movement. O'Neal engages in debates concerning aesthetic value and authentic representation versus propaganda imperatives. The

second half of the book analyses diverse forms of black performance. These include Adrian Piper's quirky *Catalysis* series in which she uses her body (via costume) to "transcend difference" out on the street. Finally, Eugene Nesmith writes an informative introduction to the closing section which analyses the particular pressures on African American women playwrights. Specific themes are identified, such as: constructions of race beyond racist paradigms; exposure of the gendered dynamics of slavery via explorations of rape; inclusion of autobiographical detail as a basis to "politically charged art"; and, lastly, a critique of the "great hole of history" (metonymic of black absence) through studies of historiography.

Whilst eager to maintain prescriptive categories (primarily of race, gender and dramatic form), this book is invaluable as an introductory text for students of black performance. Not quite the "representative history" Bean strives for, nevertheless it successfully outlines the changing aesthetic and ideological strategies of African American dramatic form.

*University of Newcastle Upon Tyne*

CELESTE-MARIE BERNIER

Mary Clearman Blew, *Bone Deep in Landscape: Writing, Reading, and Place* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999, \$22.95). Pp. 197. ISBN 0 8061 3177 2.

Familiar territory for readers of the new western fiction, Mary Clearman Blew's northern Montana and Idaho landscapes provide a stark and moving background to this volume of essays, the fifth volume in the Literature of the American West series, edited by William Kittredge. The landscape functions as a jumping-off place for memoir and history, and history devolves into family history as invisibly as the quilter's seams with which Blew begins her book.

However, the gentle, conversational, opening ("The Art of Memoir") and equally benign concluding essay ("Sisters in Summer") belie the raw truths and uncomfortable realities which populate Blew's world and these thirteen essays.

The demythologizing of the West, in which current trend this book might be placed, has never been a necessity for those who actually live in the West, and these essays attest to the rigors of a life in which hardship, poverty, unimaginably hard work, and loneliness were facts of life. Blew's story of a grandmother who, as a young mother, began to hallucinate after eighteen months without female company, sets the tone for what becomes the dominant theme of the book, the unrelenting sufferings of women, living on the homesteads of the West.

Elsewhere Blew has stated, "In my family, the men were glamorous and the women persevered." But there are glamorous women in Blew's book as well. The essay, "Mother Lode" examines the fictions of B. M. Bower, Dorothy Johnson, and Mildred Walker, women who, like Blew, gave up the hard and thankless struggle on the ranches and turned to writing. *Chip of the Flying U* may be all but unread today, but B. M. Bower's novel was considered the equal of its contemporary, Owen Wister's *The Virginian*.

Blew's voice, like others beginning to be heard in the New West, is a combination of hard realism and deep appreciation for a landscape once regarded

as essentially male territory. Jonathan Raban has described Blew's landscape as "a landscape ideally suited to the staging of the millennium," and it is a place where the climate is alternately viciously cold and stunningly hot; a place where the wind howls ceaselessly over short grass plains; where a wrong turn on an unpaved road can still, even in the age of the cellular phone, mean death. And yet it is a landscape of unparalleled grandeur, and a world in which the bonds of attachment to the land, like the family ties they mirror, are as invisible, yet as strong as the expert quilter's seam.

*Goldsmiths College, University of London*

MEGAN RILEY MCGILCHRIST

Emily Miller Budick, *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, £35 cloth, £12.95 paper). Pp. 252. ISBN 0 521 63194 7, 0 521 63575 6.

The turbulent relationship between African Americans and American Jews has been a subject of intense scholarly debate since the late 1960s. A central concern of these studies is to assess the causes and, in some instances, to propose a cure for the inter-ethnic conflict that has characterized interaction between the two peoples these last thirty years. It is often argued that there once existed a powerful political alliance between African Americans and Jews, which reached its apotheosis in the civil rights struggle of the mid-twentieth century. Since then arguments over such contentious issues as affirmative action have stirred mutual mistrust. Most recently the inflammatory rhetoric of Louis Farrakhan and other representatives of the Nation of Islam has driven a deep wedge between these former political allies. Tensions have at times spilled over into violence, most strikingly on the streets of Crown Heights in New York.

This depressing tale has been told from different perspectives by historians, political scientists, sociologists, and philosophers; but not, until now, by literary scholars. Emily Miller Budick has added a new dimension to the debate by looking beyond the discussions of political leaders to assess the "dialogue" between novelists, essayists, and critics. Budick draws upon a broad array of authors from both sides, among them Toni Morrison, Chester Himes, Bernard Malamud, and Saul Bellow. One of the strongest themes that emerges from the book is the profound misunderstanding between the two peoples. The experience of the Holocaust sensitized Jews to the persecution of other minorities, especially African Americans. Blacks none the less accused Jews of condescension in their assessment of the race issue. By exploring the plight of African Americans through the prism of the Holocaust, Jews by implication stressed the greater significance of their own oppression. Black writers have, in turn, responded by appropriating the term "Holocaust" in recounting the suffering of their own people under slavery. The tragic impression is that African Americans and Jews are in competition to confer privileged status upon their own historical experience of discrimination and repression.

Budick has produced a provocative analysis of the cultural and intellectual interaction between blacks and Jews in the United States. The main criticism that

can be made of the book is that it is not constructed chronologically and contains no conclusion. As a result it is difficult to assess clearly how the literary dialogue between African Americans and Jews has developed since the Second World War and, in particular, to gain any insight into its future direction. Budick should none the less be applauded for enriching our understanding of this most complex and controversial political issue.

*University of Sussex*

CLIVE WEBB

Robert Butler, *Contemporary African American Fiction. The Open Journey* (London: Associated University Presses, 1998, £26). Pp. 163. ISBN 0 8386 3787 6.

Robert Butler points out that much of the past century's greatest African American literature has concerned itself with migration. Using the rhetorical process of signifying, many twentieth-century narratives have repeated and revised elements of nineteenth-century testimonial writing, and concerned themselves with real or symbolic journeys from the south to the north. Butler supports Paul Gilroy's view that the experience of the black Atlantic diaspora is one of "ceaseless motion," but in his highly ambitious book, which aims to consider all of the most significant African American writers of the past century, he acknowledges that motion rarely results in a sense of safe, unproblematic arrival.

Butler describes the writing of authors such as Richard Wright and Zora Neale Hurston as "stunted picaresques." Characters are compelled by the desire for open motion that typifies the American picaresque tradition, but they are constantly frustrated and contained by social and environmental factors. It is only when they abandon the teleological notion of life as a linear journey that satisfaction can be found and inner exploration can commence.

Butler's text is essentially a celebration of the sheer energy and ingenuity of much of twentieth-century African-American literature, which he stresses departs from the nihilism of many travel narratives by white authors that have focused on the anxiety associated with the end of the road. By contrast he argues that many African American texts which deal with the journey motif have more in common with the Whitmanian belief in life as a perpetual journey towards infinite possibilities. This sense, he suggests, is encapsulated by Charles Johnson's protagonist in *Faith and the Good Thing* who finally realises that her life is "an endless series of paths leading to an indefinite number of truths."

For Butler, the most successful African American writing is aggressively nonteleological, and he interprets the work of Toni Morrison and Ishmael Reed particularly effectively to support his view. There is one aspect of this fine and well-designed book which does become both tiresome and limiting towards the end however: this is essentially a personal view with very little use being made of existing criticism. With a mass of secondary material surrounding authors such as Wright, Walker and Morrison, this is a curious oversight.

*Suffolk College*

KATE RHODES

Janet Gallignani Casey, *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, £37.50). Pp. 230. ISBN 0 521 62025 2.

The status of John Dos Passos continues to be ambiguous. On the one hand he is recognized to be a classic, one of the central novelists of the interwar years, and yet critical accounts show an unease about situating him within the debate over proletarian literature. This is the situation which Janet Gallignani Casey addresses in her new study, which demonstrates convincingly that Dos Passos shared with women writers of the left, like his friend Josephine Herbst, for instance, a conviction that the personal and the political were inextricably linked. Thus Dos Passos' involvement with radical politics explains the gendered rhetoric of his fiction in the 1920s and 1930s. The attacks he received from Hemingway and Edmund Wilson for being a sissy and a latent homosexual reflected indignation with Dos Passos for not conforming to their models of masculinity, and Casey uses these attacks to point up two interlocking aspects of her subject: Dos Passos' ironic criticism of male presumptions and his examination of the position of women within American society. Even in his earliest stories she finds the beginning of such questioning of gender stereotypes, but it was not until *One Man's Initiation* (1917) that he engaged with the question of how far the protagonist is imprisoned within conventions of romance. Casey's focus on gender produces a series of lively and suggestive new readings, particularly when she turns to Dos Passos' first mature fiction. She redresses the critical emphasis on war in *Three Soldiers* by arguing that combat and sex form the two terms of a reversible analogy. The three protagonists are subjected within the novel to an ironic perspective on their respective gender presumptions. In *Streets of Night* Dos Passos gives a more Freudian inflection to this same subject by linking desire to the gaze. Here Casey proposes Nan as the true protagonist, the object and conscious exploiter of sexual observation. In that sense she looks forward to Ellen in *Manhattan Transfer* who is described as the "supreme instance of a pattern," in women's experience of the metropolis. Casey shows that autonomy was historically unavailable to women in the twenties and interestingly relates the specular image to labour economics. Rightly stressing theatre and spectacle – Dos Passos described New York as a "city of signs" – she shows how Ellen's subjectivity is created by others and that Ellen realizes this, for example, when she feels to have become dehumanized into a mechanical doll. By this point in the study it has become very difficult to discuss any character's experience as "individual" since Dos Passos' whole method is designed to show that the city imposes its own limited repertoire of behaviour on its inhabitants. This problem becomes even more acute in the *USA* trilogy where Casey makes out a good case that *1919* is the most unified section, being built around a series of links connecting "an unwholesome politics of the body to a corrupted body politics." The demonstration of such connections through careful textual explication and always with reference to the different media makes this study a valuable re-examination of Dos Passos, particularly in bringing out his awareness of how cultural codes and rituals can entrap. Casey's Afterword briefly looks at two topics which could add further dimensions to her study. She shows how Reginald Marsh's illustrations to the *USA* foreground gender by bringing out the specular

implications of many scenes. This valuable commentary could be extended into a broader consideration of how the visual arts impacted on Dos Passos' treatment of gender, as could her remarks on Dos Passos' critical reception. Lastly her study consolidates the view that his major works were written between the wars. We still have to wait for a reevaluation of novels like *Chosen Country* and *Midcentury*.

*Liverpool University*

DAVID SEED

Elizabeth J. Clapp, *Mothers of All Children: Women Reformers and the Rise of Juvenile Courts in Progressive Era America* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1998, \$55.00 cloth, \$18.95 paper). Pp. 214. ISBN 0 271 01778 3.

In the vein of Theda Skocpol's *Protecting Soliders and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* and Linda Gordon's *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare*, Elizabeth J. Clapp explores the role of maternalists in shaping United States public policy in the early twentieth century. Clapp's well-researched study of the campaign for and development of juvenile courts in the Progressive Era reveals the influence of women in redefining the status of troubled children brought before the law: young criminals became juveniles in need of guidance. Women made their voices heard through an assertion of their right to speak as "mothers of all children."

By using Illinois as a case study while still observing national trends in juvenile justice, Clapp presents a thorough and detailed analysis not only of this important area of progressive reform, but also of the intricacies of maternalist activism itself. Beyond simply reinserting women back into the story of the Progressive Era, *Mothers of All Children* makes a significant contribution to an interpretative trend – the maternalist paradigm in women's reform – that had seemingly run its course. Clapp reveals divisions and variations among maternalists by distinguishing between *traditional* and *professional maternalists*. The first consisted of women, typically married, who became involved in progressive reform via their desire to use their mothering abilities to improve the world, usually as a result of their experiences in local women's groups. The second were women, typically educated and unmarried, whose knowledge of social science motivated them to campaign for progressive reform and justified their actions with maternalist rhetoric. Accordingly, Clapp defines Jane Addams and her Hull House comrades as professional maternalists and members of the Chicago Woman's Club as traditional maternalists.

Clapp's categorization of maternalists offers an intriguing new lens with which to study the maternalist phenomenon, demonstrating the importance of questioning whether maternalism was a rhetorical device or a held ideology. Yet, historians must be attentive to the dangers inherent in imposing Clapp's labels. The lines between the two are not clear. Some women, at various points in their lives, were both professional and traditional maternalists. Nevertheless, Clapp offers a useful analytical framework in which to explore the myriad of reasons why American women became increasingly involved in the formation of public



policy in the early twentieth century. *Mothers of All Children* reveals that maternalists were a more diversified group than previously understood.

University of Virginia

CLAYTON MCCLURE BROOKS

Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876–1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, \$32.50, £25.95). Pp. 313. ISBN 0 226 11492 9.

Offering itself as an alternative to both an older account of the “Golden Age” of American museums that emphasised their position as treasure troves erected by wealthy patrons, and a more recent genealogical narrative emerging out of the growing institutional stature of museum studies, Steven Conn’s book strives for the kind of encyclopedic coverage sought by many a museum projector of the nineteenth century. Considering a wide variety of museum types, from museums of history and natural history to those of anthropology, commerce and fine arts, Conn charts the decline into irrelevance, by the years surrounding the First World War, of what he terms an “object-based epistemology.” If carefully classified and arranged collections of museum objects were at one time thought to provide for both the dissemination and the advancement of scientific knowledge, Conn’s goal is to demonstrate that universities increasingly displayed museums as privileged sites of knowledge production; he argues further that burgeoning professional communities claimed the production of new knowledge as *their* responsibility, leaving museums with the “derivative” task of public education. This thoroughly researched volume makes a strong argument for a pervasive institutional shift away from the democratic aspirations of many in the American museum community (though this term is used to contain entities like mechanics’ institutes and societies “friendly to science”) and toward the installation of a new oligarchy of university-trained professionals. One especially fine chapter considers the friction between the then “new historians” of the post-bellum era, who prized objectivity and historical fact gleaned from documentary sources over all, and two renegade attempts to glean “history from things.”

If, however, he accuses museum studies “in the Foucauldian vein” of being “historically shallow,” it must be admitted that Conn’s own contribution to the field, while it presents much compelling material related to the institutional vicissitudes of some of America’s most interesting and prestigious museums, occasionally lacks analytical depth (though this may be a result of its broad scope); the potential utility of Conn’s “object-based epistemology” is not borne out in enough specific analyses of the particular ways in which the objects in question emerged. This may well stem from the author’s allegiance to intellectual history and his resistance to an approach that would locate the specificity of objects at the intersections between discourse and practice. It is not hard to agree with Conn’s call for “historical depth,” but his hurried dismissal of a casually delineated “Foucauldian” approach surely obscures the undeniable usefulness of the Foucault of *The Order of Things*, for example, to historians of material culture generally. Such a difficulty, of course, need only detain those with a particular interest in the theoretical and methodological issues at stake in museum

historiography; this is a worthwhile and engagingly written look at an important period in the turbulent history of the museum enterprise in the United States.

*Brunel University*

JAMES MASSENDER

Morris Dickstein (ed.), *The Revival of Pragmatism: New Essays on Social Thought, Law, and Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998, \$69.95 cloth, \$23.95 paper). Pp. 453. ISBN 0 8223 2228 5, 0 8223 2245 5.

Jonathan Levin, *The Poetics of Transition: Emerson, Pragmatism, & American Literary Modernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999, £11.95 paper). Pp. 222. ISBN 0 8223 2296 X.

