

Reviews

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ELIZABETH MADDOCK DILLON, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649–1849*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014. Print.

In *New World Drama*, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon aims at nothing less than a conceptual and methodological re-conceptualization of early American theatre and drama. Her study critically addresses, challenges, and revises the coordinates that have traditionally informed scholarly debates in this field. In fact, theatre and drama have been routinely exempted from most deliberations of early American literature. In contrast to the few critics who have focused on a performative tradition that simultaneously envisions and enacts “America” as concept and reality, Dillon works within a transatlantic framework which allows her to develop a new critical narrative “that is colonial and Atlantic in scope rather than solely national and one that focuses on scenes of representation, embodiment, and erasure in theatrical spaces as well as the layered and contrapuntal performances of colonial relations therein” (223). Published in Duke University Press’s prestigious *New Americanists* series edited by Donald E. Pease, Dillon’s book thus adds to the growing body of scholarship in transnational American studies. It is no surprise, then, that the chronological reach of Dillon’s study—which begins with the execution of King Charles I. in London in 1649 and concludes with the mid-nineteenth-century theatre riots in New York City—sits uneasily with common periodizations of early American literature that usually focus on a post-revolutionary struggle for cultural emancipation from British and European role models. Her choice to begin her study at the height of Puritan rule in England and to end it with the democratic clamor of antebellum theatre riots is an apt one since it allows her to illustrate what she perceives as the central developments in theatre and drama in a circum-Atlantic world.

Building on the recent transnational turn in American studies, Dillon’s introductory chapter outlines the methodological premises and core arguments of her study. It argues that the Atlantic world of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century saw the rise of a “performative commons.” This new way of imagining collective identities, Dillon claims, is the result of transforming an earlier collective form of ownership and access to limited public resources into the abstract notion of a collectivity that

imagines itself as the carrier of “popular sovereignty” and fundamental political rights. For Dillon, this new “virtual body” has less a material than an aesthetic and figurative shape. Informed by Jacques Rancière’s theories of spectatorship and Erving Goffman’s notion of audience participation, Dillon locates the formation of this “performative commons” in scenes from playhouses around the Atlantic rim where audiences become actively involved in theatrical performances. Her point is not that spectators passively identify with theatrical representations of themselves as audiences. Instead, Dillon concentrates on instances of spectators participating in the enactment of a new virtual form of collective identity. This shift from the representational to the performative level—a shift from the mimetic to the ontic, as Dillon calls it—turns theatrical performances into social events in which a new, abstract notion of collectivity is performatively and sometimes spontaneously created.

In her first chapter, Dillon shows how this idea of a new virtual collectivity, which bears a certain family resemblance with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s notion of the multitude, is further complicated by what she refers to as the “colonial relation.” Building on Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein’s notion of “Americana,” Dillon sees in the “colonial relation” a characteristic feature of the Anglo-Atlantic world that describes the growing hiatus between the political ideals of (European) liberty and the new systems of unfreedom and racialization imposed on Africans and Native Americans that result in the expropriation of indigenous lands as well as the extortion of forced labor from African slaves in the New World. Here, Dillon’s study breaks new ground by moving beyond the postcolonial criticism of early American drama. While studies by Susan Castillo and Myra Jehlen, which are conspicuously absent from an otherwise substantial bibliography, have pointed at the performative dimension of European encounters with Native Americans, Dillon shares with these critics the concern about a general erasure of slavery and colonialism in European accounts of the rise of a modern Atlantic world. In her analysis, however, Dillon moves beyond merely juxtaposing the ideals of personal liberty in metropolitan centers and the reality of slavery in the colonial periphery. She takes seriously the economic and material practices that underpin the social reality of the early Atlantic world.

In her second chapter, Dillon begins to combine her critical perspectives on the “performative commons” and the “colonial relation” by focusing on the establishment of a transatlantic theatrical network of performances and productions in the urban centers of the English-speaking Atlantic world such as London, Charleston, Kingston, and finally New York City. As Dillon argues, the dissemination of European performance styles is driven by the policies of implementing early capitalist economic structures in England. Such political measures as the Licensing Act of 1737 not only gave rise to the distinction between popular and elitist forms of theatrical entertainment, but also pushed troupes like the Hallam company out of the country and across the Atlantic. As Dillon’s analyses of popular stage figures such as the “Indian king” and the “royal slave” show, the ideological work of theatrical performance consists in masking and unmasking the inherent economic contradictions of a “new regime of finance capitalism” (112) as well as English settler colonialism in the New World.

In her case studies on Charleston, South Carolina, and Kingston, Jamaica, Dillon then proceeds to illustrate the subversive potential of the performative commons. In her discussion of Charleston Theatre, Dillon finds that “the theatre was a location where the public went in order to explicitly consume performance, as well as to perform itself and thus to debate its own self-constitution” (140). As she shows, this explicitly includes the presence of African Americans even while their presence in the theatrical space was officially disavowed. Dillon demonstrates her acuity as a historian when she builds her argument from archival findings in local newspapers and magazines. Dillon crafts her argument from such records as, for example, a letter reprinted in the *South Carolina Gazette* on April 26, 1797 in which the manager of the Charleston Theatre is accused of allowing too many mixed-race spectators to interfere with the dramatic performance on stage. In a similar manner, she argues, the performative commons of eighteenth-century Kingston allowed “black sociality and cultural production [to] proliferate under the sign of their own erasure” in colonial Jamaica (169). From such examples Dillon constructs her narrative about how audiences of local performances materialize and constitute themselves as new collectivities.

In her last chapter on New York City, Dillon’s argument climaxes in a discussion of the simultaneity of the rise of Jim Crow as a popular representation of blackness on American stages and the urban theatre riots during the first half of the nineteenth century. For Dillon, Jim Crow symbolizes the disavowal of an Atlantic history of slavery and “the eclipse of an Atlantic sensus communis in favor of a U.S. nationalist one” (220). Placing the continental figure of Jim Crow next to the figures of Thomas Southerne’s *Oroonoko* or the Jamaican Jonkunnu performance, Dillon suggests that the growing popularity of blackface minstrelsy effectively suppressed and expiated the colonial history of slavery from the national consciousness. As this discussion of Jim Crow shows, Dillon’s argument rests on a critical narrative that locates key elements of early American drama in a transatlantic genealogy of dramatic performances and calls for recuperating processes of identity formation that present an alternative to a nascent American cultural nationalism.

While Dillon makes a convincing case for reconsidering theatrical practices and traditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, her study also points at more far-reaching questions and problems. It remains open to debate, for example, how the rise and fall of a “performative commons” affected the actual social life of local communities throughout the Atlantic world. Some historians would probably prefer to see some of the claims about the constitution of a performative commons as a new social reality substantiated by further source materials. While Dillon remains minutely aware of the economic underpinnings of theatrical practices throughout the Atlantic world, it would also have been interesting to learn more about how this new form of performative identification relates to the rampant anti-theatrical prejudices in New England and Pennsylvania, as well as the increasing commodification and cultural elitism of theatre and drama since the late eighteenth century. Most importantly, however, Dillon’s study is confined to a consideration of the English-speaking Atlantic world. This results in an omission of other urban centers, which were more ethnically diverse, for example, Philadelphia or New Orleans. Nevertheless, Dillon’s study is not only ambitious in its geographical and interpretative scope. It is also an important book that will shape and instigate further scholarship on

early American drama for years to come. It will undoubtedly stand next to such seminal works as Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* or the scholarship of Joseph Roach and Diana

Taylor on intercultural performances in the Atlantic world.

Mainz

Frank Obenland

THOMAS DIKANT, *Landschaft und Territorium: Amerikanische Literatur, Expansion und die Krise der Nation, 1784–1866* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2014), 250 pp.

“The geographic fantasies pursued in U.S. literature,” Jennifer Rae Greeson has written in *Our South*, “have not been simply ‘super-structural’ window dressing for the real operation of power in the United States.”¹ This idea—namely, that “geographic fantasies” or aesthetic discourses of landscapes on the one hand, and discourses of territorial politics on the other hand, are inextricably linked in U.S. literature—also lies at the heart of Thomas Dikant’s *Landschaft und Territorium*. For such a double focus on aesthetic and juridico-political aspects of representations of the land in U.S. writings, perhaps no other time period in American literature furnishes as many fruitful examples from different genres as that of the massive territorial expansion of the United States during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. Dikant thus situates his study between the Ordinance of 1784 and the publication of Melville’s *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* in 1866, dedicating each of his altogether four analytical chapters to texts from one canonical writer of that time span: Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Cooper’s *The Pioneers*, Emerson’s “Nature” and his *Poems*, as well as Melville’s aforementioned poetry collection. The introductory chapter employs Petrarch’s famous “Ascent of Mount Ventoux” as a starting point for an informed discussion of the two central concepts of the book, “landscape” (representing an aesthetic approach to the land) and “territory” (as a shorthand for a political interpretation of the land).

Especially in the case of the former term, however, such a heuristic separation of the aesthetic and the political dimensions of “the land” is not unproblematic, as the author himself acknowledges when he points out “[d]ass es sich bei der Repräsentation der Landschaft um keine unpolitische Darstellungsform handelt und dass das Betrachten der Landschaft eine Praktik ist, der politische Implikationen innewohnen” (22). Likewise, drawing on Robert David Sack’s concept of territoriality, Dikant establishes that the “territory” is

the result of various practices of control over a geographic area—prominent among which are, amongst others, aesthetic representations of landscape (cf. 27). Rather than mutually exclusive categories, then, “landscape” and “territory” constitute concepts that feed into each other.

Perhaps the best arguments against an oversimplified juxtaposition of “landscape” and “territory,” though, are Dikant’s illuminating readings of Jefferson’s, Cooper’s, Emerson’s, and Melville’s texts, which, individually, show how exactly the aesthetic and the juridico-political are intertwined in the case of each writer and, collectively, trace shifting emphases of landscape depiction in U.S. literature from the Early Republic to the Civil War. One of the great strengths of *Landschaft und Territorium* is the rich historical contextualization that the author provides for the texts that stand at the center of each chapter. In the case of the second chapter, which discusses Jefferson’s *Notes on the States of Virginia*, this context includes the territorial politics of the Early Republic in general and the Ordinances of 1784, 1785, and 1787 in particular. Dikant identifies the *Notes* as belonging to the genre of “statistics” or “beschreibende Staatenkunde” (37), yet also notes that on several occasions, such as his descriptions of Harpers Ferry or the Natural Bridge, Jefferson switches to an aesthetic mode of representation that locates the viewer in the landscape and records his emotional and imaginative reaction to it. It is this affective reaction which fosters an emotional unity among the inhabitants of the land (51), a unity that, according to Jefferson, includes Native Americans (due to their ability to perceive the landscape aesthetically; 70), but excludes African Americans (due to their lack of this ability; 72).

The so-called “Marshall Trilogy,” a series of Supreme Court decisions under Chief Justice John Marshall that all related to federalism and Indian law, provides the background for the chapters on Cooper and Emerson. The first case of the trilogy, “Johnson v. McIntosh” (1823), involved two men who purchased titles to the same land directly from Native Americans and from the federal government, respectively, with the court ruling that tribal lands could only be obtained through the government. Cooper’s *The Pioneers*, published in the same year as that decision, solves an analogous case differently, “nämlich indem der Erbe desjenigen, der den indianischen Landrechtstitel

¹ Jennifer Rae Greeson, *Our South: Geographic Fantasy and the Rise of National Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010) 11.

besaß [Cooper's Oliver Edwards], ins Recht gesetzt und zum Eigentümer wird" (108). More importantly, however, Dikant identifies Cooper's picturesque landscapes as both synecdochic and chronotopic: on the one hand, *The Pioneers's* regional New York landscapes stand for the nation as a whole; on the other hand, for Native and Anglo-Americans alike, these landscapes implicate a temporal dimension. But whereas Chingachgook only sees memories of the past, the Anglo-Americans see a process of "civilization" that is bound to repeat itself in the future: "Aus der in *The Pioneers* vollzogenen geschichtlichen Logik ergibt es sich geradezu zwingend, dass sich auf all dem *vacant land* [...] die Erfolgsgeschichte der Besiedlung wiederholen wird" (109).

In chapter 4, the longest of the study, the second and third cases of the "Marshall Trilogy," "Cherokee Nation v. Georgia" (1831) and "Worcester v. Georgia" (1832), as well as Emerson's protest against the policy of Indian Removal, serve as a starting point for a discussion of Emerson's conceptualization of landscape and the way this conceptualization informs his notion of land ownership. Focusing mainly on *Nature*, Dikant stresses that one of the consequences of the specifically Emersonian concept of the sublime is that "die alltäglichsste Kulturlandschaft als potenziell erhaben aufgewertet, ja geradezu sakralisiert wird" (137). Any landscape, according to Emerson, may induce feelings of the sublime, but not in anyone: following his analysis of *Nature* with readings of Emerson's "Hamatreya" and "Ode, Inscribed to W.H. Channing," Dikant shows how in these poems both individuals and the collective (nation) view the supposedly "sublime" land primarily in terms of the territorial (167). The poet emerges as a privileged individual, whose "territory"—Dikant's metaphorical use of the term in this case may be a little confusing—is autonomous and transcends material ownership of the land.

The last chapter also discusses poetry, turning to the, according to Dikant, selective and fragmented representation of the Civil War in Melville's *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of*

the War (1866). Indeed, while some of Melville's poems depict the war in mediated form (e. g., through ekphrasis, as in "The Coming Storm"), others focus on specific battles, military operations, and, concomitantly, the land where these battles took place. In the latter cases, Dikant argues, Melville constantly inverts and ironically undermines pastoral conventions: "So wird an der Pastorale, die von Anbeginn in einer kontrastiven Relation zum Kriege konstruiert ist und in der sich immer schon das Politische sedimentiert, sichtbar, dass dies kein konventioneller Krieg ist, der sich in den hergebrachten ästhetischen Konventionen normalisieren oder gar als pastoral naturalisieren ließe" (199). In poems such as "The March to the Sea," where the violence of war is directed straight against the land, neither the territory nor nature can serve as the basis for national unity anymore, let alone for a national future. What is inscribed into the landscape instead are the war and its violence, which stand for the destruction and the fragmentation of the union (219).

