Journal of American Studies, **32** (1998), 3, 513–564 Printed in the United Kingdom
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Reviews

Richard Gray, *Writing the South: Ideas of an American Region* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1998, £13.50). Pp. 347. ISBN 0 8071 2217 3.

The shelf lives of works of literary history and criticism tend to be notoriously short, given the rapidly changing landscape of literary study. As a result, we do not see many reissues of literary criticism; only the most special texts get a second life. One such book is Richard Gray's study of Southern literature. *Writing the South: Ideas of an American Region*, originally published in 1986 and now reissued with a new Afterword looking at the state of Southern literature in the 1990s.

One of a handful of major texts that present and interpret the broad sweep of Southern literary history from the colonial period up through the present day, *Writing the South* certainly deserves reissue. Although not strictly a survey (Gray is selective about whom he writes), Gray's book reads like one, to the extent that he works through the different periods of the South's literary history, using representative writers to chart out each era's imaginative landscape. And, consistently, Gray underpins his provocative and insightful readings with level-headed discussion of social and cultural history, economics, and literary theory. This contextualization is no small achievement; Gray's knowledge of Southern culture (in the broadest sense) is immense. There are few critics of Southern literature who would dare to take on a project of this scope, and even fewer who could pull it off as successfully as Gray has.

Gray's overriding thesis can be stated fairly simply: Southern writers from the beginning have been less writing about the South than they have been *creating* the South, an identity that, as Gray puts it, embodies "a set of structural possibilities, frames for composing and articulating experience." Drawing on the insights of Roland Barthes concerning the significance of cultural myths, Gray locates two shaping legends in Southern experience, one embodying a populism centered in the yeoman farmer and the other a patriarchy centered in the aristocratic planter. After establishing the formation of these myths in the colonial South, Gray then works through the ways that writers and other cultural or political figures of succeeding generations reworked, reinterpreted, and reshaped these myths, responding not only to the diverse shapes of their own individual imaginations but also to the changing social, economic, and political landscapes.

Not surprisingly, Gray argues that the greatest writers are those who invoke Southern myths while simultaneously evaluating and revising them in a self-conscious fashion. Faulkner, says Gray, possessed this "extra edge of self-consciousness," so that his "awareness of myth could then develop into a creative absorption in the mythmaking process, while a concern for rhetoric and

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an interest in ritual could be translated into, in turn, an imaginative analysis of speech, its limits and possibilities, and a dramatic enquiry into the nature of codes." Faulkner was not, of course, the only Southern writer possessing this self-consciousness, but he was and is the South's greatest writer precisely because he was the one who put it to the most extensive and deliberate imaginative use.

Writing the South is everywhere filled with insight and intelligence. Gray is always good, frequently better than good, and sometimes great, as in his discussions of the Nashville Agrarians and the contemporary scene. Gray gives a masterful reading of the paradoxes and contradictions underlying the Agrarian enterprise (and specifically *I'll Take My Stand*); and he is equally masterful in his discussion of the almost comically diverse state of contemporary Southern writing (particularly when contrasted with the consistency of literary expression found during the Southern renaissance). Underlying Gray's discussion of the present state of Southern literature is the question now plaguing scholars of regional literature and culture: what should we make of regional literature – or the idea of a regional literature – in these heady, postmodern days when regionalism, regional identity, and regional writing are arguably being subsumed in the rush towards the global village?

The appearance of *Writing the South* in 1986 generated a fair amount of controversy, along with acclamation, particularly because of its reading of the South as less of a downhome fact than a constructed idea. Twelve years later, Gray's work reads much less iconoclastically, evidence not only of the shifting trends in literary criticism but also, even more significantly, of the tremendous interpretative work *Writing the South* has already accomplished – the way it has reshaped our understanding of Southern literary expression. This is an important work, and one that will continue to be with us for a very long time.

University of Mississippi ROBERT H. BRINKMEYER, JR.

John H. M. Laslett (ed.), *The United Mine Workers of America: A Model of Industrial Solidarity?* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, £58.50). Pp. 576. ISBN 0 271 01537 3.

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

The most provocative set of articles situate the UMWA in an international perspective. The best of these comparative pieces look to the example of British

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

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

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

Previously published material appears elsewhere in this collection, but without ill effect. Readers familiar with US labour history will recognise Price Fishback's article on company towns from his book on the economic welfare of bituminous coal miners, *Soft Coal, Hard Choices* (1993); and Keith Dix's treatment of mechanisation and workplace control in the hand-loading era is reproduced

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virtually verbatim from his *What's a Coal Miner To Do?* (1988). Other contributions are distillations of recent monographs, including Robert Zieger's pithy portrait of John L. Lewis and Alan Derickson's essay on the fight against respiratory diseases.

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

University College London RICK HALPERN

Dieter Meindl, *American Fiction and the Metaphysics of the Grotesque* (London: University of Missouri Press, 1996, £31.95). Pp. 234. ISBN 0 8262 1079 1.

One might anticipate a proliferation of books assessing continuity across American literary history as we approach the new millennium Dieter Meindl argues for a common thread through the grotesque, a literary mode with some affinity to the established tradition of American romance. In *American Fiction and the Metaphysics of the Grotesque*, Meindl finds a defining tension between humour and horror in works of writers from Edgar Allan Poe to Thomas Pynchon. But the author is also concerned with outlining the ways in which this literature lends substance to twentieth-century philosophical debates. For this reason, neither the history of the grotesque nor the continuity of the American canon itself is able to claim the primacy within this study afforded the Heideggerian thought that informs it.

Meindl begins from the admission that his interest in the grotesque in American literature is rooted in his fascination with Herman Melville's "Bartleby." In and of themselves, the readings Meindl provides for Melville's works and the works of other significant authors like Henry James and William Faulkner are spirited. Particularly noteworthy is the discussion of Flannery O'Connor in this context, though as with other figures given passing treatment one might like a more thorough treatment to highlight development within the careers of a greater number of particular writers. But while the study is structured as a survey, its heart is with Poe. The author of "The Fall of the House of Usher" is the hero of the piece, having undertaken the "romantic rehabilitation of the underworld" that functions at the philosophical centre of Meindl's argument.

It is with Poe, of course, that Meindl introduces the emergence of the "new metaphysics" in American fiction. The rejection of a more idealistic stance in favour of a "metaphysics of depth and descent" is a noteworthy development in American literature. And while in the inter-war period, for example, this new orientation could be seen in an expatriate interest in German romanticism, Poe's work provides an important precedent. But American literary history does not

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begin with Poe, and the absence of an earlier period of letters that embraced humour and horror must be seen as a shortcoming here, even though Meindl acknowledges that this book is only a first step in charting the American grotesque. What he does provide is a good sense of the new metaphysics in the context of contemporary critical thought and how its impulse can be identified over the past 150 years of American literature. But rather than positing literary history as a frame, it would have been even more effective to outline a reading of the modern American culture that gave rise to this impulse.

University of Lethbridge, Canada CRAIG MONK

Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (eds.), *Launching the "Extended Republic": The Federalist Era* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996, $37.50). Pp. 397. ISBN 0 8139 1624 0.

This latest volume of papers from a symposium of the United States Capitol Historical Society focuses on the 1790s. The papers cover a mixture of topics, at varying length but uniformly high quality. They fall into three groups. Studies by Maeva Marcus on judicial review, Thomas P. Slaughter on the law of treason, and James H. Kettner on a Virginia Quaker's efforts to oblige his heirs to free the slaves he bequeathed them, deal with aspects of the law. Papers by Andrew R. L. Cayton on the Blount conspiracy of 1797, Bernard W. Sheehan on the Washington administration's "Indian policy" in the Old Northwest, and John Lauritz Larson on George Washington's visions of water-borne commerce in the interior, discuss implications of the literal "extension" of the republic in the Federalist period. Gordon S. Wood's introductory essay, Gary J. Kornblith's analysis of New England artisans' adherence to Federalism, and John L. Brooke's lengthy discussion of freemasonry as an element of the eighteenth-century public sphere, all explore facets of political culture in what James Madison envisaged as an "extended republic" of competing interest groups.

If these papers share a perspective it is that of the (male) groups and individuals who claimed to exercise power in a period when it was still conceived in hierarchical terms. However, the authors frequently remind us that Federalist conceptions of orderly government were being undermined by popular pressure, and would soon be rejected, along with the Federalists themselves. As Wood puts it, "Everything was built on illusions" (p. 23). The papers differ, however, in the extent to which they regard the 1790s as discontinuous with what followed. Marcus sees the establishment of a long-standing constitutional tradition, while Slaughter argues that the decade's political events prompted a broad interpretation of treason that was significantly curbed after 1800. Sheehan identifies a "philanthropic" shift in federal Indian policy, though one needs to read Cayton's perceptive essay on the comparative geopolitics of the Northwest and Southwest for a reminder that this was only after the smashing of the Shawnees' western confederacy at the Battle of Fallen Timbers.

Most interesting of all is Brooke's discussion of freemasonry and voluntary organisations as components of a political culture too often studied primarily for

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signs of party formation. While fully alert to the nuances of change in the 1790s, he concludes that 1800 may not have marked such a sharp break after all. Not until the 1820s, he suggests, did "rule by a benevolent gentry" finally collapse.

University of York CHRISTOPHER CLARK

Peter Wilson, *A Preface to Ezra Pound* (London and New York: Longman, 1997, £14.99). Pp. 255. ISBN 0582 25867 7.

"An 'Image,'" Pound famously wrote, "is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." They're words to which one returns again and again; they endlessly generate meaning while retaining a sense of basic rightness – this, at least, is what it feels like, not only to contemplate an image, but also to respond to virtually any work of art. But Peter Wilson decides that these words lack precision and therefore need to be translated; for him, "an image is a series of signs whose signifiers present a complex of denotational and connotational signifieds in an instant of time." One cannot imagine this translation possessing the generational capacity of Pound's original statement, though they certainly help to prove that the original statement possesses precisely that capacity. For Wilson, "denotational" is more accurate than "intellectual," since the word "relies on relatively stable semantic components or features"; "connotational" is better than "emotional" because it refers to those features which are variable and which "override, complicate or render ambiguous the basic denotation." This clearly misses the point; Pound's "complex" occurs because the intellectual and emotional features create a kind of interdependent cluster of activity, a kind of dance in which the emotional and intellectual partners keep swapping roles, testing and extending each other's capacities. At times it's the emotions which move with a simple grace, while the intellect furrows its brow, trying to draw its partner into a more complex configuration, yet the dance is endless; the intellect, temporarily satisfied in its demand, feels the sudden tug of an emotional torrent, and the dancers are moving again. In this way of picturing it, the complex is of course the dance itself, which may be a waltz or a jig; the "instant of time" is the feeling of satisfaction, the feeling that we are performing within the limits of the particular dance, while being blissfully unaware that these limits are in any way limiting – we are exactly where we want to be.

It is interesting that Peter Wilson associates intellectual activity with stability; I suspect that it is the technician in him, a side which becomes particularly apparent in the second long section of his book, a section revealingly devoted to critical matters. Elsewhere in the same section, Wilson argues that Pound failed to discriminate properly between subjectivity and objectivity in his definition of the Image, yet he ignores the fact that Pound did not want to draw a sharp distinction between these two words; Pound wanted to put human beings back inside a natural universe and saw the creation of a separate interiority as a disastrous fiction; Wilson admits that fertility myths underscore THE CANTOS yet fails to see that they are emblematic of Pound's attempt to eradicate this kind of interiority. Surprisingly, Wilson has many valuable things to say about this area

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in Pound's work; perhaps it is the weight of poststructuralist argument that stops him from taking the full measure of Pound in those sections of the book more fully devoted to theory.

Putting these quarrels to one side, it is hard to imagine a better introduction to Pound; Wilson appears to have read just about everything by or on him. On the whole, he provides an extremely balanced overview, refusing to turn his back on areas which others might regard as either quirky or inessential. Pound's sexual, musical and economic theories are all rehearsed and he does not shrink from making the occasional contentious value judgement, as in his claim that HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY suffers from a "design flaw." Yet I have to wonder in the end who these introductions are for; though they are not meant to satisfy the demands of a specialist audience, they must nevertheless take that audience into account. They must cater to the needs of a variegated student body yet avoid simplifying the issues involved. Wilson's book seems to walk this tightrope with consummate ease and skill, but I am not sure how homogenous his pretended audience actually is. I started this review with my own, perhaps unfairly protracted, criticism; I enjoyed and was impressed by the show, but finally left by one of the many relatively unmarked exits. Apparently we all had different homes to go back to.

University of Wales, Aberystwyth CLIVE MEACHEN

Leslie J. Reagan, *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and the Law in the United States, 1867–1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, $29.95). Pp. 387. ISBN 0 520 08848 4.

The voices of women are central to this excellent book, and the hardest part to read. To write an authoritative history of abortion, often assumed inaccessible because both intimately personal and illegal, Leslie Reagan has found rich sources at those points where the personal became anguishingly public: police records and criminal court proceedings, admission records for oversubscribed septic abortion wards, the reports of coroners' inquests. The women who are eloquently on record here are so as they are publicly shamed, dying, or memorialised by bereaved sisters, friends and partners. Clara L., arrested in a clinic raid in 1947, was told in a courtroom full of men to "raise your voice a little, so that the last jurors can hear you," as she was asked, "Tell us what part of your body the tube was inserted in?" Mrs Carolina Petrovitis was rushed to hospital in 1916, in terrible pain following an abortion. The police were called. "With the permission of the hospital physician, Sgt William E. O'Connor 'instructed' an intern to 'tell her she is going to die'...'she started to cry – her eyes watered.'" She identified a midwife, and "she made her 'mark' on the statement. And then she died." Frances Collins, wife of a master printer and like Petrovitis a mother of two, told her husband in 1920 that she had "missed." Counselled by a woman friend, she found a doctor to have "'her womb opened up,' something, she commented later, she had 'done many times.'" She called her husband home from work and told him "'I am unwell.' He told her inquest that he asked her, 'Natural? And she says no. That is all.'"

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Reagan has also used medical journals, records of professional associations, newspaper exposés and the letters that flowed into publications like Margaret Sanger's *Birth Control Review*, to provide a solidly grounded general history with much particular detail from Chicago archives. The book does more than provide the facts, however. One theme is the importance of women's networks, both for practical help and their matter of fact prioritising of women's and families' needs above the law. This applied regardless of class, race or ethnicity, and from the local and family networks of the nineteenth century through to "Jane" in the 1960s. Reagan is helpful too in teasing out where such demographic and temporal characteristics did make a difference. Contributing to the political history of women she also shows how, over a century, women moved from private contravention of the law to public campaigning against the law.

Women's relationships with their doctors prove to be complex. In 1891 one doctor lamented that "leading ladies of the community not only 'commit this crime but talk about it unconcernedly.'" Some doctors needed the family business, some really listened to women, increasing numbers worked to control both female patients and female midwives. Few doctors spoke so honestly in the courts as the women and men whose lives were touched by abortion. Few were prosecuted and their greatest achievement as a profession was gradually to transform the definition of 'therapeutic' abortions into a prerogative of medical judgement, perpetuated in *Roe v Wade*.