The current fascination with pragmatism and its applicability to a range of disciplines in the social sciences, the humanities and the arts is evident in these two welcome volumes from Duke University Press. John Patrick Diggins argued in *The Promise of Pragmatism* (University of Chicago Press, 1994) that the American philosophical/social tradition beginning with Peirce and James in the late nineteenth century had spiralled into free fall when an ageing John Dewey was left theoretically ill-equipped to deal with the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the dark days of the Holocaust. Since the 1980s the revival in the fortunes of pragmatism has been stimulated by neo-pragmatic critics as influential as Stanley Cavell, Diggins, Stanley Fish, Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty (all of whom contribute to Morris Dickstein's collection of essays) and Cornel West. Dickstein views contemporary pragmatism as a form of "constructive skepticism," combating dogmatic authority and representing an ongoing "search for method" amongst the debris of crumbling philosophical foundations, while Jonathan Levin deploys the "energizing" spirit of pragmatism as a tool for reassessing the literary modernist preoccupation with dynamism and transition. This emphasis on the use value of pragmatism does not represent a return to utilitarianism as a commitment to grounded technique stripped of human subjectivity; rather it enables these critics to explore "situational" methodologies which help to ground philosophy in lived experience.

*The Revival of Pragmatism* is divided into four sections which deal in turn with philosophy, social thought, law and culture. In his introduction Dickstein identifies the optimistic and future-oriented dimensions of pragmatism as being peculiarly American, but argues that the early anti-epistemological emphasis of James and Dewey has given way to a more creative set of critical negotiations in "today's post-ideological climate." Rather than seeking a critical consensus about the nature of pragmatism, the book encourages debate and argument. For example, in the section on philosophy, Rorty argues that pragmatism is a kind of romantic polytheism which eschews transcendental authority in order to address "diverse, conflicting, but equally valuable forms of human life." He identifies pragmatic elements in European philosophy, but plays Nietzsche off the American pragmatists on issues of democracy and religion to indicate that Dewey's emphasis on "universal human fraternity" cannot be squared with Nietzsche's ruthless pursuit of human happiness. In conclusion, Rorty argues that Dewey echoes Whitman's praise of a mythical America – "the union of the ideal

and the actual” – as the ultimate symbol of pragmatism, suggesting an intertwining of poetry and philosophy which Richard Poirier develops in the section on culture and art. Later in this section, Giles Gunn challenges Rorty’s assumption that pragmatism represents the end phase of “a process of divinization” and the general decline of religion in the West, by siding with Poirier in arguing that religion and pragmatism can be seen as allies rather than combatants. While Gunn is encouraged by Rorty’s discussion of the relationship between the two, he is worried that religion too closely resembles art for Rorty and that his romantic polytheism is based on a narrow understanding of Dewey as a “celebrationist reading of America’s religious destiny.”

Published in Donald Pease’s ‘New Americanists’ series, Levin’s *The Poetics of Transition* focuses more exclusively on the literary implications of pragmatism by taking as its starting-point Emerson’s hatred of stasis and inertia in favour of “unsettled possibility.” As such, “the poetics of transition” represents a resistance to “definitive formulations,” often manifesting itself “as a pervasive formal or stylistic restlessness” which cannot be assimilated into an epistemological quest for certainty. Levin discusses this “illegible moment in American writing” as an unnameable (or barely nameable) phenomenon which he traces through the work of Emerson, the James brothers, Santayana, Stein and Stevens, and which he only loosely defines as the “dynamic margins of experience.” Rather than developing Cornel West’s view of the romantic–prophetic spirit of pragmatism in a reading of “degraded otherness, subjected alienness, and subaltern marginality,” Levin demonstrates that a similar emphasis on uncertainty is evident in canonical American modernism as a set of “transitional dynamics that rub away at the edges of self and world.” Levin is particularly interested in those factors which prevent “preoccupied attention” from being equated with self-interestedness. Addressing this issue, he reads Emerson as asserting that an awareness of, and receptivity to, certain “moral and intellectual energies” existing outside the self should encourage the individual to participate in the “complex web of purposes and ideals” which bind together a social and moral community. Ultimately, this assertion represents a belief in human reciprocity (rather than a grounded ethics), which may be a supreme fiction but, in pragmatic vein, serves to initiate “new transitional processes” and maintain an open relationship between the self and the world.

*University of Leicester*

MARTIN HALLIWELL

Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Disaster and Memory: Celebrity Culture and the Crisis of Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, £34.00 cloth, £12.95 paper). Pp. 182. ISBN 0 231 113161, 0231 11317 x.

In the weeks following the death of Princess Diana, it became commonplace to see swiftly printed commemorative tea-towels, t-shirts and magazine supplement tributes, attesting to an expedient use of old stock to cash in on the unexpected commercial opportunity. Wheeler Winston Dixon’s *Disaster and Memory* begins and ends with a discussion of the events surrounding the death of the “People’s Princess” in order, it claims, to illustrate “our culture’s obsession with

monumentalised images of catastrophe.” However, one can’t help feeling that, like the visage of Diana stuck to a memorial tea-tray, these sections have been speedily attached, with much publishing fervour, to what is in large part an eclectic and slenderly related collection of themes and topics.

The result is that the book suffers from something of an identity problem; the cover declares it an on-the-cusp-of-the-millennium, *zeitgeist*-gauging account of “celebrity culture and the crisis of Hollywood.” Yet the content delivers interesting if rather rambling and whimsical chronicles of, amongst others, Andy Warhol, Jean Luc-Godard, the cult TV series *The Prisoner* and 1950s Sci-Fi movies. Moreover, such sections do not always coalesce into convincing arguments – the premises with which Dixon sets up portions of the book are all too often just provocative ways for the author to segue into obviously more cherished areas of personal interest. For example, in order to illustrate the proposition that the “cult of personality ... has gradually overtaken the world as a congruent whole,” the author chooses, rather eccentrically, to examine the marginalised 1950s directorial careers of Ida Lupino and Richard Carlson. The feeling one is left with is that Dixon is paying lip service to the “sexy” premises the publisher desired, and then moving on to what really interests him.

Having said this, the book is never less than entertaining and engaging as it flirts capriciously with one topic after another. It forgoes footnotes and references in favour of an approach that seeks to enrapture and cajole the reader, rather than strive for academic rigour; these are meditations on contemporary culture, rather than a work of exegesis. Ultimately though, the book’s success or failure may depend upon whether the reader shares Dixon’s quite old-fashioned framing of contemporary culture behind the postmodern façade, where mainstream cinema is always dominant, avant-garde figures are always unfairly marginalised, and the old mass-culture theory line about audiences being seduced by meaningless spectacle always holds.

*University of Nottingham*

JAMES LYONS

Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930–1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, \$49.50 cloth, \$19.50 paper). Pp. 412. ISBN 0 231 11094 4, 0 231 11095 2.

Thomas Doherty’s third book (previous studies have covered the films of World War II and the “teenpics” of the 1950s) is a pleasure to read. Where film criticism often seems doomed to crush the power and immediacy of the moving image under the weight of theoretical abstraction and protracted analysis, Doherty’s prose is swift, vivid and energetic, much like the films that he addresses here.

The years 1930–34 have been seen as the height of promiscuity and daring in pre-1960s American cinema, and arguably they produced some of the industry’s most startling images: explicit female nudity in *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1932), rape and riot in *Wild Boys of the Road* (1933), and miscegenation both explicit (in *Massacre*, 1934) and implicit (in *King Kong*, 1933). In retrospect the Code itself sounds patently absurd, forbidding “obscene” dances, citing brothels as “dangerous and bad dramatic locations,” and noting that adultery is a subject

that “should be avoided.” But it is important to remember that the Hays Code – which was written by a Jesuit priest and a Roman Catholic layman under the direction of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America president, Will H. Hays – was in actual fact a tool devised to put a respectable face on an industry long beleaguered by criticism for its lax morals, sensationalism and hedonism. While the gaunt, bespectacled figure of Hays is still associated with morbid sexual repression and authoritarian zeal, Doherty reminds us that in fact the Hays Code served as a form of Hollywood self-censorship, devised at a moment when the industry was suffering on numerous fronts.

In two strong opening chapters, Doherty sketches the confluence of events that led up to the code: the arrival of sound, the Depression and near-economic collapse of the studios, and a lingering, collective sense of guilt that remained after the public scandals and excesses of the 1920s. The book then embarks on a genre study of the pre-Code years, covering gangster films, comedy, horror, newsreels, exploration and adventure films, and what the censors then labelled “sex films.” Aspects of this material have been covered before, and one wonders how much can be added to recent feminist scholarship on Mae West, or to postcolonial readings of racialised adventure films like the *Tarzan* series. But Doherty covers each film with conviction and clarity. Read within the political contexts of pre-Code cinema, the daring wit or often maddening contradictions one finds in these films can take on new and unexpected shades of meaning.

As Doherty is quick to point out, he has not pursued this project simply for the sake of praising the imagination and verve of pre-Code Hollywood. He is willing to concede that the greatest American films were largely produced after the Code came into force. He does not begin to suggest why censorship might give rise to great art, but leaves us with a thorough account of the unbridled, unreserved, and often messy world of early 1930s cinema.

University of Essex

JEFFREY GEIGER

W. D. Ehrhart, *Ordinary Lives: Platoon 1005 and the Vietnam War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999, \$29.50). Pp. 334. ISBN 1 56639 674 3.

*Ordinary Lives* is a chronicle of W. D. Ehrhart's fellow Platoon 1005ers who were in Marine boot camp in Parris Island in 1966. Ehrhart writes in the introductory chapter, “The Search for Platoon 1005,” that “*Ordinary Lives* is not a book about me. It's a book about the other seventy-nine men of Platoon 1005.” His account of the painstaking, time-consuming research indicates the depth of his commitment in the project. The portraits vary in length and detail depending on access to information and the former Marines' willingness to share their memories and experiences with Ehrhart.

This book could be placed within the context of other oral histories on Vietnam such as Mark Baker's *Nam*, Al Santoli's *Everything We Had*, and Kathryn Marshall's *In the Combat Zone: An Oral History of American Women in Vietnam*. Ehrhart extends the genre of oral history by focusing extensively on veteran lives after the war; accounts of combat experience are minimal. Unlike Baker's

anonymous accounts, Ehrhart names and places each veteran within particular contexts of family, community, memory, war, and politics. The Vietnam War, Ehrhart writes, “was [...] history, and each of these men was and is a part of that history, and I believe their stories are important.” Ehrhart’s own voice is muted; his interaction with veterans and their families creates a sense of lived history without illusions of “objectivity.” Oral histories recuperate individual memories that could be inaccurate and exaggerated, but their value lies in resisting a “top-down” history. Ehrhart’s presence, the immediacy of detailed interviews, and occasional before-and-after photographs represent vital memorialisations in the context of a wider amnesia regarding Vietnam. In this respect the collection is at one with the rest of Ehrhart’s work: sympathetic, rigorous in detail and scope, and mindful of the costs of war.

The interviews touch on widely debated issues: whether the US presence was justified, whether the politicians lost the war, that veterans were heroes, the question of draft dodgers. There are common themes and iterations that recur in the interviews, such as the belief that north Vietnam ought to have been invaded. Milton R. Waters, Jr., who regrets not having served in Vietnam, sums up this conviction: “I thought we should have been in Vietnam. My only complaint is that we didn’t annihilate them. I still feel we should have blown North Vietnam off the map.” Occasionally there are alternative points of view. Coulbourn H. Godfrey, Jr., says, “Should we have been there? No. We never could understand those people.”

The men of Platoon 1005 came from all walks of life and from all over America. Those who returned from Vietnam are neither villains nor heroes, and it is this quality of ordinariness that Ehrhart projects so effectively. For him the transcription of stories is a personal quest: “To whatever degree it might be possible, I wanted to restore each man’s individual self, to give him a permanent place in my memory and on the printed page.” Ehrhart has admirably restored individual selves and in the process created a moving verbal tapestry that reiterates some of the contradictions that permeated America during and after Vietnam.

*St. Stephen’s College, Delhi*

SUBARNO CHATTARJI

Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997, \$19.95 paper). Pp. 434. ISBN 0 8078 4667 8.

There is a poignant paradox at the heart of Glenn Eskew’s splendid account of the civil rights movement in Birmingham, Alabama, which is neatly captured in the book’s title. But for the Birmingham campaign of 1963, with its vivid dramatisation of the brutal lengths to which some whites would go to defend segregation, the course – or at least the chronology – of the civil rights movement would have been very different. Events in Birmingham, in conjunction with hundreds of other campaigns across the South, finally prompted a slovenly Kennedy administration to support comprehensive civil rights legislation. But for Birmingham itself, particularly for the black masses who ignored the threat

of Bull Connor's dogs, fire-hoses and jails to march alongside local leader Fred Shuttlesworth and the city's most celebrated visitor, Martin Luther King, little of substance changed as a direct consequence of the campaign.

Ultimately, Eskew argues, King and a conservative local black elite which had always looked upon Fred Shuttlesworth's direct action campaign with suspicion, settled for symbolism over substance in reaching an agreement with "progressive" white civic leaders. Thus he describes how an indigenous Movement for racial justice was variously co-opted by King, the federal government, and Birmingham's white business progressives headed by Sid Smyer; indeed, in one of the most powerful sections of a passionately written book, Eskew describes Shuttlesworth's anger as he announced the details of a settlement which – although publicly hailed as a major victory for the Movement – actually recognised none of his original demands.

If the basic contours of this story are well known to Movement historians, Eskew succeeds in refining our understanding of its local and national coordinates and significances in important ways. For example, his emphasis on demographics and changing residential patterns in the city provides critical background to the city's deepening racial crisis in the 1950s and 1960s. Eskew also corrects a number of erroneous assumptions about the role of Bull Connor in the events of 1963. He reminds us that, while Connor's presence helped to provide the images of segregationist violence which the Movement needed to provoke federal action and prick white consciences, this prospect did not determine the SCLC's decision to get involved in Birmingham, or the timing of that intervention, since it was assumed that Connor would already have left office as a result of his defeat in a municipal election before the SCLC arrived. Moreover, Eskew insists that, while the policing of the official protests was often ferocious enough, the dogs and hoses which made the front pages and newscasts were never actually directed against demonstrators; rather, they were used for crowd control against angry black bystanders who tried to interfere with the policing of the marches. Indeed, although he never really explores the full significance of the insight, Eskew begins the process of re-contextualising Birmingham's much vaunted non-violent direct-action campaign in the midst of a permanent capacity – sometimes realised – for black, as well as white, violence in the city. A sophisticated and engaging piece of scholarship, *But for Birmingham* ranks alongside the best of a new wave of histories which skillfully investigate the relationship between the national, regional and local forces which fashioned the Southern freedom struggle.

*University of Florida, Gainesville*

BRIAN WARD

Philip Fisher, *Still the New World: American Literature in a Culture of Creative Destruction* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999, £18.50). Pp. 290. ISBN 0 674 83859 9.

American newness is a not unfamiliar topic, but even newness itself can be refreshed, as it is here in the latest wise and penetrating offering from Philip Fisher where America's unique stake in the newness of the new is seen as a

combining of restlessly accelerated technological transformation and permanently unsettled conditions. Newness is a *permanent* frame of being; America is *still* the New World and will continue so to be. New is, perhaps, too old and static a word by now for the period under consideration, roughly 1840–1940: Fisher has a fondness for Twain’s term “removal” as a closer nuancing of America’s shifting nature, its abstracting of persons and social mores from what had earlier been more stable and more familiar cultures on behalf of a land that is “unfinished” and a society that is “never finished.” This abstraction is what Fisher means by the “creative destruction” of his sub-title, the “favoring of the future over the past within economic and social life,” where he assumes, and demonstrates, a radical cultural change – or, rather, a change in the nature of our understanding of a “culture” as generational, relatively unified and stable, patient in its accommodation of alterity: “Transmission of an existing way of life came to be replaced by an ever new economic and cultural world into which the members of each generation – made up of the young and of the newly arrived – settled and defined themselves.” Mobility is the key characteristic (for Fisher, “the only real American tradition”) wherein every American is effectively a permanent immigrant or newcomer through the various processes and stages of unsettlement – what Fisher invokes Whitman to call “the loose drift of character” – and where identity is re-cast as a form of membership depending upon, in a wonderful phrase, “erasure of traits rather than cultivation of features.”

