

## REVIEWS

Bożenna Chylińska. *The Gospel of Work and Wealth in the Puritan Ethic: From John Calvin to Benjamin Franklin*. Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 2012. 336 pages.

Although it has been a fact in human life since time out of mind, work became a subject of detailed and specialized studies only in the past two centuries. In her book Bożenna Chylińska applies a large variety of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories and conceptualizations of work to the lives and careers of English and especially American Puritans. The opening Chapter I traces the evolution from ancient times to the present, from theology to ethics, from the focus on work to the focus on workers, and from the concept of work as degradation to the concept of work as ennoblement. The awareness of the fact that the word “work” has its origin in the Greek word for sorrow (*ponos*) and the feeling that labor amounts to servility and freedom from it is synonymous with nobility, have colored attitude to work for centuries. Although it seems that Chylińska’s book poses questions which are important to students of American literature and culture, it addresses in fact major philosophical dilemmas which are significant to a much larger audience. Self-reflexive (after all academic activity also qualifies as work), the book invites the reader to progress intellectually through several centuries (and two centuries in greater detail) of work motivated by religious dogmatism. What is particularly valuable in this account is the perspective of Catholic Christianity which is a point of reference throughout this study of Puritanism.

Chapter II focuses on the European origins of the Puritan mind and spirit. It outlines the history of various attempts to reform the Roman Catholic Church before and after Martin Luther. Although Luther’s *Ninety-Five Theses* has been recognized as a landmark, it was “not a revolutionary document” (59). However, the debate that flared up in response to it attracted public attention and had wide-ranging social and political consequences. Luther himself opposed the Peasants’ Revolt, which shows that his major concern was theological, and not political (62). Since “his theology did not constitute the only facet of the Reformation” (64), Chylińska discusses also the contribution of such reformers as

Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, the latter in particular. Calvinism, which had a lot in common with Lutheranism (68) is discussed in greater detail as “the greatest religious force in the development of the Protestant Reformation in Europe and, ultimately, in North America,” the one that “gave rise to the Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Baptist denominations” (71). Chylińska notes the moral discipline and the strict hierarchical church structure devised by Calvin, who also considered the way church and state should relate. She devotes much attention to the situation in England, which differed considerably from the developments in Germany and Switzerland. She argues that the English Reformation may in fact have been rooted in the Lollards movement, rather than in the doctrines of Luther (72). Anti-clerical sentiments were in addition “radicalized by the Humanistic movement” (74). However, even though the Act of Supremacy officially put an end to Catholicism in England “in no sense could the ‘new’ religion be called ‘reformed’” (77), at least during Henry VIII’s reign. Motivated by political rather than theological considerations, the Reformation in England resulted in (rather than being a consequence of) the expansion of Protestantism. In the sixteenth century, Calvinism was promoted by a group of radical theologians who were later labeled as Puritans, a word which came into usage c. 1564 (81). Bożenna Chylińska discusses the activities of several Puritan theologians affiliated with Cambridge University, stressing in particular the contribution of William Perkins, a prolific writer whose fame reached far beyond England and shaped Puritan thinking in America, and exerted an impact on seventeenth-century literature and visual art. His notion that religious devotion was linked to economic prosperity attracted the rising English middle class in that it justified their entrepreneurial approach (85–87). The story of opposition to the Puritans, their persecution and exile first to the Netherlands and then to the New World is narrated in detail and with recourse to historic documents on the remaining pages of Chapter II (91–101). The narrative culminates in the symbolic act of obliterating local names and filling America with new meanings (97).

Chapter III explores the concept of “Calling” in American Puritanism. It opens with an attempt at a definition of Puritanism, which proves to be a major challenge. Chylińska considers a variety of definitions formulated recently and in the past, in prose and in verse, by proponents and opponents. What emerges out of such juxtapositions is a multifaceted definition, which is then in addition illustrated by vignettes of several prominent American Puritans. The discussion of “Calling” is indebted to Max Weber’s concepts of protestant ethic and capitalism, and results in an illuminating comparative analysis of Calvinism and Catholic Christianity. “Calvinism” argues Chylińska, “extended and spiritualized work and wealth, and

turned them into the virtual sacraments” (117). American Puritans constructed a social hierarchy based on the individual relation to work and the degree of social usefulness (119–120). The role of the state (acting through civil magistrates) was also precisely defined by American Puritans, who went to great lengths to regulate in particular church government (128). Work amounted to serving God and disciplining oneself at the same time. It meant “relief from forbidden passions and excessive energies, which were denied outlet and expression elsewhere by the Puritan moral code” (148). The concept of “Calling was extended by the Puritans to cover all honest human activities and some productive occupations” (149). The lives, careers, and Calvinist lessons of the Mather dynasty (carefully studied on pages 135–151), illustrate these principles. Their published works, also a form of “Calling”, served to promote Puritan ideology. A richly nuanced comparison of Puritan and Catholic conception of work and wealth (151–155) encourages the reader to ponder the role of Puritanism in the dismantling of medieval ideas and in forcing Catholic Christianity to redefine its stance on work in later centuries.

The phrase “from ... to ...” in the subtitles to Chapters II, III, and IV signals the intention of tracing the (r)evolutionary change that Calvinism underwent once it crossed the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the development of Puritan thought in the New World. Chapter IV offers a fascinating study of “Puritan wives” from Lady Margaret Hoby in Yorkshire to Mistress Anne Bradstreet in New England. Biblical proverbs set the standards for all Puritan women, though class and religious status accounted for fine distinctions within female community (162–163). Chylińska studies them in detail, exploring as an example the daily account of Lady Margaret Hoby, “virtually the first English woman-diarist” (164). Repetitive in its account of practical and devotional occupations, the diary speaks volumes about the life of a Puritan woman of high social status. Numerous quotations illustrate Chylińska’s thesis about the meaning of work in a Puritan woman’s life (164–176). Even though the community of American Puritans was strictly patriarchal, women were present and notable in their settlements from the very beginning. In this respect the Puritan colony was unlike non-Puritan ones, which consisted almost exclusively of men. The Bible and its reflection in countless conduct books and sermons both set the standards for gender relations and offered their justification (176–183). Each aspect of a woman’s life was considered and regulated. Chylińska discusses such crucial matters as a woman’s marital status (184–195) and appearance (196–202). Hannah Moody, Dorothy Dudley, and Anne Bradstreet come alive in this careful study as various types and generations of Puritan wives. Bradstreet’s poetry serves as a point of reference in an exploration of various aspects of a woman’s life. Although living half a century apart and on

two opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean, Bradstreet conceptualized her daily toil very much like Lady Margaret Hoby.

The mind of Benjamin Franklin is the final destination of the intellectual pilgrimage to the Puritan past. In Chapter V Bożenna Chylińska juxtaposes his life and works with those of Cotton Mather. Both were polymaths, but whereas Mather lamented the decline of Puritan faith, stressed the need for “doing good”, and looked back, Franklin insisted on the “well-being” aspect of economic rather than spiritual salvation, and looked ahead to the times which he expected to be different. Chylińska underlines, however, the similarities between the two Puritan thinkers. Franklin not only met Mather, who was his senior by nearly forty years, but he also acknowledged the influence of Mather on his own life and writing. He stayed in contact with Mather’s son and nephew (235–236). In her in-depth study of *Autobiography* and *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, Chylińska explores the deist and pragmatist (*avant la lettre*) side of Franklin. As in previous chapters, she looks at Franklin’s secularized Puritan ethics through the lens of Max Weber’s thoughts on the rise of capitalism, the relation between time and money, and the economic morality and salvation. Taking up a motif present in the previous chapter, Chylińska brings to the limelight the marginalized figures of women in Franklin’s life, especially his wife Deborah, who found a way of handling her “deputy husband” (280–298). Franklin has often been compared with Jonathan Edwards, and this is the way the chapter is concluded. However, as it was in the case of Cotton Mather, Chylińska stresses similarities rather than differences, which means that her aim is to reclaim Franklin as a Puritan thinker, albeit with a deist twist.

The study ends with a conclusion which sums up the project, but also—because of the global and universal significance of the problem—provokes new questions, for example, the one concerning Puritan heritage in American multiculturalism. The book is superbly documented: it contains an extensive bibliography and an index of names, as well as numerous and relevant quotations from original historic sources and an abundance of reprographic materials which allow the reader almost to touch history. Readers of this book will never again take work for granted, be it their own work or that of others.

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Paweł Jędrzejko, Milton M. Reigelman, and Zuzanna Szatanik, eds., *Hearts of Darkness: Melville, Conrad and Narratives of Oppression*. Zabrze: MStudio, 2010. 262 pages.

Paweł Jędrzejko, Milton M. Reigelman, and Zuzanna Szatanik, eds., *Secret Sharers: Melville, Conrad and Narratives of the Real*. Zabrze: MStudio, 2011. 395 pages.

The two reviewed volumes are collections of essays on Melville and Conrad; about half of them are comparative studies, whereas the other half are mostly, and significantly, about Melville. The intention of the editors and compilers was to provide a comparative study of Melville and Conrad in two ways: in terms of “Western existentialist thought” and of post-colonial criticism. The essays were presented by distinguished scholars from many countries during the 6th International Melville Society Conference in Szczecin in August 2007. Effectively, both books are proceedings that try to be monographs. Like most of such books, the two volumes lack a clear framework; chapters, which are loosely related essays, are arranged according to vague thematic affinities. As such, the volumes provide neither a full survey of Melville’s or Conrad’s work, nor a comprehensive range of comparative topics. The editors, following the generally accepted procedure, resolved to rather daunting philosophical themes, such as the “existential philosophy of participation” or the “multifaceted relations” of the self to the world. Such sweeping generalizations, for all their brilliance and philosophical informedness, leave the unprepared reader with a rather poor idea of what the books are about.