Meantime, on a bumpy path from the relatively open span from blind eye to deprecation to punitive moralism of the nineteenth century, through the growing recognition of social hardship during the depression, to the repressive and misogynistic control freaks of the 1950s, the authorities remained flummoxed by a social issue where a considerable cross-section of the entire female population persistently spoke and acted against their regulatory regimes. That remains so, and given the immense human cost revealed here in statistics and stories it is not surprising that Reagan's epilogue on the 1990s is both assertive about the (limited) gains she believes a century of private and public politics have made and anxious about how secure these gains may be. This is an important and compelling book for historians and for any person concerned about abortion politics today.

University of Sussex VIVIEN HART

Lawrence Grossberg, *Bringing It All Back Home: Essays on Cultural Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997, £15.95). Pp. 425. ISBN 0 8223 1916 0; and *Dancing In Spite Of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997, £14.95). Pp. 299. ISBN 0 8223 1917 9.

Bringing It All Back Home: Essays On Cultural Stuies and *Dancing In Spite Of Myself: Essays On Popular Culture* together document not only the evolving critical practice of one of the pioneering figures in Cultural Studies, but also the development of Cultural Studies in both Great Britain and the United States,

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from the late 70s to its present-day popularity. Lawrence Grossberg's career as a Cultural Studies theorist, from his early days at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, maps the emergence of the field of Cultural Studies on both sides of the Atlantic, within various different discursive arenas. Both collections demonstrate Grossberg's emphasis upon pedagogical self-reflexivity: "to reflect on where the questions driving our research are coming from" and also communicate the dynamism of the field of Cultural Studies. Grossberg offers his theoretical observations "not as the end of a debate," but as part of an ongoing project to negotiate the ideas and identities of Cultural Studies as a field in flux. Taken together, both collections attest to the eclecticism of both the field and its practitioners by mapping the extent of its diversity in different discursive locations.

Of the two, *Bringing It All Back Home* seems the more important collection; *Dancing In Spite Of Myself* is the more engaging. *Bringing It All Back Home*'s importance stems from its effective function as a document of the evolution of Cultural Studies through an "attempt to negotiate [the] identity of Cultural Studies." Grossberg addresses, in turn, criticisms of Cultural Studies as too populist, as lacking an oppositional role and as focusing upon the processes of consumption rather than production. The individual essays stress Cultural Studies' interdisciplinarity by bringing together philosophy, popular culture and communication theory, and attempt new ways of dealing with the challenges of globalisation and mass culture. Some of the essays tackle these issues more adroitly than others. Those pieces which address Cultural Studies' histories and identities head on offer lucid and persuasive analyses: "The Formation(s) of Cultural Studies: An American in Birmingham" traces the development of Cultural Studies from its emergence in the 50s; "The Circulation of Cultural Studies" functions as an intellectually sensitive geography of Cultural Studies; "Towards a Genealogy of the State of Cultural Studies" asserts Cultural Studies as an unstable and contested field of intellectual and political practice. However, the thematic organisation of the essays does work against this documentary aspect of the collection, and I wonder if a chronological organisation might have been preferable. I also found Grossberg's refusal to answer his many elegantly articulated questions frustrating, despite his very compelling epistemological reasons for not doing so.

Dancing In Spite Of Myself has a much narrower focus. It is an attempt to understand the politics of the popular in the contemporary United States. Grossberg's approach views popular culture as "a sphere in which people struggle over reality and their place in it," a definition which accepts popular culture's role as a force in and of political struggle, as well as asserting a dynamic model of the circulation and negotiation of popular cultural practices. Grossberg covers rock (the formations of rock, the problems of critically approaching rock and the death of rock); television (asking where we might find the televisual sites of postmodernism, and whether film theory may offer a way of critically accounting for televisual culture); and finally turns his attention to trying to locate postmodernism in popular culture.

Dancing In Spite Of Myself closes by imagining the future of Cultural Studies as an oppositional space, which refuses disciplinary and intellectual assimilation and

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closure. My only criticism of the collection – in fact, both collections – is their scant attention to female voices in the field, with the exception of rather brief mention of Angela McRobbie and Meaghan Morris. But this is a minor objection, and one anticipated, if not exactly addressed, by Grossberg. Overall, these are two important and enticing collections, which complement each other well. Grossberg's strength may perhaps best be summed up by quoting his own praise for the work of his colleague, Stuart Hall: "The 'multi-accentuality' of his work is magnified by his commitment to modes of collective intellectual work and authorship... His 'author-ity' extends far beyond those texts he himself has authored: he is as much a teacher and an activist as a writer."

University of Wales, Aberystwyth HELENA GRICE

Derek Bok, *The State of the Nation: Government and the Quest for a Better Society* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1996, £23.50). Pp. 483. ISBN 0 674 29210 3.

In the late-1970s Jimmy Carter identified a "crisis of confidence" among the American people as cause of the national malaise during his presidency. Nowadays, while Bill Clinton points to the successful achievements of the country and looks forward optimistically to the twenty-first century, it is the people who have their doubts. In the middle of this decade 74 percent were "dissatisfied with the way things are going," and more than half were not optimistic about the future faced by their children. This decline in public confidence is attributed by many people to a failure of government. These are the issues addressed by Professor Bok, formerly president of Harvard, in his detailed assessment intended as the foundation for a second volume examining the reasons "why public officials and institutions often fail to achieve their goals."

Focusing on five areas – economic prosperity, quality of life, opportunity for all, personal security, and fundamental societal values – Professor Bok sets out to determine whether things really are getting worse for Americans by taking an historical and comparative approach. The result is a book packed with a great deal of statistical data of interest to anyone concerned with contemporary American society and government. Some topics, such as values, do not lend themselves easily to quantification; other subjects produce rather obvious conclusions – "violence in America is the product of a complex mixture of many factors." Other subjects are perceived rather narrowly – race is examined under "Opportunity" and deals only with black Americans. Many issues, as Bok indicates, are subject to diverse interpretation, but despite this some of the conclusions suggest that things are not as bad as people believe. However, in some fundamental areas, such as (un)employment, job security, health care, and crime, the record appears genuinely negative. Equally significant has been the sense of relative decline as other countries caught America up. Many Americans blame government for failing to tackle these issues, but Bok's conclusion is that if government is the problem, it is also still the solution. In order for government to work, however, public officials need to be able to make wise policy choices and design effective legislation to help fulfill national aspirations. The fundamental

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debates this raises about the function of government, federal or state, presumably will be dealt with in the next volume.

University of Glamorgan NEIL A. WYNN

Myra Jehlen and Michael Warner (eds.), *The English Literatures of America, 1500–1800* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997, £16.99). Pp. 1118. ISBN 0 415 90873 6.

Let us dwell first on the chief components of the title. *America* here is the American continent from Costa Rica, where Captain Morgan put a "whole city to the sack, not the least corner escaping his diligence," to the Canadian prairies, whither as early as 1690 Henry Kelsey set out "to live amongst the Natives of this place;" and it is the offshore islands of that continent, from Barbados to Bermuda to Newfoundland, all of whose settlements date from the first quarter of the seventeenth century. *1500–1800* is to say from around the time of Columbus's and Vespucci's voyages and of the first appearance in English of the word "America" in 1509, to just after the establishment of the independent United States of America, the last entry in the volume being Philip Freneau's poem of 1797, "To the Americans of the United States." Apart from Chapter One which consists of pertinent early documents translated from Italian, Spanish and Nahuatl, *English* is the original language of the items included, but it is an English almost as much of London as of Virginia or New England, written either by people who had never set foot on the American continent or by Anglophone settlers who until well into the eighteenth century considered themselves to be English, however far-flung, rather than whatever an American might be. Lastly, this is an anthology gathered not from a single literature but from several *literatures*, from a plurality of literary types: high and low, public and private, rough and smooth, ornate and plain; poetry and prose; fact, fiction and all stations in between; extracts from novels; a whole play (Aphra Behn's *The Widow Ranter*); histories, travel narratives, captivity journals, sermons, jeremiads, exhortations, letters, diaries, broadsides, essays, philosophical enquiries, descriptions of fauna, flora and terrain, and treatises scientific, religious and political. The authors are, of course, most often male, but there are many entries of various kinds by women; and the authors are, of course, usually British or from the British diaspora, but there are also several entries by Native or African Americans.

There are fourteen chapters, arranged according to time, place or literary kind. Two titles may exemplify: "Seventeenth-Century Anglo-America: Virginia and the Indies" and "Science in America: The Eightheen Century." Each chapter has a beautifully clear, compact but panoramic introduction by one or other of the editors, and each entry is preceded by a brief account of the author and an explanation of the entry's significance. A king, James I, delivers his famous "Counter-Blaste to Tobacco" in 1604. A chimney sweep, Terence, writes from obscurity "To the Printur of the Penselvaney Kronical" in 1772. In that same latter year, a Christian Indian and ordained minister, Samson Occom, in a sermon preached before the execution of another Christian Indian, urges his fellow

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Native Americans to "break off from your drunkenness...and believe on the Lord Jesus...[for] drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." And in that same year again the African Philis Wheatley addresses a poem "To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth" and prays that "like the prophet, thou shalt find thy God." Meanwhile Daniel Boone, in John Filson's report, was returning "home to my family with a determination to bring them as soon as possible to live in Kentucke, which I esteemed a second paradise." Doomed to find not paradise but the flames of Inferno was the slave who, about to be burned alive in Barbados, spoke these brave, defiant, haunting words: "If you Roast me today you cannot Roast me tomorrow." He was undoubtedly demonstrating what a few years later so shocked prosecution lawyer John Smith, namely "the monstrous ingratitude of this black tribe," whom slavery had saved from the miseries of life in Africa. Packed with all kinds of historical matter, the anthology offers also a range of literary manners. Typical of Puritan aesthetics was William Bradford's desire to write "in a plaine stile, with singuler regard unto the simple trueth in all things," thus pointing through Franklin to Twain and to Hemingway. But every bit as zealous a Puritan was his slightly older contemporary, the verbally flamboyant and extravagant Nathaniel Ward, who clearly loved to flaunt his "bullymong drossocks" and "nugiperous Gentle-dames" dressed in "nudiustertian fashions."

Familiar names necessarily predominate. Amongst the poets there are Anne Bradstreet, Michael Wigglesworth, self-contemning and all-condemning, and Edward Taylor; while on the English side of the Atlantic are Spenser, Milton, Marvell, Dryden, and Pope. Drayton's "To the Virginian Voyage" is not here, as might conventionally have been expected. But in ample compensation there is George Herbert, that embodiment of purest Anglicanism, observing in 1633 that "Religion stands on top-toe in our land, / Readie to passe to the *American* strand." And there is mention, intriguingly, of Francis Quarles, Catholic-inclined Royalist, sending to John Cotton, first Teacher of Boston Church, some of his metrical translations from the Psalms – in 1639, a year before the appearance of *The Bay Psalm Book*, to which Cotton contributed.

Amongst the prose-writers are Francis Bacon, Defoe, Adam Smith, de Crèvecœur, Paine, Burke, and all shapes and sizes of optimistic progressive, Whig and republican, writing their paeans to trade, commerce, and colonial enterprise, Over against them are such anti-imperialist spoilsports, such killjoy Tories as Swift lamenting "the Natives driven out or destroyed, their Princes tortured to discover their Gold; a free Licence given to all Acts of Inhumanity and Lust; the Earth reeking with the Blood of its Inhabitants." And there is Samuel Johnson asking, a year before the Declaration of Independence, how it is "that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes."

Most widely represented of all, as surely their part in political and intellectual history dictates, are John Winthrop, Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. In disappointing contrast, Roger Williams is represented only by a "scientific" entry, an extract from "A Key into the Language of America," which is assuredly an impressive proof of his desire to understand Native Americans and to meet them on something like equal terms. But the exhilarating libertarian who spoke in winged language on individual conscience is not to be

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come upon here. Most surprising of all, however, is the non-appearance of John Adams, save as the recipient of a letter from his wife, Abigail. (Is that Ezra Pound I hear, savage with indignation, in the transcendental distance?)

These are quibbles, though. Williams and Adams can readily enough be discovered elsewhere. Over all, this anthology, which, it should be noted, is also plentifully and fascinatingly illustrated, in a magnificent achievement, an editorial triumph. To historian, literary scholar, and general reader alike it cannot be too highly recommended.

University of Essex R. W. (HERBIE) BUTTERFIELD

Robert Justin Goldstein, *Desecrating the American Flag: Key Documents of the Controversy from the Civil War to 1995* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996, $49.95 cloth, $19.95 paper). Pp. 368. ISBN 0 8156 2702 5, 0 8156 2716 5.

Robert Justin Goldstein has published three books in as many years on the history of American flag desecration, quickly establishing himself as the best source for both information and analysis on this surprisingly neglected subject. The first provided an historical overview of the subject, the second teased out the implications of the recent 1989/90 controversy, when hostility mounted to the Supreme Court ruling that upheld the legality of symbolic flag protests. The new book is a supporting compendium, containing almost 150 critical documents, assembled with impressive scholarship from widely scattered sources – Congressional hearings, debates, legal briefs, newspaper articles, oral arguments, press briefings and speeches. Although Goldstein claims that he wants his work to be "descriptive rather than prescriptive" (he knows the material provides a good story in itself), no one is more aware of the extent to which the issue presses buttons in the American psyche, and he comes clean as to his own somewhat heat-reducing, rationalist position – that although flag desecration is a highly unproductive political tactic, it remains a form of "symbolic speech" (rather than "conduct") that should be completely protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Above all, he establishes that the timing of a flag desecration is the crucial factor when it comes to controversy, and the majority of the documents he has gathered slot into three distinct periods. The Civil War may have transformed the flag into a popular symbol of the nation (or more precisely the North), but it was only in the period following the war that the stars and stripes became truly "iconized," through the efforts of veterans' groups (mostly Union survivors) and hereditary-patriotic groups (such as the Daughters of the American Revolution). As a direct result of their campaigns, numerous states passed bills to outlaw "desecration" (by definition, sacrilegious treatment of a holy object) of the flag. The period 1967–73, the years of greatest intervention in the US's other civil war, Vietnam, sees the majority of all the American flag desecration cases. The national government's first ban on such acts, coming as late as 1968, is revealed as a transparent attempt to suppress a particular form of antiwar dissent. But the main focus of Goldstein's study (and the event which prompted his initial interest) is the third and most recent phase of the issue, when

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Revolutionary Communist Party member Gregory Lee Johnson successfully took his flag-burning case all the way to the Supreme Court (he had been sentenced to one year in jail and a fine of $2,000). Goldstein shows that the 1989/90 controversy and its aftermath tapped into everything cultural conservatives had disliked about the sixties, gave politicians an ideal opportunity to wrap themselves in the flag and created what even today remains an open cultural wound. As these "key documents" amply demonstrate, burning and saluting the flag are two sides of the American mindset. They are also a reminder that old-fashioned patriotism can rip through the multilayered postmodern ironies of national identity like a midsummer twister, and that even if attempts to get a constitutional amendment to protect the flag continue to fail, the issue is unlikely ever to disappear.