The heart of Fisher’s thesis derives from Whitman and, to a lesser extent, Emerson, and its thrust is to investigate the urgencies of democratic social and aesthetic space under the aegis of “creative destruction” through Stowe, Melville, Twain, James, Howells, Dreiser, Hemingway, Dos Passos, West, and Fitzgerald with illuminating visual analogies from Thomas Eakins, Jasper Johns, Winslow Homer, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Its stance is firmly and richly materialist (“it is in the guiding signals of the American economy of mass-produced, ever-changing goods, along with the ever-changing frames within which those goods appear and are distributed, that the leading and defining edge of national life is to be found”) enabling the notion of a culture of consumption to be modified thus: “If we imagine that it is not the number of goods that is decisive, but the rapidity with which needs are invested or met in new ways, then the emphasis shifts from quantity of goods or the process of acquisition to the speeding up of invention and to the accompanying instability of the activities and objects of social life.” Fisher’s transferring of the emphasis from goods or systems to what he calls “the calculus of rates of change over time” for not only goods but ways of doing things and ways of social and individual behaviour, is a transference that catches perceptively the material immateriality of newness itself. It enables also some marvellously acute readings of his texts: “Benito Cereno,” for example, is analysed through an equation of work (understood as output whereby social transparency is enabled) and ritual (understood as a system of self-regulation that is opaque to outsiders), schematised syntactically by a highly sophisticated structure of either/or. While the argument for the transparency of work seems to neglect the forgetfulness of labour’s process within developing industrial practices, and while the syntactical debate might



have benefited from Levi-Straus's famous essay, Fisher's account is extraordinarily adroit in its assessment of the tale's preoccupation not with slavery as such but with the suppressions of slavery's aftermath.

Philip Fisher's *Still the New World* is but the most recent element in his distinguished and energising critique of American literary culture which began with *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: OUP, 1985). It adds further confirmation to his place amongst that small group of critics whose work is unfailingly rewarding.

University of Keele

IAN F. A. BELL

Mick Gidley, *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian, Incorporated* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, £37.50, \$59.95). Pp. 330. ISBN 0 521 56335 6.

Edward Curtis's photographs are among the most easily recognisable images of North American Indians, regularly used as part of the continuing nostalgic fascination with Indians as natural and noble. The photographs, though, were in fact only part of Curtis's ambitious project of recording and documenting the Indians of North America. This monumental undertaking spanned nearly four decades and resulted in his 20 volume collection of ethnographic text and photographs, *The North American Indian*, theatrical performances, combining photographs and original music, as well as, in 1914, what was the first documentary feature film, *In the Land of the War Canoes*. Mick Gidley's scholarly and fascinating book is devoted to showing us this larger enterprise and the complex interrelation of commercial, institutional and aesthetic concerns with which Curtis had to reckon. As a result the focus of the book is not just on Curtis, though he is always present, scheming and planning, but on his many and various collaborators, and one of the strengths of this deeply textured book is the depth of detail we are given on these other figures, and their activities on the fringes of the rapidly developing disciplines of anthropology. As the word "incorporated" in his title suggests, Gidley wants to alert us not only to the business aspects of Curtis's enterprise (which aimed to draw in eminent figures like J. Pierpont Morgan) but to the larger sense of the incorporation of the Indians into a justificatory national narrative, with the requisite body of knowledge to buttress it. In the period from the 1890s the evolutionary assumption was that the only option for Indians as the "vanishing race" was assimilation, but the imagination of scholars and public alike was fired not by the changes and adaptations being made by Indians but by the image of the Indian as preserved outside history and change. Gidley acknowledges Curtis's role in perpetuating this sense of arrested development in his choice and presentation of Indian materials, but he also shows how this is inherent in the larger activity of the institutionalisation of knowledge in the period, not only in salvage ethnography but in the many other areas Curtis was involved in, from art and curio collecting to the popular presentations of Hollywood.

Gidley skilfully and economically incorporates recent work on representation which has shifted the terms of the debate beyond questions of accuracy and stereotyping, and towards a closer examination of the interlocking discursive practices within which representation of other cultures resides, and he does provide some penetrating readings of individual photographs and texts, but ultimately his concern in this book is not to enter the debates over the aesthetic or political values of the work so much as to document the conditions of its production. In its rich detail, and its judicious refusal to go for easy formulations, this is a book to work *with*, rather than a book to be quickly consumed and positioned, and it is perhaps with this in mind that Gidley takes the unusual approach of including after each chapter a selection of key or representative documents, allowing a fuller sense of the texture of the arguments. These, supplemented by Gidley's detailed footnotes, which constantly suggest further directions for primary as well as secondary research, make the book a rich and exciting resource for anyone working in the period, as well as an outstanding contribution to the scholarship on Curtis and Indian representations.

*University of Nottingham*

DAVID MURRAY

Sam B. Girgus, *Hollywood Renaissance: the Cinema of Democracy in the Era of Ford, Capra, and Kazan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, £37.50 cloth, £13.95 paper). Pp. 258. ISBN 0 521 62388 X, 0 521 62552 1.

American studies and film studies are in the midst of a transitional period, the former attempting to re-conceive the study of the United States as a unified place and concept called "America," the latter increasingly validated as serious academic work, yet perhaps beginning to lose the sense of the freedom and unpredictability it once promised as it is drawn into the intellectual and aesthetic hierarchies of scholarly institutions. These tensions hover on the margins of this book, which revisits a number of important films that have achieved nearly canonical status – *The Searchers*, *It's A Wonderful Life*, *Red River*, *On the Waterfront*, *Giant* – and argues that they have helped to define a coherent and inclusive democratic ideology.

For Girgus, the directors of these films – John Ford, Frank Capra, Howard Hawks, Elia Kazan, George Stevens – constitute an ideological core roughly equivalent to the one formed by nineteenth-century writers praised by F. O. Matthiessen in his landmark study, *American Renaissance*. Girgus argues that, like Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman, and Melville, the filmmakers above were united in their devotion to the possibilities of democracy. Together they produced a body of work that still testifies to a "culture of renewal and ... a history of one generation's power to awaken and motivate another." Girgus does an admirable job of describing the political debates that inevitably have raged around a unified notion of the democratic ideal and around these films in particular. For example, the context of the recent controversy over the honorary Oscar given to Elia Kazan – still reviled for "naming names" before the House Un-American Activities Committee – is presciently explained here, though the book appeared a few months too early to address the event itself. In a series of

comprehensive close readings, Girgus offers keen visual analysis, critical background, and the historical context of the films.

The book strives for balance in covering what has become contested territory, but at times a tendency towards hyperbole has the opposite effect. For good reason, Girgus clearly loves these films, and this affection is warmly conveyed in the prose. He further argues for the productive possibilities of an American “ideology of consensus”: a theory elaborated by Sacvan Bercovitch which describes American ideology as a process of re-absorbing dissent into dominant cultural forms for social ends. While this comes across as an inclusive position, this idealistic consensus is yet again opposed to unspecified figures of “dissensus” in the form of “multiculturalism” and “political correctness.” Girgus justly suggests that any attempt to “restructure a center” for American ideology needs to take into account the fact that America has perpetually deconstructed and reconstructed itself over time. But there is a circular logic here – recasting difference as center, center as difference – which may too easily absorb (even while acknowledging) the alternative cultural locations of people of color, women, lesbian and gay people: actors in the primarily masculine and heterosexual dramas of these films.

*University of Essex*

JEFFREY GEIGER

William A. Gleason, *The Leisure Ethic: Work and Play in American Literature, 1840–1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, £37.50 cloth, £11.95 paper). Pp. 446. ISBN 0 8047 3399 6, 0 8047 3434 8.

*The Leisure Ethic* begins by outlining how the intensification of monotonous, arduous industrial labour during the nineteenth century devalued the Protestant Work Ethic and prompted new theories of leisure. William Gleason posits that “play theorists, an eclectic mix of educators, social philosophers, and playground organizers,” attempted to recontain this potentially subversive “gospel of play” within a pro-capitalist discourse. *The Leisure Ethic* is an account of how literary narratives figured work and play rather more critically than the play theorists’ manuals.

The strong opening chapter argues that *Walden* challenged the emergent industrial society by presenting a radical fusion of labour and leisure. However, Gleason suggests, Thoreau “bar[red] the Irish from his new ideology of work and play” because these unskilled and exploited immigrant workers were incompatible with his vision of “free labor.” Gleason identifies a similar selectivity in *Roughing It* and *Life on the Mississippi*. Twain’s indictment of capitalist labour relations narrows into an idealized empathy with artisans (including, unsurprisingly, river pilots), in whom Samuel Clemens perceived his own authorial persona.

In an innovative appraisal of two lesser-known novels, Gleason suggests that Cahan’s *The Rise of David Lewinsky* and Rølvaag’s *The Giants of the Earth* subtly queried the “metaphorical reconception of American leisure (and leisure space) as the new frontier.” Gleason then considers how Gilman and Ferber critiqued the “strategies of recontainment” which kept women’s work within the domestic

sphere. However, the argument becomes strained as Gleason himself struggles to “contain” the more troubling aspects of *Herland* and *Emma McClesney & Co.* in qualifications and footnotes.

Perhaps Gleason’s most audacious move is to compare Jay Gatz’s “passing” in the white leisure-class to the fate of James Weldon Johnson’s ex-colored man. Yet the reading of *The Great Gatsby* is unsatisfactory. Gleason cites “an abundance of racial signifiers” which turn out to be rather tenuous, and his references to wider cultural sources are too speculative.

*The Leisure Ethic* recovers authority in the penultimate chapter. Gleason persuasively argues that *Native Son* revised *An American Tragedy*’s critique of the leisure-class to include “the racial dynamics of American leisure.” The final chapter claims that in *Sanctuary* Faulkner critically replicated the scopoc control imposed on Southern white women’s leisure. On an optimistic and impressive endnote to an ambitious but not always convincing volume, Gleason shows how Hurston’s Janie Crawford escapes this male gaze to perform her own work and play.

*University of Nottingham*

MARTYN BONE

Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson (eds.), *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1997, \$70 cloth, \$22.50 paper). Pp. 532. ISBN 0 8139 1725 5, 0 8139 1726 3.

The editors, via the epigraph to *Haunted Bodies*, contend that “it is not sexuality which haunts society but society which haunts the body’s sexuality.” This valuable volume comprises twenty essays that probe the ways in which the history of the American South has been written on the body. Literary-critical analyses plot the landscape of the American South by viewing the terrain through the lens of gender. Some of the writers take a panoramic view, others focus in on specific texts in close readings. Some essays test new ground in more obvious ways than others but the result is not uneven.

The contexts range from eighteenth-century Florida (Jane Landers) to 1970s rock and roll (Ted Ownby) and representations of father-daughter incest in fiction of the 1990s (Minrose Gwin); from juxtaposing Mary Chesnut with Virginia Woolf (Michael O’Brien) to interrogating what is camp about the “homosocial fantasy of racial harmony” in Southern literature (Caroline Gerbhard). Essays are subtle and challenging: as in Patricia Yaeger’s exploration of women writers’ use of the grotesque and Mary Titus’s study of “cuisine and company” in the domestic spaces of the nineteenth-century South. Included are innovative readings of Poe (David Leverenz) and discerning reconsiderations of Douglass, Stowe, Hurston and Faulkner (Richard Yarborough, Anne Goodwyn Jones, Lucinda MacKethan, Catherine Gunther Kodat, Noel Polk, for example). Contributors discuss the way in which black women’s texts have become a battlefield for black male critics (Deborah E. McDowell) and how Southern autobiography stands in troubled relation to history (Peggy W. Prenshaw and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese).

This is not a sprawling compilation of ideas but a thematically defined inquiry most useful for its examination of the anxieties of gender: masculinity, femininity, and what the editors call “the tragic incarceration of gender” in Southern story and history. Overall, the volume wears its theoretical perspectives lightly. I wonder whether a longer, more rigorously theorised introduction might have helped to show how nuanced Gender Studies and Queer Theory have become in recent years, and the ways in which post-structuralist thinking about gender categories has contributed towards opening up axiomatic polarities by pointing up the mobility of gender positions. That said, *Haunted Bodies* expands on Foucault’s idea that sexuality is “the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours and social relations” by extending it to gender.

The essays are carefully edited to fashion intertextual associations across the volume and, as with a number of recent collections, there is a strong sense that the critics are in dialogue and that their conversation about the South is open-ended. This is a rich study region, race, gender, and genealogy which offers many opportunities to examine Southern preoccupations and literary–critical concerns.

*University of Nottingham*

SHARON MONTEITH

Richard Gray, *Southern Aberrations: Writers of the American South and the Problems of Regionalism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000, £25.95 paper). ISBN 0 8071 2602 0.

Is there anything new to be said about Southern literature? Or is the question really, what still needs discussing, even though it may not be “new?” Richard Gray’s achievement in *Southern Aberrations* is closer to the latter. In it, he is exploring an important theme of Southern literature – its pre-occupation with Southern identity – with more subtlety than is usually brought to the topic. Gray’s controlling perspective is that Southern literature has always seen itself as an “aberration” from “national or international norms” and also as aberrant to/from itself. With this in place, Gray explores the following: two uneasily Virginia writers, Edgar Allan Poe and Ellen Glasgow; the shaping of the Southern literary canon by Allen Tate and the Agrarians as a profoundly ideological act; Southerners of the 1930s and 1940s who wrote about poverty and those who wrote about the mountain South; and, finally, the remarkable variety of contemporary Southern writing. The upshot is that the old question of what the South, and what Southern literature is, is still very much a live issue. The South, in Gray’s phrase, is constantly in a state of “self-fashioning,” and that, in turn, is reflected in its literary expression.

Those familiar with Gray’s work on the South will find all his strengths on display here: it is impossible for him to say anything stupid or banal about a text or a writer. (This is not to say that he is never wrong or beyond criticism; more of that presently.) Gray is also an indefatigable reader; and he covers a prodigious amount of material, lots of it unknown and/or unread by most of us, at least by me. Finally, Gray is a lucid synthesizer, not just of literary themes but also of historical transformations. His account of the protean-like post-1960s South, roughly the first fifteen pages of chapter six, is remarkable in its feel for the

significant historical and sociological detail that reveals what the South is now like. It is a good thing he is not an historian or we historians would be out of business.

But, in covering so much ground, *Southern Aberrations* inevitably raises questions about who and what it does (not) engage with. It is hard to calculate the degree to which Gray's omissions and inclusions trace back to his steady focus upon regional self-identity. For instance, on Gray's account, relatively few white Southern writers have ever written about race in a sustained and critical way. Leaving Faulkner aside, few of the better-known figures have done so; and those that have, get short shrift in Gray's compendious study. There is nothing on William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, though Gray did discuss that novel in his *The Literature of Memory*. Mississippi's Ellen Douglas only gets the briefest of glances; and Lillian Smith is praised but only briefly in a footnote. Again, I am not sure whether Gray's omissions reflect the reality of the matter or whether they reflect his own concern with regional self-definition rather than with a tradition of moral and racial self-scrutiny. But there are enough Southern writers that take up the racial theme – Madison Jones's *A Cry of Absence*, Jesse Hill Ford's *Liberation of Lord Byron Jones* and even Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* come to mind – to make me suspect that Gray might have said a lot more on the topic.

Something similar happens with the Southern political novel. To be sure, that category overlaps with the race novel. Yet, it need not. From Robert Penn Warren down to Texas's William Brammer and Larry King, the fictional fascination with the Southern white demagogue has been a staple of Southern political fiction. And when Gray discusses Alice Walker's *Meridian* and Ernest Gaines's *A Gathering of Old Men*, he fails to emphasize that, whatever else these books are, they are also profoundly political novels; not because they advocate racial justice or attack white racism, but because they force the reader to understand what it means to be political, to enter the public realm and survive. (One of the best novels written about the Southern racial crisis and about being Southern – Rosellen Brown's *Civil Wars* – is absent from Gray's text.) *Southern Aberrations* records Gray's convincing refutation of the Agrarians' claim that the best literature always transcends ideology and political position-taking. Why then not deal with Southerners who wrote about political issues and the issue of the political?

