

REVIEWS

Zbigniew Lewicki, *Igrzyska demokracji. Amerykańska kultura wyborcza* [Democracy Games: American Electoral Culture]. Warszawa: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2016. 221 pages.

After the last presidential election in America, the eyes of all people are turned towards the “City upon a Hill” more than ever, albeit for a different reason than in Winthrop’s times. Donald Trump’s presidential victory may not have come as an immense surprise given the populist turn in world politics; still, the fact that it is the USA that has just gained an unprepared and unpredictable leader is an outcome whose seriousness we are yet to appreciate. Given this new political context, Zbigniew Lewicki’s book seems to be a very good choice for those who want to understand the American electoral system that has just elected Trump.

The book’s comprehensive scope makes it a valuable reading both for Polish general audience, having only basic understanding of the American political system, and for those working within American studies who wish for an engaging, synthetic and vivid review of the electoral culture. Lewicki is interested not only in the present situation, but also in its historical development, which explains the intricacies (and sometimes apparent absurdities) of American politics. The reader will learn not only about presidential elections, but, more generally, about the right to vote and stand for election, the organization of elections, electoral campaigns, as well as state and judicial elections. The latter ones may be particularly interesting for the Polish audience, since the custom of electing judges and prosecutors in general elections is unique for America (with the exception of parts of Switzerland and Japanese Supreme Court, as Lewicki notes on page 188). Another chapter which may be very helpful for the Polish reader is one concerning the Electoral College; the book explains the historical reasons for its formation and draws attention to the possibility of a candidate’s winning the popular vote but losing the presidential election—a consequence of the College’s existence perhaps most exotic in the eyes of Europeans, not accustomed to the federal system of representation.

What makes the book particularly enjoyable are numerous anecdotes that pepper the historically and politically-oriented text. Thus we learn for example that Abraham Lincoln was called by his political opponents “a horrid looking wretch... sooty and scoundrelly in aspect, a cross between the nutmeg dealer, the horse swapper, and the night man, a creature ‘fit evidently for petty treason, small stratagems and all sorts of spoils’” (Boller 107), or that since both of Harry Truman’s grandfathers

had names starting with an “s,” in order to satisfy them both the future president’s parents decided to give the boy only “S.” as the middle name (Lewicki 113). The anecdotes are sometimes rather loosely connected to the main argument, but they prevent the text from acquiring features of a dry schoolbook. Additionally, Lewicki provides quite recent examples of political controversies, referring for instance to the 2000 presidential election in Florida, or the 2016 Clinton vs. Trump election, which makes the book more relevant for contemporary readers.

Interestingly, *Igrzyska demokracji* was finished in July 2016, that is several months before the results of the 2016 election. However, Lewicki’s diagnosis of the political situation is surprisingly valid even after Trump’s victory became known. First of all, the book stresses a strong possibility of Trump’s victory, correctly foretelling what has indeed happened. Second, the analysis of the presidential campaign and both candidates’ positions even now to a large extent explains Trump’s victory. The chapter on 2016, even though short, is probably the selling point of the book in the present situation. Contrary to many political commentators who wrote before the election’s results, Lewicki does not make light of Trump, pointing at the candidate’s use of controversial language and lack of political correctness differentiating him from political elites, his popularity among Latinos (despite his radical views on illegal immigration and the wall at the border with Mexico), as well as negative attitude of most Americans towards both Clinton and Trump.

The fact that the book has been written in Polish may suggest that its intended audience is predominantly the general Polish reader, not necessarily fluent in English. However, *Igrzyska* is an interesting and enjoyable read also for Americanists, with a potential of being used as one of suggested textbooks for students. A lack of index makes it bothersome to go back to specific fragments, but overall the book is useful and reader-friendly.

Work Cited

Boller, Paul F. *Presidential Campaigns*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.

Justyna Fruzińska
University of Łódź

Maureen Tuthill. *Health and Sickness in the Early American Novel: Social Affection and Eighteenth-Century Medicine*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 253 pages.

Intersectionality is a key term in the Palgrave Macmillan series Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine. Maureen Tuthill’s contribution to the series, *Health and Sickness in the Early American Novel*, is a study of several American novels from the years 1787-1808 which examines how they represent diseases and medical practices in the context of the medical and political discourses of that time.

The body of work the author analyzes includes Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple*, Charles Brockden Brown's "yellow fever novels," and Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive*. These literary works are examined in light of ideas derived from William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* and the medical tracts of Benjamin Rush, and political works written by Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, in an attempt to map out socially significant issues connected with medicine at the turn of the eighteenth century. Finally, the last analytical tool used in the book is the application of Foucauldian theories on medicine and power.

Tuthill's study examines how representations of medical and political discourses in literature often manifest themselves by means of tension between the individual and the community. Her analysis is divided into six chapters, although each pair of them clearly makes a common point: the first two examine the disciplinary practices of withholding medical intervention performed on a female body and refusal to seek medical help as a practice of dissent. The following two chapters discuss novels describing the yellow fever epidemic, and how they represent the notion of self-determined health. Later, the author explores the rise of the professional doctor, and how this change implicitly excludes the poor; the idea is elaborated in the last chapter, which focuses on Afro-American healing practices in relation to the position of the doctor figure, and a short epilogue discussing Native American healing practices.