BBC NIGEL LEIGH

Matthew J. Dickinson, *Bitter Harvest: FDR, Presidential Power and the Growth of the Presidential Branch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, £40). Pp. 267. ISBN 0 521 48193 7.

It was the "bitter harvest" of a series of disastrous presidential decisions, including Vietnam, Watergate and the Iran-Contra affair, which made the presidential "branch," the White House centred advisory system that is an increasingly influential actor in presidential politics, the subject for Matthew J. Dickinson's first book. An assistant professor in the Government Department of Harvard University and a former student of Richard Neustadt, Dickinson organises his study around the dominant paradigm in presidential studies, Neustadt's conception of the bargaining president first articulated more than three decades ago in his classic *Presidential Power*, which Dickinson extends and elaborates to uncover the link between presidential staff and presidential power.

There is an emerging consensus among scholars that the presidential branch is flawed, perhaps fatally so. Dickinson's analysis examines the rate and locus of presidential branch growth, its internal configuration, including levels of hierarchy and role specialisation, and, most importantly, its overall impact on a president's effective influence on governmental outcomes. Although the book is addressed to the larger issue of how best to organise the presidency, the substantive focus is on the Roosevelt administration. Dickinson rejects the prevailing scholarly sentiment that Roosevelt himself planted and nurtured the seeds of the presidential branch, arguing that while he did seek to bolster presidential staff support, he was not responsible for creating the present White House centred advisory system. To show that Roosevelt's system was significantly different from those of his successors, Dickinson explores the evolution of Roosevelt's advisory system in response to administrative complexities not since matched, the two greatest crises facing the American political system this century, the Great Depression and World War II.

Arguing that Roosevelt's effectiveness contains important lessons for today, Dickinson identifies the basic principles which guided Roosevelt's use of staff: resist delegation of inherently presidential authority; personally manage staff;

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recognise the different incentives driving institutional and personal assistants and organise to insure input from both; limit White House staff specialisation in title, form and actual responsibilities (that is governing with a small staff of generalist and specialists to handle daily chores); employ overlapping staff tasks, and use internal deadlines to govern staff work while eschewing public commitments until timing is advantageous for presidential bargaining effectiveness.

This immensely scholarly analysis provides new insights into the American political system generally, into the Roosevelt administration specifically and into one of the most fascinating of presidents. It contains valuable lessons for political scientists and historians, not to mention potential presidents.

The George Bell Institute DIANNE KIRBY

Andrew M. Lakritz, *Modernism and the Other in Stevens*, *Frost*, *and Moore* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997, £36). Pp. 218. ISBN 0 8130 1460 3.

Examining the poetry of Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost and Marianne Moore through the lens of the "other" works well in Andrew M. Lakritz's *Modernism and the Other in Stevens*, *Frost*, *and Moore*. Lakritz uses ideas culled from Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno to explicate his arguments, and emphasizes close analysis of poems, with particular attention paid to the poets' varied uses of nature and animal imagery. He suggests that these three poets should be firmly placed within the modernist tradition, in part because of the ways in which each clearly critiques the notion of "progress" within modern culture, and in part because of their use of "dense" language (a term borrowed from Richard Poirier). This language is, according to Lakritz, the perfect vehicle for allowing the "other" to speak or to be heard *through* silence.

Lakritz repeats significant quotations and ideas between chapters, so that the chapters, while in a sense progressive, can also be read individually without disrupting meaning. The chapter on Wallace Stevens is perhaps the most engaging. Stevens' contradictory political stance as both radical and conservative is, it is argued, an inevitable part of his "poetic project," and the power of Stevens' poetry lies in its refusal to communicate, its emphasis on nonsense, and its frustration of expectations. The chapter provides a close analysis of "The Snow Man." among other poems, and enumerates characteristics of Benjamin's "destructive character," the most important of which, for Lakritz's argument, appears to be that such a character works with nature while simultaneously destroying it.

The chapter on Frost focuses on the imagery of ruins and makes particular use of Benjamin's concept of the "aura". Emerson's critique of commodity is also considered. Lakritz maintains that Frost's dialectical poetry is his most intriguing, and further argues that Frost's emphasis on ruin and loss is a response to "the loss of definition and atrophy of experience in the modern period." Lakritz reads Marianne Moore's animal poetry as her way of representing repressed human instinct. Using animals then becomes a means of circumventing conventional morals while still attempting to attain some sort of "authenticity." Lakritz

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maintains that Moore is successful in forcing the reader to reconsider the ways in which the natural world is perceived.

Throughout the book, there is an interesting switch between third and first person, and, especially in the Moore chapter, an emphasis on material which relates to Lakritz's time and place, rather than the particular poet's. The book provides some original readings of particular poems, while usefully contextualizing other criticism on the poets. Overall, the ideas are intriguing, and the case to include Stevens, Frost and Moore in the canon of modernists persuasive.

University of Central Lancashire HEIDI SLETTEDAHL MACPHERSON

Katharine Washburn and John Thornton (eds.), *Dumbing Down: Essays on the Strip-Mining of American Culture* (NY, Norton, 1997, £19.95). Pp. 329. ISBN 0 393 03829 7.

According to the editors of this collection of twenty-two pieces of cultural commentary (some previously published), the US is in the midst of a cultural war fought between the depleted defenders of America's rich cultural heritage, and the mass-market cultural philistines. The editors complain they, and all the other casualties of this war, have been left with "the sense that something had imperceptibly shifted in American society while we were protesting the Vietnam War, studying Middle High German or minoring in Women's Film Studies, vacationing in Dubrovnik and mortgaging the grand piano for the rock guitar – all the while counting on someone else to maintain what we have inherited." The editors and contributors are single-minded in their pursuit of the contemporary failings of American society and culture. All Americans, whether defenders of the heritage or part of the problem, are victims and are diminished as a consequence of the "feast of ignorance."

The editors quote, among others, Matthew Arnold as the touchstone for what is being dumbed-down – the "pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know... the best which has been thought and said in the world... turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits" (Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 1869). The editors argue that the key to what is being eroded today is the willingness to dismiss excellence in the hot pursuit of the easy and populist, and the problem has seemingly been exacerbated by the expansion of the demotic middle-class mind. Whether it sounds anti-democratic or not, the editors' answer lies in the defence of the high culture America has produced, whether this be in the sustenance of grammar and style over the spell-check and adspeak, or July Fourth oratory over gangsta rap.

What we have in this book is often (not invariably) self-righteous, smart-alecky, journalistic, right-wing spleen, and a staggering inability to understand what culture is, and how it works. This is distressing given its structure – twenty-two pieces of supposed cultural criticism. No where is there a mature appreciation of the nature of cultural change. The notion that there is a war between a given transcendental and transhistorical quality of truth and beauty which has been systematically eaten-away by the rise of modernism is evidenced – but there is no basis for the premise of a foundationalist culture. Among the elements of this

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fictional culture that must be defended appear to be civility (of an invariant nature), books (reading good books, preferably at some point classic books by classic authors), keeping in touch with tradition (of a certain sort), quality (again of a certain kind), facts, empiricist history, faith, faith in God, science, correct spelling, non-interactive museology, grammar, reality (not virtual), content over form, truth, the complexities involved in getting at the truth … and the list could be extended.

To my mind the central element (in any American?) cultural tradition would be tolerance. This is in many ways an intolerant book. While claiming to be intolerant of stupidity and open to rationality, it is actually intolerant of change and of those who would be different.

Staffordshire University ALUN MUNSLOW

Ralph E. Luker, *Historical Dictionary of the Civil Rights Movement* (Lanham, MD., and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1997, £64.60). Pp. 331. ISBN 0 8108 3163 5.

A civil rights activist in the 1960s, professor of history at Morehouse College, author of *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885–1912* [1991], a prolific essayist, and a co-editor of *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Ralph Luker – now turned lexicographer – gives the lie to Dr. Johnson's withering definition of that occupation: "a writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge." Students of the civil rights movement will give thanks to the assiduous compiler of this particular short dictionary, although they may express grave reservations about its price.

Viewing the "modern civil rights movement [as] unquestionably an achievement of the post-World War II era," and its signal victory "the abolition of *de jure* segregation and legal barriers to the full participation of African American citizens in American life," Luker provides informed profiles of four generations of men and women who made significant contributions to a cause which "captured the nation's attention episodically [but] retains it relentlessly." Summaries of numerous executive orders, judicial decisions, and legislative acts which formed integral parts of the struggle supplement the biographical entries.

The include such first generation pioneers as A. Philip Randolph, E. D. Nixon, Septima Clark, Charles H. Houston, Vernon Johns, and Paul Robeson. Among their second generation successors were Ella Baker, Daisy Bates, Ralph J. Bunche, Dorothy Height, Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Roy Wilkins. The third generation (born between 1920 and 1940) produced James Baldwin, James Bevel, Charles and Medgar Evers, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Fred Shuttlesworth, Constance Baker Motley, Diane Nash, and Andrew Young. Notable "children of the movement" (including Luker himself) are Julian Bond, Stokely Carmichael, Angela Davis, Jesse Jackson, Emmett Till, and Sammy Younge.

Individuals and organizations opposed to civil rights objectives – George Wallace, Eugene "Bull" Connor, the Citizens' Council, and Bob Jones University – receive judicious attention, as do those African Americans who distanced

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themselves from the movement in the South, but contributed to "the enhanced sense of racial identity" in the black community. These critics are represented by Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, LeRoi Jones, Bobby Seale, and, most notably, Malcolm X, whose "specific accomplishments were limited" but who "became in death an even more powerful symbol of African American dignity than he was in life."

A detailed "Chronology of the Civil Rights Movement" from 1941 to 1995, and a basic Bibliography, enhance this impressive work of engaged scholarship. (In a brief Bibliographical Note, Luker also displays an astute awareness of the quantity and quality of recent civil rights historiography). The *Historical Dictionary of the Civil Rights Movement* is at once authoritative, comprehensive, and far too expensive. Order it for your local library – or wait for the paperback edition.

University of Hull JOHN WHITE

Deborah Solomon, *Utopia Parkway. The Life and Work of Joseph Cornell.* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997, $30). Pp. 426. ISBN 0374 180 121.

Deborah Solomon offers in this first critical biography of Cornell a rich and immensely detailed study. Using the journals which he kept for most of his adult life in combination with pertinent observations from his family and acquaintances she manages to offer refreshing insights into the life of this notoriously secretive artist.

Solomon comments very effectively upon frequently neglected elements of Cornell's career including his films and juvenilia. She also reveals a willingness to puzzle over areas of Cornell's work which have been addressed but remain enigmatic, particularly the obvious contradictions between his life and work and his complex use of symbolism. She lingers thoughtfully over his frequent use of astronomers' charts, globes and maps, and his use of bird imagery, pausing to offer some interesting interpretations of his constant romanticising of space and movement. Throughout, Solomon manages to offer an effective historical backdrop, placing Cornell within the New York art scene which moved during his lifetime through Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism until he became the unlikely recipient of Warhol's admiration.

Solomon's work addresses the vexed issue of the celibate Cornell's repressed sexuality particularly well, focusing effectively on his desire for "visual possession" of the icons which he creates in his work. She analyses his numerous obsessions with women from Garbo, Bacall and Carmen Miranda to Susan Sontag and explores the contradictory impulses he felt to celebrate the power of their beauty and simultaneously deny them power by locking them into his cage-like boxes.

Tantalisingly, Solomon only begins to address the relationship between Cornell's work and literature, touching briefly upon the impact of Mallarmé, Marianne Moore and Emily Dickinson. Her comments upon his homages to Dickinson in particular are genuinely thought-provoking as she compares two

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similarly reclusive and gifted artists who explored in spatial and literary terms "the vastness of time and the finality of the grave."

Throughout, Solomon addresses the peculiarities of Cornell's character sensitively, managing at times to convey an understanding of the loneliness which characterised his life. She depicts him contemplating "the nightmare of my empty house" at the end of a reclusive life, which had been dominated by unrequited romantic obsessions with numerous icons. She ends by suggesting that despite his deep loneliness "he created some of the most romantic objects ever to exist in three dimensions." A fitting conclusion for a particularly sympathetic and enthralling biography.

University College Suffolk KATE RHODES

Stanley Cavell, *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman*. (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1996). Pp. 239. ISBN 0 226 09816 8.

In *Contesting Tears*, Stanley Cavell explores the links between the concerns of philosophical skepticism and what he calls the genre of the "Unknown Woman." This genre is composed of four main films: *Gaslight*, *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *Now*, *Voyager* and *Stella Dallas*. It is argued that this genre is characterised by the central female protagonist's search for a voice – for a place of being. He argues that this process is a place of tears and mourning which differs from, but leans upon, the genre of the "Remarriage Comedy" that he previously delineated in *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*. (Cavell, 1981) Unlike the remarriage comedies wherein relations between the sexes are characterised by conversation, mutual learning and play, the genre of the unknown woman is marked by the absence of communication and articulates what Lacan calls the "sexual non-relation." The woman's isolation, rather than happy coexistence in marriage, leads to a particular rendering of melodramatic tropes: excess, mourning and the search for the illusory guarantee that proves autonomous existence.

The links between the genre and philosophical skepticism are explored through a dense web of subjective associations, centring on concepts such as indebtedness, fate, gift-giving, anxiety, mourning and the (gendered) dynamics of "being." Cavell's eclectic philosophical references range from Derrida, Emerson, Thoreau to Freud through which he seeks to show the intertexts between Hollywood and philosophy. The major strength of the book for me, as a film theorist and not as a philosopher, is the insightful, subtle and sensitive readings of the film texts. This is particularly the case in his readings of *Now*, *Voyager* and *Stella Dallas*. The book however does seem at times overly self-indulgent in its preoccupation with Cavell's own subject position *vis-à-vis* the "great" philosophers. The layering of associations upon further impressionistic associations does, at first, appear to diffuse the main arguments of the book, resulting in a text that is itself symptomatic of the anxieties born of making one's own thoughts and, more precisely, doubts public. However, given that self-doubt is the main topic of the book, this is not completely without due relevance.

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Cavell's work on a group of films that were marketed as the "woman's film" has been taken up by feminist theorists, such as Tania Modleski, Linda Williams and Elizabeth Cowie. It does raise the question of whether this work is an appropriation of feminist concerns and thought for the "feminisation" of philosophical discourse. In *Feminism Without Women*, Modleski critiques Cavell's previously published *Now, Voyager* chapter and argues that he fails to engage with the feminist work on the film in favour of a discussion of the film through Emersonian and other (male) philosophical work. Whilst this criticism is a valid one, Cavell uses it to melodramatise his work by implicitly putting himself into the place of a "victim" of mis-reading. Uncannily, it is this paradox that makes the book an interesting, if contentious, intervention on debates on the complexities of interpretation, exchange and the dynamics of desire.