There are other aberrant groups whose fictional voices go unexamined. Southern Catholic novelists receive scarcely a mention, though perhaps enough has been written about Walker Percy. But even where Gray did write about Percy in *Writing the South*, his focus was not upon Percy's religious commitments. What South could be both more similar and more different than the African American South? Neither Ralph Ellison nor Richard Wright – nor Sterling Brown's early *Southern Road* – gets a look, while Zora Neale Hurston only comes on the scene near the end of Gray's study.

Finally, Gray needlessly restricts his generic range. The vicissitudes of Southern identity have been explored with penetration and imagination in essays by C. Vann Woodward, Ellison and Albert Murray and in autobiographies by everyone from Wright to Lillian Smith to Mary Karp. This writing easily

matches the achievement of contemporary Southern fiction in its exploration of Southern identity. Besides Wendell Berry, the essayist, historian Shelby Foote and sociologist John Shelton Reed also come to mind as figures whose writing about the South deserves extended exploration. Not to deal with such figures and these kinds of writing seems needlessly self-restrictive.

Still, everyone has their favorites and everyone knows how other people should have written their books. Taken for what it is, Gray's *Southern Aberrations* refamiliarizes us with writers we have forgotten and makes us acquainted with some we have never heard of. Overall, it further consolidates Gray's standing as the leading analyst of Southern writing in the contemporary world.

*University of Nottingham*

RICHARD H. KING

Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, \$29.95/£21.95). Pp. 296. ISBN 0 691 01739 5.

In this incisive political and ethnographical study, Gregory portrays the growth and development of African American settlement in Corona, Queens (NY) from a turn-of-the-century rural community to a substantial black and multi-ethnic urban borough of today. Gregory's Corona residents reveal a "strong sense of history." They have been influenced by the Civil Rights era and the retreat to the conservative politics and economics of subsequent decades. Many Corona residents "told" how the elation of racial progress gave way to the harsher realities of deteriorating neighbourhoods, inadequate public services, political disinterest and corporate business intrusion. A national press portrayed images of festering, welfare-dependent ghettos where crime, drugs and female-headed families seemed to threaten the moral and social fabric. Academics debated urban blight and the existence of a "culture of poverty" and powerlessness.

*Black Corona* posits an alternative analysis. Based on community research, oral history and ethnography, Gregory explores notions of "community," "identity" and the politics of race, place and empowerment. Black Corona sustains a plethora of community groups, churches, civic associations, and informal networks that cross racial, class, gender and generational lines. Its activists "know" who to mobilise to address increasingly daunting problems. Today's Corona residents recognise that the Civil Rights era gains have not effaced racism, prevented injustice nor made government and business interests more responsive to their needs. As the capacity of participatory community politics to shape the decision-making process closed down, new strategies were needed. Thus, activists anxious to challenge the Port and Airport Authorities recruited broader support in adjoining neighbourhoods likely to be affected by the official plans and private ventures. Gregory devotes attention to their struggles.

Earlier community activity was more intimate. The interplay of race, class, gender and generation was played out in local meetings, churches, picnics, dances, youth forums and campaigns. Here people met, talked, reminisced, shared histories that were as different as the Korean businessman, the Latino newcomer, the older generation Italian and Southern black, the young college

graduate, the playgroup and 'mothers' network. It is an active working-class and middle-class world. People are articulate. The past helps shape and inform the present. The power structure is, if anything, more intractable.

While social historians of black urban life may find much in *Black Corona* that is familiar, the detail and analysis are absorbing. The photographs are good and the excellent bibliography completes a fine study and fresh perspective on modern urban black life.

*The Open University*

ROMA BARNES

Daniel S. Hamermesh and Frank D. Bean (eds.), *Help or Hindrance?: The Economic Implications of Immigration for African Americans* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998, \$48.00 cloth). Pp. 448. ISBN 0 87154 387 7.

Recent high levels of immigration are changing the United States from a largely bi-racial society to a multi-racial and multi-ethnic one. In 1996, a quarter of the population designated itself as black, Hispanic, Asian or American Indian; African American were about 44% of the minority population. Some observers fear that low-skilled African Americans are losing out to non-white European immigrants in the labour market, in access to housing and in education. Restrictions on immigration are mooted.

In *Help or Hindrance?*, the first investigation into the economic implications of immigration for African Americans, the editors ask leading economists to produce fourteen innovative essays. It is published under the Russell Sage Foundation's 1907 mandate to foster "the development and dissemination of knowledge about the country's social and economic problems." The rigorously researched essays fall into three categories. Part I discusses the direct labour market impact of the 1970s–1980s immigrants on African American work times, wage rates and earnings. Part II explores the pre-labour market effects of immigration on their educational attainment, housing and job location, small business opportunities and the drift amongst black youth into criminality. In Part III, commentators evaluate the significance of all this research for social and welfare policies.

This study, although based on individual research projects, adds fresh insights to the field of labour market competition and substitution. It re-examines the benefits of immigration emphasised by the National Research Council. Overall, the "observed effects" of immigration remain small. The results show "small negative effects" on African-Americans' economic position and "some positive gains" for a minority of African Americans with skills or capital. There is a "worrisome displacement of minorities by immigrants" in affirmative education schemes. Moreover, "Research ... clearly suggests that African Americans do not appear to have benefited economically from immigration to the same degree as native whites." It did not substantially change African American rates of employment, but it did contribute slightly to the widening gap between the annual earnings of black and white males. Those lowest-skilled African Americans with abilities similar to those of the immigrants were the most likely losers. Any attempt to draw policy conclusions from the studies is "fraught with complexity."



*Help or Hindrance?*, then, is a valuable pioneering study by eminent empirical economists. Other scholars are certain to extend the debate to a wider readership before conclusions can be made on this controversial concern.

*The Open University*

ROMA BARNES

Phillip Brian Harper, *Private Affairs: Critical Ventures in the Culture of Social Relations* (New York: New York University Press, 1999, \$50 cloth, \$16.95 paper). Pp. 189. ISBN 0 8147 3593 2, 0 8147 3594 0.

The boundary between public and private is one of the most fascinating areas of contention in contemporary American culture. Whether considering the slide between celebrity and politics, or the keen debates about identity and performativity, this particular borderline is of immense significance and, therefore, subject to intense scrutiny. This topical volume of essays, which considers some key moments of fracture in the 1990s which affect received notions of the division between the public and the private concerned with sex, race, law, and economics, is a highly welcome addition to the developing literature in this area. Phillip Brian Harper, the author of *Are We Not Men? Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity* and *Framing the Margins: The Social Logic of Postmodern Culture*, draws not only on talismanic episodes of the faultlines in the privacy debate in recent American history, but also on his own experiences as a black, homosexual American male academic to illustrate his argument that privacy in America is available only to the few. That, in fact, privacy is an illusion afforded only to those whose "secrets" fall within the realm of the normative, and are therefore no secrets at all.

Harper's argument, inflected by ideas drawn largely from Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, is both intelligent and intriguing. And, if the logic of the arguments displayed in the essays is sometimes rather tenuous and ramshackle, the incidents, episodes, and instances chosen for analysis are always telling and deftly selected from a pleasingly wide range of cultural effects. After opening the volume with an introduction which cites the Clinton/Lewinsky affair as a paradigm of the problems raised by the notion of privacy in the American political context, Harper moves on to examine the reception of Rodin's, Brancusi's, and Klimt's celebrated representations of the kiss in terms of gender differentiation and practice and the contradictions in the fiction of privacy in the performance of erotic acts. The rest of the essays range with skill and ease over topics such as the position of the homeless, film, the Pee-Wee Herman case, and the nationalist and racial myopia of Andrew Sullivan's arguments regarding AIDS. All of the essays are marked both by cultural sensitivity and generosity, and constitute not only a fine addition to the increasingly impressive collection of recent material on gay and lesbian experience, but to the equally important recent literature on the history of human rights in America. *Private Affairs* is only the second volume in the new series *Sexual Cultures: New Directions from the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies*. If this highly accomplished volume is any indication of the quality of its productions, this will be a series to watch.

*University of the West of England*

KATE FULLBROOK

Philip Horne (ed.), *Henry James: A Life in Letters* (London: Penguin Press, 1999, £25). Pp. 668. ISBN 0 713 99126 7.

Neil Cornwell and Maggie Malone (eds.), *The Turn of the Screw and What Maisie Knew* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998, £40 cloth, £12.99 paper). Pp. 252. ISBN 0 333 68479 6, 0 333 68480 x.

The determining term in the title of Philip Horne's magnificent achievement is "A Life *in Letters*." It is a measure of the scale of this achievement that the term could so easily, and fittingly, have been *of*, *by*, or *through*, since no other major novelist has been as committed as James to the epistolary form. While Lubbock collected 403 letters and Edel brought together 1,100, Horne has selected 296 (some half of which are unpublished previously) directed to 115 correspondents, but estimated a probable total range of 12,000–15,000, not excluding the possibility of a final total in excess of 40,000. James's view of his brother William – that he was "so admirable a letter-writer that *they* will constitute his real and best biography" – is instructive for his own exercise and underpins admirably Horne's ambition to cast his selection as a refashioning of the Victorian "Life and Letters" format, producing, in a fine phrase, "a narrative of passionate creation." Literature, of course, is the "controlling concern" of the selection, but Horne successfully has a more specific rationale in which he aims "to keep in mind, and satisfy, angles of interest on James that have opened up more recently – taking into account the perspectives of feminism, gender studies, publishing history and literary theory."

Do we have a "new" Henry James from these letters? Well, no – given the amplitude of James scholarship, such would be too grand (and perhaps foolish) an expectation. But we do have an especially rich feast of exegesis, gloss, amusing surprise, and unexpected turn. The range is wide and the compass of a short review permits only an ungenerous selectivity. Small details can be telling: the consistent use of "Bohemian" as a pejorative term, for example, and, while it is entirely understandable that, in collecting essays for *Notes on Novelists*, James should plead with his agent for additional time for "revision," his wanting time also for "titivation" is to encounter an unusual word in the Jamesian lexicon. Wry social notation ("I always rather deprecate the marriage of two Bostonians! I always think that such a one should marry a Louisianian, or a native of San Antonio, Texas; just as I infallibly think that a Texan should marry a Bostonian") mixes with the wonderfully simultaneous rectitude and plentitude of his remonstrances towards correspondents who query his work. This is a simultaneity which can prompt an engagingly modest expression of the novelist's function, as here in a reply to Alice Stopford Green's feelings about *The Ambassadors*:

I rejoice, without reserve, to have done in any degree for you that which is perhaps as good a thing as we poor mortals can do for each other – administered the anodyne of a tolerably intense alternative or vicarious experience, a beguiling interruption to the dire familiarities of self.

James then goes on to re-cast the function in more immediate terms: "the creation, the projection and evocation by hook or by crook, of some human and

personal *good company*, for the mind and imagination of one's readers ... is as kind a turn as one can render." Such intimate moments share the pen of the formal aesthetic pronouncements. These cover the fresh articulation of fundamental Jamesian premises (a refusal of closure, for instance, in "no fulfilments are ever as delicate as the radiant impulse"), and the more complex negotiations of feeling and form we see in his response to Edmund Gosse's *The Secret of Narcisse*. James found the novel to be insufficiently "personal" and as part of his critique he announced his prejudice "in favour of all sorts of intense modernity of realism and observation." To picture this modernity, he distinguished between two ways of writing – "the old-fashioned English 'historical-tale' way (which for me, as a form, has ceased to have any interest)" and the way of Flaubert's *Trois Contes* or Anatole France's *Thais* and *Balthazar*, "the way of verbal magic and surface perfection and *ciselure* and infinite particularity – the way, in short, of renovation by *style*." A condensed moment, admittedly, but one which, in 1892, stands as the most modern of modernist proclamations.

A "Life in Letters" in its other sense adumbrates the pressures of the writing life. The stress here is not so much that of compositional anxiety as of external urgencies – in the main, persistent worries over money and over the need to knock stories out to commission for immediate financial return. And length is a constant irritation – 5,000 words is a "detestable number" late in his life, and earlier James complains about the amount of space afforded by the *Cornhill*:

Even 15 of your pages make less than 7,000 words – and I find myself in my old age unable to turn round or to do anything interesting in so small a compass. As one grows older one's manner inevitably becomes more complicated – one's reach, or embrace, ampler: and the form (of brevity) you mention grows therefore a terrifically difficult and expensive process (unsuccessful even then,) of working on the *done* thing – re-boiling down, re-elimination, in which the subject (*my* subject at least,) perishes.

I have a hunch that within the seriousness of this complaint, James allows himself a degree of playfulness at the expense of his own style; and it is this tone of the speaking voice that provides the "Life" in the "Letters," that justifies Philip Horne's "Victorian" handling of his subject. Horne has given us a major work of scholarship, impressing equally by its imagination as by its research – "picturesque" in the Jamesian sense of a *vividness* of portraiture achieved through the speaking voice lacking in conventional biography and through the editorial narrative lacking in conventional epistolary collections.

James himself offered a similar exercise in *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*, and after quoting one letter he noted "Ghosts enough, verily, with a little encouragement, would peep out of the foregoing." Ghosts, inevitably, demand much of the space in the "New Casebooks" compilation of essays on *The Turn of the Screw* and *What Maisie Knew*, gathered together by Neil Cornwell and Maggie Malone. Importantly, this gathering is not merely at the behest of the "best" (although each essay is undeniably powerful) or the "new" (and most of the essays are from the past decade or so, with the exception of a new piece on *The Turn of the Screw* by Ronald Knowles), but is constructed by an argument

impelled by a specific and necessary agenda – the editors demonstrate the schismatic and bipartisan colouring throughout the history of both texts’ receptions and bring out here the more recent insistences on ambiguity and undecidability.

These days, *The Turn of the Screw* is open particularly to self-selecting critical instruments. The first of these is psychoanalysis, represented here by Ronald Schleifer who yokes the tale’s Gothic features with psychoanalytical and Kierkegaardian analyses of meaning, and by Shoshona Felman’s justly famous and tremendously influential discussion of unreadability (given its stature, it would be difficult to omit this essay from any such collection – very few accounts since 1977 have failed to invoke it – but I cannot help feeling that its very fame could argue against its inclusion). Matters are tuned to the social sphere by John Carlos Rowe who relates the tale to issues of authority, power and class relations, and by John H. Pearson who is also interested in power and in questions of patriarchal and textual stability. Finally, the discourses of gender provide the tools for Beth Newman who analyses female identity and the structures of looking, Marianne Dekoven who concentrates upon gendered power relations, and Ronald Knowles who uses the Wilde trial to argue for the tale’s subject as “male homosexual panic.” In the midst of the recognisable positions within these highly impressive essays lies what is arguably the most expressive of all – T. J. Lustig’s acute and sophisticated exposition of the tale’s various lacunae: a model of rigour and sensitivity for the opening up of a Jamesian text.

*What Maisie Knew* is given less space but no less laudable attention. Barbara Eckstein reads it by the side of *Lolita* to demonstrate the world of Maisie as one of “contextual ethics”; Julie Rivkin investigates Maisie’s relations to paternal authority and their consequences for narratology; and Sheila Teahan elaborates an equation between the “compositional law” of Maisie’s consciousness, its straining for epistemological articulation, and the “rhetorical situation” of the novel itself. The imbalance of space afforded these two texts reflects their respective histories of critical discussion, and the editors may have been inhibited by the publisher’s strictures; but it remains an imbalance nevertheless and is to be regretted. However, Cornwell and Malone have provided an excellent service in bringing these essays together, in compiling a first-rate bibliography, and in charting a lively chronicle of their texts’ receptions.

*University of Keele*

IAN F. A. BELL

Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley (eds.), *Perception and Prejudice: Race and Politics in the United States* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1998, £20). Pp. 260. ISBN 0 300 07143 4.