Key tools in Tuthill's effort to historicize her reading are popular medical publications from the period. According to William Buchan, health was perceived in terms of personal responsibility and individual achievement, and thus as a private matter. The community may take some of this responsibility in acts of healing, but only up to a point and on the condition that the sick person meets social requirements. From this viewpoint, the eponymous character of Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* is an individual who fails to follow the rules of society, and that causes her illness and stops the community from helping her. Tuthill disagrees with common readings of the novel, which interpret the protagonist's sickness as a metaphor for her desire, and fail to consider its very nature to be a key element of the narrative. Referring to material feminism, she considers Charlotte's circumstances to be an effect of complex cultural and biological factors. Then, she exemplifies how Buchan's and Rush's medical thought is visible in the novel, for instance in her fainting: "[Fainting] could be caused, Buchan writes, by sudden transitions from cold to heat, 'great fatigue,' or 'excessive weakness' The causes of fainting that Buchan lists are almost identical to Charlotte's physical and mental states in Rowson's novel" (29). Understanding such episodes as material and bodily events, rather than metaphors, draws attention to the factors which have put her in that position. The illness is a bodily manifestation of her social alienation, and, at the same time, progresses because of the very isolation. Tuthill compares Charlotte to two other women in the novel, both in good health, which represents their affinity with the community, and their self-sufficiency. Through this comparison, the novel appears to be a criticism of friendship in the American society, which implies the need for self-sustenance.

Read this way, *Charlotte Temple* is a novel which dramatizes disconnection from the community, its bodily consequences, and self-centeredness as an American trait.

Tuthill pays attention to sickness as a real event. In her reasoning, the bodily fact of ailment informs and relates to other positionalities of the character, but it does so through the actual, carefully reconstructed connections that specify the situation of a sick person at the time, rather than through arbitrary meanings of illness imposed by the contemporary reader. This approach may seem counterintuitive at first, as, despite its focus on the bodily reality of sickness, the study does still discuss its numerous metaphors (such as the abovementioned lack of connection with the community), but it does involve the historic interpretations in order to inform the position of a sick character in a particular culture, rather than to ascribe any definitive meaning to the malady itself. The medical and political discourses Tuthill includes in her reasoning in an attempt to historicize her readings prove satisfactory in explaining the historic views on illness and its position in the predominant ideologies. However, too little space seems to be devoted to the discursive character of her study this method provokes. The author clearly posits her analysis in relation to pre-existing modes of thinking about early American novels, where sickness was mainly read as a metaphor, but scarcely does she refer to particular critical works on the subject, and when it happens, it does so in quite a narrow manner. Thus, to a reader unfamiliar with discussions of these particular novels, Tuthill may seem to be the only audible side of a meaningful conversation, where the other side is voiceless; I am convinced that a more comprehensive look into established critical analyses of these novels would benefit the study greatly.

The next chapter includes a discussion, where Tuthill shows how the Eliza from Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* is, again, ill due to her social transgression. This time the character is a member of her community, which uses medical intervention and withholding it as a corrective practice. Eliza's eventual demise is a result of her resistance and insistence on personal freedom, which breaches the status quo. This American collective consciousness is informed by Hamilton's *The Federalist* and Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which discuss the republic as an able body comprising healthy individuals, and transgression in terms of degeneracy that can be infectious. The community responds to Eliza's dissent with a corrective practice masked as a medical intervention, and, after a failure, it discontinues treatment in order to prevent the body politic from contamination.

Having mapped out the limitations of communal healing, Tuthill discusses self-determined health as an inherently American notion, because "for the pursuit of political liberty to make sense, early Americans had to believe that they could control their own biological realities" (82). Thus, self-interest is the predominant mode of thinking about medical intervention. In her analysis of Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* and *Ormond*, Tuthill discusses the reality of epidemic, which necessitates a paradigm of self-preservation. Brown emphasizes limits of communal healing and the necessity to control a humanitarian impulse. These ideas make way for the particular manner in which the figure of the doctor appears in the early

American novel. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the doctor represents a new, more scientific approach to medicine, which is an element alien to the community. His emergence is exemplified by Tuthill in the story of Doctor Updike Underhill's rise to respectability in Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive*. The author analyzes the protagonist as a profoundly egocentric individual, whose motivations are the respect he commands and financial rewards. He wishes to separate himself from the communities he heals, and perceive the patients as clients. This way, although Tuthill never states this explicitly, her analysis demonstrates how the novels of this period show the formative stages of the medical gaze.

The gaze of both doctor and author is, for obvious reasons, colorblind. The last chapter discusses how black bodies and their medical realities are hidden from the reader. On the rare occasions when they are not, they reinforce the idea of healing being imposed on those who belong; communal healing on the one hand takes the form of a doctor's medical intervention, when the slave owner calls him in order to preserve his slave (health thus becomes not only a commodity, but someone else's commodity; a slave's failing health is the owner's loss) and on the other is present as traditional practices preserved within slave communities. In an attempt to diversify her viewpoint, Tuthill ends book with an epilogue discussing shortly Native American healing practices, and examining how white Americans were inspired by them, but refused to give credit to their sources.