Brunel University TANYA KRZYWINSKA

David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997, $49.95 cloth, $19.95 paper). Pp. 444. ISBN 0 252 02266 1, 0 252 06568 9.

This is an excellent overview of political insurgency in the United States from the 1880s to the present. Horowitz argues scholars have often approached "American politics from a 'left versus right' perspective that contrasts 'liberal' or 'progressive' campaigns for social justice and power sharing with 'conservative' insistence on the status quo, order, elitism, and militarism." Horowitz rejects this method, preferring to focus on "independent" competitors and citizens who eschewed ideology, but drew from populist traditions, opposed to the power of the state and corporate business.

The book, though not biographical, brings together a strange collection of bedfellows from Robert La Follette to Joseph McCarthy, and from Burton K. Wheeler and George Norris to Father Coughlin and George Wallace. The combining of these diverse characters into a single monograph may appear contradictory, but the book's protagonists' aversion to big business and the state creates a general synthesis.

The all consuming hatred of statism led Wheeler, La Follette's running mate in 1924, to support McCarthy's antagonism to the "eastern elite." This hatred of statism also saw insurgents oppose Eisenhower's use of federal powers to enforce civil rights.

Horowitz skilfully explains the links between insurgency of the past to the present. However, there is a risk of over emphasising continuity, ignoring the sea changes in insurgency after 1924 and again after the New Deal. Insurgents before 1924 were far more progressive than in the period that followed. Their increasingly anti-collectivist stance cannot be explained entirely by the changing nature of American capitalism and the state or purely as a change in ideas. It is also necessary to take insurgents' later isolation from any mass movement into account. Populists in the late nineteenth Century aligned themselves to Farmers' Alliances and sections of labour. La Follette had close links with the Railroad

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unions and insurgent farmers. After the defeat of the La Follette presidential campaign in 1924, such links were for the most part more imagined than real or rejected outright. The New Deal deepened the gap between unions and insurgents, affecting the very nature of insurgency itself. McCarthy could denounce big business while simultaneously attacking militant trade unionism. By the 1960s insurgents opposed the Great Society and Barry Goldwater claimed to be a great admirer of La Follette.

Horowitz concludes with a call for vital politics at the national level: politics to defend ordinary citizens against arbitrary power, and achieve the goals of social justice and fair play. However, as Horowitz's book dazzlingly reveals, such a politics isolated from the grassroots struggles of ordinary citizens is doomed not only to failure, but even worse to providing the rhetoric for reaction.

Colchester Institute ANDREW STROUTHOUS

Brook Thomas, *American Literary Realism and the Failed Promise of Contract* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, $35.00). Pp. 372. ISBN 0 520 20647 9.

In light of recent controversy over affirmative action both in the University of California system (Professor Thomas is Chair of English and Comparative Literature at UC Irvine) and state-wide in California, the appearance of *American Literary Realism and the Failed Promise of Contract* is nothing if not timely. This far-reaching yet focused study deals with the period known to legal scholars as the Age of Contract and to literary critics as the Age of Realism, juxtaposing contractarian legal thought and realist fiction in order to reassess the defining characteristics of literary realism in the context of legislative attempts to reweave the fabric of American society following the Civil War. Further, Thomas emphasizes the continuing claim that realist fictions have on readers of the present, given their power to raise questions about the problem of agency in a democratic society. For those who enter into negotiation with them, such texts offer no comforting recourse to a higher order. As Thomas says of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, "Twain makes no explicit effort to solve problems. Instead, his narrative exposes limitations to liberal, republican, and progressive solutions." Indeed, it is precisely the question of whether solutions to social ills should be imposed from above or whether they might be sought at the level of ethical obligation (through the binding power of the promise) that is tabled for our consideration throughout this book.

Thomas opens with an analysis of the movement of post-bellum America away from a hierarchical society animated by status and ordered by a transcendent moral principle to one oriented horizontally and based on the manifold contractual relations entered into by equal and responsible human agents. Such a vision of equity is the "promise of contract" to which Thomas alludes in his title; realist works, he argues, both call forth contract's promise of an equitable social order, and dramatize its failure due to "the persistence of status," leaving the way open for that promise to be "evoked ideologically to create the illusion of equitable social relations." This doubleness, which is constitutive of the realist

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text, thus creates a space into which a vision of social harmony might be projected, a space informed by the intersubjective nature of promising itself.

Thomas reads a selection of realist works by William Dean Howells, Henry James, and Mark Twain in conjunction with "non-realist" novels, such as Charles W. Chesnutt's *House Behind the Cedars*, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' *The Silent Partner*, and Albion W. Tourgée's *Pactolus Prime*, and cases such as those designed to test the 13th and 14th Amendments (*Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896), for example). The resulting readings differentiate realist texts (from those deemed naturalistic, sentimental, or "Republican") as those that reject all appeals to fixed principles, and that challenge us to fashion realistic solutions to moral dilemmas in accord with the potentials and the limitations of human agency.

University of Kent at Canterbury JAMES MASSENDER

Theda Skocpol, *Boomerang: Clinton's Health Security Effort and the Turn against Government in U.S. Politics* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, $27.50). Pp. 230. ISBN 0 393 03970 6.

Theda Skocpol has written a remarkably detailed, intricate and accessible account of the politics of health-care reform in the early 1990s. She addresses the reasons why a reform plan in health-care that gave hope to the 38 million Americans who have no health-care insurance cover, and heart to progressives that the era of "benign neglect" of pressing social concerns (inaugurated most recently by Ronald Reagan) had finally come to an end, failed so spectacularly. And not only did it fail in its aim, it actually led to the resurgence of right-wing anti-statism, and the annihilation of the Democrats in the mid-term elections of 1994. How could a reform plan that had the support of almost 60 percent of the American public end up reinforcing the principal trend of the post-1960s era – opposition to the federal government?

Skocpol begins her story with the near-euphoria that marked the opening days of Bill Clinton's presidency, and systematically analyses how careful he was in devising a moderate plan that would require no new taxes, would fall within his campaign promise to cut the budget deficit and live within the conventional political wisdom of the times – that "tax-and-spend" liberalism was truly dead. But Clinton's middle way between government regulation and market forces failed because of bad political timing, other issues that distracted the President (NAFTA, gays in the military, character issues, Somalia, Haiti), atomisation within the Democratic coalition, the failure to mobilise public opinion in the right way at the right time, and a well-organised right-wing movement that smeared the reform plan as "socialised medicine," and as being foisted on an unsuspecting public by an unelected domineering woman. Skocpol also places the narrowly political happenings into the context of major shifts in the political terrain of post-1960s America, especially the skewing of the electorate towards the more affluent classes, the concentration of financial resources in the hands of corporate forces and political action committees, and the demise of the Democratic Party's grass-roots support, especially the labour movement.

This is a highly readable account of a complex issue, based on a wide range of

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sources, including confidential White House memoranda. It is also an excellent example of how to study and write about power in the United States.

University of Manchester INDERJEET PARMAR

William M. Banks, *Black Intellectuals: Race and Responsibility in American Life* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, Ltd., 1997, £22.00). Pp. 335. ISBN 0 393 03989 7.

The painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Untitled* (Eye), 1984, decorates the jacket of this book and seems to capture William Banks's position on the role of black intellectuals: the one-eyed caricature parodies the "New Individualist" intellectuals in the 1980s and 1990s who, preoccupied with individual ascendency, blind themselves to the group reality of social injustice. Banks instructs his black contemporaries to embrace their ethnic group allegiances while retaining intellectual autonomy – a critical role first articulated by Harold Cruse during the more testing times (for black scholars) of the black liberation movement in his seminal work, *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967). Hence Banks acknowledges his indebtedness to Cruse, likewise the black community.

This self-ascribed role as a black intellectual underpins Banks's methodology. His sweeping history of black thinkers, from the West African priest and medicine man to the "public character" of new black intellectuals like Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West, backgrounds personal responses from interviewees – mostly black scholars – to create a study that transcends particularistic ethnic interests without disregarding the racially defined social and psychological world. Indeed, these interviews give intimacy to the work, producing what reads as a biography of black intellectuals.

The human subjects of this study are the "reflective and critical, who act self-consciously to transmit, modify, and create ideas and culture." Their "fluctuating fortunes," from the eighteenth century to the present, are explored against a continuum of dilemmas and controversies in black intellectual discourse. How does racial discrimination shape their activities and choices? How does race define them and influence their service to their ethnic group? How best to interact with the white intellectual, cultural and political mainstream? These conundrums guide the reader through what is a potentially confusing journey, highlighting the many parallels in black intellectual history in the process. The slave preacher's coded message resounded in the texts of Wheatley and Hammon, and moved the literary figures of the Harlem Renaissance to subvert the interests of their white patrons. The tensions and nature of black involvement in the abolitionist movement returned to obstruct true collegial relationships between black and white scholars in white intellectual institutions. The question of how best to educate black students divided early black thinkers – Douglass and Purvis, pitted DuBois's liberal arts programmes against the Hampton–Tuskegee industrial education model and powered the debate on the black studies programme in the 1970s.

Banks's history of talented blacks repays its debt to Cruse's vision and may prove to be as inspirational to young scholars. As the role of today's black

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875898416037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

intellectual is less encumbered by formal institutional barriers than their moral sensibilities, Banks recalls his Grandfather's advice: "Never let your brain outgrow your heart."

University of Sussex NICHOLAS PATSIDES

Jon Michael Spencer, *The New Negroes and Their Music: The Success of the Harlem Renaissance* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997, $20.00). Pp. 171. ISBN 0 87049 967 X.

With some justification, Jon Michael Spencer asserts that historians of the Harlem Renaissance have paid scant attention to its *musical* exemplars. In this revisionist study, he offers some perceptive comments on the achievements of such "serious" singers as Harry T. Burleigh, Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson and Dorothy Maynor, and the composers/arrangers R. Nathaniel Dett, William Dawson and William Grant Still. With their literary counterparts, these musicians shared the conviction of such leading publicists of the Renaissance as Alain Locke and Charles S. Johnson, that the "vindication of the Negro" was to be achieved through (in Houston Baker's phrase) the "mastery of form."

Adopting James Weldon Johnson's "thematic treatment of black music" in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* [1912] as a template, Spencer asserts that black musicians of the Renaissance – like Booker T. Washington in his "Atlanta Compromise" address of 1895 – appeared to be accommodating to the unflattering stereotypes of blacks held by their Negrophile white patrons. In fact, they constructed a "two-tiered" synthesis of content and technique which enabled them to create compositions and deliver performances which were "classic in form but Negro in substance." Prime exhibits in this categorization are Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony* [1934], Dett's concert arrangements of spirituals and folk songs, and Still's *Afro-American Symphony*, premiered in 1931 at the prestigious Eastman School of Music. In similar vein, Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson, and Dorothy Maynor (who sang at the inaugural ceremonies of Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower), included both European classical pieces and African-American spirituals in their repertoires.

So far, so good, but Spencer spoils his original thesis in offering repetitive critiques of two commentors on the Harlem Renaissance: Nathan Huggins and David Levering Lewis – both of whom are monotonously faulted for slighting its music and confining their discussions of the "New Negro" to the decade of the 1920s. The contributions of "serious" musicians of the Renaissance, Spencer contends, extended at least into the 1950s. Thus, William Grant Still (1895–1978) produced arrangements for W. C. Handy, Sophie Tucker and Artie Shaw, was commissioned to write the theme music for the New York World's Fair (1939–40), and by the mid-1930s, had perfected "form and technique" to a point where he "could speak in whatever stylistic idiom was appropriate to the particular subject being addressed." Much the same could also be said of Duke Ellington (1899–1974), whose *Reminiscin' in Tempo* [1935] revealed that he had been listening to Ravel, Debussy and Delius – with whom he had already been compared.

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The New Negroes and Their Music is marked by over-quotation as well as pedestrian prose. The innovative musicians of the Harlem Renaissance – including its jazz performers – are better served in Eileen Southern's authoritative and graceful text, *The Music of Black Americans* (3rd edition: 1997), than in this adversarial and discursive treatise.

University of Hull JOHN WHITE

Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, $29.95). Pp. 368. ISBN 0 520 20622 3.

But for the outbreak of the Civil War, the California Gold Rush would probably be remembered as the seminal event in nineteenth-century American history. By comparison with the war, which inspires an annual deluge of publications, the Gold Rush has received comparatively little attention from historians. Indeed it has been two generations since the publication of the standard scholarly work on the subject, Rodman Paul's *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* in 1947. Malcolm Rohrbough's *Days of Gold* complements and in many respects supersedes Paul's work. Where Paul considered mining as a business, focusing on the organization and the techniques employed in the California gold fields, Rohrbough focuses on the 49ers themselves. His is the story of the Gold Rush told from the perspective of the men (and small numbers of women) who dug for gold.

Drawing on the diaries, letters and memoirs of the 49ers and their families, Rohrbough skillfully recreates the experiences of the gold seekers from the moment they left their homes and traveled by sea and land to California. Rohrbough describes how the early 49ers, those who arrived in 1849 and 1850, worked together in small groups pooling their resources in an effort to make relatively modest gains (despite their expectation of instant riches). Eventually opportunity declined during the 1850s as more capital-intensive methods such as hydraulic mining were introduced and most miners became wage laborers working for modest gains. In the end very few found the riches they expected in California. This bare outline is a familiar story, the strength of Rohrbough's analysis, however, is in the details. Like his subjects he sifts through the masses of evidence in search of anecdotal nuggets which reveal the complex nuances of the Gold Rush experience. The result is a superb book which has much to say not only about the Gold Rush, but labor, wealth, urbanization, gender and race relations in nineteenth-century America. Indeed, the real strength of *Days of Gold* lies in Rohrbough's thorough integration of the Gold Rush into the whole story of *antebellum* American development. Consequently *Days of Gold* treats in detail the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of those left behind by the 49ers (especially women and children). The book is punctuated with poignant anecdotes of families divided geographically, culturally and emotionally by the Gold Rush.

Rohrbough's is mainly the story of the majority of 49ers who were English-speaking (and literate) and who migrated to California from the eastern United

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States. While he touches on the experiences of non-white and non-American miners, their stories do not figure largely. Nonetheless Rohrbough has set an excellent precedent for those who will follow to tell the tale of these "other" Gold Rushes.

University of Edinburgh FRANK COGLIANO

Gavin Cologne-Brookes, Neil Sammells and David Timms, (eds.), *Writing and America* (London and New York: Longman, 1996, £40.00 cloth, £16.99 paper). 310pp. ISBN 0 582 21417 5, 0 582 21416 5.

In a defensive and apologetic introduction Gavin Cologne-Brookes fails to bestow a sense of unity on this collection of ten essays and a few selected documents, with the pretentious title *Writing and America*. Ironically, his desperate attempt to press the case of the volume's coherence makes it all too easy for a reviewer to notice the absence of a well thought-out idea behind it.