This study, the product of the Race and Politics Study (RPS) organisation, explores white attitudes towards blacks and their effects on public policy issues in the late twentieth century. Employing a multi-disciplinary psychological, sociological and political approach combined with computer-assisted inter-

viewing technologies (CATI), the authors examine the extent to which negative stereotypes of blacks today determine white sentiments towards public policy issues.

The book's central premise is that anti-black prejudice is still as strong today as it was forty years ago. Negative perceptions and stereotypes still exist, they argue, only in a more covert form. By using random questionnaire wordings to different correspondents, these essays draw out the complex nature of white attitudes towards blacks in both racial and non-race-related contexts. Using CATI technology, Laura Stoker, for example, finds that whites are divided in their judgements about affirmative action programmes. They are divided, according to how the issue is phrased and their personal opinion of blacks, on the issues of fairness and whether they feel blacks are deserving of preferential treatment. Feelings of resentment, the racial stereotyping of blacks as "lazy" and inherently inferior, and the belief, espoused in the "symbolic racism" thesis, that blacks are failing to live up to the American work ethic, all have a part to play in shaping white opposition to such programmes.

Chapters that discuss the views of Republicans and Democrats towards race and whites' stereotypes of blacks indicate that race is a divisive and explosive issue for white Americans. Edward Carmines and Geoffrey Layman demonstrate, for example, that racial issues are more problematic for Democrats than Republicans. While the Republican Party is largely unified behind the principle of limited government, its findings convincingly demonstrate that the diverse make-up of the Democratic coalition breeds internal dissension over race-based initiatives. Race, it concludes, is the divisive issue for the Democratic Party, and in particular for its white Southern activists.

There are, however, problems with the book's methodology and conclusions. Firstly, it takes almost no account of African American views. In reasoning that the question of race is a white person's problem, Hurwitz and Peffley ignore the views of blacks within the investigation of an issue at which blacks are at the centre. Secondly, their conclusions are scarcely path-breaking; previous studies like those conducted by Myrdal (1944) and Takaki (1979) have similarly concluded that the politics, economy and culture of American society has, to a large degree, been shaped by whites' derisive views of blacks. This collection of essays confirms, somewhat depressingly, that this situation still holds within American society nearly forty years after the Civil Rights movement started to challenge Jim Crow.

*Brunel University*

NICHOLAS G. NAYLOR

Sherrie A. Inness (ed.), *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 1998, \$55.00 cloth, \$18.50 paper). Pp. 330. ISBN 0 8147 3764 1, 0 8147 3765 X.

Just prior to reading this book, I spent a month in my childhood home, cleaning it out in preparation for sale. What little pleasure emerged from the task had to

do with rediscovering objects from my own girlhood, many of which had been passed down to me by my mother and grandmothers. The invitation to make my debut (immediately declined) now jostles alongside Nancy Drew books from the 1930s to 1960s and school yearbooks, in packing cases waiting to cross the Atlantic. This collection of essays helped me to realize both how commonplace and how atypical my own girlhood was.

*Delinquents and Debutantes* is a good mixture of essays which seeks to explore the varieties of girlhood in the US in the last century. This is a vast subject whose surface is only scratched by the essayists. It is divided into three sections: socialization, consumerism, and identity, and strives to apply questions about the gendering of identity to girlhood. Of course, this is difficult as the old question of how to balance childhood against girlhood or girlhood against adulthood must be attacked by each contributor. But the reality is that girls and boys experience childhood differently from early on, and by the teenage years the only question is: when can a girl be considered an adult? Most of the essays, then, focus on the years of adolescence when girls might be joining the scouts (Laureen Tedesco), babysitting (Miriam Formanek-Brunell), and entering the world of dating.

Dating is, in fact, a recurring theme in these essays, especially those by Mary C. McComb, Kelly Schrum, and Vicki L. Ruiz. Each examines how young women were influenced by surrounding customs. Ruiz's article about Mexican American women is joined by Melinda L. de Jesús's consideration of how Nancy Drew's class and race could be ignored by a Filipina audience, to add a welcome non-white perspective. Other essays (by, respectively, Sherrie A. Inness and Jennifer Scanlon) examine material culture in the shape of the American Girl doll collection and board games. Efforts to control girls are treated by Rachel Devlin (delinquency) and Rhona Justice-Mallowy (changing styles of clothes and the freedom they offered). The influence of juvenile fiction is treated by Angela E. Hubler and Julia D. Gardner. Gardner's study of Mabel Maney reveals that popular heroines have offered a comfortable jumping-off point for a range of lesbian fiction, while Hubler suggests that texts like *Caddie Woodlawn* are more opaque than some studies have suggested. Finally, Mary Celeste Kearney explores the contemporary world of "zine" culture where girls reappropriate narrative in their own way.

*Delinquents and Debutantes* is a suggestive collection which reminds the reader of both the variety of experiences within American girlhood and the dominance of certain tropes (the ever-present Nancy Drew). There is a certain tension within the volume between the two dominant approaches of cultural studies and history. I particularly liked Miriam Formanek-Brunell's historical analysis of the way that baby-sitting was feminized in the interwar years, as it clarified the way that gender identity was reconfigured for boys as well as girls during this century and relied on more than textual readings to arrive at its analysis. But the collection as a whole points researchers forward to more considerations of girls of different regions, classes, races, ethnicities, and proclivities. I look forward to reading these soon.

*Middlesex University*

KELLY BOYD

Christoph Irmscher. *The Poetics of Natural History* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 1999, \$42). Pp. 335. ISBN 0 8135 2615 9.

Like the collections of plants and animals Christoph Irmscher writes about, *The Poetics of Natural History* teems with curiosities – some trivial, some important but none uninteresting. Focussing his attention on “nature’s nation” between, roughly, the Revolution and the end of the Civil War, Irmscher’s central concern is with: “The image of the naturalist who creates a collection and then puts himself into it.”

Irmscher divides his very handsomely produced book into two large sections: “Displaying” with chapters on John and William Bartram, Charles Willson Peale, and P. T. Barnum; and “Representing,” which includes chapters on the fascination with snakes of the New World, John James Audubon, and Louis Agassiz and William James in Brazil. Besides the fascinating details and insights, Irmscher repeatedly offers close readings to establish the autobiographical point and to emphasize the inseparability of natural history and personal narrative.

Still, “Representing” seems to me the more compelling of the two sections. Of no one as much as Audubon is it true to say that he murdered to dissect – but also to evoke and dramatize. The Swiss-born Agassiz, perhaps America’s best-known scientist at the time, conducted a well-financed and outfitted expedition to Brazil in 1865. There he hoped to find the evidence to refute the recently published theories of Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, both of whom had also visited Brazil. Still casting about for a vocation, the young William James went along as an assistant, albeit a rather detached one. To his credit, he eventually defected to the Darwinian camp.

Indeed, it was Darwin who ended this tradition of natural history activity and writing. After him, according to Irmscher: “animal nature no longer functions in analogy to human nature ... natural history has ceased to be a stage for autobiographical self-definition.” Irmscher’s judgement here seems to me uncharacteristically misjudged, ignoring as it does the way today’s Darwinians constantly tell us how we should arrange our lives. Still, of course, Darwin was undoubtedly the great watershed figure in the English-speaking world of the 19th century.

Ultimately, natural history was, as Irmscher reminds us, a highly moralizing, even allegorizing discipline. A kind of pre-lapsarian aura hovers over it, reminding us of the time before there were “two cultures” and when we could all understand science. But, lest we become too nostalgic, a note of special political pleading on behalf of the New World is present in much of this work. And, while natural history was acutely concerned with the place of humans in nature, Irmscher emphasizes the way Agassiz, for instance, used his scientific work to justify the elevation of whites over blacks everywhere. Fascinated by the gap between animals and humans, people such as Barnum and Agassiz located African Americans (or African Brazilians) in that breach. They were human but not fully, animals but just a bit more. Natural history was pre-Darwinian, then, but never innocent.

*University of Nottingham*

RICHARD H. KING

Henrietta Stratton Jaquette (ed.) *Letters of a Civil War Nurse: Cornelia Hancock, 1863–1865* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1998, £9.50). Pp. 201. ISBN 0 8032 7312 6.

Scholars dubious of the utility of Civil War letter books (and Civil War scholars frustrated by that doubt) should be impressed by Bison Books' recent reprint of Cornelia Hancock's highly readable letters. Hancock was a well-educated middle-class New Jersey Quaker abolitionist – and a social worker by nature – who rushed to Gettysburg to succour the wounded. Her adventures-in-aid took her to the major Virginia theatre battlefields, even to the front at times, and the Contraband hospital in Washington. With her indomitable spirit of adventure, she consistently broke both social and martial rules, moving as she pleased without passes and working with unsatiable fury. She thrived on her success and fame as an efficient hospital builder and director, while gleefully spurning male advances. Progressing from fright to hardness to fatalism in the face of unspeakable horrors, her letters are the products of mature observation and analysis. Her position as a prominent nurse brought her close enough to the action to be aware of it in its closest, most loathsome details, yet sufficiently detached to make broad, informed statements.

The letters are a minor treasure trove for the historian seeking to *feel* the time. In describing seeing Lincoln leaning against the Oval Office door in mid-conversation, or the rigours of heat and dust which made men unendingly profane, or how to manipulate Grant for furloughs, Hancock helps the historian whose imagination struggles to picture the period. Her experiences (and complaints) with the bureaucratic machinations of the War Department, the hospitals, and the Sanitary and Christian Commissions provide wonderful insights into nineteenth-century red tape.

Social historians will find obvious interest in the work. Hancock, famous and loved in a man's world, found her chief foes in the likes of Dorothea Dix and family concerns of behaviour unbecoming to a lady. The lovely twenty-three-year-old Hancock was not Dix's model nurse – old, homely, and unexciting to the boys. When Hancock's patients were African American, she struggled against both an uncooperative government and vocal-only abolitionists.

The editor, a descendant, succeeds at showing Hancock's service spirit in all its glory. The new introduction at times slides into the lamentably frequent moral imperialism of history, interpreting the past through modern morals. Indeed, one of the values of Hancock's letters is the window they provide into the varying moralities of her age. Her perceptive letters are an excellent readdition to the corpus of Civil War letter books.

*University of Edinburgh*

JEREMIAH E. GOULKA

Malcolm Kelsall, *Jefferson and the Iconography of Romanticism: Folk, Land, Culture and the Romantic Nation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999, £42.50). Pp. 207. ISBN 0 333 69824 X.

In *American Scripture*, her best-selling book published in 1997, Paulien Maier took issue with a tendency in the United States to mystify the Declaration of



Independence, to transform it from a practical political document into an enshrined monument of state. Malcolm Kelsall's new work approaches this same issue from a different direction, since his central concern is, as he puts it, "with the mythic history of the romantic nation," the ways in which American nationalism was orchestrated and consolidated in the nineteenth century. In this sense, his book, appropriately illustrated on the front cover by a Thomas Cole painting, is concerned less with Jefferson as an Enlightenment rationalist than with Jefferson as a harbinger of patriotic sublimity. This book is published in a series entitled "Romanticism in Perspective," and that is the aspect of Jefferson clearly on display here.

As a professor of English, Kelsall's main interests are focused around how the iconography of American nationalism comes to create particular forms of symbolic significance. One section discusses the construction of the Seal of the United States, and another the ways in which Jefferson inscribes the landscapes of Virginia and the West. In perhaps his best chapter, Kelsall, the author of an earlier book on the English country house, analyses Monticello as a "signifier of culture and power," comparing it to Lord Burlington's house at Chiswick and showing how Jefferson's architectural enthusiasms were, despite his own avowed Anglophobia, paradoxically interwoven with the English style. Indeed, Kelsall takes a refreshingly eclectic approach to his subject, seeing Jefferson as the intellectual contemporary of Goya, Blake and Brockden Brown, and refusing to circumscribe his discussions within the normalizing assumptions of what he calls that "peculiar subsection" of the American canon, "early American literature."

There are one or two moments here where the references to Derrida or Northrop Frye seem a bit forced, and a couple of passages that read like a parody of critical theory, as when the author assures us that "the name Jefferson," as opposed to "Jeffersdaughter," indicates the "patriarchal and patrilineal" nature of society. The production levels are also rather variable – Jefferson was accused of being an atheist, not an "aetheist" – and the price is exorbitant. From a critical point of view, however, this is a well-researched, erudite and astute approach to Jefferson, which uses its interdisciplinary expertise to place his life and work within a broad aesthetic framework.

*Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge*

PAUL GILES

M. Alison Kibler, *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999, 39.95 cloth, 13.50 paper). Pp. 283. ISBN 0 8078 4812 3.

The introduction of an increasing number of "legitimate" female performers, and the promotion of educational family oriented entertainment, underpinned vaudeville's campaign for feminine respectability and uplift at the turn of the century. Theatres gave top billing to well-known female performers, hoping to appeal to white middle-class women and attract a higher class of patron; strategies which created tension between theatre owners and the traditional male

vaudevillians. *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville* addresses such struggles between high and low taste, examining the complex “gender symbolism and cultural hierarchy” existent within the audience, careers of female performers, and the labour movement associated with the industry.

*Rank Ladies* begins with an examination of the audience, addressing the conflict between “official” expectations and actual audience behaviour. Alison Kibler draws on reports by theatre managers, newspaper articles, and personal accounts to construct a picture of the tensions between managerial strategies, audience reaction, and individual acts. Entrepreneurial theatre owners saw female audiences as the key to increasing vaudeville’s prestige and cultural standing, a position which paralleled contemporary reform ideas and drew on the “sacralized” image of Victorian femininity. In challenging such accounts, Kibler explores the reciprocal effect of mass culture on high-brow standards, moving beyond “official” audience definitions, and revealing tensions between management and patrons.

Managerial attempts to feminize vaudeville simultaneously created friction between traditional vaudevillians and “legitimate” performers. Despite drawing acts from the theatre and opera, managers filled programmes with more traditional performers: vaudevillians who were “likely to mock vaudeville’s cultural pretensions and feminine restraint.” Kibler reads such managerial ambivalence over billing as further undermining the idea of “mass culture as a process of homogenization and embourgeoisement” and examines how women performers experienced the difficulties consequent upon both ambivalent billing strategies, and vaudeville’s ambiguous reputation. Presenting four in-depth case studies of individual women performers and types of performance, *Rank Ladies* reveals how reputable female acts, who moved from legitimate theatre to vaudeville, publicly represented “cultural uplift” for theatre owners, but were left open to questions about their female respectability. Kibler demonstrates how some women chose to move into “low” styles of performance (masculine roles and racial masquerades), which offered them an opportunity for greater control and freedom on stage. However such acts, while providing an increased amount of autonomy, simultaneously raised wider questions and criticisms concerning ‘the proper boundaries of women’s activity and influence.’

In addressing vaudeville’s labour organization, the White Rats, Kibler further elaborates confusions around contemporary definitions of femininity and interpretations of gender symbolism. The Rats, consisting originally of traditional male vaudevillians, saw the feminization of the theatre as eroding an authentic, vigorous, masculine performance, undermining their craftsmanship. As such the Rats’ interpretation of vaudeville’s increasing feminization represented a polemic to the management’s perception of cultural uplift, and provides a fitting conclusion to a study which is centered on the hierarchical tensions between cultural categories and changing gender symbolism. By addressing issues of gender, class, and ethnicity, *Rank Ladies* reveals an interesting interpretation of vaudeville’s role in the development of mass entertainment, and highlights the centrality of gender to social changes around the turn of the century.

*Keele University*

STOBHAN DAVIS

S. J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States, 1830–1945* (London: Macmillan, 1999, £45.00 cloth, £14.99 paper). Pp. 368. ISBN 0 333 61097, 0 333 61098 9.

In the first pages of *Women in the United States*, S. J. Kleinberg states that the ambitious purpose of her book is to write “gender into American history” by offering a “general introduction to the history of women in industrializing America.” This is indeed what this excellent study provides, as it skilfully pulls together an exceptionally wide range of scholars’ work on the history of women in the United States, while adding to it in illuminating and highly productive ways. Lucidly written, deeply generous, and convincingly organized, this text should become a standard in its field. Managing to be simultaneously erudite and accessible, as sensitive to the commonalities shared by women as to their differences, as interested in the daily lives of ordinary women as in the history of activists and other notable women, *Women in the United States* covers an enormous amount of ground with admirable ease.