The two volumes have recently been reviewed by Elle Stedall in *The Conradian*; the rather skeptical review points to the fact that most essays are about *Moby Dick* and *Heart of Darkness*—one is bound, apparently, to find affinities between such outstanding and generally admired works of literature. This, however, does not suffice as a reason for approaching them comparatively. “[C]an the universal squeeze of the hand,” asks Stedall, “which, incidentally, is conceptualised in a chapter which one can hardly imagine Conrad calling beautiful—incorporate the hand in which Melville’s masterwork lay open and unappreciated. And should that matter? Does comparativism have to be companionable; should we look for friends in the authors we admire; must their work make the world less hostile?” (Review). Stedall’s question is about the purpose of comparative criticism, whether it should create thematic constellations of admired authors, simply because they are admired simultaneously by one critic. A contrastive approach, defining Melville’s and Conrad’s cultures by mutual negation, might be as interesting, but is never undertaken in the two reviewed volumes. Another comparative angle, the study of contexts and traditions, is not corroborated by historical evidence, as the editors

and some essay authors remark, referring to Conrad's famous and derogatory remarks about Melville in a letter to Humphrey Milford. Yet another approach, based on Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, would link Melville and Conrad as representatives of a historical tendency in development of world literature, but again, no essay in the collection attempts to do it. Generally, both volumes are not based on any theory of comparative literature; they do not explain why Melville and Conrad should be compared at all, other than because of the "essential liquidity of the existential condition" which "necessitates a 'universal squeeze of the hand'" (*Secret Sharers* 22).

There are, however, several very good essays in both collections, such as Arthur Redding survey of American reception of *Moby Dick* in the 1950s or the series of essays on mirrors in the 2011 collection. It is perhaps significant that so many essays, including the most interesting ones, forego the comparative perspective altogether, and are about Melville. Redding focuses (*Hearts of Darkness* 167–182) on C. L. R. James's *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville* (1953), a political interpretation written from a Trotskyist point of view, but the essay presents James's book in comparison with the contemporary representatives and predecessors of the myth-and-symbol school of American literary criticism, such as F. O. Matthiessen, Richard Chase, or Leo Marx. These prevalent readings of the 1950s are compared with James's Trotskyist (anti-totalitarian) stance, and with the political discourse of American foreign policy in the twenty-first century. The essays on narcissism and mirror reflection, mostly related to Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus* and *The Mirror of the Sea*, are grouped in two sections of *Secret Sharers*: "Ungraspable Phantoms. *Vanitas*-Text-Reality" and "*Mise-en-Abyme*. Reality as Mirror." The first group consists of Dennis Berthold's essay on the Narcissus myth in Melville and Conrad (*Secret Sharers* 175–184) and Joanna Mstowska's "The Idea of *Vanitas* in *The Mirror of the Sea*" (*Secret Sharers* 185–205). Berthold contrasts the use (and prevalence) of visual imagery in Conrad's and Melville's fiction, pointing to the scenes of mirror reversal and self-reflection, and arguing that Narcissism in Melville is individual, and in Conrad, communal, as in a crew and ship saving itself by "enlightened self-love" (181). Mstowska's essay is exclusively about Conrad and contemplation of human nature through allegorical objects (*Vanitas*), such as ships, mirrors, and sea. In the other group, Sarah Thwaites compares the nineteenth-century debate on photography as the magic mirror (pace Trachtenberg) with Melville's use of conflicting perspectives, both on the plane of ideology in *Moby Dick*, and on the plane of visual descriptions. The other essay on mirror and *mise en abyme*, by Marek Paryż, compares *Moby Dick* with Sam Peckinpah's Western movie *Major Dundee* (1965), treating Melville's novel as an allegory of the American frontier.

Another outstanding essay was provided by John Bryant (*Secret Sharers* 31–48); while comparing *Moby Dick* and *Typee* with *Lord Jim*, it also describes the fluid text of *Typee*. Bryant has written a theoretical book called *The Fluid Text* (2002), a term that refers to texts with many variants, and created an interactive variorum edition of *Typee*. Stephen Andrews (*Secret Sharers* 93–125) offers an interesting reading of “Benito Cereno,” comparing Melville’s imagery to today’s notions of piracy, property, right, law, and innocence. Andrews explores, through quotations from 19th-century background texts on confidence and trust, the ambivalent attitude of Captain Delano’s attitude towards the *San Dominick*: is Delano an innocent observer or a pirate? How can law and order legitimize themselves? Fiona Tomkinson, Scott Norsworthy, Aubrey McPhail, and Stanford E. Marovitz describe intertexts and sources for both authors. Tomkinson (*Secret Sharers* 49–60) refers to the possible influence, on Conrad, of colonial imagery in *Wędrowiec* (The Wanderer), a popular nineteenth-century Polish magazine. The theme of wandering in Conrad is, in turn, compared with images from *Moby Dick*. Scott Norsworthy, in the same manner, provides a detailed catalogue of near-quotations used by Melville’s and Conrad’s various works. Aubrey McPhail (*Secret Sharers* 351–370), in a more general discussion, presents the various philosophical sources referred to in *Moby Dick*, and Stanford E. Marovitz (*Hearts of Darkness* 203–214) presents biographical sources and influences that shaped Melville’s and Conrad’s heroines. Some essays project established readings of one author onto the other, perhaps in an attempt to demonstrate the similar impacts across literary cultures. This approach is exemplified by John D. Schwetman’s study of *Billy Budd* and “*The Secret Sharer*,” and by Wyn Kelley, who relates several novels and stories by Melville to a short story by Conrad. Another group of authors, such as Sostene Massimo Zangari (exotic imagery), Wendy Stallard Flory (psychological imagery), and Yukiko Oshima (Eastern religions), read Melville and Conrad in a parallel manner, discussing imagery related to one subject of choice.

The two volumes are expertly and flawlessly edited, and are fine specimens of sumptuous bookmaking. They are also a testimony to an important conference that provided an opportunity for a fruitful exchange of ideas and for a further consolidation of a strong intellectual milieu (that is, critics of Melville’s and Conrad’s fiction). The variety of themes and the differences in the quality of research make both *Hearts of Darkness* and *Secret Sharers* very interesting, but uneven books. The efforts of the editors, who tried to create a framework for a coherent comparative study, were only partially successful. One of the reasons was the very difficulty in comparing Melville and Conrad, but the two books have the intrinsic qualities of all collections derived from

large conferences: a wide range of themes and approaches, lack of historical or interpretative continuity, and incomplete selection of texts by the author(s) under discussion.

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Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis, *Aristocratic Ethos in Ellen Glasgow's and Walker Percy's Fiction*. Lublin: KUL Publishers, 2011. 334 pages.

*Aristocratic Ethos in Ellen Glasgow's and Walker Percy's Fiction* reads as an ambitious reeducation project. While some scholars in Southern studies have attempted to re-examine the endurance of some of the South's treasured icons, thus providing innovative re-readings of the lady or the belle figures that have "been fetishized, fixated on and marketed for so long" (McPherson 152), Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis seems to be siding with Elizabeth Fox-Genovese in acknowledging that women's history in the plantation South "cannot be written without attention to women's relations with men in general and with 'their' men in particular, nor without attention to other women" (Fox-Genovese 42).

From the opening pages, Niewiadomska-Flis's objective is indeed clear: by focusing on "the changing aristocratic South from the 1850s to the late twentieth Century" (12), she aims to offer significant insights into "the changes, along with their agents, in the image of the lady and the gentleman which run parallel to the shifting patterns of social structure in the aristocratic South, such as marriage, friendship and sexual unions" (21). Her work will also make for another lack in Southern literary studies, since she hopes that, in "comparing the fictional worlds

created by Glasgow and Percy" (12), this "arrangement offers insight into the complementary constructions of gender and transformations of the myth of the South from the Old to the New to the "American South," otherwise called "the late South" (12).

The book is developed accordingly, with a first chapter entitled "Southern Gentlemen: Evolution from Noble Origins to a Contemporary Rhinestone?" The second chapter, entitled "Southern White Womanhood: The Evolution From White-Gloved Ladies to Rebel Queens" complements the first chapter's development of the myth of the Southern Gentleman, by focusing, this time, on the evolution of the image of the Southern lady since the times of the Old South. The changing concepts of gender guide the discussion in the third chapter, entitled "Love, Sex, Marriage, and Homosocial Friendship from the Old to the American South" (22). Niewiadomska-Flis's analysis uses the critical lens of irony as a recurrent element of discursive strategy for both Glasgow and Percy. Indeed, both authors, as she notes, share the same desire to "undermine [the workings of the myth of the South]" and both equally resort to "ironic discourse in their fiction to reveal hypocrisy, evasive idealism, and double standards, enforced gender differences, the nondescript New South, the dubious Old South heritage, and moral estrangement" (17).

Though focused on Glasgow's and Percy's work, Niewiadomska-Flis's study successfully sets each writer in his or her (literary and historical) context. The book is thus organized as a contextualized case study since the close readings of Glasgow's and Percy's texts are integrated into larger discussions of identity-shattering periods in Southern history: the slaveholding South, the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement and even more challenging to Southerners, women emancipation in the 1960s that marked perhaps a more profound break with the past than the Civil Rights movement had been (125). Drawing on Glasgow's male cast—from Gabriel Pendleton or Olivier Treadwell of *Virginia*, Judhe Honeywell of *The Romantic Comedians*, Virginius Littlepage of *They Stooped to Folly*, Tucker Corbin of *The Deliverance*, to General Archbald or George Birdsong of *The Sheltered Life* (and many others)—in addition to a vast array of male characters taken from Percy's novels, among whom John Bickerson Bolling of *The Moviegoer*, Williston Bibb Barrett of *The Last Gentleman* and Lancelot Andrews Lamar of *Lancelot*, Niewiadomska-Flis offers a complex and richly nuanced portrait of Southern white men in the changing South. The Civil War that was to fundamentally metamorphose the traditional values of the Old South and the accompanying mythologization of the Southern gentleman . . . in the New South" (50) forced Southern scions to reevaluate their place and role in Southern society. With a challenged hierarchy, with men now finding themselves "less sure of what [was]

right and honorable" (50), and with old principles now turned into "antiquated notions" (54), the South had to (re)invent new foundations for self-edification and self-worth.

In placing Southern men at the center of the academic debate, Niewiadomska-Flis moves away from the unproblematized images of Southern manhood as the paradigm of honor, community and chivalry, but also from the unproblematized reduction of masculinity to patriarchy. In the rich and varied corpus of literary texts under consideration, Niewiadomska-Flis indeed explores Southern manhood in its plurality—a judge, an aging patriarch General, an inadequate Southern man who lacks character (45), a Southern male of plain origins in Glasgow's *The Miller of Old Church* (49), as well as John Bickerson (also named Jack or Brinx) who suffers from what Niewiadomska-Flis defines as the traditional hereditary disease of the Southern male in Percy's *The Movie Goer*: self-dislocation and self-deception (61). As such, she underlines the necessity of talking about male fictions (and representations) in the plural and to explore (and rethink) masculinity in its plurality as well as incredible complexity.