Starting out from Terry Eagleton's definition of a nation as an act of the imagination, a country of the mind, Cologue-Brookes realizes that "an enormous range of texts, from Presidential addresses to advertisements of Pepsi; from Supreme Court judgments to the songs of Paul Simon... have contributed to the ideological and rhetorical construction and reconstruction of America and Americanness." But the essays and documents, even if they had been brilliantly written and judiciously selected, could not possibly begin to do justice to such a vast subject.

I have rarely learnt so little about writing or about America from a volume, and I find it surprising that a book of essays published in 1996 can be so far behind the times, and can contain so many elementary mistakes. Clearly, the editors and some of the writers were not on top of their material.

The infelicitous and ambivalent phrasing of the introduction gives the game away: "The variety of contributions distil (*sic*) issues in broad areas" or "the two final essays focus broadly on..." The volume is "a blend of specific case-studies... with essays on more general topics," and they were written by "scholars on both sides of the Atlantic and from a variety of disciplines." In fact, the one contributor who teaches on the American side of the Atlantic is a specialist in feminist theory and modern British literature. All three editors are from Bath College of Higher Education.

Cologne-Brookes lists some 40 names on pages 2 and 3 but in introducing the notion of regional myth he makes the familiar mistake of confusing the Fugitive Poets with the Nashville Agrarians. From "the Agrarian poets" he moves on to such "distinctly Southern voices as Thomas Wolfe and Robert Penn Warren." The latter is of course, both a Fugitive poet and a Nashville Agrarian. (Andrew Lytle, the most outspoken Agrarian, is only mentioned elsewhere, to become "Lytles" in the index, as Johns Hopkins becomes John in three different places, Niebuhr is Neibuhr, Timothy Flint is Fint.)

The least sophisticated of the ten essays is on humour and American women. Regina Barreca writes: "It is a fact of American life that women have often been

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regarded as humourless creatures. Women are notorious – among men – for having no sense of humour." A paragraph later she reassures us by adding that "obviously, women do indeed have a sense of humour. Obviously, too, it has gone unnoticed because it differs from what has been for many years considered 'true' comedy, 'true' humour." Barreca concludes that "comedy … can help women recognize new sources of power within themselves." The list of names she provides of some 25 funny women on the last page of her essay cannot salvage her piece.

Antony Easthope's "The two narratives of the Western" deals with film. It must have been written some considerable time ago, for the author tells us that he revised his essay at the last moment in response to an article by Jane Tompkins that was published in 1987! (The index makes her Jayne Tomkins.) Where she wrote that in a world without an afterlife "survival is everything," Easthope's rejoinder is that "what counts is purity of heart, not skill in the hand," for implicitly, "the hero is the bearer of a *manifest destiny*." This destiny the author links to the virtues of "the successful *entrepreneur*" as formulated by Andrew Carnegie.

He concludes "by rehearsing briefly the history of the Western in Hollywood because it provides confirmation for my argument," and summarizes the last 35 years of the Western in two pages. His secondary bibliography includes nothing more recent than five studies published in the 60s and three in the early 70s, an indication perhaps that the author may have lost interest in the subject since he wrote the article. He shrewdly uses the title of his own book *What a man's gotta do* (1986) as one of his subheadings.

Alun Munslow revisits Turner's Frontier Thesis. He uses the terminology of Foucault, Barthes and Jameson and brings into play contemporary notions of narrative structure and metalanguage, but sometimes the text is less than "highly readable for students of American Studies" (*sic*!): "Operating as a socially constructed and ideologically interpellative space, at the metalanguage level the heterotopic frontier constituted 'the forces dominating American character.'"

By far the longest essay is "African American song in New Orleans: the voice of the people." Mary Ellison's 40 pages would not be out of place in an encyclopaedia. Its liberal use of names (Blue Lu Barker, Henry Byrd or Professor Longhair, Ann Cook, Fird "Snooks" Eaglin, et al.) sees to it that musicians constitute 10 percent of the references in the index. Other essays deal with recantation memoirs of the Cold War (David Seed has a single reference to 1990, nothing of a later date), with bestselling texts of the nineteenth century on native American themes (Robert Burchell concentrates on the struggle in those texts "to understand cultural differences"), with Henry James's *Hawthorne* (David Timms mentions no critic after 1972) and with William Carlos Williams (a good article but lost in this volume. It has no references to anything after 1970).

A modest and intelligent essay is "Revisioning the American landscape: from Utopia to eco-critique," by Renee Slater and Kate Fullbrook. It has a clear structure and touches on some contemporary writers who try to "live ecologically responsible lives."

In the documentary section, the twentieth century is represented by William Carlos Williams (1 p.), Barry Lopez (1·5 p.) and Whittaker Chambers' memoirs

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(9 pp.). One wonders what purpose can be served by such minimal documentation.

To return to Cologne-Brookes's introduction, we read there that, alas, the editors had to leave out "American drama from Howells ... to Naomi Wallace and her Gulf War play ... writing in such areas as, say, sociology, psychology or science; small journals; post-modernism ... the Melungeons in the Clinch Mountains of the Appalachians in Tennessee ... sports writing and the O. J. Simpson trial ... One could go on, for that is the nature of the subject." Indeed, the field is vast, certainly if one includes, as this book does, film, music, and image-making of all kinds. Given the absence of a clearly defined premise, *Writing and America* does not even fulfill its minor aim "to offer a guide to the terrain and provide some insights on the way."

Leiden University TJEBBE WESTENDORP

Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750–1820* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997). Pp. 220. ISBN 0 674 02322 6.

Robert A. Ferguson seeks an understanding of the American Revolution through a survey of the era's literature. He examines the use of formal elements and generic combinations in public documents, and political and religious writings, and conveys the impact such writings had. Here, the Revolution is the "greatest literary achievement of eighteenth-century America." In a culture where approximately 85 percent of white adult males were literate, literature played a necessary role in forging a consensus in favor of rebellion. And the literature which motivated the public (from the British and Americans, loyalists and patriots, secular and the religious) undergoes a close reading and analysis.

Ferguson claims that without the churches' support, rooted in both the written and spoken word, the Revolution might have never taken place. Puritanism's familiarity with resistance to kings and the revivals' "intercolonial, lower-class protests" cut an unbroken path to radical politics; while the galvanizing rhetoric of The Great Awakening and the progressive aspects of Reform Protestantism locked arms with that of the Enlightenment. Just as the American churches sought sovereignty as well as ecclesiastical union, they backed the colonies' crusade for independence and unification. Ferguson suggests that neither the Revolution's legendary figures nor the might of Reason could have accomplished the chore of emancipation alone.

In accordance with the Enlightenment tradition, Ferguson applies a critique to history and literature which attempts to demythologize the era's central events and figures. And he is eager to confront the theme of oppression versus liberty. In typically American fashion, the theoretical claims laid against the Enlightenment are here made concrete: lurking behind the language of human freedom lie the contradictions between enlightened principles and practices. While attempting to avoid the snares of ahistoricism Ferguson dismantles the Enlightenment "text" in order to reveal the quest for domination inherent in the contemporary political rhetoric. The notion of a universal morality sought by the enlightenment founders as Native Americans are dispossessed of their land,

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African Americans continue in their slavery and the second-class citizenship of women is sustained. As the early republicans felt forced to choose the stabilization of the union over the adherence to their ideals, the purity of meaning behind the battle cries of liberty and equality is sacrificed. As Ferguson attempts to enlighten the Enlightenment about itself, he shows that freedom and domination emanated from the same source.

University of Essex CARL DIMITRI

Peter P. Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 1997, £40.50 cloth, £15.95 paper). Pp. 301. ISBN 0 271 01578 0, 0 271 10579 9.

In this innovative piece of work, Peter P. Hinks has provided us with a detailed analysis of the life and work of David Walker, as well as a reflection on the significance of his work on slave resistance. Walker was the author of the 1829 *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, within which he challenged his "afflicted and slumbering brethren" to rise up and cast off their chains. Hinks's study imaginatively uses a biographical sketch of Walker for the purpose of analysing and contextualizing the meaning and significance of his *Appeal*.

Hinks examines the various influences upon Walker's life in order to assess the implications that they had upon his *Appeal*. Walker (who grew up as a free black in Wilmington, North Carolina), was undoubtedly exposed to the institution of slavery. Furthermore, as an adult residing in Charleston, South Carolina, he was also exposed to the rebellious nature of slavery at this time, as exemplified by the Denmark Vesey conspiracy of 1822. Walker was also directly involved with the development of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in Charleston. Hinks therefore argues that Walker carried the twin traditions of resistance to slavery and rebellious black religion to Boston, where he settled and became involved in African-American Freemasonry, which itself had roots in the protest against slavery and racial discrimination.

Hinks argues that Walker and his associates were endowed with a sense of commitment to the black community in America. This was reflected in Walker's *Appeal*, which called for the skilled and the educated to utilise their talents in order to benefit the less advantaged members of the black community. The *Appeal* can therefore be seen as a product of Walker's experiences in both the North and the South. Hinks states: "The pamphlet was therefore its era's paradigm of the extent to which the southern African-American culture of resistance and rebellious religion had come to merge with the flowering northern culture of moral improvement to which ever more free blacks adhered." Whilst contextualizing the *Appeal*, shows us that it was very much a product of its time, Hinks is also keen to stress the uniqueness of the *Appeal*. He argues that Walker both encompassed the totality of the experience of American blacks, and also communicated this in a form accessible to the mass of American blacks.

In later chapters, Hinks investigates both the circulation of the *Appeal* in the South (where he emphasizes the importance of underground communication

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networks within the slave community), and also the fear that the *Appeal* generated amongst slave holders (exemplified by the passing of various legislation that outlawed slave literacy at this time). Hinks' work, which may also be seen as representative of the growing historiographical trend towards smaller, more detailed historical case studies, therefore not only tells us about David Walker and his *Appeal*, but also about the broader nature of slave resistance in the antebellum South. By sophisticated use of a variety of source materials and of a variety of methodological techniques, Hinks has therefore managed to illustrate the wider significance of David Walker's *Appeal*.

University of Liverpool EMILY WEST

Robert M. Slabey (ed.), *The United States and Viet Nam from War to Peace* (London: McFarland, 1996, £34.65). Pp. 268. ISBN 0 7864 0227 X.

Commenting on Robert McNamara's book, *In Retrospect*, former colleague Walt Rostrow wrote in *The Times Literary Supplement* in June 1995 that the theme was the author's enduring belief after 1965 that the war was "a problem with no solution." This new collection of essays, edited by Robert Slabey, confirms the notion that the *legacy* of the war is also "a problem with no solution." It is hard to believe that any text on Vietnam could include more social, cultural, literary and political motifs than this one. It is also hard to believe that one could be written any better.

To observe that this book merely reiterates the persistent notions about the conflict is not enough. To state that America is still on a journey through "the Vietnam experience," still celebrating and, at the same time, attempting to transcend nationalistic myths, and still seeking a path down which to normalize relations with Vietnam, is to undermine and ignore a myriad of different propositions that the authors include. Only when reading through all the chapters is one reminded of the vast array of references in popular and critical discourse that the influence of Vietnam has made provision for. As the title of the final chapter suggests, you may be forgiven for thinking that Vietnam is responsible for "the interconnectedness of all life" so profuse has been the attention given to that country and the war that raged there.

There are problems in some of the debates that are being engaged here. How to analyse the war (most especially the Vietnamese role) when even the most celebrated of scholars have already been inculcated in the mythologies that Vietnam has created? How to reconcile the first-hand experiences of writers such as Tim O'Brien and Philip Caputo (both extensively referenced here) with the likes of Susan Fromberg Schaeffer and Danielle Steele who have adopted the textual backdrop of the war for their own dramatic licence? How to assess the impact on society of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or the plight of MIAS (Missing In Action) when these disputes have been so immersed in political "soundbite" rhetoric? The chapters, juxtaposed against each other, seem to almost unwittingly point us towards the fragmentation of outlook that is "Vietnam." The note at the beginning of the book is quite possibly the key that unlocks this Pandora's box of tragic guilt and uneasy reconciliation.

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For some writers, here the subject is Vietnam and the physical realities that continue to impinge on that country and the United States. For others though, it is "Vietnam" and the metaphysical implications that it has on the psyche of all that have been touched by it. Nowhere does this dilemma seem more stark than in the section on the Literature of Reconciliation. The work of Robert Mason, Tim O'Brien, Michael Herr and many others has rightly been lauded for the brutal and painful realities it has revealed in these people as much as in the war itself. Yet the section, and theme for the book as a whole, returns time and again to the sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, examination of truth. What should we believe about Vietnam/Viet Nam? To what degree should we accept the first-hand experiences of those caught in the maelstrom of this history? How quickly should we dismiss those on the fringes who have "exploited" the war by creating a cultural facade of myths and counter-myths?

In this respect, one is struck by the various reactions to President Clinton's Memorial Day speech at the Wall (in his first year as President, and spoken of in Chapter 4) and by his decision to resume diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1995. Clinton is the most public personification of those excluded from the Premier League of "Vietnam experience" by virtue of his moral stance in the 1960s. Vietnam is therefore divisive on many levels and for many reasons and this has clearly shaped the kind of nation it is in the 1990s. The twenty or more Memorial Days that have taken place since the United States finally extricated itself from South East Asia demonstrates that the war has taken its place by the side of the Civil War as a conflict whose individual and collective psychological reflection and reverence tell us a great deal about the hopes and fears of the country. It may be a trite point, but the introduction wishes this to be a contribution to the "closure" of the War/reconciliation/the pain(?). That would be to do this marvellous collection of essays a disservice. They identify the questions that still need asking and will always be asked about Vietnam.

University of Manchester IAN SCOTT

Alison Easton, *The Making of the Hawthorne Subject* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996, £44.95). Pp. 311. ISBN 0 8262 1040 6.

Alison Easton begins this study of Nathaniel Hawthorne's early writing with the contention that much criticism of his work does not take enough account of its breadth or chronology. More particularly, she claims, critics tend to treat writing that preceded his most renowned work, *The Scarlet Letter*, selectively or with lack of interest. This writing, which includes "one hundred or so short stories or sketches" is mostly judged inferior or treated as preparation for Hawthorne's later novelistic output. Easton challenges this view. Her analysis resists any crude prioritisation or criticism of particular works by Hawthorne, or any simply teleological account of their chronology. Rather than drawing over-general or reductive conclusions concerning a clear line of development, she traces the "evolution" of a body of work that is "diverse" and contingent and which is the "outcome" rather than the aim or end of its various influences.

This involves showing that Hawthorne came to appreciate and register the

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importance of "subjectivity," understood here as the complex of particular discursive involvements that make up what can only erroneously be called the "individual." These involvements are primarily social, cultural and historical. The "individual" formed by them is in error in so far as it sees itself, or in so far as it is seen, as autonomous, integrated, and self-sufficient. According to Easton, nineteenth-century romantic and commonsensical "ideologies" encouraged such misapprehensions.