The epilogue of *Landschaft and Territorium* continues to look at Melville's poems, foregrounding his wish to reintegrate the defeated South into the Union (224). Dikant wisely closes his study at this point: in postbellum U.S. writings, specifically in popular travel writings about the South by Northern journalists such as Edward King, the question of landscape and territory would be inextricably linked with U.S. imperial expansion,² and examining this kind of literature would require going beyond Dikant's focus on the territory of the nation-state (31-32). For the texts discussed in *Landschaft and Territorium*, however, Dikant's approach, as his study convincingly shows, yields insightful and nuanced new readings even of well-established texts. The only real drawback, then, is the fact that *Landschaft and Territorium* is written in German (elegant German, nonetheless) and that the book may therefore not get the international attention it deserves.

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Florian Freitag

² See, for instance, Greeson 13.

HEINZ TSCHACHLER, *The Monetary Imagination of Edgar Allan Poe: Banking, Currency and Politics in the Writings* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2013), 230 pp.

In order to prove “that the writings and career of Edgar Allan Poe cannot be separated from the world of banking and finance in antebellum America” and “that to talk about Poe’s genius as producing nothing but unearthly visions is to diminish his hold of the language of banking and finance” (165), Heinz Tschachler provides five chapters of historical description, analysis, and discussion, accompanied by a prologue and an epilogue, endnotes, an index, and a bibliographic essay. With passion for the subject, Tschachler sheds light on the discourse of money and currency in the U.S. in the first half of the nineteenth century and on the use of a monetary discourse and of financial metaphors in Poe’s writings from several perspectives. Those are 1) the disregard for a relation of Poe’s stories and poems to monetary discourse in the critical reception of his work, with the exception of biographical attention to Poe’s poverty; 2) a gold standard or a gold-backed paper currency in relation to paper money as a fiduciary system based on trust and the inscription of both of these systems in Poe’s writings; 3) the relations between banks and politics in the U.S. from the early nineteenth century to the Civil War and how they affected Poe’s life and writings; 4) counterfeiting, fraudulent bank practices and the lack of a national currency in the Jacksonian Era and the resulting sense of economic insecurity among the people; and 5) the eventual realization by Abraham Lincoln with the Legal Tender Act of 1862 of a trust-based paper money system, along with the discussion of the question whether Poe, by then deceased, might have supported the establishment of this system—which again only lasted until the re-introduction of the gold standard in the 1880s.

In terms of politics and monetary economy, the main event in Poe’s life and writings as well as throughout Tschachler’s historical analysis is Andrew Jackson’s so-called ‘bank war’ in favor of hard money, that is, a currency based on gold coins and a gold standard. Jackson attempted to settle the many controversies on the question of American money in 1832 with a veto against the re-charter of the Second Bank of the United States that would have become a national—or federal—institu-

tion issuing paper money for all of the states. Tschachler shows how the depression following Jackson’s veto, culminating in the Panic of 1837 and lingering well through the 1840s, influenced the daily life of the people, Poe’s included. In Tschachler’s descriptions of commercial banks, currency, and barter economy for lack of currency, the people’s sense of economic instability and insecurity during the 1830s and 1840s is evoked and becomes tangible. The illustrations in the book—images of coins, bank notes, counterfeit notes, and political cartoons on banking and currency that might have come along Poe’s way or into his hands through his newspaper reading—support the successful evocation of the atmosphere of everyday monetary life at the time. It is Tschachler’s declared aim “[t]o revive Poe as a historical figure” by considering “the material conditions of the writer’s existence” (165), by which he means, in a wider discursive sense, not merely Poe’s income but the money Poe handled and the effects of the failures of the monetary system he was subjected to throughout his life. While Tschachler insists that he “cannot aspire to an iconographic analysis” of the coins and notes, the images that figure in the book still are “evidence both of the acrimonious debates about America’s money and of the social transformations and financial problems plaguing people in the antebellum period” (209).

The manifold detail Tschachler’s prose provides on the historical situation of banking and finance in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century includes excursions back to the early 1700s and forth to the early twentieth century. Tschachler draws, on the one hand, on his expertise accumulated in *The Greenback: Paper Money and American Culture* of 2010,¹ which as “a cultural history of the dollar from its origins in colonial America to the present” he calls the “companion piece of sorts” (209) to the book on Poe and banking, and, on the other hand, on his study of the cultural history of the dollar bill in *All Others Pay Cash: Dollar Bills and Their Cultural Work* of 2008.² Readings of literary works against the semantics and tropes of economic life and the economic theories of the authors’ times—a method following New Economic Criticism—are encouraged by Tschachler’s

¹ Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company.

² Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.

extension of his previous work into a related study of the figure of Poe and by his findings. For historical evidence, Tschachler extensively and in expert scholarly manner draws on newspaper writings and the record therein of public debates of the period as well as on Poe's correspondence. Tschachler's thesis that an important impetus for Poe's poetics of satire, gothicism, criminology, cryptography, and semantic destabilization can be traced to the desire for and need of a "stable medium of exchange in everyday commercial transactions" (28) is convincing.

However, appreciation of Tschachler's work, which is methodologically sound as regards a discursive correlation of poetics and economics, is compromised by the compositional style and by the way the extensive research is presented. Associative evocation of the historical context takes the lead over linear narration and logical argument, which would be easier to read if the rendering of the context were not somewhat repetitive from chapter to chapter. The anchoring of concepts of money in their nineteenth-century, specifically U.S. American history is not systematic in respect of general economic and monetary theory and its history. Each chapter repeats the point, for instance, that in the Revolutionary Era, Tories supported a gold currency whereas rebels were in favor of paper money and that this victorious colonial alignment with a unified paper money system was overturned in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century when the Jacksonians favored and successfully defended a specie currency and the rights of dispersed local or regional commercial banks whereas then the Whigs called for a national paper currency and a national bank of issue. Also repeated is the point that Poe, in his writings, abstained from clear, politically identifiable views of the monetary system and of banks in order not to compromise his standing with any section of a potential readership on a national literary market he felt himself painfully dependent on. Each chapter in the book brings detail to the argument of Poe's abstinence from explicit political opinion that is already voiced in the prologue while this argument is not systematically followed through in its constituent parts pertaining to the relation of politics with the discourse of economics and money.

The persuasiveness of Tschachler's work also seems weakened because the sole text by Poe that is treated in depth is "The Gold-

Bug" of 1842. As highly topical and important as this short story is for Tschachler's study, a detailed reading of the logics of some more of Poe's works would have been desirable. Instead of addressing different works by Poe, the chapters in *The Monetary Imagination of Edgar Allan Poe* are organized along a succession of aspects of a monetary economy: money as such, paper system and trust, banks, counterfeiting, and a national currency. But again, for such a thematic organization of the book in terms of monetary theory, there is not enough coherent background provided on the history of thought on the monetary economy. Instead, some positions of monetary theory seem interspersed throughout the historical material on financial life in Poe's times. While it organizes the entire view on the Jacksonian Era presented from the beginning of the book, Jackson's bank war is focused as late as chapter five instead of being cohesively presented in chapter one already. References in the text and in the endnotes to points made in previous or later chapters do not amend the diffusion of argumentative stringency and add to the enervating effect of the endnote instead of footnote format. The author appears to owe much of his view of Poe to Terence Whalen's often cited *Poe and the Masses: The Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America* of 1999,³ yet he never discusses the concept of the masses even though 'they' are introduced as Poe's great antagonist.

Regarding an article that I presented as a lecture at the Velden conference *Almighty Dollar* organized by Heinz Tschachler in 2008⁴ and which is quoted in Tschachler's study, he appears to assume that the distinction into legal and sacrificial theories of the supposed origin of money were a standing topos I rely on (65). I must insist, however, that my distinction of two strains in the history of thinking on money by the two terms "legal" and "sacrificial" is of my own making and was developed as an abbreviation for longer descriptions of disputed theoretical oppositions in the history

³ Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁴ See Heinz Tschachler, Eugen Banauch, and Simone Puff, eds., *Almighty Dollar: Papers and Lectures from the Velden Conference* (Wien and Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010); therein: Nadja Gernalzick, "Sacrificial or Legal: Money in American Literature (Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, Frank Norris, Ezra Pound, Don DeLillo)" 137-57.

of monetary theory; the distinction between legal and sacrificial theories of money summarizes an argument from my earlier work,⁵ for which argument, in turn, I combined Joseph Schumpeter's distinction of a real and a monetary economy in his *History of Economic Analysis* of 1954⁶ with historical and anthropological writings that engage in a discussion possible origins of money. Moreover, the tracing of the history of monetary thinking back to Aristotle and the introduction of contemporary alternative monetary theory after Gunnar Heinsohn and Otto Steiger—a central line of argument in my article of 2010 as in my previous work—is taken up by Tschachler in phrases stating that the distinctions of the Aristotelian tradition are “no longer viable” and that they describe “an ideal, not a lived or livable reality” (53): These phrases are the translation of a summary statement by Jacques Derrida through which he distances himself from the Aristotelian tradition in economic thinking and that is found in his *Donner le temps* of 1991,⁷ and by which he is also repeatedly quoted in my work.⁸ Tschachler neither acknowledges the quotation and the source nor therewith the Derridean synthesis of the

dichotomies of the Aristotelian tradition; this synthesis, or, integration, however, is at the core of the logics of Derridean deconstruction and its understanding of economics, as I have repeatedly tried to show.

It is, I argue, largely due to the influence of Derrida's writings—and not so much, contrary to what Tschachler claims (206), to Marc Shell's achievements in the field of writing on money and literature (e.g. 68 n. 96, 70 n. 115, 74 n. 135, 104)⁹—that the Aristotelian tradition with its demonization of money has come under scrutiny in more recent years and that alternative theories of credit and trust have gained support over classical, liberal, or Marxian theories of money, capital, value, and labor. Suggesting the integration of economic and monetary theories into price theory, thereby following the mathematization of economic theory since the turn to the twentieth century, and thus correlating the semiotics of monetary theory with constructivism in cultural studies, the writings of Derrida must be seen as more theoretically, and semiotically, astute in the analysis of economic and monetary thought and as more relevant to the future of the New Economic Criticism than the thought of Shell, as Tschachler himself acknowledges in passing in the “Introduction” to his *All Others Pay Cash* (17) of 2008. Much scholarship in literary and cultural studies, and, especially, in New Economic Criticism, correlates signification in literature and the arts with functions of the monetary economy, yet it is to the detriment of these studies that

⁵ See Nadja Gernalzick, “From Classical Dichotomy to Differential Contract: The Derridean Integration of Monetary Theory,” *Kultur-Sprache-Ökonomie*, ed. Wolfgang Weitlaner, Wiener Slavistischer Almanach Sonderband 54 (2001): 363-73, republished in: *Metaphors of Economy*, ed. Nicole Bracker and Stefan Herbrechter (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005) 55-67; and *Kredit und Kultur: Ökonomie- und Geldbegriff bei Jacques Derrida und in der amerikanischen Literaturtheorie der Postmoderne* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2000).

⁶ Ed. Elizabeth B. Schumpeter, 1954 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁷ *Donner le temps: 1. La fausse monnaie* (Paris: Galilée, 1991) 203. English translation by Peggy Kamuf as *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992). On the reception of Aristoteles' writings on economy and chrematistics in the works of Derrida and on Derrida's term “in-vivable,” see Gernalzick, *Kredit und Kultur* 140-43.

⁸ *Kredit und Kultur* 203; “From Classical Dichotomy of Differential Contract” 365; “Sacrificial or Legal” 141.

⁹ See Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); *Money, Language, and Thought: Literary and Philosophical Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley, CA, and London: The University of California Press, 1982); *Art & Money* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995). The latter book contains the essay “The Issue of Representation” (72-86), which was reprinted in Mark Osteen and Martha Woodmansee, eds., *The New Economic Criticism: Studies at the Interface of Literature and Economics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) as the first chapter. Shell's essay as the reprint in the collection by Osteen and Woodmansee is held by Tschachler to be the “*locus classicus* for the theoretical discussion of the relationships between literature and money” (*The Monetary Imagination of Edgar Allan Poe* 206).

their sole guarantors for monetary theory still appear to be *The Wealth of Nations*, *Capital I*, and again the relevant passages from the *The Nikomachean Ethics* and *Politics* of Aristotle, with some David Ricardo thrown in. Unfortunately, for many economists', politicians', and journalists' thought today, the background in monetary theory does not appear to differ.

It is the achievement of Tschachler's study of Poe's monetary imagination and of the phenomena of the monetary economy in Poe's times that the reader becomes convinced that in his everyday life Poe struggled with the actuality of the long-standing theoretical oppo-

sition of a 'real' and a monetary economy—the false opposition analyzed by Schumpeter as constitutive for all of the economic theory of the 19th century—and that Poe in his works, perhaps, was on the way of overcoming this theoretical opposition, as further readings of Poe's texts might show. *The Monetary Imagination of Edgar Allan Poe* provides a learned, impassioned, and, within the wider scholarship on Poe's work, unorthodox, refreshing, and inspiring study of a nineteenth-century U.S.-American author in his times.

Bern

Nadja Gernalzick

LAWRENCE BUELL, *The Dream of the Great American Novel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2014), xii + 567 pp.

Debates around the Great American Novel (GAN) have been going on for a century and a half, with periods of greater or lesser efflorescence. We are now in a time of heightened and, one suspects, enduring interest in the topic, given a number of factors: ongoing identitarian debates around the novelistic canon; contestations of the very legitimacy of universalizing constructs like the GAN; an inveterate American fixation with lists and rankings; and, not unrelated to these factors, the internet's maieutic role in the proliferation of all manner of discourse and data—websites, wikis, blogs, surveys, etc.—and advanced information technology's growing capacity to quantify literary reception as we see, for example, in the "computational criticism" being developed at the Stanford Literary Lab but also in social media.