Besides focusing on the fragmented (male) subject of Southern fiction, Niewiadomska-Flis makes sure to revisit and discuss one of the most influential stereotype in the plantation South: the "mythical image of [the] Southern lady as an innocent and inferior creature" (159). Tracing the evolution of the Southern lady along with the development of the South, Niewiadomska-Flis reconstructs the changing sense of self that Southern ladies experienced as they transitioned from "an old ideal to a very "real" human being" in the New South (178). Both Glasgow and Percy, as Niewiadomska-Flis demonstrates, pulled away "the fabric of illusion" by satirizing the old style of womanhood—the fossilized ladies—as evasive, parasitic and lethargic" (Jones 260). Representative of the shrewdness of Niewiadomska-Flis's portrait of Southern womanhood is the spectrum of her analysis: a clear-eyed portrait of Southern womanhood, Niewiadomska-Flis suggests, must reclaim the voices of these women we do not always listen to—the mothers, daughters, "she-man" (156), the ethereal lady who has become the "master of pretenses and deception" in Glasgow's novels (140), the disgraced Southern Belle, the lady/whore in Percy's *The Last Gentleman* (155), but also the "doubles", i.e. these women who manage to turn men back on the right path of life and their opposites, the "false doubles" (167).

Even if both authors, as Niewiadomska-Flis explains, do prove different in their treatment of emotional attachment (love, sexuality, true companionship), the reconceptualization and demythologizing of gender meanings is becoming increasingly clear throughout as this common thread runs through most of their novels and with it, traditional Southern images, places and paradigms are being

challenged. By making the issues of the relations between Southern men and women, of sexuality, love, marriage, the home, morality, “beautiful behavior” (233), friendship or courtship, topics of literary and cultural investigation, Niewiadomska-Flis’s analysis reaps a number of rewards. First, instead of pitting Southern men and women against “social changes in the twilight of Victorian times and then in the New South” (257), Niewiadomska-Flis chooses to place them as fully participating *in* (rather than simply reacting *against*) struggles over identity definition. Such is the necessary condition, Robinson asserts, if one wishes to renegotiate and shift gender meanings. Men (and women), she claims, must indeed be set within a field of struggle over cultural authority and priority, rather than outside these struggles (4). Second, it shows that what is referred to as the “normative” should be, and indeed was, tested and revised in response to changing times. Third, by focusing on Percy’s work, Niewiadomska-Flis’s analysis also reveals the ways in which his texts continue along a trajectory of earlier Southern fiction and the ways in which “Percy’s fiction further develops Glasgow’s vision of the aristocratic ethos” (258). Last but not least, the ironical stance deployed by both Glasgow and Percy not only allows to test and to rebel against “stifling Southern myths” (257), but also allows to revisit Southern heritage. Young Southerners, as Niewiadomska-Flis remarks, could “only make limited use of the previous generation’s experience” (259). As such, the book calls for an interrogation of inheritance as it affects both the lives of both male and women characters in Southern American literature and those of women and men writers alike, wrestling with imposed patterns of inheritance or claiming the right and feasibility to reinvent inherited traditions, if not to dispense with them altogether. Niewiadomska-Flis’s book is an important addition to the exploration of gender issues in Southern literature. It problematizes essentialist visions of Southern gender as “universal, eternal, and immutable” emphasizing instead to what extent the performances of gender were “historically constructed, context specific and culture bound” (Armengol 1). Both authors, in effect, have not only revised traditional patriarchal concepts of gender but have also proposed new alternative forms of being (and living as) a gentleman or a Southern belle in the devastated post-Civil War South.

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Alexander Leicht, *The Search for a Democratic Aesthetics: Robert Rauschenberg, Walker Evans, William Carlos Williams*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 264 pages.

Alexander Leicht gets it exactly right when he argues that links between art and democracy are too often acknowledged only offhandedly—for instance, in the various discussions of Walt Whitman’s large-souled aesthetics—and are rarely studied with any seriousness. As a result, he writes, we know little of the exact nature of those links and rely only on vague intuitions. With his inconspicuously titled book *The Search for a Democratic Aesthetics*, Leicht hopes to fill this very gap. Ultimately, the book offers three interpretations of a lifetime’s work by Robert Rauschenberg, Walker Evans, and William Carlos Williams to argue that their formal strategies are metaphors for some of the crucial aspects of “liberal-egalitarian” democracy. For this purpose, Leicht first immerses himself in all the major contemporary theorizations of democracy by such philosophers as John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, Robert Dahl, Will Kymlicka, Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam, and isolates the most important features of a democratic imagination manifesting itself in the arts. To give a few examples, Leicht first identifies the notion of radically non-hierarchical organization of the state in Robert Dahl’s idea of the equal moral worth of every individual and the principle that every person is recognized as the best judge of his or her good. The author moves from that to observe that this sentiment manifests itself in the various formal features of Walker Evans’s photographs; Evans’s portraits in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), for instance, are highly respectful of his sitters’ autonomy. The independence and worth of all individuals is visualized in various forms of assemblage and collage: Evans’s pictures of junkyards and discards, for instance, express such “non-hierarchical” imagination. Or take the idea—always verging on

contradiction and so carefully worded by Kymlicka or Dahl—that the coherence of an ideally democratic society can only be maintained most tenuously, never at the expense of individuals' autonomy. An analogous sentiment, Leicht argues, can be sensed in the tentative compositional schemes of Robert Rauschenberg, only subtly guided by the principles of symmetry or sequence; Leicht also promises to find the same in lightly signalled structuring devices in the books and portfolios of Walker Evans. Lastly, the author repeats after Michael Walzer and Jurgen Habermas that democracy, if it is worthy of its name, is less a social condition than a never-ending process of public debate. That, too, has its aesthetic analogies.

While the subsequent chapters devoted to individual artists, though very solid, do not surprise us that much with their approach, the most engaging is probably the concluding part of Chapter I, that is, the section entitled "Democratic Theory and the Aesthetic Imagination" (56–71), which goes far justifying the whole project. By relying on the interesting formulations by Martha Nussbaum, Noel Carroll, Elaine Scarry, and Winfried Fluck, Leicht suggests that art can offer a significant, even necessary "input into moral [philosophical] deliberation." Aesthetic contemplation of beauty, symmetry, balance, etc.—whether in a narrative, a poem, a photograph or in a canvas—encourages us to intuit our reasoning beyond the fixed categories of professional moral philosophy. One is also impressed by the conceptual part devoted to the notion of metaphor as most effectively describing and negotiating the interface between the realm of the aesthetics and that of political ideas. This section very persuasively sets up the subject and wins over the skeptical. One can only find some flaw with his readings of contemporary philosophers of democracy, readings that seem a bit too extensive and ultimately excessive. You begin to wonder if these ventures into political philosophy were really worth all this effort given that they somehow disappoint by producing conclusions one easily anticipated from start. As a result the text in the first chapter becomes unnecessarily jumpy, moving back and forth between two disparate fields.

The chapters that follow discuss one artist at a time, each working in a different medium. In Chapter II, Leicht shows that "almost all of" Robert Rauschenberg seeks to recognize the individuality of all objects and that his work shows aesthetic pluralism and an open-ended processual structure. The book offers chronologically arranged "close readings" of selected works by Rauschenberg starting from sample works of his *Scatole Personali* series (1952) to the various elements of his magnum opus, *The Quarter Mile or 2 Furlong Piece* of the 1990s and 2000s. Echoing Arthur Danto's notion of "the transfiguration of the commonplace" which Danto finds mostly in Warhol, Leicht defends Rauschenberg against the accusations that the artist, using paint as he is, is no less elitist than

Abstract Expressionists. Leicht also claims that Rauschenberg has little to do with the kind of self-consciousness and philosophizing that often accompanies the various gestures to elevate ordinary objects to the status of art like that by Marcel Duchamp or Warhol. If theirs were frequently “mental acts” posing philosophical questions on the nature of art or on commodification, his work is more of a “sensual experience.” Much of the chapter is well and clearly argued, even when the reader hesitates to be entirely persuaded—say by the somewhat fancy idea that Rauschenberg’s silkscreens and painted-over photographs restore the original existence of subjects by underlining the superficiality of the images as merely images.

No less interesting is Leicht’s detailed review of Walker Evans’s oeuvre for similar formal structures embodying the main aspects of a democratic society. For instance, having carefully set up the terms for the discussions of “respect” in portrait photography, Leicht discusses Evans’s “respectful portraiture.” The author also links it to a similar non-hierarchical “frontality” in the photographer’s images of inanimate objects, something that makes manifest those objects’s specificity and individualized nature. In the next step, *The Search for a Democratic Aesthetics* asserts the most tentative and most dynamically maintained coherence in Evans’s work by tracing integrative structures in larger units such Evans’s collections (*American Photographs* [1938]) or exhibitions. Finally, Leicht finds temporal openness in Evans’s series.

The last chapter discusses the same formal parameters of democracy not in visual works of art but in poetry. William Carlos Williams, however, was an easy choice, it seems, and a certain monotony and predictability set in, perhaps unavoidable in a book in which thoroughness and order are priorities. Much of the commentary on Williams is also slightly derivative; the author himself admits that as he started researching for this part of the book he found himself relying on earlier findings by J. Hillis Miller, Henry Sayre and Marjorie Perloff. True, this chapter, too, is quite informative. Here we find extensive treatment of Williams’s respectful portraiture, his line breaks and enjambments, the triadic stanzas from the the Asphodel period and the collage-like structures of *Patterson*. But there is no denying that the book’s conceptual structure begins to exhaust itself. It seems that venturing, with the same interpretive apparatus, into the other artforms like jazz or dance—something which is encouraged by Leicht in the conclusions—would be quite redundant.

Altogether, however, the book deserves praise. Leicht takes up a topic that at first seems self-evident and relatively easy to pursue. However, he then makes the best of it, carefully laying out the terms of the discussion, rarely neglecting to anticipate the reader’s skepticisms and often surprising one by showing complex-

ities in ideas that have long since been taken for granted. He also makes highly persuasive comparisons by bringing in the well-known works of other artists such as Andy Warhol, Richard Avedon or Gary Winogrand. In short, though somewhat unoriginal in its impulse, ultimately *The Search for a Democratic Aesthetics* makes a really useful reading, making you more confident of ideas that you had not even known you understood quite poorly.