For the most part, Easton's analysis is thorough and convincing. Meticulous, clearly presented research reveals the gradual development, in Hawthorne's early short pieces, of a sense of significant, but not total, determination of subjectivity by influences other than those of individual will. This development is first of all traced through work intended for three short story collections of the late 1820s and early 1830s (*Seven Tales*, *Provincial Tales* and *The Story Teller*) none of which materialised in the form planned for them by Hawthorne. Easton shows that Hawthorne's preliminary, unpracticed, adoption of the gothic genre (in his first novel *Fanshawe*, as well as in early stories) rejected subjective determination by politics, place and genealogy in favour of individual, insular, reflection. The resultant solipsism of Hawthorne's writing was overcome when the gothic form was broadened to include social and historical perspectives.

Easton shows that developments such as these were not only authorial, but also corresponded with local historical ones, and with developments concerning local, national and international literature, politics and theology. Hence Hawthorne's work of the early 1830s (written in Salem) was partly instructed by his Unitarianism, his (Boston) work of the late 1830s by a implied questioning of contemporary Christian and democratic ideals. This questioning persisted in his early and mid-1840s (Concord) work as an enquiry into domesticity which found it both commendable and ideologically restrictive. By the late 1840s (once again in Salem, where Hawthorne worked at a Custom House), an equivalent tension was being explored, perhaps more explicitly. This was between civic custom or conformity and the both subjective and communal interests inadequately represented by it. By 1850, an appreciation of such conflicts allowed a representation of character as something singular but socially mediated, and intersubjectively rather than objectively or individually apparent. Easton concludes her impressive analysis by demonstrating as much with regard to Hester Prynne and the various characters implicated in her fate in *The Scarlet Letter*.

University of North London MARTIN MURRAY

J. F. Buckley, *Desire, the Self, the Social Critic: The Rise of Queer Performance within the Demise of Transcendentalism* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press and London: Associated University Presses, 1997, £25). Pp. 150. ISBN 1 57591 001 2.

Buckley's study focuses on desire as a form of cultural critique in selected works of Margaret Fuller, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and Emily Dickinson. These romantic social critics, he contends, "g[a]ve literary birth to queer

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performance in attempting to transcend the ills of American culture." Rather than an absolute, ahistorical sexual essence, Buckley positions queerness as something opposed, but semiotically linked, to the dominant culture. Drawing on Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Sedgwick, he argues that these transcendentalists consciously acknowledge identity as both a performed contingency and potentially at odds with convention. Thus, "America's first literary queers" disrupt the presumed naturalness of social norms and "[foreground] antisocial desire."

In particular, Buckley explores these writers' critiques of the nineteenth century's discursive codification of acceptable expressions of desire in monogamous heterosexuality. Situated along a continuum from Fuller's rearticulation of heterosexual marriage to Dickinson's increasing absorption into self, these queer performances provoke various kinds of sexual trouble that seek "to write into existence the antisocial self as normative." An unresolved crisis emerges, however, since Buckley understands queer desire as a rhetorical repositioning that "envisions a future with more possibilities for meaning and understanding" but devoid of material change.

Despite his acknowledgement that desire is mediated by social differences, including class, race, and ethnicity, Buckley does not adequately address their effects, even displacing them by insisting that "when expressed, desire is always a self-embodying force." Also, although (the legacies of) slavery, Native American genocide, and the belligerent annexation of half of Mexico were among the ills of nineteenth-century US society, in Buckley's brief mentions of these, the voices of people of color are never more than passive absences. It is therefore problematic that people of color only appear directly in the book's conclusion. Yet, even then, these subjects equally fail the privileged test of queerness: Harriet Jacobs and the divas in the voyeuristic film *Paris Is Burning*, apparently, do not realize that "[t]he only enemy a self can have is its own lack of desire to know itself," so they ingratiate themselves to their audiences and end up either "a victim" or "pleading for…acceptance."

For Buckley, finally "to be queer is to critique society by performing a better alternative," but it does so outside of – albeit while "contemplat[ing]" – the material world. This voluntarist and decidedly curious, though not particularly queer way to undertake social change might explain why Buckley figures queer critique as "reactionary" rather than proactive and linked in complex solidarity with other (overlapping) oppositional subjectivities.

San Francisco, USA SCOTT BRAVMANN

Curtis Besinger, *Working with Mr. Wright: What It Was Like* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, £45.00 cloth, £15.95 paper). Pp. 313. ISBN 0 521 48122 8, 0 521 58714 X.

This journal-like account of the life of an apprentice in the Taliesin Fellowship in Wisconsin and Arizona between 1939 and 1955 is an indiscriminate mixture of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875898416037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

trivial and striking details, punctuated by short and seemingly neutral accounts of wonderful incidents:

Mies spoke no English... Conversation was limited; tea was brief. Mr Wright, who liked to hold forth on his favorite subject, architecture, seemed thwarted by speaking through an intermediary and by Mies' one- or two-word responses. Mies: "Ja." Translator: "He says 'yes'"

Less is more?

Curtis Besinger seems to have been a model apprentice and wrote his account in reaction to Robert Twombley's more critical (and second-hand) version of Taliesin. But there is an angle to the book because Besinger tells us that by the end of his long stay he had become unhappy with the changes in the Fellowship's purposes as an Emersonian/Jeffersonian influence gave way to Georgi Gurdjieff-type theatrical self-explorations. The photograph of the 1955 summer party on a Venetian Renaissance theme, with "glamorous and exotic maidens" "dispensing treasures" and Frank Lloyd Wright in the middle of it, is enough to make one sympathetic to the affront to Besinger's midwestern, Southern Baptist outlook. A week later he left Taliesin.

There are many passing insights into Wright's projects and Besinger relates his particular interest in the Usonian houses and how they differed from Wright's earlier, individualistic Prairie-style houses. One of the themes of Wright's work, dating back to 1901 and "The Art and Craft of the Machine," emerges in Besinger's discussion of the Usonian concept, with its combination of craft and mass-production. There is also some informative attributing of various Usonian houses since Wright exercised only general control at times. And, of course, there is plenty of significant detail – amidst all of the day-to-day routine – of Taliesin in Wisconsin and in Arizona. The construction of Taliesin West or Taliesin in the Desert, for instance, is described as part of the annual migration to Arizona by Wright's apprentices and the camping and very basic toilet and shower facilities which they apparently cheerfully endured while building the Wrights' quarters. As Besinger notes, one had to live and work on the site to appreciate the "way in which all paths of movement within the camp seemed to be consciously directed toward, to focus upon, and to reach out and 'pull into the camp,' major features of the much larger landscape." Then there would be the "spontaneous" picnics at Taliesin in Wisconsin or treats, such as the overnight camping trip from Taliesin West to Los Angeles in 1940. Wright joined the group in Los Angeles, having been driven there in his Lincoln Continental convertible, and took Besinger and the other apprentices on a tour of the houses he had built in the city, expressing considerable irritation when he discovered that the furnishings put into the Ennis house by the Ennises were not the ones he wanted. Probably the most telling detail surfaces in Besinger's account of Wright's movie shows. Along with cleaning and other tasks, operating the antiquated movie projectors fell to apprentices such as Besinger and he tells of his experiences when the film broke or became jammed. Among the films Wright particularly liked were Eisenstein's; two Westerns – *Stagecoach* and *Destry Rides Again* – which were screened at least once a year; and *The Czar Wants to Sleep*, a Russian satire. According to Bessinger, Wright "always left the theater after seeing this film with his eyes brimming

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875898416037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with tears from laughter, and saying to himself the last line of the film, 'It is difficult to be a czar.'"

University of Nottingham DOUGLAS TALLACK

Jeanne Rosier Smith, *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, £35.00 cloth, £13.95 paper). Pp. 196. ISBN 0 520 20654 1, 0 520 20656 8.

"As liminal beings, tricksters dwell at cross-roads and thresholds and are endlessly multifaceted and ambiguous. Tricksters are uninhibited by social constraints, free to dissolve boundaries and break taboos. Perpetual wanderers, tricksters can escape virtually any situation, and they possess a boundless ability to survive." This definition of the trickster figure forms the basis of Jeanne Rosier Smith's argument. By emphasising their quality of liminal beings she is able to make a convincing case for their significance in the literary aesthetics of American women of color. Her first theoretical chapter draws on the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, Paula Gunn Allen and bell hooks, to construct a configuration of tropes about contemporary women authors which coincide satisfyingly with classic studies of trickster figures in African, African-American and Native-American traditions. The writings of Henry Louis Gates Jr., Gerald Vizenor and Mikhail Bakhtin are also drawn on as substantiating authorities. Clearly Rosier Smith is attempting to construct a persuasive synthesis, and in so doing she inevitably elides specific ethnic differences in this first chapter. One is struck by the importance of Anzaldúa's theories of the new mestiza as a kind of conceptual cement here, even though Chicana novelists do not feature in this study; and also by the relative paucity of theoretical resources in relation to Chinese American women's culture, even though "the germ of this book" developed from hearing Maxine Hong Kinston read from *Tripmaster Monkey* in 1990. However, this only demonstrates the need for a study such as this one, which does attempt to revise thinking about the alternative canon and discover new conceptual constellations for studying it in an integrated fashion.

Rosier Smith's thesis is that the figure of the trickster is a more satisfactory trope than for example magic realism, especially since it signifies many of the features of post-modern narratives, including narrative indeterminacy and double-voiced or polyphonic stories, and also because it allows authors to assume ambivalent positions in relation to marginal and mainstream culture and in relation to gender politics and ethnic identity. She demonstrates that in the works of all three novelists studied – namely, Maxine Hong Kingston, Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison – tricksters feature both as characters, as narrative technique, and as literary aesthetic. She traces the use of prior texts as a trickster-like playfully parodic device, and she evidently perceives each of these writers to be, like the trickster, a cunning, crafty, cultural hero. Of course, there are dangers in publishing such a study; and one of Rosier Smith's authors does trickster-like elude her. Erdrich's "tetralogy" became a "quinque-logy" in 1996 with the publication of *Tales of Burning Love*. It is a tribute both to Rosier Smith's theory of aesthetics and to her analysis of the novels she does study, that one is able to

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apply her approach to a reading of this new novel, in that it too subscribes to a trickster aesthetic, with two trickster heroes (Gerry Nanapush and Jack Mauser) who continue to exhibit classic features of the trickster tale in a contemporary post-modern narrative: most notably in their boundless ability to survive.

University of Warwick HELEN DENNIS

Joel Pfister and Nancy Schnog (eds.), *Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America* (London: Yale University Press, 1997, £30 cloth, £12.50 paper). Pp. 329. ISBN 0 300 06809 3, 0 300 07006 3.

John Demos opens his influential essay of 1978, "Oedipus and America," with Freud's notorious statement that "America is a mistake: a gigantic mistake, it is true, but nonetheless a mistake." This fascinating collection of essays returns Freud's scepticism with interest. By looking at the rise of the therapeutic (and largely Freudian) model as the most important source for modern Americans' explanation of subjectivity and interiority, it obliquely charts the evolution of the notion of the democratic self in the United States from the *antebellum* period to the present day. It is an ambitious project, carried out in the multidisciplinary spirit of the best cultural studies projects. And if its deepest intellectual base has become overly ritualised (the ideas of Jameson, Foucault, and Bourdieu provide much of the theoretical substratum for the volume), and would benefit from the same kind of historical scrutiny afforded to Freud and his popularisers, the essays in the volume nevertheless address their topics freshly and with enthusiasm.

Two excellent essays by the editors introduce the collection by sketching the need to examine the psychologizing of American life in terms of the social and historical circumstances which accompanied this radical shift in the understanding of the self. Pfister and Schnog stress the need to be attentive to the classic sociological triuisms attendant on the nineteenth-century shift to an urban, massified, and alienated society, with its decisive ideological divide between the public and private spheres to understand the conditions which fostered the ascent of the psychological. The other contributors build on this basic historical analysis in a variety of ways. John Demos's foundational essay mentioned above, is reprinted here, along with a somewhat random selection of essays which treat facets of the infiltration of the therapeutic into such disparate areas of American life as music, fiction, painting, journalism, television, and academic textbooks. All the essays are of high standard with David M. Lubin's essay on the portrait art of Thomas Eakins and Pfister's on the glamour of neurosis of particular interest. Equally interesting are Catherine Lutz's treatment of the military uses of psychology during the Cold War and Jill G. Morawski's survey of introductory psychology textbooks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The volume concludes with a marvellously argued and observed piece on the Oprah Winfrey phenomenon by Franny Nudelman which, like so many of the essays here, signals the desirability of developing this collection into a larger and even more ambitious project.

University of the West of England KATE FULLBROOK

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875898416037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Bill Brown, *The Material Unconscious: American Amusement, Stephen Crane, and the Economies of Play* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996, £29.95 cloth, £15.50 paper). Pp. 335. ISBN 0 674 55380 2, 0 674 55381 0.

It was in his *Principles of Psychology* that William James most fervently displayed his scepticism about our habituation to the referential promise of language: "All *dumb* or anonymous psychic states have, owing to this error, been coolly suppressed; or, if recognised at all, have been named after the substantive perception they led up to, as thoughts 'about' this object or 'about' that, the stolid word *about* engulfing all their delicate idiosyncrasies in its monotonous sound." Pursued extensively and exhaustively in the work of his brother, this scepticism grounds a good deal of the modernist enterprise as it emerges at the moment of mass culture and the more extravagant visibilities of a commodified society – the moment of Stephen Crane. Yet it grounds also the problem of the historicist critic (whether old, new, or reconstructed) in reading the conditions of a text's production without the reductiveness of facticity and vulgar materialism: the problem of maintaining the experienced quiddity of things without resorting to the necessity, as the other James puts it, of "going behind." Or, for Bill Brown here, the problem of a new critical materialism that "does not just recognize the materiality of everyday life unconsciously registered by the literary, but also recognizes how literature develops what we might call the unconscious of material objects themselves, how it exposes the latent dialectics in the history of things."

Brown's striking analysis of Crane explores this "material unconscious" through American forms of play, amusement and recreation at the end of the nineteenth century. We have been aware, principally since E. P. Thompson, of the new and contradictory status of leisure within a disciplined industrialised economy and, since Homer, of games and comedy as holiday – a putative temporary release from discipline which, whilst recapitulating the order of discipline itself, may nevertheless allow space for alternative speculations. But Brown takes us much further down the road, advancing the recreational in Crane as ubiquitous yet crucially "specifically not integral to the plot, not the object of the text's diegetic address" to urge: "It was less through the realist transparency and more within moments of obliquity and opacity that specific questions about conflicting cultural pressures become apparent." Brown's technique is shown to best effect in a brilliant exegesis of Crane's western tales where the form of the short story is seen as the generic counterpart to gambling and the world of chance where the form "compensates for (the rationalization of) and registers (the irrationality of) the economic system it inhabits" and where the cultural work it performs is most visible: "to the extent that it emphasizes chance and depicts only the partial, the short story, even while it registers the pressure of material life, expresses an aversion to any understanding of culture as wholly determinant. Like a single throw, the story marks the capacity to imagine (better, the capacity to feel) the radical contingency of history (its noninevitability) and therefore the possibility that things might have been, and might yet be, other than they are." In the heat of the realism that surrounds him, Crane allows the recreational

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(institutionalised though it is becoming in the 1890s), some element of Hawthornesque "licence," the Romance's potential for the theatre of liberatory play: here, forms of leisure take over from the more familiar tropes of forest and sea at sites for imaginative possibility whilst maintaining their ghostly (by Crane's pen) social register.