For the record, the inaugural formal intervention into the politics of the GAN occurs in 1868, when novelist John W. De Forest, in an essay in *The Nation*, offers a brief prescription of what such a singular work might entail. Not surprisingly, he comes up with an essentialistic model. Such a work must be a "tableau" that depicts "the American soul" and, after briefly dismissing works by Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, settles his nomination on Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), though not before flagging its idealized characterizations and flawed plot (qtd. in Buell 24).

Lawrence Buell's views on the GAN owe little to the essentialization of De Forest and likeminded others who have contributed to GAN discussions. Indeed, his considerable breadth of reference and the exegetical nuance of his readings confirm what he announces in his title: though notionally a project that will yield a category containing precisely one work, the GAN critical enterprise is actually rather different; the objective of revealing the GAN is a kind of "dream" to be pursued, but not one that will yield any sort of apodictic result. As Buell acknowledges in his introduction, the whole "GAN idea" is "absurdly oxymoronic if taken too solemnly," if it attempts to discern "the one single once-and-for-all supernovel" (5).

Strangely, *The Dream of the Great American Novel* is the first monograph-length study

of this complex field of literary production and reception and, given this complexity but also the extraordinary richness of the tradition, any fulsome first treatment of the topic will be long, and Buell's is long and intricate. Studies in the GAN are of course studies of canon (de)formation and reception aesthetics, but Buell resolutely ties *The Dream of the Great American Novel* to empirical receptions—mostly within the domain of professional readers, i.e., academics, writers, and critics, though sometimes citing statistical data on broad readership patterns—eschewing by design the sort of theoretical work done in the late twentieth century by people like Fish, Iser, Jauss, and Barbara Herrnstein Smith. The result is a very approachable, theoretically unfussy study that provides rich commentary, not only on nominees for the GAN designation, but also on historical contexts and formative critical and social debates.

The broad parameters Buell sets for himself yield a leisurely-paced, highly erudite book; life on Buell's textual raft is "mighty free and easy," to borrow from Twain's Jim, and, indeed, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) figures into virtually all discussions of the GAN and certainly in Buell's.¹ Buell structures his typological study around four "scenarios" or "scripts," each of which is based on certain recurrent elements of plot and character development within a typically multi-work GAN domain. The first of these scripts, however, and exceptionally, emphasizes just a single work: Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850).

Hawthorne's best and best-known novel brought its author immediate recognition making him, in the words of Richard Brodhead, "the only major author never to have been underestimated," and making it an obvious early candidate for GAN anointment (qtd. in Buell 71). The tragic circumstances played out in the novel starkly encapsulate fundamental moral dilemmas in the Atlantic world around individual freedom and communitarian standards of comportment and citizenship as Hester's "able-ness" is played off against her adultery. As Buell observes, this novel continues to be the most taught long work of pre-modern American literature in American high schools and colleges and serves "as a key reference point for U.S. literary history"

¹ Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1986) 128.

(72). Given its pretty much immediate canonization, *The Scarlet Letter* has enjoyed long-lived, careful attention, and has inspired considerable imitation over the years. In Buell's model, it garners GAN significance both due to its meditation on issues central to American national identity and an *iterative* dynamic whereby it becomes "classic" through myriad novelistic "retellings" over time (91).

Buell's other three GAN scripts are rather more involved than his first, and receive the bulk of his attention. Each captures a major historico-cultural theme: "up-from," *aspirational* narratives of social mobility; *conflictual* tales about racial and interregional strife; and, finally, *multitudinous* novels about great expansive communities, as small as a New England whaler and as large as the USA. We do not need Jay Gatsby to tell us that the greatest early "up-from" narrative is of course Benjamin Franklin's posthumously published *Autobiography* (1818), at once a precursor and generator of a long line of quintessentially American novels about characters who are "imagined as national exemplars who attempt for better or worse to act out versions of the traditional American dream script" (106). Surveying a constellation of six novels ranging from Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925) through to Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Roth's *American Pastoral* (1997)—all essays in the *Bildungsroman*, in one way or another—Buell examines the depiction of prevailing American mythemes—the "self-made man," America's limitless opportunity, the American Dream—which together weave the nation's "single most iconic story line" (101).

A number of GAN candidates have focused on certain fundamental conflicts that have structured American life, directly and indirectly, for a very long time. Works falling within this cluster include *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Huckleberry Finn*, Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), and Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). All of these contend with interracial and interregional relations and conflicts, replete with chronic tension and frequent violence. Stowe's novel stands out from the group because of its clear, if melodramatic, delineation of the horrors of slavery and its obvious influence on American history. Quite simply, as Buell notes, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* changed the world" (226). At the same time, though unable to claim this kind of political agency, the other three works deal articulately with

their subject matter while advancing the novel as an expressive artistic medium. Whereas Hemingway would assert (with forgivable hyperbole) in *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935) that all of modern American literature began with *Huckleberry Finn*, the Nobel Committee would later declare both Faulkner and Morrison to be great global writers (1949, 1993).

Unlike the three that precede it, Buell's final "script" involves GAN candidates that elaborate great novelistic universes, rather than particular privileged foundational themes. The place of these multitudinous works is secure in any canon of great American novels: Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* trilogy (1929-1938), and Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). Buell traces the ebb and (seemingly final) flow of *Moby Dick*'s critical receptions, with it now being firmly ensconced within the literary-critical imagination, not to mention within the consumer realm of Starbucks coffee shops and sundry other commercial undertakings (359). In contrast to the "microcosm" of *Moby Dick* stands "a macrocosmic complement," the *U.S.A.* trilogy and its panoramic sweep of American life during the early decades of the twentieth century (389). Expansive temporally and spatially, mimetically inclusive, formally innovative, and insistently modern, Dos Passos's masterwork has a depth, breadth, and thematic embrace that are unrivalled in American literature. Still, as Buell outlines in fascinating detail, the *U.S.A.* trilogy never quite received its coronation as the GAN that its early reception seemed to presage and remains more "precedent than prototype" for GAN candidates that come later (422). The last exercise in novelistic "maximalism" that Buell examines is Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, a work that, in the words of David Cowart, is "widely recognized" as the "most important American novel" since World War Two and remains for Buell a better candidate for GAN designation than three other contemporary works, Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996), DeLillo's *Underworld*, and the four extant installments of William Vollmann's *Seven Dreams* series (1990, 1992, 1994, 2001) (qtd. in Buell 427)².

Highly readable, scrupulously researched, *The Dream of the Great American Novel* is a

² I do note that, subsequent to the appearance of Buell's study, Vollmann has published the fifth part of his *Seven Dreams* series: *The Dying Grass* (2015).

major contribution to American literary historiography, not to mention to American Studies. Long a distinguished commentator in these fields, Lawrence Buell brings equanimity and a relaxed eloquence to the GAN debate, moving easily from his own period specialization—nineteenth-century American prose—into the modernist, postmodernist, and our own (post?)postmodern periods. In closing, let the

last words here be the author's own. For Buell, the GAN remains a "field of dreams," quite as much a critical enterprise as a creative one, and it seems certain that readers will continue to promote candidates for GAN canonization for the foreseeable future, and so it goes (465). How could it be otherwise?

Edmonton, Canada

Jerry A. Varsava

SABINA MATTER-SEIBEL, *Contending Forces: Romantraditionen amerikanischer Schriftstellerinnen 1850-1900*, Mainzer Studien zur Amerikanistik 61 (Frankfurt et. al: Peter Lang, 2013), 622 pp.

Mit *Contending Forces: Romantraditionen amerikanischer Schriftstellerinnen 1850-1900* hat Sabina Matter-Seibel einen längst fälligen Beitrag zur Erforschung des sentimental Genre in der Frauenliteratur vorgelegt. Im Fokus ihrer Untersuchung stehen nicht mehr allein Subversion und Widerstand in einer Vielzahl von Romanen weißer und afroamerikanischer Autorinnen, sondern auch das komplexe Zusammenspiel sowohl hegemonial-dominanter als auch subversiv-marginalisierter Konventionen, Sprachen und Lesarten. Matter-Seibel baut auf der feministischen, genderorientierten und revisionistischen Forschung der 1990er Jahre auf, die zu einer kontinuierlichen Neubewertung der Frauenliteratur und in Vergessenheit geratener Autorinnen und ihrer Werke beigetragen hat. Es mag zu Zeiten des *transnational turn* überraschen, dass der Fokus ausschließlich auf amerikanischen Texten und nationalen Belangen liegt. Es ist jedoch eine der besonderen Leistungen der Studie, einen äußerst dynamischen, erhellen- und sinnfälligen Dialog zwischen kanonisierten, erforschten Romanen amerikanischer Schriftstellerinnen und weniger bekannten Autorinnen zu entfachen. Die Studie beeindruckt außerdem durch ihre große Breite und die Detailliertheit der Textinterpretationen der ausgewählten Romane, wobei sich Herangehensweisen des *New Historicism* und der Rezeptionsästhetik gelungen ergänzen.

Indem sich Schriftstellerinnen der Tradition des sentimental Romans bedienen, argumentiert Matter-Seibel, schreiben sie gegen androzentrische Machtpositionen an, partizipieren daran aber zugleich, was unweigerlich zu ideologischer Verstrickung und zu einem Schwanken der Autorinnen „[z]wischen Ohnmacht und Ermächtigung“ (41) führe. Wie Matter-Seibel betont, ist die auktoriale Partizipation eine zweifache: sie umfasst weibliche Körper und Ideen bzw. Werte. So entstehen vielschichtige Texte, deren Gesellschaftsentwürfe und Gesellschaftskritik gleichermaßen auf materiellen und ideellen Aspekten basieren. Trotz der Hybridität der Romane ist für Matter-Seibel letztendlich die sentimentale Tradition bestimmend, wodurch ihre Studie stark durch Genre und Periodisierung ge-

prägt ist. Diese methodische Ausrichtung birgt trotz der Betonung der ideologischen Ambiguität und dialogischen Verflochtenheit der ausgewählten Romane die Gefahr einer gewissen Homogenisierung, die den produktionsästhetischen – ganz besonders den intellektuellen und philosophischen – Ansprüchen und Leistungen der Schriftstellerinnen nicht immer gerecht wird. Ferner impliziert diese Herangehensweise eine nicht unproblematische linear-teleologische Sicht auf die untersuchten Romane innerhalb der Zeitspanne von 1850 bis 1900, wenn Matter-Seibel etwa konstatiert, dass die nachlassende Autorität des sentimental Romans mit einer zunehmenden Ablösung der Schriftstellerinnen von „herrschenden literarischen Konventionen und den Erwartungen des Lesepublikums“ (571) einhergeht.

Auf das einleitende Kapitel, welches neben Forschungsstand, Fragestellung und Methode die Auswahl des Textkorpus erläutert, folgen vier Interpretationskapitel mit den Themenkomplexen „Frauenfrage,“ Wirtschaft und Arbeit, Reformliteratur als moralische Instanz und „Afroamerikanische Variationen.“ Jeder Themenbereich wird durch jeweils relevante sozio-historische Kontexte eingeführt, wobei das zweite Kapitel zur „Frauenfrage“ grundlegende (hetero)normative Begrifflichkeiten, Ideologien und weibliche (Mittelschichts-) Ideale, wie etwa die der *separate spheres*, *true womanhood*, Ehe und Mutterschaft, *self-possession*, das „natürliche“ Wesen der Frau oder die häusliche Ideologie darlegt. Dieses Kapitel bietet eine hervorragende Einführung in die wesentlichen kultur- und ideengeschichtlichen Kontexte und die prägenden Diskurse zur Identitäts- und Subjektivitätsbildung weißer Frauen der Mittelschicht in der amerikanischen Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts. Es zeigt auf womit bzw. wogegen sich Autorinnen wie Adeline D.T. Whitney, Elizabeth Stoddard, Louisa May Alcott, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, oder Kate Chopin arrangieren und behaupten müssen und welches Risiko ihre literarische Auseinandersetzung mit den sozialen Idealen und Ideologien mit sich bringt, nämlich ein gefährliches Oszillieren zwischen Selbstermächtigung und Selbstausslöschung. Schon dieses erste Interpretationskapitel („Zwischen Ohnmacht und Ermächtigung: Die ‚Frauenfrage‘ im Roman“) präsentiert eine eindrucksvolle literarische Bandbreite hinsichtlich sozialer Erziehung und gesellschaftlicher Erwartungshaltung in Bezug auf

das weibliche Ideal der *true woman* vor und nach der Eheschließung. Alle Romane der hier ausgewählten Schriftstellerinnen zeugen von den gravierenden körperlichen wie seelischen Verletzungen, welche diese Idealvorstellung den jungen (Ehe)Frauen zufügt, wobei die Bewältigungsstrategien variieren: sprachlose Annahme in Whitneys *Hitherto* findet sich neben expliziter Rebellion in Stoddards *The Morgesons*; Auflehnung gefolgt von Selbstaufgabe sowie Auflehnung gefolgt von persönlicher Entfaltung stehen sich in Alcotts früher und später Version von *Moods* gegenüber; das Leiden und Warten auf die erlösende Emanzipation durch die Nachfolgegeneration in Phelps' *The Story of Avis* kontrastiert mit dem Freitod als „konsequenter Akt der Selbstautorisierung“ (182) in Chopins *The Awakening*.