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Ewa Łuczak, ed., *Toni Morrison*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2013. 183 pages.

Reminiscing about her childhood in a recent interview given to the French press, Toni Morrison mentions that the multiethnic mining community of Lorain, Ohio, in which she grew up, included a large Polish population. While not of the utmost importance, this biographical detail strikes one as somewhat ironic in the light of the fact that Morrison—who is not only a critically acclaimed author, but also a best-selling one—has received comparatively little attention in Poland. This situation is rightly deemed regrettable by Ewa Łuczak in her introduction to *Toni Morrison*, a collection of critical essays published in the series *Mistrzowie literatury amerykańskiej*. The brainchild of the Section of American Literature at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, the series in question is meant as Poland's answer to Anglo-American companions to major writers. As its title suggests, the recently published volume, succeeding a previous one on Don DeLillo, is devoted to the work of the leading Afro-American author and Nobel Prize winner.

Edited by Ewa Łuczak, who is also the author of two of the volume's nine essays, the monograph includes analyses of Morrison's *œuvre* by several other Polish scholars of American literature: Patrycja Antoszek, Grażyna M. T. Branny, Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska, Marek Paryż, Anna Pochmara, Anna Warso and Justyna Włodarczyk. With the exception of the volume's closing essay, which deals with Morrison's socio-cultural and literary criticism, each of the texts focuses on one work by the author of *Beloved*. While each of the essays makes interesting, worthwhile and truly pleasurable reading when examined separately, together they make up a comprehensive study, which successfully delineates Morrison's literary achievement in the realm of both fiction and nonfiction. As such, it constitutes a major step towards remedying the oversight on the part of Polish readers to

which Morrison's prose has fallen victim. The fact that, like other monographs in the series, *Toni Morrison* is a Polish-language publication makes it accessible to a non-English-speaking Polish readership. More importantly, however, the authors of this highly readable collection of essays strike a balance between *par excellence* academic content, in-depth readings of literature and form which is at once sophisticated and reader-friendly, backing it all with thorough scholarship.

The volume contains analyses of six out of the ten novels Morrison has produced so far. *The Bluest Eye* is discussed by Justyna Włodarczyk, whose sensitive reading of Morrison's debut novel centers on such important aspects of her prose as family breakup, violence and the inextricable link between American popular culture, itself allied with capitalism, and racism. In keeping with the essay's title, Włodarczyk reflects on Morrison's attempt to let the marginalized speak, on the poetics of trauma and the traumatic effect of racism on the Afro-American community, as well as on the role of literature and literacy in counteracting it. In her interesting essay, Patrycja Antoszek explores *Sula*, focusing on the motifs of transgression and subversiveness central to Morrison's second novel. Taking as a point of departure the turbulent sixties and seventies in America, Ewa Łuczak examines *Song of Salomon*, published in 1977, in terms of its treatment of the past, memory and nostalgia as well as their role in shaping identity. Łuczak convincingly shows how Morrison's novel inscribes itself into Afro-American culture and history, at the same time questioning certain radical Afro-American ideologies based on violence and idealization of the past. Another truly interesting and accomplished essay deals with *Beloved*, arguably Morrison's best-known work. The essay's author, Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska, identifies trauma, memory, itself inextricably linked with the body, and amnesia—on both the individual and the historical levels—as crucial to Morrison's Pulitzer-winning historical novel. Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska sees *Beloved* as a combination of literary genres and conventions, and shows how the Afro-American writer subverts the conventions of the classic historical novel and exploits the Gothic tradition.

Far from being confined to the novels Morrison published in the first two decades of her literary career, the volume also covers those dating from the nineties and noughties. In her ambitious essay, Grażyna M. T. Branny undertakes a comparative study of Morrison's *Paradise* and William Faulkner's *Light in August*. The focus is, again, on the notion of memory, collective memory to be precise. Perceiving several novels by Morrison as Faulknerian, Branny looks at how the Afro-American writer "rewrites" (117; trans. A. P.) the author of *The Sound and the Fury*. The interesting conclusion of Branny's intricate analysis is that, *vis-à-vis* Faulkner's novel, *Paradise* is a "photographic reversal of the positive and the negative" (132; trans. A. P.), and as such it shows how racial stereotypes upheld

by whites are regrettably adopted and internalized by Afro-Americans. Importantly, Branny's reading of Morrison's and Faulkner's novels is two-way, each work elucidating the other. The last novel to be discussed in the volume is *A Mercy*. In his highly perceptive, erudite and yet lucid reading of this 2008 work, Marek Paryż demonstrates how Morrison uses her story, set in the late seventeenth century, to explode the founding myths of America, in particular that of freedom. Identifying individualization and symbolism as the key strategies employed by the writer to achieve her aim, Paryż examines Morrison's reversal of biblical symbolism in the novel as well as her revision of the myth of the American Adam. Moreover, Paryż also ponders the role of geography in *A Mercy*, arriving at interesting and convincing conclusions.

In addition to the novels, *Toni Morrison* also discusses the Afro-American writer's only short story "Recitatif," to which two essays—one by Anna Pochmara and the other by Anna Warso—are devoted. While the decision to include two essays revolving around the same, relatively short literary text in one volume may come as somewhat surprising, Pochmara's and Warso's essays dispel any potential doubts. Firstly, it goes without saying that polyphony and pluralism are as welcome in literary criticism and scholarship as they are in social and political life. Secondly, as Pochmara points out, "Recitatif," oft-anthologized and frequently discussed in American literature classes, is rarely subjected to critical analyses. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the striking complexity and sophistication of "Recitatif," a true literary *tour de force*, as well as the multiple critical and readerly perspectives it offers more than justify the above-mentioned editorial decision. The two essays overlap, but also complement each other. In a gripping essay, Pochmara delves into the mystery at the heart of Morrison's short story, which focuses on the relationship between two women – one white and one Afro-American – but refuses to unequivocally state which is which. Observing what she aptly calls "the merry-go-round of racial identity" (54; translation mine), Pochmara carries out a detective-like investigation, which draws on an analysis of racial, political, social and cultural codes as well as historical circumstances. In a similar vein, Warso pertinently notes that "while we are reading 'Recitatif,' 'Recitatif' is reading us" (71; trans. A. P.) and analyzes the way Morrison's text drags the readers into a tricky and complicated interactive game, obliging them to look for meanings and realize the often frightening power of racial, cultural and gender clichés. The last essay in *Toni Morrison* beautifully completes the volume, devoted largely to Morrison's fiction, by concentrating on her critical writings and showing—interestingly—that the image of Morrison the critic does not necessarily coincide with that of Morrison the novelist. In her examination of Morrison's responses to two *causes célèbres* of the nineties, namely the Clarence

Thomas affair and the O. J. Simpson murder trial, Łuczak points out that Morrison's stances, especially on gender issues, are sometimes controversial and that the writer distances herself from mainstream (white) feminism, but also anticipates an ethnicity-minded modern version of it. Łuczak's essay also discusses Morrison's "ambitious proposal to reread the history of American literature" in the light of "the Africanist persona" and "the Afro-American discourse" (174; trans. A. P.), and her critical attempts to define both Afro-American literature and Afro-American identity.

Conscious as they are of the didactic dimension of their monograph, by no means do the authors of *Toni Morrison* restrict themselves to a school-like reading of the literary texts they discuss. Instead, they offer a broader critical perspective, consistently underlain with references to literary and cultural theory, which makes the volume a valuable tool for Polish students and scholars of American literature alike. Their analyses also boast a solid factual background, relying heavily on Afro-American history, culture, myths and beliefs. Antoszek reads Morrison's *Sula* in the light of Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject. Pochmara filters "Recitatif" through the critical race theory, social constructionism and the perspective of whiteness studies. The archetype of the trickster is applied to Morrison's prose by Warso and Branny alike. Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska delves into generic subtleties in her study of Morrison's use of literary genres and conventions in *Beloved*. Both Łuczak's analysis of *Song of Solomon* and Paryż's reading of *A Mercy* explore Morrison's revision of the founding myths of America. Additionally, Branny also refers to Ferdinand de Saussure's concepts of *signifiant* and *signifié*, and to Jacques Lacan's semiotic theory, while Paryż supports his theses with, on the one hand, Crèvecoeur's writings and, on the other, references to such exponents of the French Theory as Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. Importantly, the authors of *Toni Morrison* draw on up-to-date bibliographical resources.

Despite being the fruit of collective effort, the volume is strikingly cohesive and consistent. The individualities of the contributors and the fact that each of them focuses mostly on a single literary work do not prevent their essays from overlapping and revealing certain parallels. The same motif is often discussed in more than one essay, and the critical strategies adopted, the observations made and the conclusions drawn are frequently convergent. As a result, the picture of Morrison given by the monograph is coherent, though in no way oversimplified or over-generalized. While revolving around the notions of race and gender immanent in Morrison's *œuvre*, the essays emphasize the ambiguities inherent in her prose, her avoidance of clear-cut dichotomies and simplifications, and of a—fortuitously named—black-and-white world. The author of *Beloved* emerges as a writer who shuns the unequivocal and the obvious in favor of fluidity, multiplicity and in-

stability. Moreover, she emerges as an author whose approach to both form and content is dialogic, which, as Łuczak notes in the volume's closing essay, is also, in Morrison's eyes, the approach generally distinguishing Afro-American literature from mainstream—that is, white—American literature.

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Anne Mihan, *Undoing Difference? Race and Gender in Selected Works by Toni Morrison and Jeanette Winterson*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 393 pages.

In *Undoing Difference? Race and Gender in Selected Works by Toni Morrison and Jeanette Winterson*, Anne Mihan sets side by side authors living and writing in two different countries and focusing their literary works through different lenses, those of race and gender, respectively. In this, Mihan's enterprise is unique: no other volume has been devoted to a comparative analysis of these two female authors read together. The author validates such a choice of writers by noticing and then analyzing a common strategy used by both Morrison and Winterson, that is their experiments in employing narrators and protagonists whose race or gender remain ambiguous. Mihan's main critical goal is to examine the writers' reasons for using such textual strategies and to establish whether their "play" with gender and racial ambiguity possibly constitute a plea for eliminating "these categories because they rely on essentialist notions of purity and exclusivity" (19).

