

Department of Chinese and Japanese Art at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts depicts late nineteenth-century white American fascination with Japanese arts and crafts. Krystyn Moon considers the reception of Japanese acrobatic troupes in various New England cities during the late 1860s. Moon's original research on these performing artists reinforces the close relationship between various discourses of Orientalism and the racialization of Asians visiting or inhabiting the United States. Bandana Purkayastha and Anjana Narayan also scrutinize this connection; their essay on 1890s lectures by the Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda suggests how Vivekananda's teachings countered the prevalent typecasting of "hindoos" and how in the present South Asian Americans both employ and oversimplify versions of his doctrine to challenge Orientalism's continuing legacy.

Later essays provide distinctive sites of scholarly study and question the terms by which such research is framed and conducted. Shirley Suet-Ling Tang and James Điền Bui look at Vietnamese American grassroots community-building efforts in Boston's Field's Corner neighborhood, and Monica Chiu examines the expressive possibilities of hip hop for Lao American youth in New Hampshire. Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns uses the example of the University of Massachusetts–Amherst's New World Theatre and Roberta Uno collections to unpack the ideological underpinnings of Asian American studies and performance studies archives, and Leakhena Nou considers the possibilities of an indigenous perspective in research on Cambodian Americans. While individually none of the essays makes a sweeping claim about Asian Americans in New England, collectively they invite a larger reconsideration of the history and the contemporary presence of Asian Americans, not just in this understudied location, but overall.

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James Silas Rogers and Matthew J. O'Brien (eds.), *After the Flood: Irish America, 1945–1960* (Dublin: Irish Academic, 2009, £19.95). Pp. 223. ISBN 0 7165 2988 2.

In their short introduction to *After the Flood*, the editors note that Irish American historiography has traditionally focussed on the nineteenth century, particularly the years of the Great Famine (1). In line with more recent studies, which challenge this narrow chronological scope, Rogers and O'Brien make a claim for the years 1945 to 1960 as "a distinct historical and cultural moment" in Irish America, arguing that Irish American ethnicity is of "pivotal significance" in these years (4). Indeed, 1945 to 1960 might be "the most important single period for twentieth-century Irish-American ethnicity" (5). They and other contributors (notably Margaret Lee) are keen to discredit the thesis of "ethnic fade" which proposes a "straight-line course of assimilation that would reduce ethnicity to a romanticized affectation" (2). Rogers and O'Brien need not be so emphatic in their claims, which are, in any case, very difficult to prove. This is a thoroughly original project, spanning history, politics and cultural studies (literature, film, sport, music), that justifies its existence in its very title. While the historical ground has been covered quite comprehensively by Linda Dowling Almeida in *Irish Immigrants in New York City, 1945–1995* (2001), it is true that

very little analysis of Irish American culture in these years exists and, moreover, that Almeida's New York focus necessarily ignores the regional expanse of Irish migration to, and Irish American influence in, the US during this period.

One of the most illuminating and convincing contexts discussed by several contributors is that of the legacy of World War II and the ensuing Cold War. In O'Brien's essay, he argues that the mainstream American preoccupation with the Red Scare in the immediate postwar years presented the Ancient Order of the Hibernians, whose membership and influence had declined in the 1930s and early 1940s, with an opportunity to reinvent itself in opposition to the "Anti-Christ" of communism and, thus, to promote Irish Catholicism's compatibility with American patriotism. Stephanie Rains discusses the sensational story of Colorado housewife Virginia Tighe, who "apparently recalled, under hypnosis, a previous life in nineteenth-century Ireland" as Bridey Murphy (132). At a moment during which there were fears of communist brainwashing, hypnosis was a controversial pursuit. Meanwhile, Edward Hagan's essay on *The Quiet Man* (1952), undoubtedly the most exhaustively discussed Irish American cultural phenomenon of the 1950s, draws upon its appearance in the aftermath of World War II as a previously unconsidered context for the film. Hagan reads Seán Thornton's search for "peace and quiet" in the light of "that constellation of postwar psychological hangovers that since the 1970s have come to be grouped under the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)" (102).

Almost inevitably with an edited collection, the quality of the essays is not consistently robust. Nonetheless, *After the Flood* fills an important gap (post-Depression; pre-JFK) in scholarship of Irish America, and, indeed, the contributors do not ignore the historiography of this scholarship itself. Fittingly, Charles Fanning concludes the collection by noting the foundation of the American Committee for Irish Studies (now the American Conference for Irish Studies) in 1960.

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Michael Boyden, *Predicting the Past: The Paradoxes of American Literary History* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009, \$55.00). Pp. 214. ISBN 978 90 5867 731 0.

Michael Boyden brings the tools of the functionalist sociologist Niklas Luhmann to the study of American literary history and historiography, but his common sense stands him in equally good stead. Arguing against a recent spate of "inflammatory" (12) interpretations of the making of the American canon that stress the workings of vested social interests to explain the "fundamentally exclusionist" bent of previous historiography (12), Boyden rereads some of the strong forces in the making of American literary history in terms of the "problems" they emerged from and of the interpretive "paradoxes" they resolved (17). The core paradox he explores is the way that American literary history no less than the American literature it studies consistently advances "utopian alternatives" and in so doing "constantly predicts its own undoing," all the while lending the entire tradition a remarkable "stability" (12).