Das dritte Kapitel („Arbeit, Arbeiterin und Sozialreformerin: Literarische Reflexion wirtschaftlichen Wandels“) analysiert Rebecca Harding Davis' *Life in the Iron Mills* und ihren wenig bekannten Roman *Margret Howth*, Alcotts *Work*, Phelps' *The Silent Partner* und Mary Wilkins Freemans *The Portions of Labor* unter dem Aspekt der Repräsentation von Arbeit und der Figur der Arbeiterin. Mit diesem Kapitel liefert Matter-Seibel einen wichtigen Beitrag zu dem noch nicht hinreichend erforschten Themenkomplex Gender, Arbeit, und Industrialisierung in Frauenromanen. Allerdings übersieht sie Eva Bösenbergs *Money and Gender in the American Novel, 1850–2000* (2010), eine einschlägige Untersuchung über Ökonomie und Genderdiskurs, die schon allein deshalb hätte erwähnt werden sollen, da sie auf methodische Schwächen der Fokussierung auf die Gattung des sentimental Romans aufmerksam macht (z.B. durch eine differenzierte neo-marxistische Herangehensweise und die auf Pierre Bourdieu zurückgreifende Unterscheidung verschiedener Formen von Kapital). Gleichwohl gestattet dieses Kapitel relevante Einblicke in derzeitige Forschungsinteressen, wie z. B. den Posthumanismus, eine neue Dinglichkeit im Zeitalter der Algorithmen, oder die Kritik an einem die sozialen Werte und die Demokratie verdrängenden neoliberalen Kapitalismus: während Davis und Phelps beklagen, dass der Mensch im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung immer mehr zur Maschine wird und die Maschinen immer menschenähnlicher, entwirft Alcott eine weibliche Utopie, in der Arbeit „ein Schritt auf dem Weg zu einem erfüllten

Leben“ (274) ist; und Freeman lässt ihre Protagonistin ihre menschliche Würde allererst durch Arbeit realisieren. Dringen bei Davis und Phelps Kommerz und Profit auf schädliche Art und Weise in alle Lebensbereiche ein, gewährt Arbeit den Protagonistinnen von Alcott und Freeman Selbstvertrauen und Selbstbestimmtheit. Dennoch versehrt auch die Arbeit – wie das Ideal der *true woman* – den weiblichen Körper und Geist. Besonders die Frauenkörper der armen Arbeiterklasse sind durch vielfältige Gebrechen markiert, mitunter auch pathologisiert. Erschwerend kommt hinzu, dass Aufstiegschancen und Privilegien an Männlichkeit und Klasse, vor allem aber an Hautfarbe (*race*) und ethnische Zugehörigkeit gekoppelt sind. Trotz aller Kritik an Ungleichverteilung, Ausbeutung und den menschenunwürdigen Arbeitsbedingungen bleiben diese Autorinnen letztlich den Werten und Privilegien der Mittelschicht verpflichtet und meiden den revolutionären Arbeitskampf.

Das vierte Kapitel („Moralische Instanz im Staatshaushalt: Die Literatur der Fürsprache“) und das fünfte Kapitel („Afroamerikanische Variationen“) fallen kürzer aus, entfalten aber mit ihren Genderperspektiven auf *race* einen besonders spannenden Dialog, der anschaulich die aktive politische Partizipation dieser Autorinnen am Zeitgeschehen aufzeigt und damit auch die Gratwanderung zwischen Transgression und Einhaltung der Ideologie der getrennten Sphären, die mit ihrem Schreiben verbunden ist. Matter-Seibels ausführliche Beschäftigung mit Harriet Beecher Stowes *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ist insofern ertragreich, als die sorgfältig herausgearbeiteten rezeptionsästhetischen Strategien eindrucksvoll verdeutlichen, dass der Autorin das Hantieren mit dem sentimental Genre – insbesondere die Narrativen von Mutterschaft in einer patriarchalischen Utopie – erlaubt, den zentralen Gründungsmythos von Amerika als dem auserwählten Volk Gottes gleichermaßen hochzuhalten und umzuschreiben. Von Stowes programmatischer sentimentaler Typologie setzen sich Lydia Maria Childs *A Romance of the Republic* und Helen Hunt Jacksons *Ramona* als radikalere Plädoyers für Integration und Interkulturalität ab, wobei sie jedoch ebenso wenig wie Stowe von den (Rassen)Ideologien und Werten der weißen Mittelschicht abweichen.

Auch die afroamerikanischen Autorinnen Harriet Jacobs, Harriet E. Wilson, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper und Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins ringen mit den weißen Mittelschichts-

werten: Jacobs in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* weit mehr als Wilson in *Our Nig*, während Harper in *Iola Leroy* und Hopkins in *Contending Forces* wiederum mehr Zugeständnisse an den weißen Teil der Leserschaft machen als Wilson. Dennoch legen alle Autorinnen wichtige Grundsteine für eine *race literature*, indem sie sich klar zu ihrer afroamerikanischen Identität bekennen. Stehen bei Jacobs und Wilson die körperlich-sexuellen und die damit verbundenen psychologischen Misshandlungen ihrer Protagonistinnen im Zentrum des Geschehens, unterstreichen Harper und Hopkins die emanzipatorischen und korrekativen Aspekte von Ehe, Mutterschaft und Familienverbund. Dabei bedienen sich letztere einer anti-patriarchalen, dennoch aber nationalen „Missionierungs- und Zivilisationsrhetorik“ (541).

Es wäre wünschenswert, wenn Matter-Seibels Studie *Contending Forces* die ihr gebührende Aufmerksamkeit in Forschung und Lehre auch jenseits der deutschen Amerikanistik erlangte. Trotz der Breite der Studie sehe ich sie als Teil einer umfangreicheren

Forschungsarbeit, die insbesondere unter Einbeziehung der literarischen Vorgängerinnen weiter geführt werden sollte, sodass die in den einschlägigen amerikanischen Darstellungen von Susan K. Harris (*Nineteenth-Century American Women's Novels*, 1990), Dorri Beam (*Style, Gender, and Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing*, 2010) und Shirley Samuels (*Sentimentalism and Domestic Fiction*, 2012), sowie in den hierzulande etwa von Susanne Opfermann (*Diskurs, Geschlecht und Literatur*, 1996) und Barbara Buchenau (*Der frühe amerikanische historische Roman im transatlantischen Vergleich*, 2002) vorgelegten Erkenntnissen im Hinblick auf die Dialogizität der weiblichen Romantradition vervollständigt werden könnten. Es gilt nämlich noch immer, dass die intellektuellen und ästhetischen Leistungen der amerikanischen Autorinnen des 19. Jahrhunderts nicht adäquat gewürdigt werden – gerade im sentimental Genre.

Oldenburg

Michaela Keck

KRISTEN CASE, *American Pragmatism and Poetic Practice: Crosscurrents from Emerson to Susan Howe* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), xv + 160 pp.

In her study of “the seeds” (xi and xii) and “the echoes of pragmatist thinking” (xiii) in American poetry, Kristen Case traces parallels in the ways that a number of pragmatist thinkers and five famous American poets have understood the relationship between writing and reality (the “picture of mind and world” xiv). Over the course of six chapters, she relates the thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson, William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, and Henry David Thoreau to poetic texts by Marianne Moore, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Charles Olson, and Susan Howe. Thereby, in texts from pragmatism’s (pre)history to contemporary poetic production, she traces “a particular epistemology [...] in which mind and world are understood as inseparable, and the human being is regarded as, in Thoreau’s terms [in his essay “Walking”], ‘an inhabitant, or part and parcel of Nature’” (Case xi).

Case is by no means the first scholar to devote attention to the nexus between pragmatism and poetry. As she duly notes, Richard Poirier’s *Poetry and Pragmatism* (1992), Jonathan Levin’s *The Poetics of Transition: Emerson, Pragmatism and Literary Modernism* (1999), and Joan Richardson’s more recent *A Natural History of Pragmatism: The Fact of Feeling from Jonathan Edwards to Gertrude Stein* (2007) are important explorations of the subject. *American Pragmatism and Poetic Practice* builds on the groundwork laid by these and comparable studies and fills in some of their gaps by including “philosophers who have received less attention from literary critics (Dewey, Peirce, and Thoreau) and poets who are not generally considered among the inheritors of this tradition (Moore, Olson, and Howe)” (xi).

The first chapter functions as an introduction to the subsequent analyses and presents an ingenious study of starting points of pragmatist thought in Matthew 7:16-20:

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the

fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Titled “‘By Their Fruits’: Words and Action in American Writing” (1–20), the chapter traces metamorphoses of the biblical metaphor over the course of more than 170 years. Case introduces basic tenets of pragmatism by following the emergence of a philosophical “turn to practice (variously defined) as the locus of meaning” from Jonathan Edwards to Emerson and from Peirce to Dewey. Her discussion culminates in a reading of Frost’s poetic play upon the importance of “action” (15) in “After Apple Picking” (15ff.). Case concedes that Frost “does not quote the verse” but argues not only that he was “familiar” with it, but that “the poem’s thematic content, as well as its central image, seem to point to it” (15, emphasis added). If the connection between Frost’s poem and Matthew 7:16-20 seems, indeed, a little far-fetched, the connection between the poet’s writings and pragmatist thought becomes clear in chapter three through further substantiation of the links between Frost and Peirce.

Each of the five chapters that follow pair one philosopher with one poet and highlight how both writers tackle and redefine a traditional philosophical problem in pragmatist terms. Chapter two (21–42) is devoted to Emerson’s and Moore’s “dismantl[ing] of real and ideal” (39). Chapter three (43–70), by far the longest and most interesting part of the study, discusses Frost’s and Peirce’s take on the dualism of chaos and order (54), of evolution and design (59). Chapter four investigates the collapse of the subject-object dichotomy in the works of Dewey and Williams (71–94). The fifth chapter looks at “Henry Thoreau, Charles Olson, and the Poetics of Place” and pays particular attention to the relation between subject and environment (95–122). The sixth and final chapter takes the study into contemporary times and poetry by “explor[ing] William James’s concept of relation as it is embodied in the work of Susan Howe” (xi).

Case repeatedly and convincingly demonstrates that the poets are by no means less advanced in their discursive grasp of what traditionally has been rendered the realm of philosophy. As in the case of William Carlos Williams and John Dewey, poets are frequently shown to be taking “the [philosophical] premise a step farther” (85) or “enact[ing] the [philosophical] connection between self and world” (86) that the philosophers can only describe.

Nonetheless, Case's readings leave the reader with a number of methodological questions. The most important of them concerns the rationale behind the choice of particular philosophers and authors or specific concepts that often seem merely coincidental. Of course, the choice of one author over another is always debatable, but why, for instance, must Howe's link to pragmatism be subsumed predominantly under Jamesian thought? Apart from the question of whether Howe's idea of history might have been shaped by influences that far exceed pragmatism, it is peculiar that even the (very short) discussion of Howe's *Pierce-Arrow*, the poet's homage to Peirce, leads Case to the conclusion that it "illustrates the *Jamesian* insight that histories are always made" (130, emphasis added).

A related question bears upon the status or role of Ludwig Wittgenstein in Case's study. Given that his relation to pragmatism is ambiguous at best⁵ and that he is not American, references to his concepts ("family resemblance," "language games," "literary texts [...] as forms of life," Case 2, 81, 93) should have been based in a thorough discussion of their applicability within the pragmatist context and, at least, have had some analytical impact

on the study. Unfortunately, just as the quotation of his famous dictum that "philosophy ought really to be written only as a *form of poetry*" (Case 72, emphasis in orig.), the concepts of the Austrian philosopher—randomly taken out of the context of his language philosophy—serve only as illustrations of what could have been argued without them.

In addition, Case's effort "to enact [...] a pragmatist conception of knowledge" by including reports on "several important facts that pressed upon [her] experience" in the time of writing her book (xv) remains superficial. The personal anecdotes and musings about motherhood or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may be entertaining, but, unlike Susan Howe's poetic historiographies or Stephen Muecke's ficitocriticism, they do not add to the knowledge the book intends to enhance.

Thus, while Case does not succeed in writing literary criticism "as a *form of poetry*" (or of pragmatism, for that matter), her close readings of texts by American poets and pragmatists further illuminate important connections between American pragmatism and poetic practice.

Bochum

Kornelia Freitag

⁵ Judy Hensley, "Who's Calling Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?" *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 4.2 (2012). Symposia: "Wittgenstein and Pragmatism." Web. 24.10.2015.

BABETTE BÄRBEL TISCHLEDER, *The Literary Life of Things. Case Studies in American Fiction* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2014), 292 pp.

Of the current scholarship driving the material turn in literary studies, Babette Tischleder's *The Literary Life of Things* is a major contribution to critical efforts intent on disentangling the complicated relationship between American fiction and material culture. Using a dual narrative trajectory, the study not only expands current theories informing thing studies and material culture but demonstrates the pervasiveness with which object-oriented ontologies informed American fiction from the mid-nineteenth- to the twenty-first century.

In the first trajectory, the introduction offers a précis of current criticism discussing what is at stake when we as humans claim that the very things that are not human impact our lives but also have a life of their own. In a refreshing move that foregrounds the semantics of "life" over that of "things," Tischleder calls attention to the psychological implications that inform the fictional representation of subject/object relationships as they unfold in both space and time. Positioned this way, the study takes measure of the mostly Marxist driven field of thing theories and their various object-centered arguments. Moving deftly from Arjan Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff's take on commodification and the social life of things to Marcel Mauss and John Frow's competing notions of gift economies, the author's argument for the importance of matter's agency is motivated by two thinkers in particular.

On the one hand, *The Literary Life of Things* gains much of its momentum from Bruno Latour's almost giddy praise of literary studies in *Reassembling the Social* (2005), where he argues that unlike empirical data, literature provides a "freer" environment for exploring material life. On the other hand, Tischleder also takes a page from Hannah Arendt's classic *The Human Condition* (1958) and its postulation that the tangibility of experience is a key feature of world-making just as the material process of reification is crucial for turning actions into the stuff of future memories. Calling on an array of theorists, ranging from D. W. Winnicott to Gaston Bachelard to Pierre Bourdieu, the book asks readers not only to find new ways that include nonhuman objects into our interpretive calculus of knowledge production but to consider

the question of how fiction enables objects to come alive *in* rather than *around* us.