While a book analyzing Morrison and Winterson together is long overdue; indeed, the two authors' experiments with narrators withholding information about race or gender can be legitimately viewed as parallel, and Mihan's argument is presented in a carefully crafted manner, it is the very question posed by the author in the title of this book—and then repeated in the introduction and in the conclusion—which seems somewhat forced. True, both authors through their narrative strategies reveal how crucial race and gender are for readers as categories of classification and how the refusal to provide such information denaturalizes these concepts and forces the readers to acknowledge the ideological grounding of their response. However, the connection between Morrison's and Winterson's strategies of narration and their potential plea for "undoing difference" is somewhat dubious. After all, the erasure of race and gender as employed by the two writers is not a strategy implying the lack of significance of these categories in the contemporary world but, on the contrary, their omnipresence. Mihan does

answer the question posed in the title with a resounding no, but the fact that the answer can be predicted from the very beginning makes her argument less powerful or at least somewhat less exciting to follow.

Mihan begins with a summary of the most popular theoretical lenses for discussing race and gender. These include, not surprisingly bearing in mind the title of the book, the work of Judith Butler, mostly grounded in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, but also Sally Haslanger, Joshua Glasgow, Judith Lorber and Henry Louis Gates Jr. In other words, Mihan aptly summarizes recent theories of social constructivism. The author then devotes a significant amount of space (almost one hundred pages) to an analysis of the two authors' public statements and essayistic writing related to the themes of race and gender. These include interviews, newspaper columns and essays. The author's interest in these non-fictional texts stems from her belief—and is an attempt to prove it—that both Morrison's and Winterson's fiction is part of larger political projects. Admittedly, Mihan's familiarity with the authors' public utterances and semi-public statements is impressive and allows the author to show the evolution of particularly Morrison's public persona and political ideas. While the presence of the analysis of these non-fictional texts certainly adds to the already imposing scope of this book, it is haunted by a certain problematic assumption, that is that there exists—or could exist—an easy transposition of the author's public political statements/beliefs and the "political message" of their fiction. True, Mihan never openly states that the books of fiction can be read purely as an illustration of the authors' politics but she does not problematize this possibility either. Mihan writes "With their literary texts, in ways that are at times clearer and more radical than their theoretical statements, they [Morrison and Winterson] have also begun to re-define these concepts [race and gender]" (25). All in all, while this section is interesting and informative in itself, it could maybe benefit from a greater critical suspiciousness or "critical skepticism" in accepting the authors' own explications of their fiction.

Mihan begins the second part of her book with the chapter "Challenging the Matrix of Racial Difference: Toni Morrison's Short Story 'Recitatif'" with an analysis of the only short story ever published by Morrison and it is this reading which best illustrates the doubts I harbor about the efficacy of Mihan's method. Mihan claims that most critics who have looked at this story tend to "focus on racial difference and the racial identities of the protagonists" (120). Mihan further argues that because information about the racial status of the two protagonists has been withheld, readers know only that Twyla and Roberta are of different races, "it seems hardly surprising that the question of who is black and who white has received so much attention by critics as well as readers" (122). While it most

certainly is true that Morrison purposely frustrates readers' expectations in this short story, one would be hard pressed to find a critic who actually attempts to label the protagonists as representatives of a specific race; that is to find a critic whose analysis concludes with a triumphant declaration of who in this story is really black. Rather, most critics—including those quoted by Mihan—recognize that the exercise Morrison sets up should lead readers to understanding how this seemingly innocent desire to assign racial identities to Twyla and Roberta is not so innocent after all, but reveals their implication and complicity in the broader framework of American racialism.

Meanwhile, Mihan sums up the critical debate about the short story with a series of rhetorical questions, mirroring the one posed in the title of the book, which can be read as opening up the possibility that critical responses to the story have been insufficient in doing justice to its complexity, mostly because by focusing on the construction of race in the story – and in particular, on Morrison's use of class signifiers as racial signifiers—they “hold us imprisoned in the vicious circle of perpetual construction and reconstruction of race” (124). Mihan asks, “Is it altogether feasible that despite her intention to deconstruct this category the author could be satisfied with her readers' re-constructing racial difference, with their racializing of the protagonists of her short story whose racial identities she has deliberately and efficiently left ambiguous?” (124). The question above seems to be an ill-formed one in more than one way. Neither readers nor critics of the short story are expected to complete their interpretive process by reconstructing racial difference, that is, by assigning racial labels. On the contrary, they are expected to become much more conscious—and by extension also more cautious—of how they use race as a system of classification; to understand why they experience the pressing desire to assign racial classification and the ideological technologies governing its operations. The critical position of the author of the article criticized by Mihan as being caught up in the “vicious” circle of assigning race, Elizabeth Abel's “Black Writing, White Reading: Race and the Politics of Feminist Interpretation” (1993), is in fact an illustration of precisely the effect I have been describing. Abel's initial conviction (recounted “with considerable embarrassment”) about the racial identity of Twyla (that she is white), which opens the essay, is contrasted with the opposite conviction of her colleague. Both of these convictions are, however, presented in the past tense and the essay itself is a reflection of Abel's coming to understand how her own conviction was based on a certain unconscious fantasy of black womanhood: “Twyla's sense of social and physical inadequacy ... signaled Twyla's whiteness to me by articulating a white woman's fantasy (my own) about black woman's potency” (Abel 474).

Mihan proceeds to present her own interpretation of “Recitatif,” which does not focus on racial difference as the primary theme of the story, but which analyzes how the two protagonists’ relationship develops and continues in spite of racial difference. In her reading of the theme of the charwoman Maggie, the author perceptively notices that the protagonists’ discussion of Maggie’s racial identity masks “the more relevant question of why they wanted to hurt the old woman” (151) in the same way that the treatment of race in the US masks other more relevant questions. While this is a valuable analysis, what mars its insightfulness is Mihan’s positioning it as standing in direct opposition to other critical voices, while in fact it is based upon them and does not contradict them. I have used Mihan’s treatment of “Recitatif” as representative of the problems with Mihan’s analytical tone and strategy. Notwithstanding its problems, the book does constitute a significant contribution to the study of Toni Morrison’s and Jeanette Winterson’s writings and to the growing body of scholarship which takes on the themes of the inseparability of the themes of race and gender.

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Karsten Fitz, ed., *Visual Representations of Native Americans: Transnational Contexts and Perspectives*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 302 pages.

As has been observed by numerous critics and scholars (among them Robert Berkhofer, Ward Churchill, and Shari M. Huhndorf to name just a few), the image of the Indian captivated European imagination from the moment the first accounts of the New World crossed the Atlantic. These first accounts quickly produced myriad images, fantasies, and stereotypes which bear little or no resemblance to actual Natives and which Robert Berkhofer, in his seminal *The White Man’s Indian*, calls the “white man’s invention” (3). Karsten Fitz’s interdisciplinary collection focuses on the transatlantic adventures of the white man’s Indian, namely the circulation of Indian images in different cultural contexts and its ideological functions. Aware that the term “transnational” “still lacks a precise definition” (2), Fitz, following

the insights of Günter Lenz in “SYMPOSIUM: Redefinitions of Citizenship and Revisions of Cosmopolitanism – Transnational Perspectives,” declares that the goal of the “transnational” agenda is to question and decenter the U.S. perspective, thus offering views and insights from the outside, and, furthermore, to shift the focus away from the nation-state emphasis, which in turn puts great premium on intracultural and multicultural interaction in the globalized world (4). With the scope of the analysis thus defined, the editor of the collection points out that a transnational perspective is rarely considered in American Studies in the context of Native American topics and hence, the volume may offer interesting and original comments and observations. It is worth mentioning is that Fitz is well aware that the collected essays, with their emphasis on how images of Indians are produced, consumed and distributed to serve different ideological agendas, should not be considered part of Native American Studies.

The essays are a truly eclectic collection, covering the time-frame from the early colonial era to the twenty-first century and including such diverse topics as literary works, visual art, and photography as well as museum studies. The variety of topics under discussion, the multiplicity of methodological approaches and the contributors’ diverse cultural backgrounds reveal the project’s interdisciplinary and transnational character and its emphasis on case studies rather than theoretical context. While the volume is not divided into sections based on thematic focus or methodology, a careful reader will notice that the essays can in fact be arranged into different groups. Apart from applying a thematic criterion (film, literature, photography, museum studies, etc.), it is clear that the texts offer two radically different treatments of Native American representation. The first group of essays fulfills the promise delivered in the introduction: they do not look at actual Natives, but rather at how their distorted images are decontextualized to serve different cultural and political purposes. The second group, interestingly, assumes the position of the observed Natives and examines strategies aimed at challenging the objectifying consumption of Native cultures.

Among the essays in the first group is Maike Christadler’s “Indigenous Skins: Indian Costumes at the Court of Württemberg. Christadler analyzes how Theodore De Bry’s collection, published in 1590 and 1631 in fourteen volumes, and including a 1599 plate featuring a procession organized by the Duke of Württemberg on the occasion of a political meeting in Stuttgart, is invested with the European political and economic agenda in the New World. Christadler’s captivating reading of the plate and its political implications draws attention to a plethora of phenomena: the shocking exposure of naked bodies meant to represent Indians, casting Indian characters in the roles of fools and the context of the carnival and finally, the unintentional but resultant gender transgression.

As Christadler concludes, the Duke's participation in the procession in the role of (female) America allowed him to communicate a number of imperialistically motivated messages: "For Friedrich of Württemberg the embodiment of America is an occasion to usurp symbolically the mythical riches, and territory of a vast continent, and thus perform a role much beyond his real political and social significance and weight" (24). The theme of gender transgression is also in focus of Christopher J. Pastore, who examines a unique representation of America as male by Orazio Farinati. Drawing comparisons with typical early visual representations of the New World, Pastore reveals contradictory messages written into the image such as fear of cannibalism on the one hand and a keen interest in the newly discovered land on the other, and suggests a motif of possible kinship between Venetians and Native Americans. Robert Lee's essays, taking a temporal leap into the nineteenth century, explores how Karl Bodmer's *Views of a Vanishing Frontier* (a painting created between 1832 and 1834 when Bodmer stayed in the U.S.) was consistently treated as a historical document rather than an artist's fantasy of the American wilderness. As Lee aptly demonstrates, any attempts at redefining Bodmer's *oeuvre* as heavily inspired by European Romanticism fell short of success, thus proving the need for the perpetuation of the fantasy and in fact revealing more about the ideological agendas of Bodmer's scholars than his works themselves.