Tuthill fails to end her work on a high note, as the epilogue is hasty and perfunctory. While representations of black sickness are studied with commendable care for the particular position of a slave, the author's hurried dealing with the Native Americans seems downright tokenistic. It also highlights the main problem with this study: when the epilogue focuses on the analysis of an additional matter instead of concluding the whole argument, and when such a conclusion is nowhere to be found, it becomes clear how disjointed the monograph is as a whole. As a result, *Health and Sickness in the Early American Novel* seems to be content with proposing a method and demonstrating how it can be applied. Tuthill rarely makes authoritative statements about representations of healing practices in early American literature, and thus the study may at times seem to struggle with holding onto any general idea. Nevertheless, it is certainly an excellent exercise in historic reconstruction, as it carefully takes into account various medical and political stances on the issues discussed, proving how this method may help in unlocking meanings otherwise lost. Perhaps this strong foundation would have been better utilized, if it had posited itself more decidedly in relation to other critical readings. Nevertheless, the greatest achievement of the monograph is that it creates a space for debate, because Tuthill shows that the critical works on these novels all too often omit the bodily reality of sickness in literature in favor of the metaphoric possibilities, and demonstrates why in many cases such a search for hidden meanings may limit rather than broaden the literal reading.

Jarosław Milewski
University of Łódź

Katja Kanzler. *The Kitchen and the Factory: Spaces of Women's Work and the Negotiation of Social Difference in Antebellum American Literature*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter Heidelberg, 2016. 273 pages.

The title of Katja Kanzler's 2016 monograph, *The Kitchen and the Factory: Spaces of Women's Work and the Negotiation of Social Difference in Antebellum American Literature*, is largely self-explanatory: the full words included in it could double as keywords summing up the essence of the publication. In her study, the German scholar examines a large body of writings, both fiction and non-fiction, published in the United States before the American Civil War. While the extensive scope of her research is confirmed by the impressively long bibliographical list of primary sources, Kanzler focuses on what she refers to as the "spaces of feminine labor" (10), that is the two locations pointed out in the book's main title. In the author's own words, "the significance of kitchen and factory" (259) is that of "sites of history and of writing, sites whose 'modern' formations saw their beginning in the first half of the 19th century" (259). Thoroughly discussed though it is, "spatiality" is therefore far from being an end in itself, since Kanzler takes it as her starting point, enabling her to formulate theses and draw conclusions of a textual, cultural, social and political nature. The result is an interdisciplinary scholarly work which inscribes itself into several fields of knowledge: American literary, cultural and social studies, but also—or perhaps first of all—gender or, to be more precise, women's studies as well as ethnic studies.

The body of Kanzler's book is composed of three main chapters, preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion whose brevity may have been motivated by the author's understandable desire not to repeat herself in an exhaustive work in which a customary restatement of the key points may in fact be superfluous. The first of the chapters is a theoretical one, which, so to speak, sketches the background of the research undertaken by the monographer and deals with what she herself refers to as the "conceptual and interpretive impulses" (16) behind her own work. The two subsequent chapters are concerned with the kitchen and the factory respectively. Since all three chapters are long—the latter two consisting of a hundred pages each—it is no wonder they are split into subchapters, which in turn are usually subdivided into shorter segments. Though such a format may seem complicated, it is, as the author herself explains, justified by the wide range of writings which the monograph covers. "[T]he diversity of material" (14) is reflected in the various generic categories the writings in question fall into: Kanzler "trace[s] the kitchen in domestic novels from the North and from the South, in pro- and antislavery fiction, in slave narratives, in cookbooks and domestic advice manuals" (14), while "[t]he factories [she] discuss[es] find themselves in travelogues, sensation novels, in essays and short stories written by factory workers and by elite writers" (14). In addition to "genre or text type" (15), the monographer distinguishes two further categories which constitute her "principle[s] of organization" (15): "perspectives and frames" (15), both of them inextricably linked with the concept of spatiality, central to Kanzler's work.

Space being the pivot of her research, the monographer thoroughly delves into its symbolism and metaphorical dimension. Crucial to *The Kitchen and the Factory* are gender, racial and class issues, as is the notion of social injustice. This is particularly important in the context of the ideals underlying American democracy and the realities of a country “priding itself on its alleged egalitarianism” (257) and “the nation’s self-fashioning as classless” (257). Equally important is the fact that Kanzler closely investigates the various roles played by women in the two locations around which her monograph revolves, one of which—“the space of the family home” (21)—is traditionally perceived as par excellence feminine. The German scholar is also careful not to ignore the metaliterary dimension of the texts she examines, in keeping with her observation that “the kitchen and the factory enable specific reflections on the nature and role of writing” (257) seen “as a form of productivity and self-expression” (257). One particularly engaging issue that Kanzler deals with is the significance of the act of writing, especially to women. These are, of course, just a few of the many compelling aspects of the material under discussion in her book.

The Kitchen and the Factory is a clearly and thoroughly thought-out, arranged, written and documented study. In examining the texts which constitute the object of her research, Kanzler keeps a sense of proportion, paying attention to both content and form. Her analysis and interpretation of the works in question are both informative and inspirational. The author of the monograph is meticulous enough in her attention to detail, but never does she lose sight of the big picture. The arguments she puts forward and the conclusions she arrives at are logical, as is the whole text of her book, clear, coherent and comprehensible but not at the cost of being oversimplified.