The study's second trajectory consists of five case studies in which the author puts her working questions into action by tracking the nexus between the human and the material in select works of American fiction. The application of contextual sources and interdisciplinary methodologies cannot hide the influence of Bill Brown's seminal study of late nineteenth- and early twentieth century fiction. Similar to his *The Sense of Things* (2000), Tischleder also provides an interpretive tool kit that ranges widely from historical phenomenology and post-structural semiology to post-capitalist sociology and traditional cultural history. However, when it comes to actual fiction, *The Literary Life of Things* takes a more sweeping view, examining narrative articulations of the human-thing nexus during the periods *preceding* and *following* the era of high industrialism and intense commodification. By exploring the literary consciousness of material life from post-Civil War to post-modern fiction, Tischleder productively puts scholarship from the 1980s and 1990s into dialogue with current debates about New Materialism. In so doing, the book is able to make a compelling case for its perhaps most important but easily overlooked argument: American fiction is not only permeated with staged objects that have a life of their own, it has quite self-consciously been so long before the emergence of an interpretive language for addressing this phenomenon.

Using fiction by Harriet Beecher Stowe, the first chapter charts the strategic deployment of decommodified objects during the era of conspicuous consumption. Setting aside the much-debated object narrative of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Tischleder concentrates on stories and essays collected in Stowe's *House and Home Papers* (1864). In particular, the story "The Ravages of a Carpet" provides the anchor for revisiting older arguments about the dangerous allure of commodity culture in which the sin of material consumption tends to be pitted against the guiltless pleasure of owning well-used goods. The author sides with the assessment that Stowe eschews a critique of capitalism in favor of the pre-Civil War ideology of sentimental domesticity. But whereas earlier criticism demonstrated how material culture caused the commercialization of both family life and inner selfhood, Tischleder affords material possessions a more therapeutic func-

tion. Stowe's writings envision domestic environments in which people and things not only cohabitate, but where objects help produce an ecological balance between the demands for domestic order and the characters' emotional state. Tischleder attributes much of this balance to the way in which the objects' "patina" mediates different life experiences. The simultaneous accretion of personal and material experience transforms objects into affective sources shaping a social order centered on the family unit rather than the mechanics of the marketplace.

According to the second and third chapters, however, the mid-century faith in de-commodified objects was called into question by short stories such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) and novels like Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905). Intent on exposing the limits of Stowe's domestic animism, Gilman's characterization of wallpaper renders objects as things among things. What in Stowe were once therapeutic artifacts providing intimacy and social harmony become in Gilman tyrannical things that, through their simple unmotivated existence inside domestic settings, split the subject from the object. Experiencing the home as a form of total objecthood, Gilman's character has no choice but to resign herself to becoming one more thing inside the home's material continuum of things.

Similarly, Wharton's novel explores realist and naturalist fiction depicting the psychological predicament of an object-oriented subjectivity set adrift by the surplus experience of objects. By concentrating on the use of sensory perception, in particular "scent," Tischleder posits Wharton's characters as composite selves, mutually constituted as subject and object, whose sense of selfhood is ultimately predicated on aesthetic experiences. Drawing on Bourdieu's discussion of "taste," the chapter shows how the habits of "aesthetic competence" come to dominate the physical experience of the material world. In contrast to the traditional rules of "good taste" according to which objects became subordinated to the subjectivity of the beholder, Tischleder's astute assessment reveals the rise of a parallel material universe governed by the rules of distaste. By examining the olfactory experience of "scent" as the last vestige of material memory, she shows how in Wharton's fiction objects operate in diverging patterns, providing, on the one hand, a key to self-reflection

and conduit for intimacy, while, on the other, stimulating the senses to the point where characters lose the capacity to feel.

Chapters four and five—my favorite chapters—take the book's inquiry into subject-object relationships into the fiction of Vladimir Nabokov and Jonathan Franzen. In a narrative leap that jumps historical scales of production and consumption, not to mention a multitude of global crises spanning two world wars and the acceleration of environmental degradation, the book turns to questions of how we imagine our relationship to objects that refuse to cooperate or, through no fault of their own, have become useless. Turning to Nabokov's novel *Pnin* (1957), Tischleder examines the "recalcitrance" of things by interrogating traditional literary assumptions about human relationships that privilege the bond between people rather than those we maintain with inanimate objects. Through the figure of Pnin (and via a detour into Buster Keaton's silent movies), readers discover an artifactual America in which unruly objects, like cars, gadgets, and appliances, not only have agency but can easily turn into malicious matter. For the Russian immigrant, Pnin, who already experiences himself as a foreign body, the unpredictable agency of things simultaneously disciplines human relationships and has the capacity for serving as the touchstone of self-definition.

By contrast, Tischleder argues that through representations of "obsolescence," Franzen's novel *The Corrections* (2001) deconstructs the notion that objects ought to operate along the lines of serviceability. Portraying a subject afflicted with Parkinson's disease, the novel's objects become the source of familiarity and comfort at the same time as the protagonist's human relationships begin to disintegrate. As the literary life of things fails to intersect with the literary life of the subject, the critical awareness of material obsolescence changes the biography of things into a mere paratext. Tischleder shows how through the literary use of "thopography" (the art of still life painting) Franzen is able to critique the realist tradition and its faith in the documentary function of objects. While the characters' dependency on the material world make them face their own objecthood, postmodern fiction also recognizes that even in the age of obsolescence both our psychological life and social identity are bound up with physical matter.

The Literary Life of Things is an intense and rewarding read, even if at times its desire for complexity interferes with its many wonderful insights. Its explanations of how fiction makes things come alive might cause some specialists to quibble with particular close-readings, and the omission of addressing the actual materiality of things from Stowe's Brussel carpet to Franzen's upholstered armchair will strike students of ma-

terial culture as a missed opportunity. That said, the book on the whole offers new perspectives for reexamining key paradigms of thing theory and object-oriented ontology. By dint of its critical acumen and comprehensive range, this book will be at the center of future discussions addressing things in American literature.

University of Delaware, Martin Brückner

GARY SCHARNHORST ED, *Twain in His Own Time* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2010). 348 pp.

The anthology *Twain in His Own Time* is the first volume of a series called *Writers in Their Own Time* edited by the eminent scholar Joel Myerson. The series has so far anthologized the memories of the contemporaries of sixteen American authors—among them Frederick Douglass, Emily Dickinson and Abraham Lincoln. According to Myerson, the goal of the series is to foster a holistic understanding of “the lives of American writers” by “[p]roviding the best first-hand accounts—published and unpublished, adulatory and critical—written by both famous and forgotten contemporaries.”¹ Gary Scharnhorst, the editor of *Twain in His Own Time*, is a distinguished scholar of American Studies at the University of New Mexico and a leading Twain scholar, who has published four volumes about the prominent American writer. Among these publications is an authoritative collection of Twain’s interviews that was printed by the University of Alabama Press in 2006. *Twain in His Own Time* features an introduction by Gary Scharnhorst, a detailed chronology of Twain’s life and a bibliography as well as an index. The heart of the anthology is the ninety-four anecdotes that contemporaries of Twain remembered about their encounters with the American writer.

The memories span over a time of several decades and are organized chronologically. They voice the recollections of such gravitational figures of Twain’s life like his mother, his daughters, fellow pilots of the Mississippi River, his illustrators E. M. Kemble and Dan Beard, as well as politicians and coeval literary figures. The lengths of the memories range from one to six pages. For every recollection, Scharnhorst provides a short introduction, which situates the anecdote in the fitting historical moment of Twain’s life.

With the anthology *Twain in His Own Time*, Scharnhorst wants to cut through the veil of Mark Twain’s carefully constructed public persona. Like almost every successful artist, Twain was a marketing genius and meticulously controlled the materialization of his artistic self. Scharnhorst postulates that the selected ninety-four recollections of Twain’s contem-

poraries pierce through his public mask. He argues that the assembled voices of diverse contemporaries will enable readers to see Mark Twain in a new, much more sophisticated light. He states further that this collaborative biographical method will capture the complex personality of Mark Twain in a way no single biography can. The mosaic pictures that the diverse anecdotes provide expand the limited perception of any biographer. In this sense, one of the implicit goals of the anthology *Twain in His Own Time*, as well as the series *Writers in Their Own Time*, is the further development of impressionistic representations of significant American lives. This kind of kaleidoscopic arrangement enables audiences to attain at least three insights. Firstly, readers understand the growth of Twain’s public persona. Secondly, they realize the relationship between observer and observed, since the light and atmosphere change with every page. And thirdly, audiences are invited to construct their own impressions of Mark Twain from firsthand accounts. *Twain in His Own Time* as well as the larger series thus conforms to recent approaches in biography scholarship.

The anthology *Twain in His Own Time* presents a fractured, but professionally edited montage of Mark Twain’s persona. Contained in this progressive scholarship is diligent archival research, which makes rare primary sources available. Many of the sketches about Twain derive from personal notebooks, local newspaper interviews, and letters, and thus offer an original biography of Mark Twain which is not an easy task to accomplish. There are countless biographies about the American writer that focus on such diverse aspects as his family, his travels, his entrepreneurship, his bachelor years, his boyhood, his courtship and his final years. Gary Scharnhorst liberates Mark Twain from all these focal points with his anthology *Twain in His Own Time*.

Yet, Scharnhorst could have edited a much more inclusive and transnational picture of Mark Twain. Leading scholars in the field of American Studies have argued for a canonical turn.² However, Scharnhorst does not

² Boelhower, William Q, and Alfred Hornung. *Multiculturalism and the American Self*. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2000. Print. Hornung, Alfred. “The Birth of a Multicultural Nation: Horace M. Kallen’s Cultural Pluralism.” *Transatlantic Encounters: Studies in European-American Relations*. Ed. Udo

¹ Myerson, Joel. *Writers in Their Own Time*. Web. 10.08.2015. <http://www.uiowapress.org/content/writers-their-own-time>

include any marginalized voices of African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans or Latino/as in the anthology. It is hard to imagine that there are no responses from these groups when it comes to such a provocative figure. Despite the fact that it may be very difficult to locate these recollections, Scharnhorst could have addressed possible problems in his introductory remarks. Shelley Fisher Fishkin, another distinguished Twain scholar, convincingly called for a transnational turn in American Studies in 2004 and contextualizes Twain in the transnational setting in which he belongs by presenting international voices of fellow artists.³ As much as Mark Twain is an American icon,

he is also a transnational persona. His restlessness carried him all over Europe, as well as Australia, New Zealand, India, Mauritius, South Africa and China to name just a few of his stops.⁴ Unfortunately, Scharnhorst does not engage with transnational recollections, but largely favors American voices in the anthology. In conclusion, *Twain in His Own Time* offers a fresh picture of Mark Twain as well as an original approach to the genre of biography. However, Scharnhorst had the chance to edit an inclusive and transnational portrayal of Mark Twain, but unfortunately did not realize this potential.

Mainz

Christoph Lanzen

J. Hebel, Karl Ortseifen. Trier: WVT, 1995. 347–358. Hornung, Alfred. “Unstoppable Creolization: The Evolution of the South into a Transnational Cultural Space.” *The Global South. Special Issue of American Literature* 78.4 (2006): 859–867.

³ Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. “Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies.” *American Quarterly* 57.1 (2005): 17–57. Fishkin, Shelley F. *The Mark Twain Anthology: Great Writers on His Life and Works*. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2010. Print.

⁴ Please consider the informative book by Charles Neider for further information on Twain’s travels and in particular Selina Lai-Henderson’s study for Twain’s visits of China. Neider, Charles. *The Travels of Mark Twain*. New York: Square Press, 1961. Print. Lai-Henderson, Selina. *Mark Twain in China*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2015. Print.

JAMES NAGEL, *Race and Culture in New Orleans Stories: Kate Chopin, Grace King, Alice Dunbar-Nelson & George Washington Cable* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014), 208 pp.

James Nagel, a prolific scholar with many books on nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction to his credit, among them a monograph on contemporary short story cycles, has turned his attention to collections of short stories published in the Deep South between the late 1870s and 1900. Focusing on four collections of stories reflecting the very complex social reality of New Orleans, he provides close readings of more than fifty stories by one male and three women writers. Their fiction, in complementary fashion, captures the unique blend of ethnic and linguistic diversity shaping this city and its hinterland in Louisiana.

His analyses of the first story cycles of George Washington Cable, Grace King, Kate Chopin and the early New Orleans story circle of Alice Dunbar-Nelson are preceded by a detailed explication of the historical context, with special emphasis on the social regulations concerning racial divides and conventional arrangements like *plaçage*, which fostered the originally frequent disregard of these barriers in the rigid social caste system there. Nagel explains how the *Code Noir* observed in the French colony remained in effect under American rule and persisted after 1865 when the racial stratification was disregarded and collapsed into two classes even prior to the adoption of the Jim Crow laws. Nagel also clarifies the different uses of the ambiguous term “Creole” in nineteenth-century texts, referring either to the descendants of French and Spanish colonials or to “Creoles of color,” and provides many instructive comments on and corrections of readings by earlier interpreters (of the stories by the four writers) which have overlooked specific social conventions.

One of his primary concerns seems to be to demonstrate the cohesion of the four volumes chosen, and his argument for each book thus includes observations on the recurrence of types and characters, of constellations of figures and their preoccupations, on themes and motifs, and the functional use of the perspective of characters in whom the individual authors are primarily interested. In his appreciation of the narrative art of the four writers, Nagel illuminates the problems and often tragic consequences of social restrictions, in-

cluding the prohibition of interracial relationships in the most private sphere of life.