Similarly motivated readings which trace the ways Indian representations are used in literary texts are provided by Dirk Uffelman's analysis of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Sachem* (1883) and Michael Perník's study of illustrations accompanying Czech translations of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. Uffelman offers a brilliant close reading of Sienkiewicz's novella to reveal how in fact the text is a reaction to and a criticism of Prussian attempts to colonize Poland. Even more surprisingly perhaps, considering the historical context of Poland's partition and the way the novella addresses the military conquest of Native Americans, Uffelman concludes that Sienkiewicz, "tend[ing] towards a culturally modifying strategy of concealment" (272), in fact offers a critique of Russian politics towards Poland and plays on the colonizers' (Prussian as well as Russian) fear of revenge (i.e., Polish revolt). Perník's essay discusses illustrations included in Czech translations of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. Beginning with the first illustrated translations of Cooper's novel in 1878 and 1879, Perník traces the changes in the aesthetics and ideological content of the illustrations chosen for subsequent editions, namely "a gradual emancipation from the originally hegemonic influence of German culture by means of American literature and transnational modernism" (80). Apart from demonstrating how the choice of artists to illustrate *The Last of Mohicans* expresses Czech people's

growing self-confidence, the author also draws attention to how Czech artists adopted and then rewrote the German model of representing Indians.

Several essays in the collection focus on the transnational circulation of Native images between Germany and the U.S. Karl Markus Kreis focuses on the period before WWI and examines the production of Indian postcards and their “afterlife” when they were sent from North America to German-speaking addressees and inevitably contributed to the creation of stereotypical images of Indians. Dana Weber goes to the very source of German fantasies about Indians, namely Karl May’s novels and their later staged performances. Weber engages Homi Bhabha’s attention to functions of stereotypes to escape easy generalizations and links the construction of clichéd images with the historical development of media technologies and live performances. Alexandra Ganser draws attention to the less-studied Indian portraits produced by Winold Reiss after his immigration to the U.S. As Ganser meticulously explains, Reiss’s presentation of the Blackfeet of Montana, commissioned by the Glacier National Park, reveals internal tensions and ambiguities originating in the artist’s split allegiances as a newly-arrived immigrant required to embrace the mainstream ideology of the necessity of Indian conquest and an individual truly interested in Blackfeet culture, fighting an urge to identify with the oppressed indigenous subjects. Finally, an essay by Frank Usbeck traces the use of Indian imagery in military discourse during WWII. Although Germany did not share a collective history of interactions with Natives, Usbeck found that the Indian warrior image often dominated military reports.

The essays devoted to representations of Native Americans in film focus on projects not necessarily associated with mainstream Hollywood cinema, namely Jim Jarmusch’s *Dead Man* (1995) and Terrence Malick’s more recent *The New World* (2005). Miriam Strube turns her critical attention to both films in order to present them as examples of revisionist cinema which, informed by postmodern questioning of master narratives and historiographic methodologies, “interrogates representations of heroism and violence, history and myth, masculinity and minorities” (198). The analyses of the films allow Strube to draw an analogy between the transnational agenda in American Studies, which decenters the nation, and revisionist cinema, which, with a similar gesture, decenters the white male hero. Heike Bungert, on the other hand, focusing again on *The New World*, examines reactions to the film posted by international viewers on websites such as the Internet Movie Database to trace a transnational dialogue.

The remaining essays differ significantly in the way they approach representations of indigenous people. Rather than documenting different forms of cultural and ideological appropriations, these essays “return the gaze” and explain the rea-

sons why the representations violate norms of cultural sensitivity. The first essay written from the Native perspective is provided by Gerald Vizenor, whose critical examination of stereotypical images will be well-known to readers acquainted with Native American literature and culture. Here, Vizenor examines and interprets the functions of Edward Curtis's manipulations of his photographs and enumerates Native strategies of resistance against being immortalized in Curtis's artificial poses. Providing a productive dialogue with Vizenor's analysis, Rebecca Peabody's essay describes a symposium at the Getty Center in Los Angeles, entitled *Documents of an Encounter: Edward Curtis and the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations*. The event featured a screening of a restored film by Curtis, *In the Land of the Head Hunters*, as well as a Salmon Dance performed by Kwakwaka'wakw traditionalists. Apart from demonstrating how the film and the dance communicate on a cultural and ideological level, Peabody also draws attention to establishing connections between creative performances and lived experience, which would sensitize audiences to actual problems and dilemmas of contemporary indigenous communities. The theme of the indigenous body as an object of performance or exhibition is tackled in a revealing essay by Miriam Jordan and Jason Haladyn. Relying on Bourdieu's work, Jordan and Haladyn demonstrate how European museums, in a gesture revealing the prevailing imperialist ideologies, perpetuate the colonial fantasy of the primitive Indian and subscribe to the rhetoric of saving Indian cultures for the Indian's "own good" (179). The critique of traditional museological practices is followed by an intriguing discussion of the work of Native artists such as Erica Lord, Jimmie Durham and Kent Monkman, who consciously challenge these practices and offer counter-methods of inhabiting museum space without objectification of Native cultures. Finally, the essay by Jane Sinclair is impressive in its originality as the author examines the phenomenon of Indian gaming, Indian casinos and the processes through which the casino space is transformed into a site for displaying Indian art. The author discusses the impact of gaming on Indian communities, the rise of tourism and the resultant cultural and ecological consequences, and, more importantly, how gaming, its advantages and problems, are featured in Indian art.

All in all, *Visual Representations of Native Americans* offers interesting insights into the politics of representing Native Americans. The variety of examples and theoretical approaches and neatly delineated historical contexts result in an interdisciplinary volume that expresses both the richness and complexity of the topics. Moreover, an emphasis on particular case studies rather than theoretical frameworks caters to readers acquainted with the dilemmas inherent in the adaptation of Native American representation as well as those who are just beginning their transnational adventures.

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Christina Judith Hein, *Whiteness, the Gaze, and Transdifference in Contemporary Native American Fiction*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 381 pages.

Christina Judith Hein's volume, somewhat overwhelming in scope and heavily foot-noted, focuses on answering the question of how whiteness is represented, critically examined, and effectively challenged in contemporary Native American literature. At the outset, Hein declares her intention to move away from over-researched themes such as mixed-blood identity, reservation life and its ensuing problems, and instead concentrate on issues revolving around the performative construction of whiteness and indigeneity. Informed by and in dialogue with Whiteness Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Gender Studies, the book insists that interactions (often involving the act of looking and being looked at) between individuals of different races and genders may in fact produce situations in which the Other assumes the position of the subject rather than that of an object, forever occupying an allotted and inevitably lower place in the power structure. To illustrate this point, Hein draws attention to Native texts in which Native characters inevitably interact with white characters and as a result, whiteness is approached, observed and in turn scrutinized as the Other. These texts offer multiple, so far unexplored, perspectives on what whiteness is, how it is created, and more importantly, how it is destabilized as a normative, non-marked category.

Hein examines the literary output of four Native writers representing diverse approaches to identity politics and deploying various artistic methods and styles: Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (1998), Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus* (1991), Craig Womack's *Drowning in Fire* (2001), and finally Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996). In her meticulously presented analyses, Hein offers brilliant, insightful and original observations about the four texts. Her readings are informed by a thorough understanding of the intersectional character of whiteness (and indigeneity). Each chapter, devoted to a different text, methodically examines white and Native characters, their identity politics and interactions among them, and

exposes various understandings of what whiteness is and how it can be used (politically, culturally, or for personal purposes). A great strength of Hein's analysis (which may also be considered a weakness) is the simultaneous engagement of different theoretical positions, which expose the complexity of the discussed themes. Whiteness as it emerges from Hein's analysis, filtered by an indigenous perspective, never provides univocal conclusions.

Hein's book is characterized by a coherent and well-developed structure whose first part provides a theoretical framework which then applied in the chapters offering analyses of literary texts. The theoretical introduction begins with a brief history of Whiteness Studies and the enumeration of some of its main areas of interest such as intersections of whiteness and capitalism, class, race, privilege and the concept of whiteness as invisible, taken for granted, and racially unmarked. While the very idea of destabilizing whiteness is clearly seen by the author as productive and well-established in Whiteness Studies, it is the project of displacing whiteness, or, othering it, particularly from the Native American perspective that is at the core of Hein's analysis. As Hein asserts, "the present superiority of whiteness in a multitude of spheres may be disrupted by stressing the factual racialness of whiteness as lived identity" (48), a feat that may be achieved through the existence of an *indigenous gaze* that is trained in detecting and deconstructing mechanisms governing the construction of whiteness as an unmarked category. Since the processes of displacing whiteness in Native American fiction frequently rely on an exchange of looks, Hein incorporates into her theoretical framework Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological approach to interpreting interpersonal encounters between individuals, as proposed in *Being and Nothingness* (1992). For Sartre, such encounters, in which an individual is confronted with the Other and forced to negotiate his/her position in the world, are necessary for the constitution of social subjects (57–56). Finally, to account for situations in which "the clear demarcations of difference are transcended" (61), Hein introduces the concept of transdifference (as defined by Helmbrecht Breining and Klaus Lösch), which facilitates the understanding of fluid and instable identities, composed of plural affiliations, conflicting loyalties and opposing values.

Having presented her complex and extensive theoretical framework, Hein proceeds to analyzing the selected literary works. In Louise Erdrich's well-known novel *Tracks* whiteness is analyzed with special emphasis on the female characters Anishinabee Fleur and mixed-blood Pauline as best exemplifying the text's critical approaches to whiteness. According to Hein, Fleur, because of her interactions with the white world and her resulting fluency in its rules, deciphers and challenges the codes governing the construction of whiteness, and in this particular case, white masculinity. Since she understands its logic and operations, the objectifying

white gaze that is directed at her is in fact neutralized and turned against her white male perpetrators. Pauline, on the other hand, with her obsessive rejection of her Indian origins, not only appropriates whiteness as a chosen identity but also redefines it for her own purposes. Occupying the position of a keen observer who remains unobserved due to her physical unattractiveness, Pauline first collects data about whiteness to remodel it to her own liking. Hein offers a brilliant reading of how Pauline refashions whiteness through a reconceptualization of the figure of Jesus Christ, inextricably bound to whiteness in the context of the novel. Not only does she identify with the Savior, with his bodily and spiritual suffering, but she also transforms him into a weak and fragile creature who desperately needs her protection. Thus Pauline erases her race, cultural background and to some extent even her gender to successfully integrate herself into a confined but white community of the convent.