The scope of Kanzler’s scholarship is indeed broad. She draws on a wide range of works in a double sense. Her primary sources, which include—in addition to well-known classics such as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*—a large body of literary and non-literary texts unheard-of even by Americanists, are numerous. This is also the case with the critical writings by various scholars and theoreticians Kanzler relies on, again making for a broad spectrum of theories which form the basis of her own findings. All this leads to her monograph being comprehensive and multidimensional. In *The Kitchen and the Factory*, intended as an exploration of, among other things, the “meanings of gender, class, and race” (28), Kanzler, who opens her book with an overview of the current state of research on the subject, ventures into territory which, despite the growing popularity of women’s and ethnic studies, remains largely uncharted. The monograph’s conclusion suggests the anticipatory character of the concerns voiced in the writings Kanzler investigates by briefly referring to tendencies which marked American literature in the second half of the nineteenth century and which are reflected in the bibliography of the subject. By doing so, not only does the monographer prove—once again—the importance of her research, but she also signals its open-ended nature, which is, inevitably and hopefully, that of all scholarly work.

Alicja Piechucka
University of Łódź

Joe B. Fulton. *Mark Twain Under Fire: Reception and Reputation, Criticism and Controversy, 1851-2015*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2016. 312 pages.

Joe B. Fulton, author of three previous books on Mark Twain, has written an excellently researched study of Mark Twain's reception among critics and literary scholars, since the first critical comments until today (or, more precisely, 2015). The book is an absolute must-read for every Twainian, but I'd recommend it to anyone with scholarly interest in American cultural and literary history since the evolution of Twain criticism is emblematic of the larger currents in the history of American taste, ideology, and of course literary criticism. What enhances the value of Fulton's study is its transnational dimension, as the book does not restrict itself to following the trends in Twain's reception in the English-speaking countries but makes in-depth comments on his reputation in continental Europe (mainly France and Germany), the Soviet Union and in Asia, demonstrating the truly global status of Mark Twain's reception (and the many political uses to which his writings were put).

Besides a brief introduction and rather laconic conclusions (and, to be sure, a bulky bibliography), the book consists of five long chapters dealing with Twain criticism in chronological order. The first chapter traces the trajectory of Twain's reputation in the writer's lifetime (i.e. until 1910), ending in the loud encomia heaped upon the "Lincoln of American literature" in the wake of awarding him an honorary doctorate of letters by Oxford University (1907). That appreciation did not come easy, though, as for a long time Twain was paying "the penalty of laughter," being relegated by some genteel critics to the ranks of such literary comedians as Artemus Ward or Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby. It took Twain a long uphill struggle for respectability to earn the praise of William Lyon Phelps in *The North American Review* (1907) putting Twain's "prose epics" in one rank with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Of course, not everybody agreed. Yet, as demonstrated by Fulton, many of America's greatest literary arbiters and scholars (Howells, Phelps, James Russell Lowell, Brander Matthews, William Trent, Barrett Wendell), ultimately came out in praise of the most "American" of all writers.

It was inevitable, perhaps, for the writer's reputation to decline somewhat after achieving such a high summit by 1910, especially because of inevitable evolution of literary tastes and ideological influences on the critics. The second chapter of Fulton's book, covering the period between 1910 and 1950 recounts the famous controversy stirred by Van Wyck Brooks's *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (1920) pointing to Twain's "deep malady of the soul," precipitated by the allegedly oppressive and suffocating influences of Twain's circle of family and friends, the "debilitating" influences of the American frontier, religion, and generally the crassness of the Gilded Age. Those influences conspired, claimed Brooks, in making Twain the artist a victim of the contemporary bourgeois culture and profit-oriented publishing business. While Brooks's opinion set the paradigm for Twain's reputation

among America's left wing intellectuals of the period, some came to his defense, both at home and abroad—including voices from abroad, demonstrating the uses Twain could be put to: a good friend of Germans (as pointed out by the University of Berlin professor and at the same time Nazi propagandist professor Friedrich Schönemann, in Fulton's opinion author of "one of the most important books on Mark Twain to appear in any language until after the World War"). The defense of Twain was also undertaken by Soviet critics, who saw in him a champion of labor, critic of capitalism, imperialism, and—not least important—of Russian tsar. Twain, along with Jack London and Upton Sinclair, was among the most popular American writers published in the Soviet Union before 1941, and often compared to an American Gogol or Czekhow.

In America, Brooks was trenchantly attacked by Bernard DeVoto, the second editor of Mark Twain's papers (after Alfred Bigelow Paine). DeVoto was defending Twain from a nationalistic position, seeing him as a "true" American representing the spirit of the frontier, and victim of undeserved attacks by anti-American Left. In Fuller's estimate, in the debate between Brooks and DeVoto, which dominated Twain scholarship in the decades between his death in 1910 and 1950, it was DeVoto who won, along with more positive estimate of main influences on Mark Twain's work.

The issue of Mark Twain's reception during the Cold War dominates the book's third chapter, covering the period from 1950 to 1970, and it is here that Fulton's international perspective becomes especially visible (and precious). As amply demonstrated by Fulton, in this period Twain's reputation becomes more than ever politicized, switching between a Soviet icon (with American Marxist critics like Morris Mendelson and Philip Foner largely following in the footsteps of the Soviet critics—Fulton bluntly calls them "the tools of the Soviet propaganda") and an American hero, as perceived through the lenses of both New Criticism (fitting Mark Twain into the great tradition of the picaresque) and the myth criticism best represented by Henry Nash Smith. Much of the Twainian scholarship in that period, as demonstrated in detail by Fulton, was preoccupied with the question of (in) completeness and legitimacy of subsequent editions of Twain's work, including the controversy over Charles Neider's edition of Twain's autobiography and *The Mysterious Stranger* manuscripts, along with Twain's religious iconoclasm marking the *Letters from the Earth* (published at last in 1962, having been long withheld from publication by Clara Clemens Samossoud).