The sequence of the names of the authors in the subtitle of the book does not correspond to the order in which they are treated, as Nagel first considers *Old Creole Days*, Cable’s first collection, which apparently “initiated the use of the Crescent City as a subject for cyclic stories” (18). Nagel shows how the reformist impulse in this outsider (who was of German descent and a Presbyterian) in the “French Catholic city” shapes his ambivalent attitude to and interest in the fading white Creole aristocracy of the region. Their weaknesses and the problematic social practices conditioning the lives of quadroons and their offspring are exposed in his fiction and engender some moving narratives and tragic romances (“Madame Delphine,” “Belles Demoiselles Plantation”) but also trigger generational conflicts caused by the retrograde conservatism of (Francophone) Creoles, which are occasionally resolved by ingenious ladies (“Madame Délicieuse”).

Cable’s critical perspective on Creole customs (tempered at times by deep respect as in “Jean-ah Pocquelin”) prompted a counter-narrative in Grace King’s fictional defense of the scions of the former owners of the land, marginalized by the “push for progress” and the efficiency of “les Américains” and later impoverished by the events of the Civil War. In *Balcony Stories*, King brings out the resignation and pathetic fate especially of women from this social class, some of whom, however, show remarkable strength in coping with the trauma of defeat and deprivation (“La Grande Demoiselle” or “One of Us”). Nagel suggests that at times, King’s narratives reflect nostalgic feelings for the antebellum by showing that former slaves in the bayou country evince deep devotion to their masters (cf., “Monsieur Motte”). But here and elsewhere, Nagel’s readings are enriched by his close analysis of the psychology of the characters who often develop and mature as a result of the challenges and crises they live through. He highlights subtle shifts of perspective in the individual stories, bringing out ironic or tragic effects, and stresses the depth the four authors give to their characters (who are involved in deep emotional conflicts).

He thus argues for and certainly contributes to a reevaluation of an art of fiction that is not done justice to by being dismissed as “local color” writing. In their depiction of society, its practitioners deliberately attempted

and achieved a realism not attained by earlier authors. This was partly the result of their effective use of various linguistic registers: urbane English often replaces the French used by the Creoles; in many stories this is blended with the broad dialect of the Cajuns, or the idioms of the Creoles of color and African Americans in the region.

The latter two groups are in the foreground in Alice Dunbar-Nelson's stories in *The Goodness of St. Roque and Other Stories*. Like her novels, these have lately, since Gloria T. Hull's 1988 edition of the works of the author, attracted more attention (cf., a recent essay in the *European Journal for American Studies*¹). The stories usually narrate the fortunes of members of Louisiana's community of Creoles of color, often including poverty, loss, renunciation and disillusionment, as well as the tragic desertion of a young quadroon by a socially superior lover (e.g., "Little Miss Sophie"). Some of Dunbar-Nelson's stories depict the lifestyle of affluent white Creoles, who regularly attend the French Opera House in New Orleans, and thus reflect the social stratification in the city. They often render the interethnic encounters between Creoles of color and arrivals from the Caribbean as well as members of other ethnic groups in the multicultural ambiance of New Orleans and illustrate the use of voodoo practices as love charms. It is here that a critical reader of Nagel's study may register an aspect of its culture which some recent scholarship in the New Southern Studies's vein has stressed more than Nagel does, namely the city's openness to the Caribbean, for instance, Owen Robinson in his consideration of New Orleans in Cable's short story cycle as a "City of Exiles."²

¹ Cf., Amy Doherty Mohr, "Down the River, Out to Sea: Mobility, Immobility, and Creole Identity in New Orleans Regionalist Fiction (1880-1910)," *Transnational Approaches to North American Regionalism*, ed. Florian Freitag and Kirsten A. Sandrock, Special Issue of *European Journal of American Studies* 9.3 (2014): 14 pp. Web. <http://ejas.revues.org/10368>.

² Cf., Owen Robinson, "City of Exiles: Unstable Narratives of New Orleans in George Washington Cable's *Old Creole Days*", *Transatlantic Exchanges: The American South in Europe—Europe in the American South*, eds. Richard Gray and Waldemar Zacharasiewicz (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 293–308.

Not surprisingly, Nagel dwells finally on the accomplishments of Kate Chopin in the genre of the short story, and in his concluding chapter pays tribute to her art of fiction expressed in brief sketches and diverse narratives. He shows how their author (writing in her native St. Louis, to which she had returned as a widow) captured the complex social and economic reality in Louisiana, with the subtle exploration of the lot of members of the former Creole aristocracy who had lost control of their plantations, as well as their public and private dilemmas. The interactions across ethnic borders through intimate relationships play a major role. Nagel naturally refers to Chopin's courage in some daring stories in which she explored the private sphere of courtship and love between Creoles, Creoles of color, Cajuns and 'Anglos.' While underlining Chopin's subtle mediation of the psychological and emotional growth of a number of characters and praising the aesthetic integrity of her fiction, Nagel supports the general appreciation of Chopin's accomplishment in conveying the tragic irony of Armand's myopic misjudgment in "Désirée's Baby."

In best academic fashion—which studies by other scholars nowadays sometimes eschew to their own detriment—Nagel draws on biographies and monographs by a large number of experts on the four writers and the genres they represent. He has benefitted from Arlin Turner, Louis Rubin and Alice Hall Petry in the case of Cable, from Helen Taylor or Robert Bush for Grace King. He disagrees with some claims by Gloria Hull in her reading of Dunbar-Nelson's narratives (90, 116) while acknowledging his debt to the doctoral thesis Mary Anne O'Neal submitted at his own university. He naturally relies on Per Seyersted, Emily Toth and Barbara Ewell in the case of Kate Chopin, and carefully engages in a discussion with their findings on the authors and their formative background. He repeatedly corrects misunderstandings (cf., his comments on p. 39 concerning Petry's monograph on Cable, even though he generally appreciates it for its many insights), and he refines readings of individual stories by other scholars provided in a large number of articles.³

³ Thadious Davis, *Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2011) would have deserved consideration but probably came too late for the current study.

In his highly readable text, which avoids jargon, Nagel principally uses the first editions of the collections as his basis, as he meticulously documents changes from the first appearance of the stories in the substantial endnotes. In a few cases, an attentive reader may come across some puzzling textual problem, as, for instance, is the case in Nagel's discussion of Kate Chopin's "In and Out of Old Natchitoches" in her first collection *Bayou Folk*. In the Penguin Classics reprint, the disclosure that Hector Santien is a disreputable gambler, which disqualifies him from being an eligible partner for beautiful Suzanne St. Denis Godolph, occurs not on the train as claimed (126), but earlier in the narrative.

In general, Nagel's analyses are persuasive if not always exhaustive and should make this study an eminently helpful guide for a closer look at what is not justifiably a less acknowledged fruit of late nineteenth-century American literary productivity. Nagel's study could also inspire a new look being taken in seminars and academic courses at the work of authors whose narrative skills flourished in this distinct sub-region of the Deep South during an era of severe challenges in the economic and social spheres in the decades after the Louisiana Purchase and especially after the Civil War.

Vienna

Waldemar Zacharasiewicz

MATTHEW STRATTON, *The Politics of Irony in American Modernism* (New York: Fordham UP, 2013), 304 pp.

We live in a post-ironic age, or so much contemporary criticism would have us believe. Ironically enough, however, as Matthew Stratton points out in *The Politics of Irony in American Modernism*, the discourse on the obsolescence and end of irony is hardly new. Its repeated pronouncement must be understood, he argues, as “recurrent symptoms of a chronic disease within the body politic” (3) that has seen irony invoked in lieu of the issues that are actually under debate. Stratton’s book argues that an analysis of the uses of the term “cast as much light upon the values of the user [...] as it does upon the object of the characterization” (8). *The Politics of Irony in American Modernism* is thus precisely about the question of what the various uses of the term irony really meant and which politics were mobilized or obscured through invoking it.

To speak about irony all too often involves exclusive definitions of irony, and indeed the study of modernist irony is no exception. A prime example of this may be Franco Moretti’s suggestion that though irony is an “indispensable component of any critical, democratic and progressive culture, its modernist version has a dark side with which we are not familiar enough.”¹ It is precisely these attempts to say what irony “had” or “was” that Stratton’s study counteracts by its insistence on reading irony in its specific usages. Modernism in Stratton’s reading is a “particularly influential period where ‘irony’ exploded as a term to describe features not only of life and art of the possibilities for aesthetics to orient the lives of social individuals toward political goals” (5). Stratton is not interested in defining the highly complex term “irony” and looking for it in modernist novels; rather, his—let it be said straight away, excellent—study traces the “particular ways in which writers in both canonical modernism and mass culture (with no particular divide adduced between them) used the term ‘irony’ to describe themselves, their texts, and their world” (10). The term irony is used, as Stratton points out, by different authors and critics in different ways for different ends, but in all of these individual manifestations of modern-

ist irony, “the concept [...] came to represent intersections between politics and aesthetic practices” (13). In other words, it is a form of mobilizing literature’s integral potential as a praxis “to bring about, affect, and effect the field of ‘the political’” (14).

Stratton’s four chapters span forty years from the 1910s to the 1950s. The first chapter, “The Eye in Irony,” reads the writings of cultural critics Randolph Bourne and Benjamin De Casseres through Friedrich Nietzsche. Irony, Stratton points out, served Bourne as “a central term for representing aesthetic-political action through intersecting contemporary discourses about photography, visuality, politics, and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche as it circulated in the early twentieth-century United States” (24). Bourne compares irony to photography’s acid bath, bringing “clearly to light all that was implicit” before (27), a conceit which reveals Bourne’s belief that irony functions to transmute the “photographic negative of the truth” to “re-value, trans-value, or de-value [...] received truths” (32-3). Delving into the contemporary pragmatist debate over facts and values, irony for Bourne and Nietzsche alike reveals the world as “the product of concept formation” rather than “unitary political or moral truth” (42) and gleans its power from this capacity of revelation. Stratton concludes this chapter with a comparative reading of De Casseres’s much more radical vision for irony and suggests that the two competing versions of irony highlight the way in which the paradoxes of democracy may be visualized.

The second chapter of *The Politics of Irony in American Modernism* examines Ellen Glasgow’s novels of the 1920s to show how “irony has not only a history but a gendered history that is inextricable from the politics of gender in literary modernism” (53). Stratton argues that Glasgow promoted “‘irony’ as the lens through which to read her fiction” (85) as well as a “means of advancing an explicitly feminist political ‘freedom’ by dislodging habits of reading and thinking” (88). Irony in Glasgow’s writings is both reception and production, a means of aesthetic judgment, which Stratton reads through Hegel and Kant. The basic message of the chapter is clear: fighting against a tradition that considered irony a dangerous tool for women, modernist women writers wielded it both successfully and critically. The details of the argument, however, are difficult to follow through Stratton’s various interjections of theoretical excursions.

¹ Moretti, Franco (1987). “The Spell of Indecision.” *New Left Review* 164 (1), July-August, 27-33, 28.

Stratton's book regains its stride in the third chapter, devoted to John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* trilogy. It expands Stratton's discussion of irony to take in Dos Passos's particular form of satire. Dos Passos, Stratton argues, "deploys satire as a mode of activist irony to educate readers' aesthetic sense of print, image, and text" (110). Dos Passos's experiments in form—the familiar camera eye, the newsreels, the multiple points of view and shifting narrative perspectives—"force readers to recognize the aesthetic conditions under which new means and ends of politics might be possible" (115). Activist politics can result from such literature because, as Stratton persuasively argues, political representation (for example) constitutes an aesthetic relationship between representative and constituent, and thereby is open to manipulation by "stimulat[ing] action [...] in the context of an aesthetic disposition of the world" (133). Satirical irony provides readers with the "visceral and emotional" (135) impact required to "instantiate aesthetically a new democratic order" (143).

Stratton's strongest chapter is the fourth and final one on Ralph Ellison. Suggesting that "it is [...] Ellison's invocation of irony that render the activist political aesthetics of *Invisible Man* both coherent and plausible" (145), Stratton interweaves a close reading of Ellison's novel with a discussion of Kenneth Burke's use of the term irony. Only reading "irony as a conceptual political schema," rather than merely treating "individual instances of irony," makes it possible to see *Invisible Man*'s engagement with problems of democratic law and justice. Irony in Ellison describes "the subjective process of recognizing and ameliorating" deplorable conditions of oppression (153). Fostering an "ironic disposition" in readers, Stratton argues, *Invisible Man* offers at least the potential to allow readers to conceive of their own valuations of contested political principles such as freedom and security (187).

The strength of the chapters on Ellison and Dos Passos derives from the clarity of their exposition, the strong close readings, and the suc-

cessful and neat integration of contemporaneous literary criticism and literary practice. This bears pointing out because the few weak points of this book exist exactly where clarity goes by the boards. Stratton's study is dense and often difficult, and the long chapters are sometimes a bit unwieldy for the reader. Some of this clearly is necessary simply because of the argument itself: if irony carries different meanings and uses for the authors Stratton discusses, and these different meanings are founded in readings of different kinds of philosophical precursors, the unraveling and re-braiding that Stratton undertakes inevitably becomes complex. Yet upon occasion, Stratton's style obscures an otherwise sound point: "'Irony' both describes and demonstrably produces agonistic recontesting of how aesthetic representations help constitute forms of democratic individualism; if irony uniquely describes the irreconcilable, incommensurable frictions and fictions of democracy, it does so only when the critical terrain of 'democracy' itself is allowed to be both pragmatic and antipragmatic, careful and wild, sympathetic and pitiless" (52).

Despite such minor lapses, however, *The Politics of Irony in American Modernism* is a necessary study for anybody interested in either the political rhetoric of American modernists, or more generally the ways in which we conceive of and study irony as a multifarious term today. Beyond the study of the individual authors discussed by Stratton, the value of this study lies in its approach of its central terms—irony and politics—on their own, and shifting, an approach that is inherently pragmatic. His insistence on seeing irony as a heuristic device, clearly foregrounded of course by modernist writers themselves but ultimately to be seen multifariously as encoding related, but by no means monolithic conceptions of political action, may also help us understand our own apparently post-ironic age, simply by insisting upon the question: what does irony mean *here*, and who is politically mobilized or demobilized by its invocation?