*Heirs of Columbus* by Gerald Vizenor, discussed in the next chapter, approaches whiteness as “suffused with practices of the visual that may be challenged, countered, and frustrated by alternative regimes” (352). These alternative regimes emphasize the aural as a more productive medium of expression, one that successfully resists the objectifying operations of the gaze. In *Heirs*, the characters identified as Native choose the radio over the television as the medium which allows them to escape misrepresentation via exposure to the objectifying gaze. Moreover, echoing Vizenor’s claim refuting the discourse of victimization in representing Natives (*Fugitive Poses*), the indigenous characters, rather than assuming stereotypical roles written for them by the white culture, participate in the exchange of words (not gazes), and “remain agentive and act” (120). Knowing Vizenor’s propensity for poststructuralism and tricksterism, whiteness in *Heirs* emerges as confusing, elusive, fluid and negotiable. As Hein points out, the narrator is rather “reluctant to name characters as white” (135). In the text, whiteness is conveyed by referring to specific cultural and political affiliations, and the use of violence rather than physical characteristics. Moreover, by rewriting the figure of Christopher Columbus as part-Mayan and playfully deconstructing the opposition of the Old and New Worlds, Vizenor decenters whiteness and pushes it to the margins of the native characters’ activities.

In Craig Womack’s *Drowning in Fire*, whiteness is associated with the white Baptist church and established as an oppressive discourse delineating the borders of what constitutes the (racial and sexual) norm. In analyzing white-Native interactions, Hein identifies different strategies employed by Native characters such as Lucy and Josh to distance and destabilize whiteness as an oppressive category that instills self-hatred and internalized racism. Interestingly, these strategies, to be effective, must be derived from Creek cosmology and often, Creek language. The

emphasis on Creek tradition and history is in fact crucial in the novel, although not necessarily in the sense of its being a counter-force to whiteness. As the novel features gay Native characters and their struggle for acceptance in first the white and then the indigenous communities, Womack's agenda in *Drowning in Fire* is to first, offer a Creek understanding of queerness (not destabilizing the *status quo* as it is used in Queer Studies but actually, according to Creek cosmology, upholding it) and, more importantly, to represent queerness as inherently Creek and hence indispensable in Creek communities. Such a positioning of whiteness and Creekness, as Hein rightly points out, results in a paradigm in which the two emerge as "less negotiable and largely mutually exclusive" (357).

The final chapter is devoted to an even more extreme paradigm for interpreting interactions between whiteness and indigeneity offered by Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*. As in the case of the previous analyses, Hein examines the interactions between white and Native characters; however, she now pays special attention to two central characters: John Smith, a Native man who, as an infant, was adopted by a white middle-class family, and the titular Indian Killer, who is never identified in the text as Native or white and yet is assumed to be non-white by the mainstream, a killer who selects his victims from among the affluent white males of Seattle. In Alexie's novel, whiteness signifies privilege which is violently defended by white male and occasionally female characters. Native characters such as Marie Polatkin, however, do not remain passive and instead devise their own strategies of subverting whiteness, challenging its power and even, considering the Seattle Native homeless, creating alternative communities which cancel out the superiority of whiteness. The most extreme and violent instance of challenging whiteness is provided in the figure of Indian Killer, who, as Hein observes, is a very attentive observer of white masculinity, and turns white males into objects of an interested and violent gaze (335). What Indian Killer communicates about white middle-class males is that while they may be portrayed as perpetrators of violence and benefactors of privilege, on a corporeal level, they are as vulnerable as everyone else (338).

While Hein's detailed analyses contribute significantly to the body of criticism on now canonical Native writers (Erdrich, Vizenor, Alexie) and offer an interesting reading of emerging ones (Womack), the book's major shortcoming involves the theoretical approach. As Hein announces in the introduction, her goal is to discuss the chosen texts from an indigenous perspective (15), thus emphasizing Native methodologies of reading Native American literature (as proposed in *Native American Literary Nationalism* by Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver and Craig Womack). Therefore, the choice of Sartre's work as a theoretical framework poses numerous questions. As productive as Sartre's theory is for many literary texts,

the fact that it disregards racial, class or gender differences between individuals exchanging the gaze, undermines its utility in the Native American context. While Hein acknowledges this shortcoming of Sartre's model and proposes expansion, its application nevertheless remains problematic. Moreover, also in the introduction, Hein claims that "Evaluations suggested by indigenous perspectives, not canonized French theories, are meant to have the last word here" (17), but again, it seems that the large body of criticism produced by Native critics and intellectuals is pushed to the background or thoroughly ignored. One of the most telling examples can be found in the section discussing the history of Whiteness Studies: while Hein rightly observes that the first contributions to the field date back in time to as early as W. E. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903), she seems to forget about Native intellectuals from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Charles Alexander Eastman or John Joseph Mathews, whose texts may as well count as valuable comments on what constitutes whiteness. Nonetheless, Hein's volume does impress with the scope of the analysis and its thoroughness. *Whiteness, the Gaze, and Transdifference in Contemporary Native American Fiction* is an inspiring addition to the criticism of Native American literature.

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Ewa Alicja Antoszek, *Out of the Margins: Identity Formation in Contemporary Chicana Writings*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012. 248 pages.

The title of Ewa Antoszek's study, *Out of the Margins: Identity Formation in Contemporary Chicana Writings*, makes it clear that the author's major interest lies in literary representations of Chicana identity formation, especially its enactment in space, or—to be more specific—in various spaces. Antoszek offers in her book a detailed analysis of three literary texts by contemporary Chicana authors: two novels—*Face of an Angel* by Denise Chávez and *Caramelo* by Sandra Cisneros, and one autobiography—*Two Badges* by Mona Ruiz. This analysis is preceded by the examination of recent theoretical formulations concerning identity and spatiality, which are the two theoretical axes around which Antoszek's discussions of literary texts revolve.

In Chapter One, titled "An Overview of Chicana History and Literature," Antoszek presents crucial facts in the history of the Chicano/a community that account for the Chicano/a presence in the contemporary US. As the author claims, such a historical overview is indispensable to understanding Chi-

cano/a literature, its trends and transformations. Antoszek proves her point by enriching the presentation of historical facts with references to literary texts that attempted to record and make sense of a particular historical moment. The second part of the chapter is a more literary-oriented analysis of the trends generated by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The fight of Mexican Americans for equal rights resulted in their more visible presence on the American cultural scene, as their literary and artistic productions were frequently deployed for political aims. Antoszek focuses specifically on the emerging voices of Chicana women, who in the decades following the Civil Rights Movement attempted to express their multiple marginalizations: as women, as Chicanas, some additionally as lesbians. Antoszek ends the chapter with a presentation of four trends characteristic of Chicana literature at the end of the twentieth century, namely the proliferation of personal essays, a pronounced interest in exploring male-female relationships, an overt treatment of sexuality and a fascination with borders and border-crossings.

Chapter Two, "Chicana Identity and Identity Formation: Evolution of the Concepts," serves as an elaboration on the notion of identity as understood and employed in the analyses of literary texts in the second part of the book. Antoszek discusses significant reformulations of the concept of identity that took place in the final decades of the twentieth century within the so-called post-prefixed theories. To be more specific, postmodernism and post-structuralism led to the dismantling of identity as something stable and fixed, while postcolonialism enabled the analysis of identity in terms of the center-periphery methodology. Antoszek devotes a significant part of Chapter Two to discussing theories of identity developed by Chicanos/as themselves, including Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of *la mestiza*, Norma Alarcón's focus on the fragmentary character of identity, Chela Sandoval's concept of oppositional or differential consciousness, Emma Pérez's notion of diasporic subjectivity and Cherríe Moraga's "theory in the flesh." Antoszek then proceeds to address the criticism leveled at these theories from within the Chicano/a community itself. The chapter ends with a discussion of the most recent contributions to the understanding of identity within Chicano/a context, namely Moya's postpositivist realist theory of identity, Pérez-Torres's new readings of *mestizaje*, Priewe's concept of transculturation and, finally, the emergence of multiracial feminism as an outgrowth of US Third World Feminism.

In Chapter Three, titled "On the Transformations of Spatial Paradigms," Antoszek addresses the so-called spatial turn in the humanities towards the end of the twentieth century, whereby scholars questioned the temporal model of literary and cultural analysis and argued for the inclusion into the model of spatial parameters. Antoszek pays special attention here to Edward Soja's book *Thirdspace: Journeys*

to *Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, in which Soja attempts to develop a theory of urban space geared to the American continent on the basis of European thought, namely that of Foucault, Baudrillard, Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. The chapter also takes note of several postcolonial thinkers who—though not exclusively working on space—contributed to the changed understanding of the spatial concepts such as center, periphery or margin. What is of particular importance to Antoszek's argument is the interconnectedness of space and identity. The author shows that the production of space and the production of identities are parallel processes. She also argues in that for the Chicano/a community space has always been an important category for their self-definition.

The second part of Antoszek's book, comprising chapters four to six, is devoted to the discussion of the spatial dimension of identity formation processes as depicted in three contemporary Chicana literary texts. In Chapter Four Antoszek focuses on Denise Chávez's novel *Face of an Angel*, whose main character—Soveida Dosmantes—undergoes a process of identity formation that is intricately connected with her de- and re-construction of certain spaces: that of the patriarchal ancestral home, that of the oppressive Catholic church and that of the female body. Sandra Cisneros's *Caramelo*, discussed in Chapter Five, in turn focuses on what Antoszek calls nomadic identity, that is identity constructed on the literal and metaphorical road, through travels both in space and time. The novel's protagonist, Celaya Reyes, constructs her *mestiza* identity while traveling back and forth between Chicago and Mexico City, as well as while listening to her paternal grandmother's stories. Chapter Six constitutes an analysis of Mona Ruiz's autobiography *Two Badges*, which is, in a nutshell, an account of the transformation of Ruiz from a Chicano/a gang member to a police officer. In her discussion of the book Antoszek employs the concept of the intrinsic dichotomy of public and private spaces. However, the author expands the meaning of the private by including the whole barrio within it, whereas the public space signifies the world outside the barrio. Analyzing Ruiz's autobiography, Antoszek shows how the protagonist negotiates between public and private spaces, eventually proving them to be overlapping categories, whose boundaries are by no means definite or final.