The last two chapters cover the Twain scholarship since the 1970s, with Hamlin Hill's seminal book *Mark Twain: God's Fool* (1973) setting the agenda for Twain studies for a long time to come. Hill painted a "dark" portrait of Twain—particularly of his last years, including his insecurity, his often abusive treatment of his family, and even his alleged pedophilia. In Fulton's view, Hill's influential study in a way marked a return to Brooks's criticism, as well as to the psychology-oriented focus on the writer. Among the most important preoccupations of Twain critics in the late twentieth century, as demonstrated by Fulton, were the gender-studies

approaches, Twain's anti-imperialism and, perhaps most importantly, the issue of race, and racism—with views on *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* ranging from “the most grotesque example of racist trash ever written” (John H. Wallace) to Shelley Fisher Fishkin's controversial attempt to reclaim Twain for the American cultural left (*Was Huck Black*, 1993).

The tendency to harness Twain to one's political agenda has further intensified since the 90s, argues Fulton in the last chapter with a revealing title: “Mark Twain as a Partisan in the Culture Wars, 1990s to 2015,” where he demonstrates his own increasing discomfort with some of the more radical new “takes” on Twain, using this opportunity to question the value of some of the new approaches to the study of literature: “(t)he danger (not really a danger because so few people read these ardent exercises in liberalism) with American studies generally and with New Historicism, cultural studies, and more recently, Transnational Studies, is a political activism coupled with dilletantism.” Fulton ends his sweeping synthesis of Mark Twain's reception with calls for well-balanced approaches drawing on source studies and a thorough grounding in the history of Twain scholarship, as well as with a reassurance about unflagging popular interest in Twain which “dwarfs the interest in any other American writer.” Which all Twainians—domestic and global—may only wish is, and will long remain, true.

Piotr Skurowski

University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw

Anna Hartnell. *Rewriting Exodus: American Futures from Du Bois to Obama*. London: Pluto Press, 2011. 283 pages.

Anna Hartnell's study examines the rewritings of the Exodus narrative in the works of five African American thinkers: W.E.B Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Toni Morrison, and Barack Obama. The Judeo-Christian biblical story of Moses and his people has been central for the construction of American identity since the colonial days, and the idea of a chosen nation and escape from subjugation has long informed the myths of American freedom and exceptionalism. In turn, African American renditions of the story have deconstructed its hegemonic version, rigorously critiquing the American ideal and exposing the US as the land of slavery and oppression. Hartnell argues that scholars have frequently overlooked the ways in which these investments in religious discourse and the religious meanings of race have been central to the most radical strands of African American dissent. She contextualizes her rhetorical analysis of different recasting of the Exodus trope by positioning it in relation to contemporary conflicts in the Middle East.

The structurally circular study opens with an examination of Barack Obama, and the following chapters illuminate his intellectual debt to the earlier black thinkers and the black Exodus tradition. Hartnell shows how the rhetorical construction of Obama's political identity challenges the binary lines of thought and polar divisions into accommodationism and separatism, racial and national loyalties,

American exceptionalism and the black Exodus narrative. Drawing on the black jeremiad paradigm, which privileges the moment of liberation over the assumption of the chosen nation's power, he manages to rewrite hegemonic exceptionalism into a protest and reform narrative. Hartnell claims that Obama's rhetorical identification with the oppressed is indebted to his experience at Trinity United Church of Christ and its black liberation theology, and she demonstrates how he combines allusions to the tradition of black messianism, Zionism, and the Civil Rights narrative to navigate the tensions among the black, Jewish, and Muslim worlds. In her rhetorical analysis, she does not neglect the structural conditions, in which Obama, as a representative of the state, has pragmatically more limited possibilities for explicit criticism of American state memory and hegemonic mythology.

In the second chapter, Hartnell revisits one of the most canonical texts of African American literature, W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, and one of the most influential concepts in black thought, double consciousness. Focusing on the Hegelian master/slave dialectic, an oft-cited intertext for Du Bois's seminal notion, she shows how its appropriation reveals the Exodus tropes of "Egyptland" and "Canaan" as well as other religious dimensions in his texts. Hartnell contends that religious meanings of the concept of race enable the critical impact of his condemnation of white supremacy, slavery, and colonialism. In his radical vision of the future, he metaphorically identifies the dark races as God's chosen people, and simultaneously voices his support for the Zionist movement and Jewish statehood. Moreover, both Hebraism and Zionism deeply inform his vision of Pan-Africanism, and accordingly, his teleological thinking about black liberation parallels the Jewish vision of the unredeemed world rather than Christian eternal salvation.

In her reading of Martin Luther King, Hartnell uncovers a more radical politics than is traditionally associated with his popular image, and she again sees this as inherently related to his privileging of the Exodus narrative over the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resultant atonement. Just as in the case of Du Bois's appropriations of the Judeo-Christian bible, she points to the central significance of Jewishness in King's thought, and uses it to elucidate his championing of the black-Jewish alliance, political support for the state of Israel, and understanding of the Six-Day War of 1967 as an anti-colonial struggle. Significantly, contrary to the traditional view of the Civil Rights Movement's embrace of American exceptionalism, Hartnell argues that King's recasting of Exodus enables him to express transnational identifications with the oppressed and colonized.