It is, finally, the coherence that is imposed on an almost overwhelming amount of material that is the book’s greatest virtue. This is achieved through a complex but flexible double structure which allows no major area of women’s experience to slip through its net. The first structural layer is chronological, and divides the text into three parts: Ante-Bellum America (1830–1865); Industrial America (1865–1920); and From the Vote to World War II (1920–1945). Each of these parts is further divided into four sections which deal with economic activity, family and migration, education and culture, and politics and reform. The strategic placement of the topic of the economic condition of women at the beginning of each part seems absolutely correct, both as a corrective to general labor history which tends to delete the economic activity of women altogether, and as a platform from which to launch the analysis in the subsequent sections in each part of the book. Particularly good use is made of statistics from the census records of the US Department of Commerce in tracing the changes in women’s experience as economic agents. Kleinberg is equally fine on the shifts in the ideological pressures on the reproductive role of women as she traces the historical move from an ideal of republican motherhood, to true motherhood, to social motherhood, to the Freudianized motherhood of the suburban nuclear family. And, while remaining sensitive to the differences experienced by women in terms of race, ethnicity, age, geography, wealth, and religion, the overwhelming tension in all women’s dual role in balancing income production with domestic needs remains the most troubling, and unresolved, constant. The book concludes with an epilogue which points to the rise of the Women’s Liberation movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One can only hope that this presages a companion volume to *Women in the United States, 1830–1945* which will focus on women in American from 1945 to the present.

*University of the West of England*

KATE FULLBROOK

Robin Kolodny, *Pursuing Majorities: Congressional Campaign Committees in American Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998, \$29.95). Pp. 299. ISBN 0 8601 3069 5.

The first volume in a new series, Congressional Studies, this work deals with the neglected topic of Congressional Campaign Committees. Kolodny traces the evolution of the four CCCs (House and Senate Republican and Democrat CCCs) from their inception in the 1860s to the present day and shows that their activities vary depending on such factors as whether the party is in the majority, the presence or absence of a presidential election, the dominant campaign techniques of the time, and the agendas or abilities of individual CCC chairs. She also shows that CCC chairs often use their position to climb the ladder of internal congressional party leadership.

Much of the detail in this book will only concern congressional specialists. Kolodny is thorough in tracing the operations and personnel of the CCCs over time. Historians will probably find the detail and the focus relentless – little effort is made to link the CCCs to the broader political and historical environment – but congressional party specialists will find a wealth of information both in the text and the tabular appendixes. There is also a very useful final short chapter examining the 1994 Contract with America as an instrument of Republican CCC majority-building. Kolodny debunks its importance – Senate Republican candidates and House Republican incumbents largely ignored it in their campaigns; House Republican challengers made more use of this platform but it played little part in the eventual Republican sweep, which was due more to regional realignment in the South, the better finances of the Republicans, and the unusually large number of open seats.

Though highly specialized in its focus, Kolodny's study does make a statement about American political parties which has broad implications. CCCs are very imperfect vehicles for creating congressional majorities, being unable to direct national campaigns and control who runs for the party, and having leadership which is more attuned to personal ambition than broad party needs. In essence, CCCs function as congressional incumbent protection agencies. To this end, Kolodny suggests that the traditional political science perspective of American political parties as tripartite structures – party in government, as an organization, and in the electorate – should give way to a two-dimensional perspective. The party as organization is not independent from the party in government, particularly in the case of congressional parties which always have a core constituency of incumbents to assist regardless of majority or minority status. In essence, therefore, the nature of the separation of powers in the United States “prevents meaningful, overarching political parties.”

*London Guildhall University*

IWAN MORGAN

David Leiwei Li, *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Pp. 261. ISBN 0 8047 3400 3.

Increasingly, Asian American cultural criticism is moving away from its traditional focus upon the historical and sociological background of texts and

writers, perhaps because it is no longer quite so necessary to illuminate the social conditions of literary production of a group of writers who are increasingly well – or at least better – known. Similarly, as many commentators have observed, denationalisation is a growing trend in Asian American studies, with Asian American cultural studies moving away from a cultural nationalist agenda, shifting instead towards an increasingly globalised, diasporic perspective. David Leiwei Li's *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent* provides both evidence of, as well as commentary upon, this shift. It is in some ways quite similar to both Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (1996) and Jinqi Ling's *Narrating Nationalisms: Ideology and Form in Asian American Literature* (1997), in its focus upon Asian American citizenship, the notion of "nation," and Asian American cultural critique. Li's analysis concentrates upon the post-1970s period, however, and especially upon the well-documented war of words which took place between Maxine Hong Kingston and Frank Chin upon the publication of *The Woman Warrior* in 1976; and between advocates of an Asian American feminism, and those intent on establishing an Asian American cultural nationalist agenda.

Li's defining argument is that Asian American literature is productive of, and in discursive negotiation with, contradictions in American citizenship. Li tracks Asian American literature through a series of crucial moments in the development of Asian American cultural critique, from "emergence" in the 1970s, through to the late-1990s' focus upon issues of ethnic and cultural difference and diaspora. He discusses a series of key Asian American texts, including the life writings of Maxine Hong Kingston, the novels and nonfiction writings of Bharati Mukherjee, Gish Jen's *Typical American*, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Frank Chin's *Donald Duk*, Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*, David Mura's *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei*, David Wong Louie's *Pangs of Love* and David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*. In so doing, he provides innovative readings of a refreshing choice of texts, with an unusually high proportion of texts by Asian American men, and with a good mix of canonical and lesser-known texts and writers. This book adds an interesting new voice to the Asian American critical debate.

University of Wales, Aberystwyth

HELENA GRICE

Brita Lindberg-Seyersted (ed.), *A Literary Friendship: Correspondence between Caroline Gordon and Ford Madox Ford* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999, \$22.50). Pp. 152. ISBN 1 57233 046 5.

Brita Lindberg-Seyersted has done a thorough job of annotating Gordon and Ford's correspondence, clarifying the numerous references to contemporary literary figures, and in her introduction she places the letters in context with a useful summary of the lives and careers of both writers. She then steps back to let the letters speak for themselves – which they do, with an eloquence always graceful, and at times touching. For the researcher, the correspondence is a valuable source of information on the struggles of the two writers to produce their work in the face of familial and social demands, profit-driven publishers,

lapses of self-confidence, and, above all, the continual financial hardship which dominated so much of their lives. Nor is the outside world ignored: the letters abound with anecdotes and gossip about mutual acquaintances, many of whom were key figures on the American literary scene of the day, and Gordon provides an interesting perspective on the society in which the Agrarian movement developed. For the literary critic, the discussions between Gordon and Ford of their own work, and of each other's, offer an insight into the techniques and objectives of their fiction. Even without these more specialised interests in the letters, however, the correspondence is actually a very enjoyable read, unfolding as it does like an elegant dance with Ford and Gordon delicately advancing and retreating in their revelations of affection and respect, and Janice Biala, Ford's partner, emerging as the third figure in what becomes a friendship of exceptional intimacy, despite the physical distance separating the correspondence. Crossing this distance is a recurring theme of the letters, a much repeated wish which lack of money and unfortunate timing continually frustrate, adding a poignant touch to what becomes a chronicle of a desire deferred by inimical circumstance. Above all, both Gordon and Ford were gifted enough in their medium for their personalities to emerge in the course of the correspondence with a vitality still fresh today. What we see of them is not always appealing – their petty snobberies and prejudices are not mitigated by the lapse of time – but it sometimes is. Above all, after reading these letters one is left with the impression of having got to know their writers, and of having been privileged to be allowed a glimpse into real lives, which is perhaps the greatest contribution of this book.

*University of Essex*

RUTH FRENDO

Stephen Macedo (ed.), *Reassessing the Sixties: Debating the Political and Cultural Legacy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997, £19.95). Pp. 297. ISBN 0 393 03940 4.

This collection of essays is not the place to find out much about “the Sixties.” Rather, as the sub-title indicates, it is about the legacy of the 1960s, although the volume hardly delivers on the sub-title's other promise of a debate. These authors do not engage with one another but talk (or sometimes shriek) past one another, denouncing or defending the movements unleashed in the 1960s and the consequences imputed to them. One wonders who will be edified by this book – perhaps students of the “culture wars” of the 1990s. The 1994 congressional elections form a sort of backdrop to the volume, since Newt Gingrich had wanted them to be a referendum on the “Great Society, counterculture, McGovernik” heritage associated with the earlier decade. The view expressed by some contributors that conservatives have won the political if not the cultural battle seems less compelling now that (at the time of writing) Gingrich is gone and Bill Clinton remains in command of the White House.

These committed essays, of course, bear witness to important issues, even if they do not always illuminate them. Some do have valuable things to say. Martha

Minow, for example, interestingly (if a little sketchily) offers an analysis of the children's rights movement, which by the early 1970s seemed to be following in the train of the causes of African American and women's rights. Alan Wolfe contributes a well-written account of his own intellectual odyssey and some intelligent reflections on the respective roles of the academic professional and the general intellectual. Anita LaFrance Allen has an arresting story to tell. From an African American military family, in the Southern military bases of the 1960s she enjoyed integrated schooling, housing and other facilities, not to mention white, Hispanic and Asian friends. Only when she moved out of the military community to go to a public high school, nominally integrated, did she experience real discrimination. Military integration showed her that Americans of different races and cultures could live together, offering an intriguing if unlikely answer to the turf wars of the 1990s.

Lancaster University

M. J. HEALE

Elaine Tyler May, *Barren in the Promised Land: Childless Americans and the Pursuit of Happiness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995, paperback edition, 1997, £9.95). Pp. 318. ISBN 0 674 06182 9.

The subject of childlessness has not been one that historians have explored in any great depth. Elaine Tyler May seeks to rectify this omission and to explore the role of childlessness in American society from colonial times to the present. She also examines the transformations in public attitudes towards children and parenthood, which were the result of wider social and political changes, and their impact upon the childless.

May argues that reproductive behaviour has never been an entirely private matter in America, because society has always concerned itself with who becomes a parent, though the nature of this concern has changed over the course of American history. At varying times childlessness has been equated with sin, "race suicide," unpatriotic behaviour and immaturity. While, on the one hand, the childless have been open to accusations of witchcraft, unwomanly behaviour and of being anti-social; on the other, there have been groups who have deliberately avoided parenthood or who have tried to limit their fertility. But, for whatever reasons a man, woman or couple remained childless, society, in the form of medical authorities and social commentators, has felt at liberty to comment on their situation. From the late nineteenth century, questions of fitness for parenthood have been contested and these deliberations have continued into the late twentieth century with the debates surrounding "welfare mothers" and the suitability of certain groups for fertility treatment. These issues have been bound up over time with questions of class, race and personal identity. Thus May sees the tensions surrounding reproduction in America at any one time, as a reflection of wider social concerns.

Alongside this discussion of social attitudes, May charts the development of medical technologies that have sought to manipulate reproduction. She notes the use of contraceptive devices in the nineteenth century, the development of sterilisation techniques in the early twentieth century, and the high-tech attempts

to overcome infertility in the post-World War II period. Each of these developments has contributed to the American obsession with reproduction.

This is a fascinating and sensitive chronicle of changing perceptions of childlessness in America. Though the early part of the book relies heavily on existing literature, the sections on the period after World War II are more carefully researched and provide a forceful analysis of modern attitudes towards the question of reproduction. The inclusion of a number of personal testimonies adds a human dimension and poignancy to the narrative that makes it compelling reading.

*University of Leicester*

ELIZABETH J. CLAPP

Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., Robert C. Leitz, III, and Jesse S. Crisler (eds.), *Charles W. Chestnutt: Essays and Speeches* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, £37.50). Pp. 596. ISBN 0 8047 3549 2.

Charles W. Chestnutt was one of the most important figures of the “first” African American renaissance, centred on the cultural and political organizations of the black bourgeoisie in Washington at the turn of the century, though taking in other centres like Cleveland, Ohio, where Chestnutt lived most of his adult life. A self-educated stenographer and then successful attorney, the writer of subversive conjur tales which represent among the first literary articulations of a “folk” aesthetic, of novels and stories of the colour line, and of a biography of Douglass, this volume of his non-fictional writings reveals a powerful journalist and elegant speaker. The editors reprint and meticulously annotate obscure early articles and unpublished speeches as well as his mature journalism in *The Crisis* and elsewhere. Chestnutt appears as a complex figure: a fierce advocate of black rights and chronicler of black cultural achievements; an integrationist arguing for “race mixing” as practised in Brazil in a way which anticipates Jean Toomer; a follower of Herbert Spencer commenting on the virtues of competition and efficiency; an amateur bookman speaking urbane on Villon, Samuel Johnson, Meredith or Dumas at his local literary society.

What is particularly fascinating about this collection is that it enables the reader to trace the progress of a black intellectual in the difficult world of post-reconstruction and early twentieth-century American life: from speeches on literature and etiquette to literary societies and professional bodies in Fayetteville, North Carolina, in the early 1880s to comments of his own recent work by the successful author in the 1900s; from inspirational speeches to nurses in 1914 and “colored soldiers” in 1917 to crusty admonitions (directed at the students of Oberlin in 1929) against the sexual licence depicted in Harlem Renaissance writing by Wallace Thurman and others. These complaints testify to his adherence to earlier standards of black “respectability,” and the later Chestnutt can seem, culturally, a Victorian out of step with his age, but he remained a committed advocate of equality. Perhaps the most startling essay for today’s audiences is the acid deconstruction of Southern racial definitions in “What is a White Man?” (1889), but Chestnutt’s incisive thinking on legal issues related to African Americans (particular *Plesy v. Ferguson*) is also consistently il-



luminating. His legacy is well served by this sumptuous and meticulously edited volume, which at the price almost seems a bargain.

*Royal Holloway*

TIM ARMSTRONG

Anita Miller. *Uncollecting Cheever: The Family of John Cheever vs. Academy Chicago Publishers* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, \$27.95). Pp. 364. ISBN 0 8476 9076 8.

The struggle between an obscure, Midwestern American press and the family of John Cheever over the publishing rights to dozens of the late author's short stories has been described in the *Washington Post* as "the most expensive, protracted and vicious court battle to take place in recent years over a book." In February 1994, after four years of litigation and an estimated million dollars in legal fees, Academy Chicago Publishers brought out *Thirteen Uncollected Stories by John Cheever*.

The story behind the headlines, depositions and decisions of four courts – which Anita Miller recounts in *Uncollecting Cheever* – is a cautionary tale of ineptitude and no small degree of avarice on both sides. However, this is far from an impartial account, for Miller is the president and editorial director of the small reprint press, Academy Chicago, which she and her husband Jordan Miller founded in 1975.

This latter-day *Bleak House* saga began in 1986 when publicist Franklin Dennis suggested to Jordan Miller that he publish some of the many uncollected Cheever stories, which Dennis would then edit. Although Cheever's widow, Mary, failed to respond to Dennis's letters, Academy Chicago drew up a surprisingly parsimonious contract – which included an advance of a mere \$1,500 for Mary Cheever – to publish a book of at least sixty stories under the title *The Uncollected Stories of John Cheever*.

As unbelievable as this low offer was, Mary Cheever's reaction was, in hindsight, unthinkable: on 24 September 1987, she actually signed the contract, never having consulted a lawyer or literary agent. The explanation for this lapse in judgement that emerged during the lawsuits was that the elderly widow was misled by the press' name, thinking that the book was to be a limited edition issued by an academic press, which Academy Chicago was not.

As Academy Chicago filed suit for a declaratory judgement against the Cheevers in Chicago, the Cheever family counter-sued the publisher over copyright violations, in New York.

To her credit, Miller's book is enlivened by lengthy excerpts she presents from the various testimony transcripts, such as Mary Cheever's description of her husband's early work as "embarrassing, immature and imitative."