Antoszek's book deserves praise for its clear style, structural cohesion and thorough documentation, the works cited section filling over a dozen pages. Even though the author discusses in detail only three literary texts, she attempts to contextualize her research by showing certain trajectories of development of Chicano/a literature and community in general. What one may object to, however, is a certain imbalance between the amount of attention devoted to the discussion of literary texts themselves and to the evolution of theoretical concepts of identity

and spatiality, the latter—together with an overview of Chicano/a history—taking up half of the book. It seems that a meticulous account of all the various shifts and turns within the discourses on identity and space—albeit undoubtedly showing the author's familiarity with these theories—could have been condensed, which would in turn enable the author to discuss the literary representations of the processes she is interested in in a bigger number of sources. Despite this shortcoming, it needs to be emphasized that Antoszek's study is a compelling read, which is likely to interest all those working within the fields of ethnic literature, identity and spatiality studies. Such a contribution into Chicano/a studies is especially welcome from a Polish scholar, as so far there have only been a handful of texts written by Poles on Chicano/a community and literature.

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Volker Depkat and Meike Zwingenberger, eds., *Visual Cultures–Transatlantic Perspectives*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. 216 pages.

*Visual Cultures–Transatlantic Perspectives* is a collection of twelve essays, most of which are revised papers presented at the 2009 annual meeting of the Bavarian American Academy. As the second part of the title emphasizes, the book is a publication committed to the presentation of European views on America as well as American views on Europe, and despite the difficulty that such a commitment creates for every editor, Volker Depkat and Meike Zwingenberger deserve the highest praise for the editorial work they put in the project. Grouping the essays into thematic sections which contextualize visual culture—history, race and ethnicity, space and geography, politics—the editors have managed to create a very logical and consistent book structure and thus balance the heterogeneity of the essay topics. The latter not only deal with a great variety of visual materials, from photographs to monuments, public spaces and internet, but they also cover the historical timeline from the eighteen century to the first decade of the twenty-first. And they are written by scholars representing different research disciplines: historians, media scholars, cultural studies scholars, geographers and film critics. Worthy of note is also the agenda of the editors who emphasize the collection to be a contribution to the debate on visual culture rather than an attempt at its diagnosis or evaluation. *Visual Cultures* begins with an essay by the accomplished visual studies specialist, Martin Jay, who offers a general theoretical framework to

the entire collection by presenting the history and media specificity of what the French film theorist Christian Metz has called the modern “scopic regimes,” that is the patterns of visibility and invisibility, of gazing, looking and appearing that dominate the Western culture since Descartes. As Jay explains, the most prevalent model of visual experience in modernity is “Cartesian perspectivalism” that is a model founded on the domination of nature by the framing technological apparatus. The Cartesian regime manifests itself in architectural, artistic and discursive tendency towards some total and complete pictures of things. Think about a palace panoptically overseeing its garden, nineteenth-century pastoralist painting, or Hegel’s philosophy. Notably, Jay emphasizes that the notion of regime entails far more than merely a pattern or frame of regulating social norms and behavior. Quoting the political theorist Leo Strauss, he stresses that those regulated ways of living, seeing and thinking undergo habituation and naturalization—a fact which must be acknowledged and analyzed by everyone who attempts to contemplate and discuss phenomena of visual culture. Thus, Martin Jay sets a crucial criterion for critical analysis of the phenomena of visual culture, a criterion which all the essays in *Visual Cultures* respect by de-naturalizing the visibility/invisibility binary in its various historical, aesthetic, and political manifestations.

The second section of the collection, entitled “History and Visual Sites,” consists of three essays devoted to the visualizations of national identity in both Europe and America. In “The Face of the Nation: George Washington’s Image and American Identity” the art historian Mark Thistlethwaite discusses the iconicity of the portrait of the first American president painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1796. Presenting how the portrait has framed the presidencies of such figures as Jimmy Carter, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, Thistlethwaite stresses the symbolic weight of the media images featuring American presidents against the background of Stuart’s painting, whose frequent out-of-focus blurring sends a message of ethereal, “even heavenly” authority and prestige to the figures of the photographed subjects that remain in-focus. The ways in which the painting almost imperceptibly lends credibility to the speakers captured against its background are very ambiguous and contradicting; in the case of Obama, for example, the credibility rests on the juxtaposition of the first president who was a slaveholder and the first African-American president, a juxtaposition which paradoxically reifies the American ideals of liberty. In a slightly different way, a similar process of reification is occasioned by the contrast between the figure of president Bush speaking about economic rescue plan and the figure of George Washington who embodies the prospect of America’s economic prosperity. The second text in the section by the historian Sarah J. Purcell, “Seeing Martyrdom: Elmer Ellsworth, James Jackson, and Revolutionary Martyrdom at the Onset of

the U.S. Civil War” continues Thistlethwaite’s argument by examining the modern tendency to construct the image of national identity through the figures of war heroes. Purcell case study involves a comparison of martyrologies of the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. As Purcell demonstrates, it is especially during and after the Civil War that the ideological power of images of Ellsworth and Jackson materialized in the deepening, complication and subsequent repression of the social conflict between the South and the North on the issue of the sacrifice of white manhood. The third essay in the historical block, “Visualizing Democratic Legitimacy and Authority: The Case of the Weimar Republic” by Wolfram Pyta, counterbalances the emphasis on the American images of national identity by investigating the causes of the failure of the first German democracy to permeate culture with its ideological message. According to Pyta, the regime was never habituated precisely because it did not produce a coherent visual representation of presidency. Despite the advantageous technological support of photography and film, the country’s constitutional order remained essentially “faceless” and thus impossible to identify with from the perspective of the citizens.

The essays in the third thematic section of *Visual Cultures* concerns representations of race and ethnicity, and therefore the focus shifts slightly from how images control societies to how they are received and restructured on the community level. The essays in the section all undertake the notion of imagined community and performance of citizenship. In the essay on the work of Augustus Washington, a nineteenth-century African-American daguerrotypist, Shawn Michelle Smith proposes a reading of Washington’s daguerreotypes as performative acts of citizenship aimed at ideological de-marginalization of the oppressed members of the American society. From a different perspective, the second contributor to the section, Astrid Boger writes about the institution of World’s Fairs and their role in the shaping of the multi-cultural as well as the imperial facet of American identity. Aided by the technologies of photography, the fairs created and perpetuated the visual narrative of expansiveness, righteous conquest, and objectification of Native or African people as curiosities. Having argued this, however, Boger suggests that we also see the other side of the story and observe that however distorting was the optics of the Fairs, and however contaminated the consciousness they fostered, the visual representations of “otherness” document and mark its presence and visibility on the White horizon.

Inevitably, the essays on race and ethnicity touch upon the problematics of space and spatial distribution of identity. But it is the fourth thematic block of *Visual Cultures* that fully explores the topic. The section “Visual Culture and the Construction of Space” consists of three texts, each engaging with different modes

of partitioning and re-partitioning of space. Michael P. Conzen, resonating classical Foucauldian interpretation of spatial mapping, reminds the reader about the political and economic implications of cartographic discourse. With solid scientific data as evidence, Conzen proves how Maps of the American West during the times of the country's expansion not only were devised with political, military, or industrial benefits in mind but also shaped and transformed those spheres of activity through the manipulation of national geographical knowledge. In other words, cartography has had a much stronger impact on the format of national identity, the modes of how the economic and legal system evolved since the times of territorial expansion, and the sense of relation to the space that remains outside of the U.S. The second author of the section on the construction of space, Ingrid Gessner chooses to investigate the scopic regimes that frame the perception and reception of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, arguing that the design of the Memorial creates a heterotopic space for interactive mourning. As people see themselves reflected in the Memorial's surface or inscribe their own names on it, they manage to externalize grief and mediate it through an interactive experience. The final case study of visual spaces comes from Julia Lossau who writes about the architectural transformation of Gorbals, the unkempt project district of Glasgow, whose modernization would never be complete without the element of public art, a sculpture called *The Gatekeeper*. According to Lossau, the sculpture complements the modernization process because through its theme it preserves the spatial memory of the old Gorbals while at the same time it retouching its negative aspects.

The last thematic section of *Visual Cultures* entitled "Mediality and Visuality" covers the problematic of power mechanisms that underlie the dissemination of information in the news media and the ways in which it is made intelligible to television and newspaper audiences. Michael Griffin's detailed analysis of the imagery in war reporting during the Gulf War and after the publication of Abu-Ghraib photos of torture shows how the media manipulate the images of war by detaching them from their contexts and thus voiding them of any meaningful reference. The discussion of medial power would not be complete without a reference to the workings of the Internet, and so the Web-based format of political communication becomes the topic of Caja Thimm's "The Visuals of Online Politics: Barack Obama's Web Campaign." In her discussion of how the Obama camp experimented with the medium of the Internet to exploit the visual aesthetics of participatory democracy, Thimm demonstrates that despite the ambivalent reception of the experiments, the camp's strategy did redefine the standards of political interaction with online communities and stimulated political activism of younger voters.

The final word of *Visual Cultures–Transatlantic Perspectives* comes with Robert Blaetz’s essay “Home Movies: Thoughts on Framing the Domestic Sphere in Experimental Cinema,” which isolates what Blaetz calls the gendered “tropes” of home movie-making in the films of Marjorie Keller, Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas and Marie Menken to mention only a few. As Blaetz argues, home-movie making defies in various ways the orderly normativity of conventional filmic narratives by deconstructing scopic regimes of imaging childhood, sexuality, and gendered space and time. Even if this essay represents the “Coda” section to the entire collection, it does not so much close the discussion of visual cultures at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century as open a new one, to be realized in another publication. All in all, therefore, the volume is a recommended read for any researcher in cultural studies as well as anyone willing to broaden their general knowledge how visual regimes structure all fields of contemporary cultural production.

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