In contrast to the previous thinkers, Malcolm X, influenced by the Nation of Islam and its identification with the African civilization rather than the Hebrew slaves, reclaims a black Egypt in his appropriation of the Exodus narrative. Hartnell examines this rhetorical shift to explain the break of the black-Jewish alliance in the 1960s. Malcolm X's critique of Europeanized Christianity does not leave any hope for its recovery, and he proposes the indigenously African Islam as the only viable alternative. According to Hartnell, his subsequent falling out with the Nation of Islam and travels the Middle East and Africa enabled Malcolm X to give the trope of

Egypt a Pan-African dimension but also made the oppositions between the Islam and Judeo-Christian world or white and black races less polarized and more ambivalent.

The last chapter of Hartnell's book uses Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1998) to comment on the male thinkers and their rewritings of the bible. In her novel, Morrison explicitly recasts the Exodus narrative and reveals its necessarily reactionary character. She juxtaposes the Promised Land in the form of an all-black town with the inclusive space of the old convent inhabited by women. As the Ruby's black community starts to embrace the notion of racial separatism and bourgeois prosperity gospel, it surrenders to the logic of oppression it was founded to resist. In Hartnell's complex reading, the novel's representation of the settlement is a critical commentary on American and Israeli state violence as well as on the Civil Rights and the Black Power movement. Yet she avoids conflating these distinct phenomena and points to marked distinctions among them. As Hartnell shows, the novel offers an interesting feminist revision of patriarchal Afrocentrism and Black Nationalism: it foregrounds the significance of African heritage, and at the same time problematizes the idealization of black Egypt. She argues that despite the novel's vehement criticism of religious dogmatism, it retains hope for "the redemptive possibilities of the black experience, including its religious traditions" (208), and thus parallels the rewritings of the Exodus narrative of Du Bois, King, Malcolm X and Obama.

In her coda to the study, Hartnell analyzes the residual traces of the black Exodus myth in post-Katrina discourse, in which unhomey/Unheimlich images and tropes of slavery question the status of the US as a promised land. She discusses how Obama's campaign repetitively referred to the hurricane and used New Orleans as a symbol of rebirth and renewal, yet his post-election actions as a representative of a world superpower departed from the rhetoric of redemptive hope.

Hartnell's reading of the towering figures of the African American tradition manages to meaningfully add to a large body of writing devoted to them, and her tracing of their rewritings of the black Exodus narrative enables her to broaden our understanding of these iconic thinkers. In her theoretically sophisticated analysis, she manages to combine insights from methodologies as diverse as postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and religious studies, and pay attention to the political complexities of the US, the Middle East, and Africa, to which the black Exodus narratives speak. The book is an important addition to African American studies.

Anna Pochmara
University of Warsaw

Peter Swirski. *American Crime Fiction: A Cultural History of Nobrow Literature as Art*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 222 pages.

Nelson DeMille is a multiple *New York Times* bestseller who specializes in several popular genres that frequently rub shoulders with each other: crime fiction, police mystery, action thriller, and military adventure. There is a high probability, however, that few if any academics have ever heard of him, not because he is a bad writer

but because most academics rarely go slumming in the popular (not to say lower) strata of the book world in search of good literature. *American Crime Fiction* sets out to correct this omission, along dozens of others. It does it with stylistic grace and intellectual erudition, not to mention irrepressible wit and humor, that bring to mind the cultural journalism of early Mark Twain and the historical panorama of classic TimeLife reportages.

Beginning with his bestselling study *From Lowbrow to Nobrow* (2005), which is graced with a handsome endorsement from the late doyen of popular culture studies, Ray B. Browne (who declared that this book single-handedly made all previous popular culture studies moot), Peter Swirski has made a career of investigating the cultural “badlands” where high art and mass culture meet, often to surprising and innovative effects. The case in point is one of the twin literary subjects of Chapter 6 of *American Crime Fiction*, Nelson DeMille (the other is the chronicler of the Jazz Age and author of *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald). As Swirski tells the story, in the middle of a busy career as a writer of capable yet undistinguished police procedurals, DeMille did something few expected of him, and even less of the type of literature that he represents for the highbrows: popular, entertaining, and easy to read. As becomes apparent from the personal interviews that Swirski conducted with DeMille, which add an additional layer of interest in the story, driven by a lifelong fascination with *The Great Gatsby* and by the fecund history of Long Island on which *Gatsby* is set (and where DeMille grew up and currently resides), the ambitious writer decided to write a “ultimate nobrow novel” (158), a crossover between F. Scott Fitzgerald’s timeless classic and Mario Puzo’s timeless genre classic *The Godfather*.

The dimension of the project can be measured not just by the fact that a genre entertainer adopted as his model a canonical American novel which, as Swirski tells us, was even staged recently as a six-hour marathon stage performance hailed by the *New York Times* as the “most remarkable achievement in theater not only of this year but also of this decade” (158). DeMille attempted something arguably much harder still, which is to combine the American themes and tragic tonality of *The Great Gatsby* with those of an equally famous blockbuster in a pulp-fiction/mass-culture mode. This blockbuster is none other than *The Godfather* (the original novel, not the Academy Award winning film) which, as we learn from *American Crime Fiction*, comes with its own distinguished pedigree: “thirty-plus million copies sold, translations into all the major, many minor, and some languages that most people have never even heard of, and Hollywood adaptations so iconic that real-life mafiosi would reportedly imitate what they saw on the big-screen” (158). It takes chutzpah, or as Hemingway might have said it cojones, to combine the canon with the mass market, but this is exactly what DeMille attempted and apparently accomplished according to Swirski, who devotes the concluding chapter to *The Great Gatsby* reincarnated as *The Gold Coast*.