The New York judge found Academy Chicago's behaviour "inexplicable," and suggested that Franklin Dennis was a liar. Yet, hoping for compromise, the judge suggested that Mary Cheever select ten of fifteen stories that could comprise a small book.

Dissatisfied at this turn of events, Academy Chicago then sought relief in the Illinois Court of Appeals, which only affirmed the Cheevers' ownership of the

copyright to John Cheever's stories. Seeking enforcement of the original contract, Academy Chicago finally turned to the Illinois Supreme Court, where the five-judge panel ruled against the publisher.

The settlement that was reached in January 1992 stipulated that Academy Chicago must wait two years and then, in a press run limited to 10,000 copies, publish only thirteen public-domain stories.

While Anita Miller's *Uncollecting Cheever* is too often little more than the screed of an unsuccessful litigant against the influential heirs of an important author, it does serve as something of a morality tale about the dangers of over-reaching. It also, inadvertently, underscores the wisdom of Ambrose Bierce's definition of a lawsuit: "a machine which you go into as a pig and come out as a sausage."

*Kavamura Gakuen Woman's University*

FRANCIS J. BOSHA

Brenda Murphy, *Congressional Theatre: Dramatizing McCarthyism on Stage, Film, and Television* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, £40). Pp. 310. ISBN 0 521 64088 1.

Brenda Murphy's *Congressional Theatre* examines "the dramatic representations of the Un-American Activities Committee" within "the context of the Committee's own self-created drama, drawing upon the anthropological model developed by Victor Turner to analyze the 'social drama' of the HUAC hearings." These dramatic representations are widely defined, covering radio, television, film, theatre, and literary adaptations. In doing so, she contends the importance of life-time, experiences, and personal history of the individuals behind the works under consideration.

Murphy introduces the subject by giving a brief history of "McCarthyism," correctly acknowledging that McCarthy was "only the most visible embodiment of the worst excesses of the Congressional investigating committees." Murphy can be congratulated here for not making the error of linking McCarthy with HUAC (a common mistake despite his title of "Senator"). However, if McCarthy was only an effect and not a cause of this period then, why has she included the word "McCarthyism" in her title without any inverted commas? Surely this means that she too equates McCarthy with HUAC? Although there is nothing inherently wrong with such an equation, why does she then exclude discussion of "dramatic representations" of that too? The fascination of many writers, artists, and playwrights with Roy Cohn and the Rosenbergs provides very abundant sources to be mined.

During this introduction, Murphy provides an interesting discussion of the "ritualistic" nature of the hearings. She delineates the five-step process of the ritual: the establishment of guilt, the admission of guilt, the expression of repentance, the proof of repentance, and finally the expression of gratitude. This model, however, has been examined elsewhere, notably Victor Navasky's excellent *Naming Names* (New York: Viking, 1980), and Murphy adds nothing new. Furthermore, Murphy could have analysed some of the long chunks of testimony included in the text in more depth and to greater effect. Her analysis as it stands is rather brief and superficial. A closer look at the testimony of

individuals, such as Arthur Miller, would have revealed his fascinating stance of ambivalence, which was neither wholly cooperative nor wholly resistant. Such testimony could have been more productively deployed not least because a large part of this book is taken up with examining Miller's work (*You're Next*, *The Crucible*, *The Hook*, *A View from the Bridge*, *After the Fall* and *Incident at Vichy*).

But perhaps this is too harsh, since the text purports to examine the dramatic representations of the congressional hearings and it is only by chapter three – where Murphy begins to analyse such representations – that the book starts to become more interesting and original. In the following two chapters, she surveys the various historical analogies that have been implemented when representing the hearings: the misguided witch-hunt and the Inquisition, in particular the persecution of Joan of Arc and Galileo. In chapter six, “Informers,” she spends the entire chapter comparing in depth the respective positions adopted by Kazan and Miller after their collaboration on the failed project *The Hook*. The final chapter then looks at further representations such as *Darkness at Noon*, *Montserrat*, *The Caine Mutiny* and so on. While the concluding chapter deals with two interesting film representations (*High Noon* and *Panic in the Streets*), I found it too short to be useful in summarizing the book's main themes.

Overall *Congressional Theatre* scrutinizes an impressive range of texts. And to her credit Murphy admits, “I have tackled only a modest corner of this potentially enormous field of study. There is much work to be done.” Thus, in beginning to attempt a study of those representations dealing with HUAC, Murphy has provided a basis for further, engaging discussion, and perhaps she can take it one step further by continuing the work that has yet to be done.

*Birkbeck College*

NATHAN ABRAMS

John T. Noonan, Jr., *The Lustre of Our Country: The American Experience of Religious Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, \$35). Pp. 436. ISBN 0 520 20997 4.

John T. Noonan, federal judge and law professor, has written a challenging and idiosyncratic book, which is quite unlike current literature on religious freedom and American church/state relations. Professor Noonan adopts many styles and voices, beginning with a prologue on his own religious and legal education as an upper middle-class New England Catholic, and ranging from a catechetical series of questions and answers on the history of the idea of religious freedom, through a number of centos (literary compositions rooted in authentic historical sources), to more conventional analyses of federal court cases relating to religion. Noonan also offers a final section on the influence of the American tradition of religious freedom on France, post-World War II Japan, post-Soviet Russia and the contemporary Catholic Church. Throughout, Noonan shows how the free exercise of religion has produced major changes in American law and society, with particularly informative discussions of abolition, temperance and civil rights.

The book is based upon great learning, theological and historical, as well as legal, and it is written with a passionate commitment to its subject, with the

importance of freedom of individual conscience as its central theme. Judge Noonan, however, is also aware of the limits of that freedom whenever it challenges the “national interest.” Congress and the Federal courts have always defined what constitutes “legitimate” religion, whether acting against Mormons in the last century, or New Thought movements in this. Church and State are far from separate. Congress and the courts have decided which churches may be favoured in matters of conscientious objection, Quakers, for example, but not Jehovah’s Witnesses. Approved religions are tax exempt, but individuals and groups cannot successfully challenge the tax system on grounds of conscience. Clergy and theological students enjoy special exemption from military service, but Congress appropriates \$85 million annually to pay for a military chaplaincy. Presidents invoke the blessing of God upon the nation, and, at times of great national crisis, prayer is used to unify the country.

Noonan’s use of so many voices and his ranging across so many centuries make this a difficult book to review. The chapters on the influence abroad of the American legal notion of religious liberty sometimes claim too much, and Noonan’s use of the centos works better for de Tocqueville’s fictional sister writing on the closeness of religion and government in the early Republic than for an “oral history project” on post-World War II Japan. His very range, however, enables Noonan to display to full advantage his great learning and unswerving commitment to his subject. This is much more than legal history, and it provides a profound commentary on both a cherished American ideal and its limitations.

*University of Hull*

LOUIS BILLINGTON

Ruth O’Brien, *Workers’ Paradox: The Republican Origins of New Deal Labor Policy, 1886–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, £29.95 cloth, £13.50 paper). Pp. 336. ISBN 0 8078 2430 5, 0 8078 4737 2.

This is an interesting and important book that is bound to provoke comment and controversy. It cuts against the grain of recent writing on the New Deal, the CIO upsurge of the 1930s, and the evolution of American labor law by arguing that the system of industrial relations born with the 1935 passage of the Wagner Act owed more to Republican-inspired judicial and legislative precedents in the Progressive era than to the contemporaneous ferment of the 1930s.

Seeing New Deal labor policy as representing a continuation of evolving liberalism rather than a momentous break with the past, O’Brien extends an earlier historiographic current – most closely associated with Robert Himmelberg’s work on industrial policy and Ellis Hawley’s scholarship on the anti-trust tradition – that stressed the importance of progressive precedents in shaping New Deal initiatives. *Workers’ Paradox* builds a compelling, if not always entirely persuasive, case for this position by examining the evolution of a judicial doctrine of “responsible unionism” in the immediate post-World War One era and by exploring Congressional activism, especially with regard to railroad labor law in the 1920s. O’Brien uses this evidence to argue that it was not New

Deal Democrats who pioneered the principles of the modern system of industrial relations but liberal Republicans of an earlier era.

This line of reasoning is provocative, all the more so given the care with which O'Brien has researched and crafted her book. But strangely absent from her account are the industrial unionists of the New Deal era, key players in almost all recent writing on this topic. Conspicuous by their silence in this book are the men and women who built CIO unions in the mass-production industries, often resorting to militant direct-action tactics such as the sit-down strike to wrest recognition from employers and to seize headlines and shape public policy in the process. Also largely absent are the labor statesmen of the 1930s, men such as John L. Lewis and Sidney Hillman who pushed the New Deal experiment in a laborist direction (indeed, Hillman receives a single citation in the index, Lewis none). By ignoring the role that social protest and the insurgent industrial union movement played in the making of modern labor relations, O'Brien misses an opportunity to introduce an element of nuance and multi-causality to her bold interpretation.

Yet, if *Workers' Paradox* is unabashedly revisionist in its approach to the making of labor policy, it fits more comfortably within another recent historiographic strand, one that sees the modern system of industrial relations as a dead-end for workers seeking a more profound and egalitarian restructuring of workplace relations. O'Brien joins recent scholars such as Mike Davis, Karl Klare, and Howell John Harris in seeing the post-Wagner system as one riddled with the "snares of liberalism," a framework granting workers procedural rights rather than substantive ones and ultimately undermining genuine trade union power.

This is a book that deserves a wide readership. Its engagement with a number of current debates means that it will work well in the classroom, and its radical reinterpretation of New Deal labor policy means that it is certain to prompt serious thought and reflection.

University College London

RICK HALPERN

Sharon O'Brien (ed.), *New Essays on Cather's My Antonia* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, £27.95 cloth, £9.95 paper). Pp. 140. ISBN 0 521 45905 2, 0 521 45275 9.

Marilee Lindemann, *Willa Cather: Queering America* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1999, £36.00 cloth, £12.95 paper). Pp. 185. ISBN 0 231 11324 2, 0 231 11325 0.

Two new books on Willa Cather and both likely to be read widely by students of American Literature; yet how different they are! And the difference is not a matter of critical ideology and methods, so much as how students will receive an essay collection as opposed to an academic monograph. Sharon O'Brien was clearly the right choice as editor of this volume of new essays on *My Antonia*, since her 1987 literary biography of Cather has influenced approaches to Cather's work for more than a decade. (And in parenthesis, please could Oxford publish a reprint edition of *Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*, since it is the one biography

of Cather that is almost impossible to track down these days.) All of her contributors refer back to the work she did then, as does Lindemann in her monograph as well as in the piece she contributes to the new essays. So, why do I feel uneasy, even queasy, about this collection?

“The American Novel series provides students of American literature with introductory critical guides to great works of American literature” – or so the blurb goes. But these introductory guides must also say something “new.” And, in interpreting this brief, I sense that Sharon O’Brien has erred too far on the side of newness. If I were a student reading *My Antonia* for the first time, I would be very perplexed by this set of essays, and feel that they were not helping me to read the novel, so much as directing me to the other novel lurking in the interstices of this one I held in my hands. Sharon O’Brien provides an authoritative introduction, outlining the history of critical approaches to *My Antonia*, but students might feel that they arrived somewhat too late at the feast, when they dip into the first essay by Miles Orvell. This poses a question that I have often considered myself: what exactly did Cather intend, when her editorial introduction to the 1925 collection of stories by Sarah Orne Jewett, places *The Country of the Pointed Firs* alongside Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* and Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*? But, as an introductory essay, is this the best way to discuss Cather’s novel, published in 1918, long before she was even asked to edit the Jewett stories? Lindemann’s discussion of this question in her monograph is far more convincing, since she compares Cather’s introduction to Jewett, with the contemporaneous *The Professor’s House* (1925), and situates it in the early debates about canon formation.

Sadly, I have similar objections to two other essays in the *New Essays*. Elizabeth Ammons writes on “*My Antonia* and African American Art” and Anne Goodwyn Jones on “Displacing Dixie: The Southern Subtext in *My Antonia*.” Both essays would be admirable in the right context, and of great interest to Cather scholars, but again they hardly can be termed “introductory critical guides.” So the student finds out all about Blind d’Arnault and his historical basis, but next to nothing about all the other types of oral literature and music which inform the novel, and which far outweigh the brief interlude when Blind d’Arnault plays. And then the student discovers that actually this novel set in “Black Hawk,” Nebraska is really about Virginia, and that they should be reading *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* instead. Two things might have contributed to this trend in Cather criticism: the first is, of course, Toni Morrison’s study of *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* in *Playing in the Dark* (1992); and the second is that in June 1997 the Seventh International Willa Cather Seminar was held in Winchester, Virginia. But does that help the poor undergraduate who really needs to know about Red Cloud, Nebraska, the Burlington Railroad and the distinctive topography of the prairies in the late nineteenth century?

When one turns to Marilee Lindemann’s contribution to the *New Essays*, it is with a sense of relief, in that she offers a subtle and convincing interpretation of the novel in the student’s hand, addressing issues of gender and power and demonstrating the complexity of Cather’s narrative figuring of Jim Burden figuring Antonia and the rest of the hired girls. With even more enjoyment one reads her monograph, which is a model of academic writing at its very best. Her

thesis is that “queer literary history ... must ... account ... for the bodily terms through which many writers negotiate questions of literary power, authority, marginality, and history.” Lindemann negotiates such questions ably and with great verve. Her prose in itself makes the case for the significant presence of eroticism in Cather’s letters and art, and traces connections in the texts of the novels, which reinforce her general conclusions as regards how Cather transformed her youthful lesbianism in her mature writing. Underlying patterns emerge and hit the reader with dazzling clarity. Cather’s elusive positioning as regards sexuality, gender and cultural politics is intelligently reassessed; and one derives a strong notion of just how Cather situated herself in literary debates over the American canon, for example, where her sympathies lie with the type of alternative canon which is only now fully establishing itself. Lindemann reminds us of the well-known remark by Cather when she encourages her readers to attend to “the inexplicable presence of the thing not named,” and thankfully interprets this dictum with real insight, in a well-informed and ultimately highly responsible fashion. But the last word should be with the student – one of my final year students, studying Cather, who volunteered that *Queering America* was by far the best and most useful book in approaching Willa Cather for the first time. And it is.

*University of Warwick*

HELEN M. DENNIS

Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, *To Die For: the Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999, £25.00). Pp. 365. ISBN 0 691 01686 0.

From its title, this book might have been about anything. Someone – I suspect the publishers – has hung a grandiosely misleading label on a thoroughly respectable if conventional history of American nationalist ideology and ritual between the Revolution and the end of the First World War (inelegantly referred to by the author, here and there, as WWI). At least the Mapplethorpe photograph on the wrapper, showing a tattered Old Glory streaming on the wind, gives an accurate idea of the book’s theme.

The work is, I presume, a revised Ph.D. thesis, which no doubt explains its curious cut-off point: a work so saturated in post-Vietnam doubts about official American patriotism ought not to end in 1919. The highest compliment I can pay is to state my hope that, in due course, Dr. O’Leary will publish a second volume, taking the story up to the end of the twentieth century. For her theme is an important one, which will need to be mastered by anyone trying to understand the place of the United States, for good or ill, in today’s world. No country can rival Britain, of course, for vulgar jingoism; but Britain is no longer a very important country, whereas the prevailing variants of American nationalism may well affect the future of every society and individual. Dr. O’Leary’s intelligent analysis of the roots, development and contradictions of American patriotism is therefore bound to be widely useful, as well as valuable to mere historians. As she remarks, the conflicts of her period – over language, immigrants, history schoolbooks, the flag, and so on – are still very much with us.