Mainz

Tim Lanzendörfer

BIRGIT M. BAURIDL, *Betwixt, Between, or Beyond? Negotiating Transformations from the Liminal Sphere of Contemporary Black Performance Poetry* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013), 326 pp.

Representing the “first study of contemporary black performance poetry from the viewpoint of transnational American Studies” (back cover), Birgit Bauridl’s *Betwixt, Between, or Beyond?* pursues two overall goals: first, the study intends to demonstrate “the significance of performance poetry for the American cultural landscape” by discussing it in the light of key issues, terms, and concepts arising from cultural studies, such as memory, identity, and the emergence of communities across national boundaries, including a transnational American Studies framework; second, it aims to illuminate the reciprocal advantages of employing ideas from performance studies and transnational American Studies to understand performance poetry (273). Bauridl’s approach of viewing performance poetry through the double-lens of performative studies and transnational American studies, on the one hand, and her use of performance poetry as a platform to negotiate various ideas and concepts relevant to performance poetry, on the other hand, give it due critical weight to performance poetry and also show her extensive and detailed knowledge of theories and performance poetry as well as their respective historical developments.

The first chapter, “Taking Notes: Roots, Perspectives, and Goals,” serves as a general introduction to her following chapters and covers a lot of ground. It touches upon diverse issues such as her definition of the term “contemporary performance poetry,” her quest for ‘material’ in rural and urban America and the difficulties of establishing a corpus of performance poetry, a short history of performance poetry (here: slam poetry) from its emergence in the 1980s to the present, and the ‘transnational turn’ in American Studies. Having established the necessity of looking at “contemporary black performance poetry from the vista point of the transnational” (49) and defining “the transnational” as a “category of analysis” (49), Bauridl moves on to discuss and adapt concepts from performance studies to the needs of performance poetry, especially the concept of liminality.

The second chapter, “Rehearsal: Fine-Tuning the Concept,” first provides the readers with an overview of the multifaceted ‘discipline’ of

performance studies, its emergence, the major figures and their theories, and important critical debates. It then presents a heterogeneous group of concepts that are relevant to her discussion of performance poetry, including Erika Fischer-Lichte’s concept of *Aufführung*, and the concepts of ritual, liminality, and social drama, which were primarily developed by Victor Turner and Richard Schechner. “Fine-tuning” these concepts to fit performance poetry in the subchapter entitled “Approaching Performance Poetry,” she argues, for instance, that performance poetry displays characteristics of the ritual and, most importantly, occurs in a liminal space and, in spatial and temporal terms, is “between” (99). It is this thesis that informs the subsequent analyses.

In chapter three, “Re-Connect! Performing a Trip Down Memory Lane,” Bauridl focuses on the concept of memory and asserts that “performance poetry as an art form becomes a site of memory for black/African American culture, more particularly, the oral tradition” (122). She illustrates her assertion with several examples that manifest direct or indirect references to the black oral tradition (e.g., the blues tradition, the call-and-response pattern, and the tradition of storytelling): Patricia Smith’s poem “Life Memories” collected in *Life According to Motown* (1991), for instance, plays with the typical AAB-Blues structure (“Saying I never want to leave my memories/Saying I never want to leave my memories/Saying I never want my memories to leave/me,” 139), and Daniel Beaty’s “The Bones They Breathe,” a multimedia performance about the Middle Passage, reconnects the past with the present, serving as a reminder of the terrible history of slavery (153). According to Bauridl, it is the liminal space of performance poetry that allows black poets to “perform memory” in order to affirm African American culture and simultaneously contest dominant national narratives.

Chapter four, entitled “Fragile Connections? Performing America(ns),” explores the ways in which the liminal space of performance poetry enables poets to negotiate, challenge, and transform (national) identities. After a brief overview of criticism on the constructedness of identity, Bauridl discusses selected works by poets with migratory backgrounds, such as Bassef Ikpi from Nigeria, Lynne Procope from Trinidad, and Staceyann Chin from Jamaica, whose poems often use autobiographical details to express an

identity that occupies a place inbetween two cultures (see, for example, Bauridl's analysis of Ikpi's poem "Homeward," 172). She then draws attention to contemporary black poets who identify with the core American ideas and ideals and also "critically engage with the US nation and with what is considered Americanness" (183). A striking example is Jessica Care Moore's poem "Black Statue of Liberty" in which the Statue of Liberty is appropriated to challenge the racism in the United States and, at the same time, emphasize the values of freedom and liberty ("I am the walking, talking, surviving, breathing, beautiful/Black Statue of Liberty," 177).

In chapter five, "Transconnect! Performing Transcendences," Bauridl contends that the performance poetry's liminal realm allows for the formation of a community beyond national borders that still retains the notion of the Other:

What is transethnic, transcultural, or transnational about this community is its construction, its structure, and range, yet not the identity of members; neither is it the goal to dissolve any particularities. The community as it is imagined does not annihilate cultural, ethnic, or national difference, but appeals to what Bhaba [sic] calls 'the human culture of mankind.' (248)

Black contemporary poets like Staceyann Chin are not bound to the United States but perform all over the world and use global social networks to promote their work. They also cross cultural, ethnic, and/or national borders when they "perform for the Other," that is, when they turn "the poetry itself into a collective voice for those who are silenced in many ways" (226). In "Counting the Dead," for instance, which was written on January 12, 2009, and deals with Israeli attacks on Gaza, Chin regards it as her duty to give visibility to the histories of the Other in order to guarantee that they are not for-

gotten or marginalized by dominant narratives (230): "bodies from everywhere ... in our collective memory ... Sudan/Rwanda/Palestine/Dachau/Jamaica ... and 850 dead/in memory" (231). Rather than blending all the individual voices together, Chin reminds her audience of the existence of these distinct voices across the globe.

This brief summary suffices to demonstrate the explanatory power of Bauridl's approach to black contemporary performance poetry. At the same time, her use of performance poetry as a platform to negotiate a wealth of concepts and ideas draws special attention to the gap between the performative quality of performance poetry (e. g., slam poetry), which is typically composed for or spontaneously created during an oral performance in front of a live audience, and the numerous concepts and theories used to frame and analyze the poems. Bauridl seems to be acutely aware of the gap, which lies at the core of her study, and pursues the astute strategy of setting up her study as a tripartite slam performance: The first three chapters ("0 Prelude: Consulting the Muse"; "1 Taking Notes"; and "2 Rehearsal") prepare the author and readers for the following three written "performances" ("3 Reconnect! Performing a Trip Down Memory Lane"; "4 Fragile Connections? Performing America(ns)"; and "5 Transconnect! Performing Transcendences"). Like a performance poet, whose poetry is informed by personal experiences, Bauridl also interweaves her text with autobiographical details and becomes herself an academic performer on a literary stage. But even though her well-researched "performances" are unable to close the gap, they provide readers with valuable insights into a previously neglected subject and invite them to discover the fascinating world of black contemporary performance poetry—online or live.

Halle

Erik Redling

CHRISTINE MARKS, *"I Am because You Are": Relationality in the Works of Siri Hustvedt*, (Heidelberg: Winter, 2014), 234 pp.

In her study *"I Am because You Are": Relationality in the Works of Siri Hustvedt* (2014), Christine Marks analyzes Hustvedt's fictional and non-fictional works, including the latest novel *The Blazing World* (2014). Marks approaches Hustvedt's works with an intersubjective focus which presupposes that Hustvedt "finds intersubjectivity to be the basis for a healthy development of the self and scrutinizes the detrimental effects of American society's failure to promote relational identity formation" (2). Identity for Hustvedt, as Marks argues, is "relational, focusing on the interdependencies that shape identity and the physical connectedness between self and world" (3), thus she creates "relational models of identity" (3).

Marks's analysis of the relationship of self and other, that is, of the relationality of the characters in Siri Hustvedt's fiction, is based on an extensive discussion of relevant philosophical theories as put forward by, for example, Friedrich Hegel, Martin Buber, Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emanuel Levinas, Jacques Lacan, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Concepts such as the master-slave constellation, the mirror stage, the power of the gaze, and dialogism serve as starting points for an in-depth and well-versed discussion of Hustvedt's fiction, which often also draws on selected essays by the author.

The study, originally submitted as a dissertation in American Studies at the University of Mainz, proceeds from a detailed chapter on philosophies of intersubjectivity via a discussion of vision and the visual arts in Hustvedt's work, to a systematic analysis of identity and the boundaries of the body that are questioned in cases of hysteria and anorexia nervosa, and finally to a discussion of attachment, loss, and grief and how characters in Hustvedt's fiction deal with the sudden emptiness of place through the absence of the other.

Photography is one of the media used in Hustvedt's fiction to delineate the unstable positions and identifications of self and other. Although photography, just like the mirror image, might suggest an authentic and true representation of the self and then may potentially fill the hole in the self, it is used by Hustvedt to show how such images can contradict one's own self-image and how they potentially

distort the subject because of the subjective choice of "an isolated fragment" (91). Photographs, because they hardly ever correspond to people's self-image, indicate "a feeling of absence, fragmentation, and disorientation" (93), as Marks observes with reference to Iris Vegan, the protagonist of Hustvedt's debut novel *The Blindfold* (1992). The power of the self is given up in the moment of transition from being subject to becoming object; it is the photographer who "gains power over [Iris's] identity [...]" (96). Photography, as Marks continues to argue, is similarly used in *What I Loved* (2003) and *The Sorrows of an American* (2008). While in the former, photographs of Charcot's hysterical women at the hospital La Salpêtrière in Paris in the late nineteenth century are perceived as "an intrusion into the subject's privacy, delivering a part of the self to the world in a representation that is beyond the control of the person photographed" (98), in the latter, photography is revealed as a form of theft (98). Ultimately, as Marks points out, the photograph in this negative sense turns into "a manifestation of the objectifying potential of the other's gaze, and the self becomes consummated by the other" (100). However, as Marks emphasizes, with reference to Hustvedt's essays on photography, the author, in spite of being highly critical, "does not condemn the medium of photography altogether" (101).

Vision is further discussed in Hustvedt's use of the blindfold in the novel of the same name as well as with reference to voyeurism and the visual arts. In contrast to the representation of photography, Hustvedt's use of the *"Reciprocal Gaze"* (105) seems to endorse vision "as a medium of connection and mutuality rather than separation" (105). In line with Merleau-Ponty, Marks depicts Hustvedt's representation of selves as inevitably "inseparable from the world" (106); the perspectives of self and other intersect, and both fuse "into a synthesized existence" (107), which is even more enhanced by touch as a sensory perception that transcends the gaze (110). Ultimately, voyeurism as represented in some of Hustvedt's fiction, "leads to a softening of the definite borderlines between separate subjects. The loss of a stable perception of one's subjectivity and the assumption of the other's position, however, does not bring about a complete decomposition of identity, but rather leads to an amplified and eroticized perception of self as mixed with the other" (115).

Similarly, Hustvedt's notion of art is embedded and only exists in intersubjectivity. As Marks shows, for Hustvedt, "art happens in the moment when it is perceived"; it enters "a dialogical relation with its recipient [...]" (117). Marks continues to elaborate on the "dialogical exchange" (119) between artist and spectator/observer, and this exchange is always also "determined by the symbolic order of language and by personal experience" (122). Bill Wechsler's paintings in *What I Loved*, in particular his *Self-Portraits*, are shown as mixing identities and as gradually giving way to other media such as the film camera (128).

In another main chapter, Marks focuses on the phenomena of hysteria and anorexia nervosa as instances of the self's negotiations of bodily boundaries that are constitutional to the self but also permeable and unstable. Both phenomena are considered disorders that signify, as Marks sees it, "a disconnection between self and other" (133) but in opposite ways. While the hysteric seems to give up any boundaries between self and other, the anorexic attempts to preserve "a pure and uncontaminated self" (135) by rejecting any form of mixing through the intake of food. In contrast, Marks uses Hustvedt's position on pregnancy as an example of a unity of self and other to which human beings constantly strive to return (139).

The history of hysteria, with its origins in Hippocrates's *On the Disease of Women*, has given way to "conversion disorder[s]" (143) and is, today, no longer considered a typically female disease. As Hustvedt argues in *What I Loved*, hysteric patients imitated the epileptic seizures of other patients who were also put into insane asylums in the nineteenth century. Thus, hysteria is seen as the imitator of other diseases (145) and "is invariably tied to its cultural surroundings" (145). Taking this idea of hysteria to an extreme, all human imitative actions, for example the unconscious imitation of a writing style, as the narrator in *What I Loved* shows, could be considered cases of hysteria. The hysterics whom Bill Wechsler uses in his art furthermore reveal the "objectification of the female patient" through the "cruelty of the male gaze" (149) and the doctor's appropriation of these bodies as if they were works of art (149). In this context, the skin as the dividing line between inside and outside is turned into a blank slate by the medical profession only to be then filled with a text literally written by the doc-

tor (151) who, thus, completes a Pygmalion-like act (152).

In contrast to hysterics, anorexics attempt to keep the mind-body split intact because they feel they have control over their mind but not their body. To her analysis of Hustvedt's representation of anorexics, Marks applies Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque in which the biological and the aesthetic merge. While for Bakhtin, eating transgresses body boundaries and constitutes a "triumphant moment of overcoming the world" (160), Hustvedt's anorexic characters' eating habits are pathological in their consideration of the intake of food as "a moment of contamination and powerlessness" (160) and in their subsequent need to seal "off the self from the world" (161). Marks also successfully applies Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject to her discussion of the anorexic's loathing of food as a form of abjection (163). As Marks concludes, the anorexic in this context considers "food" as "a contagion invading the inside" (164) and, thus, "a threat to her identity" (165). The body, according to Michel Foucault's theory of biopolitics, becomes "a site of discursive struggle" (166), and the anorexic identity denies "Hustvedt's ideal of a reciprocal exchange between self and other" (170).