Swirski’s terms for this mélange of highbrow and lowbrow cultures is “artertainment” (23), a typically playful portmanteau coinage which encapsulates

the coming together of two different traditions, literary registers, and aesthetic traditions. Art, as he points out in the opening chapter entitled “Nobrow” (another portmanteau neologism), has been traditionally maintained by the highbrows to be free of the vices of the lowbrows. Mass audiences, on the other hand, were too busy buying and consuming what they liked to argue their case for their kind of culture and the kind of aesthetics. Swirski’s forte in *American Crime Fiction*, as in his previous bestselling studies, such as *Ars Americana*, *Ars Politica* (2010), *American Utopia and Social Engineering* (2011), and *American Political Fictions* (2015), is to explore this highly politicized region of contemporary culture where the artistic highs meet the artistic lows (and not by accident either).

Author of several award-winning studies of American literature and culture, and in his spare time the world expert on the bestselling Polish author and futurologist Stanislaw Lem, Swirski is not only a flat-out good writer (as proclaimed by none other than Nelson DeMille on his website), but that rare type of academic whose intellectual clarity is matched by intellectual curiosity, both of which take him to places not very many American Studies scholars ever visit. Going by the titles of his previous books, Swirski has written on computer literature, philosophy of mind, evolution, social studies, urban studies, game theory, philosophy of science, literature and science, and analytic aesthetic, not to mention more mundane subjects such as American history, politics, (rap) music, cinema, television, journalism, and last but not least popular fiction and popular culture.

Against the background of this intellectual cornucopia, *American Crime Fiction* is more focused, is this is the correct way to describe crime fiction, a genre which sells, as Swirski reminds us, a quarter of all books sold in the United States and probably around the world. Facing up to the problem of representativeness, Swirski proposes to focus on writers who have come to personify the American variety of crime fiction. Interestingly, next to the hard-boiled classics such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, Swirski discusses William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway who, as he makes apparent, have also written hard-boiled fiction, albeit with different degrees of success. It is also interesting to see a long discussion on John Grisham who has come to personify the genre of legal fiction. Although Swirski is not blind to the contributions Grisham made to the genre or to the cause of disseminating the fundamentals of legal knowledge among Americans at large, he does not pull punches when discussing Grisham’s stylistics, which more often than not come down to “wooden prose, replete with verbal splinters” (52).

In addition to these crime fiction giants, *American Crime Fiction* brings up literally dozens of others, giving a rich texture and historical depth to this panoramic study which, as the subtitle prompts, aims to become *A Cultural History of Nobrow Literature as Art*. True to the subtitle, American history provides the background to every book and every writer discussed in any detail, with fascinating information on Al Capone, the infamous syndicated gangsters known as the Group of Seven, Enron, the Ford Pinto trial, the history of the American police forces, the history of policewomen on the force, and even the story behind the discovery of the so-called Mafia Ten Commandments.

The only thing that mars this otherwise outstanding study comes at the very end. The publisher Palgrave Macmillan seems to have botched the index, which is at times a bit inconsistent in format and in one instance downright puzzling (what does the note on page 211 about “n” referring to notes refer to?). Barring this odd reference to what does not appear in the index, which in most likelihood will be of relevance only to bibliophiles, this is a valuable addition American Studies and American cultural studies. As for why, here is the final paragraph of *American Crime Fiction*:

In the second decade of the third millennium, even as homicide in America rides a low tide, crime at large rides high, still a shortcut to this or that dreamer’s American Dream. Drug prohibition still funnels users toward dealers and still fuels death. In 2008 drug overdoses in the United States overtook car crashes as the main cause of accidental death. And if you get tired of statistics, there is always crime fiction waiting in the wings to satisfy the atavistic need coiled at the base of every reader’s thalamus to vicariously experience the primal crime of passion, power, or revenge and to witness the dispensation of legal—or at least poetic—justice. (183)

L. Atkins
University of Hong Kong

Marek Paryż, ed. *Bitnicy* [The Beat Writers]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016. 305 pages.

The transnational legend of the Beat Generation as American culture’s chief revolutionaries and outlaws has always found strong resonance in Poland, where their counter-cultural thrust had a profound influence on literature, in particular during the Cold War period. In his most recent study of transnationalism and Cold War poetry, Justin Quinn argues that it was particularly Allen Ginsberg, who in his travels, interests and friendships served as a “conduit from one side of the Iron Curtain” (8) to the other: “Instead of going through Paris or some other world literature metropolis, Ginsberg occupied a locus of global conflict—the seam that ran between East and West—and wrote poetry in that zone (‘Kral Majales’ was written on the plane to London after his expulsion from Czechoslovakia) and about that zone” (Quinn, 8). Ginsberg’s active involvement in the Prague Spring of 1965 has certainly increased his popularity on both sides of the Atlantic, greatly fostering his reception in Poland. As observed further by Quinn, in Eastern Europe, “Ginsberg’s own difficulties with authorities of various kinds in the US—medical, educational, legal—also become an allegory of the artist under communism” (87). Quite recently, this legend as well as the unique status of Beat writers in Poland, especially Kerouac and Ginsberg, has been revived by two monumental and meticulously annotated volumes of Ginsberg’s letters (Jack Kerouac i Allen Ginsberg: *Listy* [2012]; Ginsberg: *Listy* [2014], Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, trans. Krzysztof Majer). The

correspondence spans the whole period of Ginsberg's fascinating career, providing a rich and nuanced insight into the growth of the poet and his legend within the cultural, social and political context of his time. Furthermore, a comprehensive, panoramic and transnational perspective on the development of the countercultural movements of the 60s is offered by Jerzy Jarniewicz in *All You Need is Love: Sceny z życia kontrkultury* (Kraków: Znak, 2016), which embraces music, literature, performance and the visual arts. This revisionary trend has been confirmed by the publication of the book under my consideration: the collection of essays edited by Marek Paryż and published in the popular series "Mistrzowie literatury amerykańskiej" [Masters of American Literature].