The book holds few surprises: for example, the persecution of German Americans during the First World War is a familiar story; but Dr. O'Leary tells it well and freshly, putting in revealing details that either I never knew or had forgotten – for example, the story of Karl Muck, the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, who was interned and deported because of a false rumour that he had refused to conduct “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Dr. O'Leary's painstaking method draws her material into a coherent whole, and various convincing points emerge. For instance, it is trite to state that the various wars in which America engaged, from that of 1812 onwards, fostered a kind of bellicose patriotism, focussed on the cult of the flag; but Dr. O'Leary shows it actually happening. She is particularly good on the impact of the Great Immigration, furnishing yet more reason to categorize Progressivism as, in part, an expression of passionate old stock anxieties, and the First World War as a hell-sent opportunity for Anglo-Americans to launch what at times almost amounted to a second civil war against black and hyphenated Americans. Inevitably this reminds the reader of the persecution of the Nisei in the Second World War, but then that was a comparatively isolated, unrepresentative incident. Perhaps progress is possible.

Dr. O'Leary's work is damagingly void of any comparative element, except for a few ritual references to Eric Hobsbawm: this makes it impossible for her to discern what was truly peculiar to American nationalism in her period, and what was a response, common to all Western nations, to universal developments. She writes gracefully: for instance, when she wants to say that Civil War soldiers sometimes ran away from battle, she says “they wanted to deviate from cultural expectations.” As this quotation shows, she herself is not safe from the cultural expectations of her own time. But such blemishes do not seriously detract from the interest and value of her work. The illustrations are plentiful and excellent.

*University of Essex*

HUGH BROGAN

Lee Oser, *T. S. Eliot and American Poetry* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1998, n.p.). Pp. 208. ISBN 0 826 21181 X.

Lee Oser's wish to bring T. S. Eliot's poetry back into the orbit of an American literary, cultural and religious context begins with an examination of the poet's relationship to the work of Edgar Allan Poe. Poe is seen to have been overlooked as a provider of models for Eliot's urban landscapes, due in large part to Eliot's own commentaries on this figure, and that he stands as a forebear of Eliot's modernist reaction against the predominant culture of progress in the US. Turning to the modern poet's response to the city in “Preludes,” (composed around 1910–11) it is seen to follow Poe's example in breaking not only from American optimism and attention to US locales, but from norms of American lyric and narrative poetry.

The same revisionary process is undergone in viewing Eliot's relationship to other American forebears, namely Whitman and Emerson. By peeping through a “wall of modernist agitprop” Eliot's ongoing discussions with an American literary heritage in “The Wasteland” and “Four Quartets” are revealed. An



example of this is the author's tracing of Eliot's New England ancestral lineage from the heart of Puritan America, and reading "Prufrock" in the light of the poet's conflict with his sermonical mother. Focusing on the rift between her devoted advancement of a Puritan duty to America and her son's increasing unease with such demands, Oser sees "Prufrock" as an expression of Eliot's complete rebellion against his familial inheritance and against a legacy represented by his mother's call to recognise duty and social responsibility, to continue to strive to build the City of God, a call which Eliot sees as "at once too demanding and too futile to be renewed." The completeness of his reaction sees his struggle with his poetry until re-energised by his escape from the historical legacies of New England and the progressivism of America.

Eliot, however, is seen continuing to grapple with American voices, particularly Emerson's, long after its shores have been left. One perceived result is that "Eliot's intense dialogue with Poe, Whitman, and other American writers helped him forge his ironic and ventriloquizing style." Of course the French are present and acknowledged, but the author's purpose is to locate "Eliot's consciousness of literary history" as "avant-garde and American." Oser challenges any appraisal of Eliot's relationship with America which makes for happy cross-Atlantic polarisations of attitude. It is Oser's stated task to reveal the cracks in this façade and re-establish Eliot's Americanness.

*University of Leeds*

IAN D. COPESTAKE

Maria do Céu Pinto, *Political Islam and the United States: A Study of U.S. Policy towards Islamist Movements in the Middle East* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1999, £35.00). Pp. 340. ISBN 0 86372 245 8.

In the United States, Maria do Céu Pinto argues, Islam is conceived of as a disruptive threat that is antipathetic to the liberalism and democracy that is personified by Western nations. According to the view publicised in general in the American media and in US political debate: "Islamism has come to be seen as a disruptive force that threatens friendly Arab regimes, has a strong anti-Western bias, is anti-democratic and the main source of subversive and terrorist activity." In a similar vein to the "Red Threat" of the USSR and global communism that once held sway in the United States, made palpable in the blood of the killing fields of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Korea, a new fear has germinated in American consciousness over the last forty years that has grown into a perception of the violence and extremism posed by the "Green Menace" of radical Islam. The view of the fundamentalism and intransigence of Islamic political movements, termed the confrontational approach, translates directly into xenophobic foreign policies taken towards Islamic groups. Alleged to be hostile to the civilising influences of democratic elections, the free market and secularism, Maria do Céu Pinto suggests that a political monologue is established towards Islam that is reflected in US foreign policy. Both American and Islamic ideologies describe one another as monolithic, static and deaf to social change. The central policy of the US, throughout the conflicts portrayed in the text and the inexorable growth in the popularity of Islamic political groups, seems to be

one of restriction and containment. Ironically, this is counter-productive, in so far as lack of dialogue assists conservative forces and the maintenance of the status quo in Islamic countries.

An alternative narrative, termed the accommodationist school, is suggested by Maria do Céu Pinto as a solution: "It is premised on the assumption that the Islamic revival encompasses a variety of movements, that Islam is compatible with democracy and that Islamic moderates, with whom the West can cooperate, do exist." Indeed, this argument is a central premise that works as a key for exploration of the tensions between the US and a variety of Islamic interest groups. In this way, Islam is seen as a multidimensional phenomenon that is contextualised by region and socio-economic circumstances: rather than conceiving of Islam as a monolithic entity, for instance, Maria do Céu Pinto illustrates US involvement during conflicts between Islamic groups and Israel and studies the standpoint of the US as regards countries as diverse as Lebanon, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Algeria.

From an American perspective on the level of a "world stage," as admitted by the author in the introduction, Maria do Céu Pinto tends to avoid domestic sources such as specific primary evidence from the American media, recent peace deals aided by the Clinton administration, the voices of refugees and asylum seekers from Islamic nations, and inequalities of gender and class in Islamic social and political life. Instead, the text focuses very thoroughly on the US government's involvement in foreign affairs in terms of the attitudes and policies taken towards radical Islam.

*South Bank University*

BENJAMIN T. GRAY

Joel Porte and Sandra Morris (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, £37.50 cloth, £13.95 paper). Pp. 280. ISBN 0 521 49611 X, 0 521 49946 1.

It is Joel Porte's contention in his introduction to this *Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* that Emerson's interpreters in the 1960s and 1970s were too often inclined to view him "as all but totally abstracted from time and place" and thus to present "little more than a caricature of his complex spirit." To the extent that there is a general editorial programme for the volume, it is to rehistoricize this Representative of America and to characterize more faithfully and more subtly the man who, to cite Porte again, "in literary terms at least, really put America on the map."

The twelve essays that follow vary widely in kind, tone, and angle of approach, but without exception they maintain a high quality of lively engagement, as they range over virtually every manifestation of their multiform subject. R. Jackson Wilson, for instance, reminds us that Emerson was first and foremost a lecturer and that this fact in large measure dictates the rhetorical character and accounts for the idiosyncrasy of the eventually published prose. Attending to that prose Albert J. Von Frank emphasizes not only the anti-authoritarian but also the markedly anti-Christian spirit of the 1841 *Essays: First Series*; whilst Julie Ellison, in addressing the *Second Series*, fascinatingly and poignantly compares Emerson's treatment of loss and grief in the essay, "Experience," with that in the poem,

“Threnody,” to demonstrate the sharply divergent functions he assigned to the genres of essay and of poem. In Sandra Morris’s extensive consideration of the poetry and its “metre-making” arguments, of especial interest, because so seldom come upon, is her discussion of the many poetic epigraphs that precede and cryptically relate to the essays. Looking also upon the poet in his diverse aspects, Catherine Tufariello observes how utterly opposed was Whitman’s Emerson to Dickinson’s, the former’s being the advocate of excess, “the priest of nature,” and “master of digression,” the latter’s being the epitome of reticence, the riddling Sphinx, and “master of the lapidary aphorism.”

Two of the essayists here approach Emerson biographically, bearing down upon different facets of his personal relationships. In Jeffrey Steele’s case, Emerson’s connection is with his friends, Thoreau and Margaret Fuller, where Steele finds Emerson’s high-flying idealism overall ill-fitting him for the imperfect human reality of friendship. Phyllis Cole’s concern is rather with Emerson’s kin: with his ancestors, who numbered in their ranks both evangelical enthusiasts and rationalistic liberals; and with his immediate family, in which the outstanding figure was his Aunt Mary, whom Cole convincingly portrays as being possessed of a rich and complex intellectual culture and as anticipating the themes of Transcendentalism whilst her nephew was still a child. The full flowering of Transcendentalism is broadly and effectively surveyed in the opening essay by David M. Robinson, as are further staple matters by Robert D. Richardson, Jr. (“Emerson and Nature”), Robert Milder (Emerson’s politics), and Robert Weisbuch, who explains the post-colonial strategic necessity of Emerson’s “erasure of Europe,” for all that “the private Emerson enjoyed Europe enormously.”

Of their *Companion* the editors announce in the Preface that, “following Emerson himself, its aim is provocation.” And assuredly the final essay by Michael Lopez is nothing if not provocative, as the author exhibits to us an Emerson whose talismans are work, action, use, energy, antagonism, productivity, “reality,” and, above all, power, and whose objects of contempt are sympathy, pity, charity, and meekness. He is altogether proto-Nietzschean, or, as it might be from another vantage-point, perhaps Nietzsche was little more than a neo-Emersonian. Lopez’s Emerson is there for the finding, of course, just as at the beginning of this century was William James’s softer “critter to be thankful for.” For did not Emerson himself famously, and provocatively, assert that “consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds?” Even so, consistency is the mark of this volume, a consistency of excellence which will pleasurably and instructively serve both newcomer to Emerson and old hand alike.

*University of Essex*

R. W. (HERBIE) BUTTERFIELD

Donald J. Ratcliffe, *Party Spirit in a Frontier Republic: Democratic Politics in Ohio, 1793–1821* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1998, \$52.50 cloth, \$22.95 paper). Pp. 336. ISBN 0 8142 0775 8, 0 8142 0776 6.

Donald Ratcliffe, of the University of Durham, readily confesses in the Preface of *Party Spirit in a Frontier Republic* that his book is likely to be dismissed as “old-fashioned political history” because it is about “how politics actually worked”

in the all-important developing state of Ohio. For the most part, Ratcliffe delivers what he promises – a book about “political contests, about electoral trends, about the way in which electoral competition became structured in the early years of the republic” – in a meticulously researched and detailed work which even proponents of the more “fashionable approach” to the period cannot and should not dismiss as easily as he thinks they will.

The book makes three important claims, the most compelling of which is that there were significant bodies of partisan sentiment in existence before 1815 – amounting to more than just a “preparty” form of political organisation – and which were orientated around national rather than local politics. Ratcliffe is clearly most at ease in delineating the complex and confusing nature of partisan activity in Ohio and at his best in describing the extent and evolutionary nature of party alignments and conflict. The second claim is that these pre-1815 partisan divisions had far-reaching consequences. Approaching Jeffersonian politics from a Jacksonian perspective in what appears to be the first of two books (the second taking the story up to 1828), Ratcliffe found more continuities than differences between the political histories of the two. Old loyalties and the memory of party division and mutual antagonism affected new alignments after 1825, when party politics once again revolved around national identifications and contests rather than local politics, and politicians often used the “language and symbols and ideas learned during the conflicts of Jefferson and Madison’s day.”

Perhaps this is enough of an accomplishment for one author, and one book, but the work ultimately fails to prove Ratcliffe’s final – and perhaps most crucial point – that these partisan divisions had penetrated deep into the electorate with the result that “Ohio was thoroughly democratized by the early nineteenth century.” It may have been, and there are some suggestive insights here, but this book does not and perhaps cannot prove such a claim because it so exclusively focuses on the politicians and what they said or believed. Apart from a short review of “ethnocultural sources of partisanship,” we are given remarkably little information about who really supported them, and why. This is an important problem, for, as Ratcliffe readily admits, the electorate often failed to provide and act as party politicians and Ratcliffe himself expected, bringing into question the pervasiveness of partisan politics and, in turn, the significance of national versus local issues.

In the end, Ratcliffe’s work will be indispensable in understanding the origins of a more democratic polity, but a more complementary marriage of the two approaches – the “old-fashioned” and the new “political culture” studies (which Ratcliffe for the most part eschews) – is still needed. As it stands, the work will be extremely useful to those engaged in that very endeavour, and to historians of the later period who have failed to recognise the importance and lasting significance of partisan politics in the early national period. Yet, while the detailed and fascinating reconstructions of evolving party alignments will be of especial interest to those who want to know how local elites worked at politics in Ohio, those wishing to uncover the full story of “how politics worked” and how a more democratic polity emerged in the early Republic will want to know more.

*University of Wales, Swansea*

MICHAEL A. McDONNELL

Adelaida Reyes, *Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free: Music and the Vietnamese Refugee Experience* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999, \$59.50 cloth, \$19.95 paper). Pp. 218. ISBN 1 56639 685 9, 1 56639 686 7.

In a dominant culture awash with representations of American trauma post-Vietnam, Adelaida Reyes' *Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free* is an incisive study of Vietnamese and their music-making as refugees in the US. Music is perceived as not just a social act, but a cultural object, "inseparable from the community whose musical language it uses." Part I details life in camp at Palawan and the Refugee Processing Center in Bataan. The two chapters provide a sensitive insight into the human, social, and ideological interstices between the trauma of the "boat people" and the types of musical productions. In Palawan, the music was "mostly 'sad songs' and 'love songs,' a statement both of fact and of ideology." Such songs had been banned by the communist Vietnamese government, and their performance constituted a type of defiance. Significantly the asylee population was primarily south Vietnamese. In Bataan the "musical life was pervaded by a sense of temporariness heavily overlaid by expectations of impending departure." Reyes outlines the spaces for public performance (song contest, Roman Catholic mass, Buddhist ritual worship), the difference between public and private performative spaces, and the ways in which music reflected national, regional, and situational identities.

The translation of these identities into an alien world is the focus of Part II. Reyes studies the "Birth of Community" in New Jersey, and the complex centre of Vietnamese music in Orange County, California. The production and dissemination of music is located within conflicting social and ideological matrices: evacuees and refugees, sponsors and sponsored, communist and non-communist. These differences are further problematised within the context of forced immigration and assimilation. The themes that emerge from Tết celebrations and other musical occasions is "the refugee-exiles' nostalgia for home, and the need to identify themselves with and adapt to their host society." The identity, the "Vietnameseness" of musical productions is forged within this cusp. "What forms are recognizable to the Vietnamese as Vietnamese and at the same time acceptable to the larger society as both an expression of distinctiveness and an expression of what might be – at least potentially – the American side of the hyphenated Vietnamese-American identity?" This question is especially resonant in Orange County (the largest centre of Vietnamese music) where traditional forms such as *cai luong* are jettisoned in favour of *tân nhạc* (which includes Vietnamese popular music, Western, new wave, and folk). The distinctive Vietnamese quality of the latter is often unavailable to the western listener. Music is a means of forging a Vietnamese identity that relates to pre-1975, pre-communist South Vietnam. The overall anti-communist ethic is something the refugees share with their hosts (a position complicated by the normalisation of US–Vietnam relations in 1995).

While Reyes deals sensitively with the problematics of identities lost and forged within a multicultural society, she seems to overlook larger political questions of collaboration, of atrocities committed by South Vietnamese officers, many of whom immigrated. The common ground of anti-communism seems to ignore the devastation of South Vietnam by US forces, and the contempt with

which US officers treated their “allies,” particularly the ARVN. These, however, are minor caveats to what is a nuanced ethno-musicological study. *Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free* is a reflection not merely on Vietnamese diasporic music, but on the traumatic nature of the refugee experience and the travails of exile which encompasses, in Marita Eastmond’s words, “the torment of remembering, the fear of forgetting.”

*St. Stephen’s College, Delhi*

SUBARNO CHATTARJI