Brown reads Crane through fascinating histories (of the amusement industry, of notions of childhood, of the sporting body, of freaks and monstrosities, of photography), and he deploys these histories to purposive and illuminating figure: on the war stories and their "metaphorics of vision"; on the genre of the "boy's book" in the Whilomville stories; and on how *The Monster* "dislodges the monstrosity of play from the entertainment industry's containment of aberrance" in its display of transforming "monstrous excess into surplus value" by transforming "the horror of the monstrous into the entertainment provided by the freak."

In trying to rethink the relations between material, intellectual and literary history, Bill Brown has produced an adventurously researched and especially rich cultural diagnosis of Crane's America. His diagnosis understands that history's most effective force in literature is to longer obliquely in ghostly form, pleading its case with some shyness from that hollow place which echoes material life. We know it by its ephemeral shadow.

University of Keele IAN F. A. BELL

Gregory Eiselein, *Literature and Humanitarian Reform in the Civil War Era* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997, £24.95). Pp. 215. ISBN 0 253 33042 4.

This study of humanitarian reform in the Civil War era arises out of a (com)passionate commitment to relief of the "suffering generated by AIDS *and the responses to AIDS*" (my emphasis). The driving engine of the book is revealed in the Afterword where Eiselein calls on academics and intellectuals to mount "an energetic critique" of humanitarian institutions, including the entire US health care system, and of (inhumane) humanitarian attitudes to persons living with AIDS.

He has enacted such a critique in this book. He analyses the humanitarian movements of the Civil War period demonstrating the extent to which humanitarian activity constructed the recipients of care as "helpless, childlike, culturally or developmentally inferior, and unable to act or speak for themselves." Arguing that the unprecedented scale of suffering caused by the Civil War disrupted dominant humanitarian ideologies and practices, he lays claim to the emergence of an "eccentric benevolence" which could imagine a relation of equality between humanitarian agent and suffering patient and which rejected the patronising, patriarchal and disempowering hierarchy of the dominant humanitarian institutions, represented here by the United States Sanitary Commission and the Christian Commission.

Reading the texts of humanitarian activists like Whitman, Harriet Jacobs and Louisa May Alcott who were both agents and recipients of humanitarian care, he

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shows how their experience of receiving or witnessing the attentions of dominant humanitarian caregivers led them to advocate "less-coercive, patient-led approaches to care." These readings illuminate the connections between racialist thinking and social control in humanitarian practices then and now. His project of re-couping "selected conceptions of helping" from the past to "reveal new, redemptive possibilities" is exemplified in his discussion of Thoreau's *The Maine Woods* where he shows how Thoreau develops an idea of "equality based on difference" which offers possibilities of moving beyond racialist and hierarchical structures.

I found his notion of "altruizm" too literal and consequently unhelpful, especially in his reading of Whitman. His political agenda leads Eiselein to judge the success of humanitarian care in terms of its "material benefit" to patients, and to undervalue the non-material benefits of "love" in the face of suffering and inevitable mortality. His insistence on paraphrasing quotations is a minor irritant in this well-written accessible account of American humanitarianism.

University of the West of England RENEE SLATER

Oscar Handlin and Lilian Handlin (eds.), *From the Outer World* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997, £36.50 cloth, £16.50 paper). Pp. 491. ISBN 0 674 32639 3, 0 674 32640 7.

The "Outer World" of the title is the world outside and apart from the Atlantic Civilization of Europe and the United States, but including Australia and Israel, which the editors define as "settler societies." Hitherto, though plenty of attention has been paid to European travellers who have visited the Americas, the impressions and opinions of Outer World travellers have not been much noted. By anthologizing a selection of "western voyages" by modern travellers from Asia, Africa, Australia and Latin America, the Handlins set out, as they put it, to redress the balance somewhat. The intention – to achieve a sort of defamiliarization by looking at one's own country through the eyes of visitors from cultures which do not share some of its basic assumptions – is an admirable one and could prove enlightening. Since the most interesting of those travellers who record and publish their impressions of any foreign country act as amateur ethnographers, by studying the reactions of perceptive Outer World travellers one would expect to be challenged into new responses to one's own civilization.

In their volume, the Handlins have made available to their readers materials they would almost certainly not have encountered previously. A few of the selected passages are by well-known writers, but most are not. They have also assembled a large number of samples (extracts from the writings of thirty-one different authors), dating from the 1920s to the 1990s. Not surprisingly, the African writers, among them Kwame Nkrumah, stress American racism and the ruthlessness of the capitalist system, though their verdicts on the American way are ambivalent and, in some cases, extremely generous. The oriental commentary selected here includes a passage from No-Yong Park's *An Oriental View of American Civilization* (1934) and an essay by Fei Xiaotong, according to the editors, China's "most prominent sociologist and anthropologist" and the man

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who explained American civilization to the Chinese in the 1940s. Both were struck by the contrast between Chinese reverence for elderly parents and American lack of it. The Japanese angle of vision (as represented here) yields less insights. Hidesaburo Kurushima's pleasure in the similarities between flag-raising ceremonies in Japanese and American schools is embarrassingly ingenuous, as is Sotokichi Katsuizumi's 1968 account of the socialization of American children and the "deep devotion to their country" shown by adults and children. The problem with these, as with most of the selections, is that they are much too brief to be exploratory. Like the extract from V. S. Naipaul's *A Turn in the South* (1989), they remain at the level of the anecdotal, and fail to provide a serious critique of American culture. Only in the two or three longer pieces does the situation become complex enough to be intellectually engaging. Hanoch Bartov's 1963 Israeli vision of American consumerism is amusing and subtle. The extract is long enough to develop his insights effectively. Longest, and best, is the forty-one page extract from the Korean Choong Soon Kim's *An Asian Anthropologist in the South* (1977). This passage presents a complex ethnographic situation that reflects on the traditions of Euro-American anthropology. The writer records the indignant resentment with which the sheriff of Pinetown, Georgia, treats the news that an Asian has come to "study" Americans. "Do you mean to say that we're primitive people?" the officer asks "sullenly." Only when he acts into the role of the deferential ignorant oriental can Choong Soon Kim relate to the white subjects of his study. The ironies here show us what the book could have achieved if the editors had been prepared to sacrifice breadth for depth in their selection.

University of Birmingham BRIAN R. HARDING

Will Kaufman, *The Comedian as Confidence Man: Studies in Irony Fatigue* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977, $39.95). Pp. 272. ISBN 0 8143 2657 9.

Will Kaufman argues that leading American comedians – including Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Sinclair Lewis, Lenny Bruce, Bill Hicks, Kurt Vonnegut, and Garrison Keillor, have been obliged, for purposes of persuasion and self-defence, to submerge their impulse toward social criticism in carefully cultivated illusions of play. American comedy is thus a confidence game. The humorist's task, in words that Shaw once applied to Twain, is to pit things "in such a way as to make people who would otherwise hang him believe he is joking." As the heavy price of gaining and holding their audiences, American comedians have been grudging ironists, saying apparently harmless and funny things while meaning quite the opposite. The strain of such self-division has lead almost inevitably to what Kaufman calls "irony fatigue," the tendency among seasoned American humorists to throw off their masks and thereby to reveal the anger and bitterness welling up beneath.

This general critical perspective serves well enough as a frame for the comedians Kaufman wants to feature in his study. It applies most clearly to Lenny Bruce, Bill Hicks and Kurt Vonnegut, the figures he evidently most

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admires, and whose work and careers best illustrate the notion of "irony fatigue." It must be added, however, that *The Comedian as Confidence Man* is most valuable not for the elaboration of its presiding thesis, but rather for its passionate critical advocacy – most especially of Hicks – and for the bright, crisply articulated insights scattered through its pages. Kaufman is much more persuasive in detailed discussions of individual humorists than he is in trying to gather the entire group into a single critical frame. In his very good chapters on Bruce and Hicks, for example, he succeeds best when he concerns himself least about "irony fatigue." Kaufman appears to know this, and therefore quite wisely keeps his theorising to a minimum. Indeed, his prose is clear throughout, direct, and admirably free of jargon.

The book is certainly not without flaws. The chapter on Twain is top-heavy with "irony fatigue," and suffers no little critical distortion as the result. There are real gaps in Kaufman's knowledge and understanding of *Tom Sawyer*, most evident perhaps in his failure to capitalise on the contrast between Tom, one of America's leading literary confidence men, and his half-brother Sid, spoil sport *par excellence*. Kaufman regards the confidence-man comedian as a uniquely American figure, but offers no comparative support for his view. E. L. Doctorow, who has written insightfully about confidence games in the national life and literature, is conspicuous by his absence. Kaufman also makes a number of rather unguarded assumptions, among them that it is possible to be true to the self and to speak in a single voice. These are not trivial matters, to be sure; but they do little to obscure the genuine merits of this useful new study of American humour.

University of California, Santa Cruz FORREST G. ROBINSON

George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville in America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, £20.50). Pp. 852. ISBN 0 8018 5506 3.

Here, masquerading under an abridged title, it is a photographic reprint of an old friend, *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America*, arguably the most important and valuable book ever published on Tocqueville, and indisputably a classic of American historical writing. If the original had not been out of print for so long (as has an abridgement, also called *Tocqueville in America*) it would be necessary to come down heavily on the publishers. Not only have they spoiled a beautifully and significantly exact title, they have also dropped nearly two-thirds of the illustrations, most of which were drawn from the sketch-books of Tocqueville's travelling companion, Gustave de Beaumont – illustrations which added immensely to the charm and utility of the book; and those which have been retained are most indifferently reproduced. Much worse, not the slightest attempt has been made to update the contents. *Tocqueville and Beaumont* was first published in 1938. It would be impossible to summarise all the relevant changes and events which have occurred since then, though the now almost complete edition of Tocqueville's works and papers (published by Gallimard) and the late André Jardin's biography (1984) must be mentioned. *Tocqueville in America* makes absolutely no acknowledgement of them, or anything else – not even of

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subsequent work by the author, G. W. Pierson. No doubt Professor Pierson, however indomitable, did not feel equal to any revisions or additions himself (he was born in 1904); but there are several scholars at Yale who could at least have provided a new bibliography. That of 1938 is now little more than a curiosity.

So a great book has not been well served; but it hardly matters. The thing is to have it available again. And in a sense the failure to modernise is apt, for it reflects a truth about the book, which is that it comes from an intellectual world now almost more remote than that of Tocqueville himself. The afterglow of Progressive history lies on Professor Pierson's pages; his discussion of prison history (Tocqueville's official mission was to inspect the American penitentiaries) is not only without benefit of Foucault, but without that of any of the work done on the subject in the last generation; not even *The Age of Jackson*, by Arthur Schlesinger Jr., was known to him; and all the controversies that have swirled round the topic of democracy in America as a result of the Second World War, the Cold War, and the civil rights revolution were yet to come. Perhaps there could be no point in tinkering with a book that is so entirely of its time.

So why was it worth reprinting? And why is it still so very much worth reading? The answer seems to be fourfold. First, this is still the best portrait of Tocqueville ever painted – not quite a biography, since it ends twenty years before its hero's death, but bringing Tocqueville vividly and sympathetically to life in a way that nobody else has managed, not even Jardin. Second, although most (not all) of the letters and notebooks which Pierson used have since been printed, it was necessary, to get their treasure out of them, to explore them patiently and chronologically: to disentangle the story of Tocqueville's journey to America in 1831–32 and the emergence of his book. The enquiry was of value in itself, and helps to make sure that we understand what *Democracy in America* is saying. The later part of this intellectual odyssey has been followed a second time by James T. Schleifer (*The Making of Tocqueville's "Democracy in America*," 1980), but no one will ever need again to recount the actual American journey in Piersonian detail: that job has been done. Third, the archival material itself, and all the supporting, explanatory details that Pierson's researches enabled him to supply, means that an extraordinarily vivid panorama of Jacksonian America unrolls before the reader, a panorama still worth the attention of any student of the *antebellum* period. You can visit the prisoners at Sing-Sing – dine with John Quincy Adams – follow a wilderness trail by moonlight to Saginaw – or watch the wretched Choctaws being driven across the midwinter Mississippi to exile, among a hundred other incidents and encounters. Finally, the book has enormous literary charm. Pierson was a young man when he wrote it – almost as young as Tocqueville had been when writing his own masterpiece – and the dew is still on the grass. It does not seem to have crossed his mind that he was writing only for a handful of academic specialists: his readership would or might be the whole body of educated, public-spirited citizens. For them he deployed his meticulous scholarship, his quiet humour, his enjoyment of his country in its robust youth, and his unfailing intellectual courtesy. All these virtues keep his book alive, and will surely guarantee that in every new generation it will find admirers.

University of Essex HUGH BROGAN

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875898416037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A. David Moody, *Tracing T. S. Eliot's Spirit: Essays on His Poetry and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, £14.95). Pp. 195. ISBN 0 521 48060 4.

Tracing T. S. Eliot's Spirit, by A. David Moody, adds yet another volume to the wealth of critical material on Eliot ready to swamp even the most fervent admirer of Eliot's poetry and prose. Fortunately A. David Moody is also the author of *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet* and maintains the same cogency of argument witnessed in that volume and his many other publications.

Moody is by now a critic deeply versed in his chosen subject, and the collection of essays in this new volume can only confirm his status as one of the leading critics of Eliot's verse. It is the breadth of his understanding which forms the basis of this collection, allowing Moody to examine Eliot's significance in ten separate essays which do not attempt to link together in forming an overriding theory in regard to Eliot's work, but rather concentrate on a single separate aspect in each essay. Most of the essays presented were originally given as lectures, and, though the genesis of ideas can be traced as far back as 1972, the majority also represent the critic's most recent work.

All of these factors are perhaps responsible for both the successes and weaknesses of the collection. Their strength is their diversity. We are given a panoramic assessment of Eliot's influences and obsessions ranging from a minute, closely-studied analysis of the Latin poem "Periviglium Veneris" to essays on Eliot as an American and as a European in England (it is characteristic of Eliot's thinking that he could regard himself as all three).