Marks's final chapter zooms in on issues of attachment, loss, and grief as inevitable features in intersubjectivity. As Marks points out, in Hustvedt's fiction many of the characters suffer from the loss of people that are dear to them whether through death or abandonment. For Hustvedt, as Marks shows, the mother-child relationship is crucial in the formation of intersubjectivity. With the help of D.W. Winnicott's psychoanalytic work and John Bowlby's attachment theory, Marks analyzes Hustvedt's characters' experiences of separation and attachment that run counter to early childhood phenomena such as the mother as mirror for the child. As Marks concludes, a child's "defective self-other relations at an early age" (187) can have severe repercussions once it grows up (as the character Mark reveals in *What I Loved*). The death of a beloved person is also the death of one part of the self that is intimately engaged with the other, as Leo and Erica in *What I Loved* and Erik in *Sorrows* experience.

Marks's conclusion draws on Hustvedt's knowledge of recently discovered so-called mirror neurons which demonstrate "that human beings mirror each other's action in their

brains” (211) for a more biological explanation of intersubjectivity. Thus, the intricate interwovenness of the identity of the self with that of an other does not only make sense in psychological and social but also biological terms. The body, in addition to the mind, is instrumental in the creation of an identity that is in constant interaction, dialogue, and mirroring with the other. Body and mind, as Marks concludes, are inseparable for Hustvedt and are always also socially embedded. Furthermore, intersubjectivity is also crucial for “the bond between author and reader” through “the dialogical nature of writing” (213). For Hustvedt, the author is not dead (and probably has never been) since, in her fiction, she “maps out a territory between herself and her characters, and ultimately between herself and the reader” (216).

At the end of this knowledgeable and philosophically inspired study of Siri Hustvedt’s work, the reader most certainly is convinced of the relevance of what the quotation Christine Marks has chosen for the title of her book suggests: “I am because you are.” Marks has revealed intersubjectivity as the most central issue, and also belief, in Hustvedt’s fictional and non-fictional work. Marks’s line of argument is convincing and is often enriched and supported by the many personal conversa-

tions she has had with a most productive, and, at least in Europe, most successful contemporary American writer, critic, and intellectual. For Hustvedt, as Marks has shown, her life and work are as intimately connected as her fictional characters are with one another on an intrinsic level. Extrinsically, author, text, and reader are dependent on each other, constantly enter into dialogue, and, thus, extensively contribute to fictional and non-fictional identity formation. Self and other, body and mind, and subject and object, as Marks has expertly worked out, mutually shape and depend on each other. Marks’s praiseworthy study is one of the first book-length studies on Siri Hustvedt and most certainly deserves high recognition in the American Studies community. Last but not least, the reading of Hustvedt’s most recently published novel *The Blazing World* will be enlightened by Marks’s “*I am because You Are*.” For anyone with any interest in Hustvedt and/or contemporary American fiction as well as in the fictionalization of research in philosophy and in the life sciences (in particular in biology, psychology, and psychoanalysis), Marks’s monograph should be required reading.

Marburg

Carmen Birkle

CLAUDIA HOLLER and MARTIN KLEPPER (EDS.), *Re-Thinking Narrative Identity* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2013), 209 pp.

The concept of narrative identity has made a remarkable career in the past few decades. Philosophers, psychologists, and literary scholars as diverse as Paul Ricoeur, Donald Polkinghorne, and Paul John Eakin have contributed to its wide transdisciplinary proliferation, and it is hard to imagine what literary and cultural studies would look like without it. One might even argue that “narrative identity” is by now so firmly established in contemporary narrative theorizing and analysis that many of its once innovative, provocative assumptions have turned into shopworn slogans—“life as narrative” (Jerome Bruner), “how our lives become stories” (Eakin), the “storied self” (Dan P. McAdams), and so forth. The present volume takes its departure from these interdisciplinary certainties and asks whether we have to revise and expand the concept in the wake of recent disciplinary approaches as well as far-reaching changes in our life-worlds that include matters of globalization and migration, bio-technological developments, and gender-related transformations. The volume thus sets out to reinvestigate and reframe narrative identity in the light of these issues as well as with regard to “new concerns in narrative literature, new arguments in philosophy and psychology and new approaches in narratological research” and asks how these may “add to our notion of narrative identity” (4). In short, the volume addresses the precariousness of the concept of narrative identity at a moment in time at which identities seem more fragmented, pluralized, relational, and de-essentialized than ever before.

Rethinking Narrative Identity zeroes in on these questions by suggesting a conceptual framework that highlights the significance of perspective and persona in research on narrative identity. The volume’s ten chapters present contributions from a variety of (inter-)disciplinary angles, from psychology (Mark Freeman, Gabriele Lucius-Hoene) through philosophy (Wolfgang Kraus, Norbert Meuter), and linguistics (Jarmila Mildorf), and has a strong foothold in literary and cultural studies (Martin Klepper, Rüdiger Heinze, Kim L. Worthington, Eveline Kilian, Eva Brunner, Nicole Frey Büchel). While the discussed material includes a number of non-fictional texts

(e.g., narrative interviews), the majority of the articles are concerned with literary fiction and autobiography, very much in keeping with the Ricoeurian notion that literature often provides the aesthetic and ethical models for all other forms of identity construction through storytelling.

The volume’s conceptual framework is laid out in Martin Klepper’s substantial introductory chapter on “Rethinking narrative identity: Persona and perspective,” which alone is worth getting the book. In it, Klepper outlines the crises that the notion of narrative identity has undergone as well as the challenges and aporias it has produced within the field of postmodern theorizing from which it has arisen. He then goes on to trace the origins of the concept—most notably in the works of Paul Ricoeur—as well as the historical social practices from which it derived. In this context, narrative identity is described as a genuinely modern phenomenon, which found its first manifestations in early modern discourses and genres such as the confession, diary, memoir, and testimonial. Klepper then pays particular attention to the changing habitual schemata for identity narratives and argues that we are currently confronted with an unprecedented proliferation of such culturally available schemata and thus a multiplication of social protocols for identity formation. Moreover, he asks whether there is an ongoing shift from temporal models of narrative identity to spatial models, which organize life stories along places rather than squeezing them into a temporal framework. Consequently, questions about embodiment and ethics are shown to be crucial for any discussion of narrative identity, since it is our vulnerable bodies which situate us in “a spatial, temporal and social environment” (27) and thus require constant (re-)emplotment.

While one of the central concerns of the introduction (and the collection at large) revolves around the general question as to whether and how it is possible that narratives can still provide an adequate form for identities—which are increasingly understood as situational, ephemeral, and contingent—the introduction also establishes the two other central concepts of the volume: persona and perspective. Narrative identity is understood as a “play with personas and perspectives” (28) that produces rather than represents a sense of selfhood and coherence. Perspective is a keyword in the discourse on narrative

identity, Klepper argues, since “it serves both as a transitionally stabilizing and a dynamic destabilizing function in the interpretation of the self” (27). As we create our selves in and through narratives, we play with personas and perspectives, taking inspiration from existing, often literary narratives, yet never arriving “at a final configuration” (28).

While the volume as a whole certainly succeeds in the rethinking of narrative identity, some articles are arguably more compelling than others in pushing the limits of the concept, also with regard to methodological questions. For this reader, four chapters in particular stand out in terms of their conceptual and, respectively, methodological richness and innovation, namely Norbert Meuter’s chapter on “Identity and empathy,” Mark Freeman’s intriguing reading of Keith Richards’s autobiography, Wolfgang Kraus’s meditation on heterotopic self-positioning in “The quest for a third space,” and Rüdiger Heinze’s narratological analysis of “Strange perspectives” in contemporary literary fiction.

Norbert Meuter’s essay explores the ethical dimensions of narrative identity by focusing on the interrelationship between identity, empathy, narrativity, and morality. Meuter’s contribution is essential to the volume in so far as it provides a concise critical discussion of several key concepts such as narrativity, temporality, subjectivity, and meaning. His conceptualization of narrative identity and empathy as two sides of the same moral coin establishes a very stimulating framework for mediating notions of self and other by foregrounding what Levinas referred to as the ethics of alterity: Through narrative symbolization, the value of the self *and* of the other are constantly negotiated and redynamized. Narratives enable us to transcend our own perspective, as narrative ethics not only take seriously the reality and plurality of perspectives, but also the “fundamental significance of the emotions that underlie morality” (45). Meuter conceives of narratives as systemic, self-organizing structures, which are not controlled by any one agent (e.g., the narrator), but essentially involve the possibility for dynamic, intersubjective, and entangled processes of meaning production and the negotiation of subjectivities.

Mark Freeman, in “Axes of Identity: Persona, perspective, and the meaning of (Keith Richards’s) *Life*,” discusses the Rolling Stones guitarist’s critically acclaimed autobiography,

applying to it a theoretical framework based on William James’s notion of social and spiritual selves. What Freeman sees at work in Richards’s text is the interplay between Jamesian social selves or personas on the one hand, often construed by public images like the “Prince of Darkness,” and his ‘spiritual self’ on the other hand, which he detects in Richards’s narrative self-conception as an artist. The theoretically rich chapter fuses James’s theory of self with Ricoeur’s concept of narrative identity and Martin Buber’s (and, to a lesser extent, Levinas’s) ethics of otherness and relationality, as well as Charles Taylor’s notion of “authenticity.” The result is a theoretically dense yet at the same time very perceptive reading of Richards’s *Life* that teases out the many “big” and “small stories” (*sensu* Alexandra Georgakopoulou’s) of which the text—and thus Richards’s identity—consists.

In “The quest for a third space: Heterotopic self-positioning and narrative identity,” Wolfgang Kraus suggests that we need to expand common notions of identity construction which are primarily focused on the temporal dimension by also taking into account the spatial dimension. Identity construction, Kraus argues, always takes place and is negotiated in social spaces and, more often than not, involves the positioning of the self by others—or simply “other-positioning”—which frequently amounts to stereotyping and social degradation. As a response to this, Kraus discusses various “identity strategies” and expressive identities, which often take place in what Foucault called heterotopias, “third spaces” in which socially transgressive practices and identities are acted out in such a way that they transcend the typical binary structures and “open up a space for the experience of otherness” (77). Kraus examines two very instructive examples in which migrants, to a greater or lesser degree, perform such “heterotopic positioning,” thereby probing ambiguities in interview settings: By telling “small stories” in which the other-positioning of the self is challenged and new subject positions are explored. Heterotopic self-positioning thus allows the subject to reopen the discourse of identity construction and acknowledge the fragility and fleetingness of narrative identity.

Rüdiger Heinze’s “Strange Perspectives” is concerned with cases of “unnatural” perspective, i.e. perspectives that “transcend the experiential theories of interpretation” and thereby “open up new horizons and narrative

identities.” Drawing on the approach of an “unnatural narratology,” Heinze thus sets out to expand traditional notions of narrative identity, which are usually grounded in realistic, mimetic conceptions of storytelling, e.g., with regard to principles such as unity, coherence, and consistency as the basic parameters of narratives (as found, for instance, in the classic model of autobiography). Heinze instead is concerned with “unnatural” instantiations of consciousness in fiction, impossible perspectives that broaden the aesthetic range and possibilities and, consequently, the conceptual framework of narrative identity.

While these four articles exemplify the interdisciplinary scope of the volume and, at least for this reader, constitute the most compelling examples of how the concept might be revised in the light of both empirical and theoretical developments, all of the remaining contributions combine into a very coherent and informative contribution to the study of narrative identity. Gabriele Lucius-Hoene’s and Jarmila Mildorf’s articles address non-fictional stories of the self by applying sociolinguistic and socionarratological frameworks. While their material and approaches differ significantly, both demonstrate how a conscious self-positioning of the narrator serves to create a particular relationship between the storyteller and his or her listener and thus is essential for the negotiation of moral and ethical issues. Eveline Kilian, with her insightful reading of Quentin Crisp’s autobiography *The Naked Civil Servant* adds a queer perspective to the volume that complicates heteronormative notions of narrative identity. Nicole Frey Büchel and Kim L. Worthington offer detailed critical analyses of two popular contemporary novels: While for Frey Büchel, Jeffrey Eugenides’s *Middlesex* foregrounds the performative dimension of narrative identity and thus presents it as an unfinishable process that contradicts and critiques essentialist claims about identity, Worthington argues that Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* is concerned with the “impossibility of attaining either truth or self-forgiveness via acts of (confessional) self-writing” (147).

Confessional writing is also a feature of Eva Brunner’s piece on Anne Sexton’s poetry. While Brunner’s narratological approach to poetry follows notable examples and certainly has its merits, one might still ask whether it might not be even more fruitful to read poetry as an alternative model to “narrative identity.” Brunner herself offers good arguments for this, e.g., when she emphasizes the emotional dimension of identity construction that is foregrounded in Sexton’s texts. The question is thus whether it wouldn’t make sense to speak of a “lyric identity” rather than incorporating the “genre-typical difference of poetry” (200) into the dominant and maybe even slightly cannibalistic concept of narrative identity.

To conclude, the present volume succeeds in offering a fresh look at a well-established concept in interdisciplinary narrative research. All of the contributions depart from an organic model of narrative identity which—by foregrounding aspects of coherence, consummation, closure, and the almost limitless power of narrative—has arguably marred the concept from the very beginning. While most of the contributions thus agree in their basic understanding of narrative identity as something that only exists in the sense that it is realized in, or constituted through, narrative discourse, and is therefore necessarily ephemeral and open to renegotiation and performance, some of the most urgent issues and contexts in this respect still need to be explored. For instance, one might think about recent developments like Facebook’s *Timeline*, or more generally the increasing mediatization (and even automation) as well as the multimodal expression of (narrative) identity in the context of social media, a context that is entirely missing from this collection. Nevertheless, the articles in this volume raise a number of important questions and offer a treasure trove of theoretical and methodological suggestions for anyone working on narrative identity from either psychological, literary, linguistic or philosophical perspectives.

Gießen

Michael Basseler