Few critics can equal the range of this kind of volume. Essays dealing with such specific issues as Eliot's Indian influence (such as the *Bhagavadgita*, the Buddha's Fire Sermon, or the Vedic Upanishads) or with Eliot's fear of women, present us not only with a close level of critical scrutiny, a narrowing of focus, but also with new and interesting connections. The weakness lies in the fact that the author never attempts to draw parallels between the diverse essays he presents, or to articulate any common theme of understanding. The contradictions – and with Eliot there are many – are never resolved, and the volume as a whole is far better at raising questions than it is at answering them.

The best essays are also the most contentious. The first four all deal with the poet in relation to place, charting Eliot's American influence (and arguing effectively for a greater emphasis on Eliot as an American) as well as his "peregrinations," both physical and spiritual, his adoption of European culture and English citizenship. The most interesting of these spiritual travel essays is the first, simply because Moody seems to overcompensate for Eliot's immersion in European culture and English society – the idea that Eliot only ever mocked English society, rather than becoming one of its leading forces, is as fascinating as it is false.

Similarly, the conclusions of the final essay dealing with Eliot's relationships, both as poet and individual, with women, are oversimplified but paradoxically present us with some of the most illuminating and interesting comments in the entire collection. Moody's best moments are his least scholarly ones – most of the essays are solid and dependable. Yet Moody backs up the hard scholarly work,

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an understanding and appreciation of Eliot's many sources of inspiration and of the stylistic and structural devices employed, with an unusual critical facility – the ability to make leaps of perception, sometimes false, but always articulate, interesting, and worthwhile. He is prepared to take some risks – even, in the seventh essay, to present a meeting in which drug addicts discussed the meaning of "Ash-Wednesday." This essay contributes the least to a readers understanding of Eliot in the way of theory or criticism, but the most in explaining why Eliot is still significant, why criticism serves a purpose, and why A. David Moody is such a humane and enthusiastic advocate of Eliots verse.

This new volume is one to be welcomed in Eliot studies; and, while it provides no unifying theory, no answer to Eliots contradictions, it does provide us with many small insights, both new ones, and old ones argued better than before.

University of Essex DANIEL JUPP

Nancy Glazener, *Reading For Realism: The History of a U.S. Literary Institution, 1850–1910* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997, £52.50 cloth, £17.95 paper). Pp. 373. ISBN 0 8223 1880 6, 0 8223 1870 9.

There is a growing body of scholarly work investigating journal publication in nineteenth-century America, and Nancy Glazener continues and extends this critical trend in her study of the influence of "the *Atlantic* group" – an homogenous cluster of journals with a shared understanding of "class-inflected cultural trusteeship." Glazener documents the stages in the definitional enterprise that is "realism," charging the twentieth-century movers and shapers of American literary history with having organised their enterprise around the work of canonical authors rather than the whole literary scene of textual production and reader reception which can be interrogated through analysis of the influence of the *Atlantic* group. Her endeavour is to show how realism has been determined by the ideological imperatives which drive genre formation: "Because realism was promoted by a literary establishment, readers had a powerful incentive to read for it." And in order to pursue this line she explores the constituency of "High Realism" in relation to other manifestations of "cultural custodianship and philanthropy, especially as reinforced by the advertising and reviewing functions of the journal in support of book and magazine publishers. She considers the reception of the work of Rebecca Harding Davis as indicative of the "misogyny involved in the *Atlantic* group's ideas about readerly connoisseurship and authorial professionalism," invoking Henry James's review of *Waiting for the Nation* as representative of the kind of criticism made of those deemed to be in pursuit of "literature under the sole guidance of sentimentality."

Glazener also explores the "fantasy of the worker-reader" as it emerged in the 1880s and 90s as a part of the reorientation of taste concomitant with the loosening of the hegemony of the Atlantic group as rival authorities – the little magazine, the university and mainstream mass publishing – provided competition and forced a reaction against high realism and toward the romantic revival. James's own *The Turn of the Screw* is used intriguingly here as a text which "riffs

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on the romantic revival," but the most interesting feature of the discussion of the "genre-wars" is the examination of the work of Agnes Repplier. Glazener attributes the general lack of knowledge about Repplier's work to the fact that her critical platform was built upon the romantic revival, a movement which, according to this study, has been ignored by those who have written literary history in the twentieth century. The chapter on regional writing centres on the differences between the *Atlantic* and the *Arena*, the latter seen as a publication with some active interest in women's right and other progressive issues. As a part of this discussion, Glazener is able to negotiate a way through the emphasis of previous studies – those of Richard Brodhead and Amy Kaplan in particular – and their focus on "the national, imperial agendas of regionalist writings," and the readings engendered by feminist approaches to writers like Freeman and Jewett. Glazener works hard to excavate the sites of literary authority and to make plain the role of the *Atlantic* group in their construction; there is much to be learned from her work, but the effectiveness of her argument is often deadened by the dense verbiage of her prose.

Manchester Metropolitan University JANET BEER

Elizabeth Abel, Barbara Christian and Helene Moglen (eds.), *Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1997, £38.00 cloth, £14.95 paper). Pp. 373. ISBN 0 520 20629 0, 0 520 20630 4.

The participants in this project are engaged in a process of dialogue and debate in which interconnecting essays respond to problems posed by others in the collection to incrementally engender an organic exploration of what Hortense Spillers has called "psychoanaltyics," whereby political agency mediates a dominant literary discourse. It is a pity that the writers discussed are generally those who have become the "names" of African American writing, most specifically Morrison, whose *Beloved* is discussed by three of the contributors, Wilson, Hurston and Larsen. That said, the approaches taken towards well-known texts are sometimes innovative and always interrogative: *Our Nig* is read as America's national story of black racial elision, *Dessa Rose* is interpolated by Mae Henderson through Pauline Reage's *Story of O* and Barbara Johnson's reading of *Quicksand* is a sharply focussed application of Heinz Kohut's theory of narcissism in which psychoanalysis is exposed in its dismissal of class differences and specificities. Others like Tania Modleski and Laura Wexler work on lesser-known subjects like contemporary performer Anna Deavere Smith and nineteenth-century photographer George Cook respectively.

For this reviewer, Abel's essay on "Recitatif," the only short story Morrison has published, remains one of the most edifying pieces in the collection, since its original publication in *Critical Inquiry* in 1993, for the possibilities of dialogue across and about racial boundaries that it raises. Together with essays like Spillers's "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" (1987) and Barbara Christian's "The Race for Theory" (1990), it underpins this project in which renowned black and white critics unite to open out the representational potentialities for African

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American subjects: to examine resistance to theory and defences of "practice-politics," to borrow Deborah McDowell's phrase, and to consider how theoretical cultural work like poststructuralism and material feminism might combine with psychoanalytical models. Jean Walton's essay is representative of the level of engagement that the crosscurrents between feminism, psychoanalysis and African American studies promote, as she revisits Joan Rivere and Melanie Klein in order to explore and expose their constructions of female subjectivity as white. The traditional occlusion of black women as analysts or analysands is investigated as psychoanaltyical feminism is placed under scrutiny most successfully by Spillers and Judith Butler.

Frank and informed exchanges characterise a book which cuts across some of the axioms of literary study and inevitably raises more questions about how race and gender are configured by different forms of critical enquiry than could possibly be answered in a single collection. Psychoanalytical theory is deployed as methodology and is consequently searchingly synthesised rather than dogmatically focussed in *Female Subjects*. The focus is wide and the writing dense at times, but it is never less than thought-provoking.

University of Hertfordshire SHARON MONTEITH

Joan Marter, *Alexander Calder* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, £18.95 paper). Pp. 302. 170 illustrations (8 in colour). ISBN 0 521 58717 4 (0 521 33038 6 cloth).

This is a lavishly illustrated paperback printing of a text originally published in 1991. It claims to be "the first full-scale study of Calder, offering a serious consideration of the artist's relationship to his peers among European and American modernists." Foregrounding the 1930s, Marter attempts a revaluation of Calder's work, based on "his major innovations, the mobile and the stabile," with the former seen as a significant critique of western sculptural principles. The conclusions can usefully be read first to get a feel for Marter's approach. An early use of the term "avant-garde" might arouse unwarranted expectations. For example, the "affinity" between Calder's 1930s wind-driven devices with "the work of Dada and abstract Surrealist artists" is merely a matter of form/technique. Marter's celebration of Calder's life-affirming playfulness, his anti-didacticism, his American "freedom of expression" and his pioneer work with industrial materials lacks a critical dimension when potentially important ideas are not followed up. For example, in the 1930s Calder produced motorized mobiles reflecting "theories about the system of the universe": a sort of sculptural physics, influenced by his studies in engineering. Yet when the unpredictable movements of his wind-driven machines introduce the idea of contingency it is possible to glimpse a critique of scientific rationalism, with all its Enlightenment underpinnings. Cannot more be made of the tensions in Calder's work? On the one hand, Marter identifies a formalist or "abstract" tendency; on the other, we are told that "since the 1920s Calder had been attuned to the possibilities of joining art and popular culture" – could something be said about the problems of relative autonomy when the question of social reference

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875898416037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

is on the agenda? If Calder's use of oversize forms is comparable with Oldenburg, *why* is this culturally significant? What does the monumental public art have to say about the ideological forces which shape its environments? Is not there a point to be made about the politics of institutional Modernism when Alfred Barr is cited on Calder's abstract virtues? Is Calder's playfulness a productive rejection of modern art's portentousness, or just a failure of nerve in the face of modernity? However, Marter's research is an essential reference point for anyone concerned with Calder. It is also useful for those interested in the various mediations of American folk art, or with the "less serious" side of twentieth-century aesthetics. (Tinguely is quoted as having been influenced by Calder.) While one can understand Marter's decision to concentrate on a descriptive map of Calder's development, this inevitably leaves room for a more theoretically adventurous study. The index does not include all names mentioned in the text (e.g. Oldenburg and Tinguely).

Nene College, Northampton DAVID A. WRAGG

Carl E. Prince, *Brooklyn's Dodgers: The Bums, the Borough, and the Best of Baseball* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, $23). Pp. 202. ISBN 0 19 509927 3.

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

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

Prince evades the major question: did loyalty to the club, and the bitter rivalry with the New York Giants, mask deep ethnic divisions between Jews, Italians and the Irish? The analysis of ethnic "isolation' is not very detailed; it misses more effective use of some outstanding monographs, especially on Jews. There is little mention of suburban development, Robert Moses and highway building, and residental change, with increasing numbers of blacks and Puerto Ricans entering former immigrant areas. Other issues are ignored. There is nothing on the financial history of the club, commercial sponsorship, or broader economic

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875898416037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

changes in Brooklyn. The impact of the radio and television is hardly discussed. That asks for a different book and different sources. Prince makes little use of oral interviews, even published testimony, but reminiscences and newspaper columnists provide him with rich descriptive detail to convey the aggressive bravado of the team and its fans. The book is always enjoyable, original, and sometimes illuminating.

University of Birmingham ROBERT LEWIS

David Thelen, *Becoming Citizens in the Age of Television: How Americans Challenged the Media and Seized Political Initiative During the Iran–Contra Debate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, $55.00 cloth, $14.94 paper). Pp. 247. ISBN 0 226 79470 9, 0 226 79471 7.

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

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

What is important about Thelen's book, however, is that it reminds us that the range and depth of opinion and beliefs held in any society on any subject are likely to be more complex and diverse than opinion surveys suggest. The problem,

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

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

University of Sussex TREVOR MCCRISKEN

J. V. Fifer, *The Master Builders*: *Structures of Empire in the New World*, *Spanish Initiatives and United States Invention* (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1996, £14.95). Pp. 320. ISBN 1 900838 01 X.

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

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

In Fifer's final analysis, the continued maintenance of the United States' tension structure is dependent upon the successful assimilation of immigrants. She identifies language, and the use of English in particular, as an indispensable structural component. She concludes that the United States possessed the

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originality of design, resources, and experience to become the most durable imperial structure the world has ever known.

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

Institute of Minnesota Archaeology, Minneapolis JOHN P. MCCARTHY

Ron Robin, *The Barbed-Wire College: Reeducating German POWs in the United States During World War II* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995, £24.95). Pp. 217. ISBN 0 691 03700 0.

In *The Barbed-Wire College*, Robin investigates the establishment and attainments of American officials' attempts to re-educate German prisoners of war in the United States at the closing stages of World War II. The re-education programme was, in Robin's view, a way of "marketing American political objectives through educational projects." While the Geneva convention specifically denounced indoctrination of prisoners, American officials felt the need to attempt a transformation of captured Germans from supporters of Nazism into supporters of western ideologies so they could help in the reformation of post-war Germany. In the early years, most German POWs in camps were left to form their own "societies" and these often reflected a military structure. The camp newspapers were often run by intellectuals who, while editorializing on issues of Nazi ideology, were too highbrow to have an impact on the bulk of their fellow prisoners' belief systems. The US military established the Special Programs Division (SPD) specifically to re-educate the POWs. The academic staff of the SPD selected the books and films that were to be made available in the POW camps. Robin's section on the censorship of camp material is interesting and entertaining. Beard's *Basic History of the United States* was banned for its critical approach to American imperialism, while the bulk of the POWs viewing time was spent watching B movies which were held in contempt by the intellectuals in the crowd but proved very popular with the mass of prisoners. By June 1945, the re-education project went public and the officials in the programme established a series of crash courses aimed at non-committed or moderate Nazis in order to expose them to American democratic traditions and American objectives in post-war Germany and then return these selected recruits back to Germany before the release of the remaining POWs. While the original mandate of these schools was to train the POWs as administrative personnel for the US occupation of Germany, the academics in charge of the programme often put the emphasis on academic training rather than the practicalities of producing useful administrative assistants. The Special Programs Division declared their success in the spring of 1946 when they polled 22,000 prisoners and learned that the majority would not fight if they had to live the war over again and no longer felt that Germans were a superior

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875898416037 Published online by Cambridge University Press

race. Yet over half still believed that Jews were the cause of Germany's problems and only 30 percent thought the stories of concentration camps were true. Robin is at his best when he relates the details of the establishment and inner workings of the SPD. He has written a good book about a little-known aspect of World War II military history. He is less convincing, and less thorough, when he discusses the clash between humanities/liberal arts academics and social scientists in the era, what he calls the "institutional and cultural battles in academia."

University of Hull JENEL VIRDEN

Donald W. White, *The American Century: The Rise* & *Decline of the United States as a World Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996, $35 cloth, £25 paper). Pp. 551. ISBN 0 300 05721 0.

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

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

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

Rather did the United States, after a period during which it was said to suffer from the Vietnam syndrome, re-emerge as a, indeed *the*, key player in the game of nations. The successful end of the Cold War, the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe towards democratic market economies, the extension of the Atlantic Alliance, and many more developments in the 1990s suggest that the American Century is far from over. It would have been worth the author's effort to explain the renaissance of United States power and the resumption of

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America's international leadership; power remains relative, and however reduced the absolute comparisons of earlier years there is no doubt that as the century closes there is only one super-power whose demise is not in sight.

Institute of United Studies ROBERT MCGEEHAN

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875898416037 Published online by Cambridge University Press