Bitnicy addresses the general audience but at the same time goes beyond canonical figures, texts and anecdotes, offering a much broader and more diversified portrait of the generation's artistic output. The fifteen texts authored by Polish Americanists focus on the more recent revisions and supplementations of the historical, cultural and literary contexts informing the legacy and writings of the eponymous movement. The scope of the presented studies is generously inclusive, as it embraces refreshing insights into the lesser-known beginnings of the Beat Generation (e.g. Marek Paryż's essay, which chronicles the earlier history of the group, and Tadeusz Pióro's piece on the early writings of William Burroughs), the contexts for its consolidation (e.g. Mirosław Miernik's insights into the significance of the hipster subculture and jargon for the shaping of the group's identity, mythology and language) and interesting studies of the group's cultural and social diversity (e.g. Ewa Łuczak's article on the relationship between the Beats and African American poetry, or Marek Paryż's and Alicja Piechucka's essays on the women writers of the generation). The collection's thematic and critical richness stems also from the inclusion of diverse genres and media—the articles refer to novels, poems, journals, memoirs, autobiographies, letters (e.g. Jerzy Durczak's article "Listy i mity" on the epistolary exchange between Kerouac and Ginsberg) and films (e.g. Tomasz Sawczuk's overview of mainstream cultural and cinematic representations). An intriguing bonus is an insert of black-and-white panels from Marianna Strychowska and Łukasz Muniowski's graphic narrative based on the life of Jack Kerouac.

All of the collected articles show that there is much more to the Generation than the canonized Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs and Corso, echoing the latter's famous protestation that "four people do not a generation make." The usual roster is thus supplemented by individual portraits of the poets and writers who have earned less eminent positions within the group or were more loosely associated with it, but who have nevertheless contributed to the development of the Beat mythology, diversifying the group's social make-up and the styles of counter-cultural expression. Marek Paryż's essay on John Clellon Holmes's *roman à clef* *Go* (1952), considered the first Beat novel, and Paweł Marcinkiewicz's discussion of Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America* (1967) uncover a complex dynamic between the core members and their less acclaimed colleagues, indicating also trajectories of retrospective perceptions of literary coteries. Since they were always relegated

to the second tier of the Beat landscape, those writers' relation to Beat leaders and ideals were more vexed, resulting also in greater anxiety of influence, and, as in the case of Brautigan, a desire to expand the founders' aesthetic frameworks. With a somewhat similar intention of diversifying the Beat circle, Andrzej Pietrasz focuses on Lawrence Ferlinghetti, not as the first publisher of *Howl* or the editor who fostered the publication of the Beats' poetry but as a poet in his own right. While the latter shared the Beats' indictment of American consumerism and their skepticism towards the idealistic vision of America, he created an original artistic idiom, enriched by his leftist views, fascination with Buddhism and engagement with abstract and surrealist art. The above mentioned essays clearly attempt to redress critical neglect of those figures, enlarging our definition as well as understanding of the Beat network. This is especially true as regards the women writers of the generation, here discussed in two essays by Alicja Piechucka and Marek Paryż.

As noted by Corso in response to a question about the absence of women in their midst: "There were women, they were there, I knew them, their families put them in institutions, they were given the electric shock. In the 50s if you were male you could be a rebel, but if you were female, your families locked you up. There were the cases, I knew them, some day someone will write about them" (qtd. in Knight, 141). Naturally, such attempts have been made, e.g. in Brenda Knight's book-study *Women of the Beat Generation: The Writers, Artists, and Muses at the Heart of a Revolution* (1996), Richard Peabody's *A Different Beat: Writings By Women of the Beat Generation* (1997), Ronna C. Johnson and Nancy M. Grace's edited collection *Girls Who Wore Black: Women Writing of the Beat Generation* (2002), and more recent essays: "Gender Performance in the Literature of the Female Beats" by Gillian Thomson (2011) and "On the Road Without a Map: Women of the Beat Writers" by Jean Stefancic (2013). In Poland, however, the women writers of the Beat Generation are basically unknown and have only recently begun to appear in translation (e.g. Jędrzej Polak's translation of Diane di Prima's *Memoirs of a Beatnik* [2013]). It is thus a pity that the collection features only two essays on the female Beats: Marek Paryż's piece on di Prima and Alicja Piechucka's presentation of Joyce Johnson. Both sketches are valuable and engaging, although very selective, which prevents their authors from painting a more comprehensive picture of the movement's gender dynamics. Perhaps a well-placed overview essay of gender concerns in the Beat circle would solve the problem, especially given the conspicuous absence of such recognized talents as Anne Waldman, Joanne Kyger, Hettie Jones, Janine Pommy Vega, or Sandra Hochman, whose poetic voices stand on their own rather than as "minor characters" in the Beat landscape, thus meriting a context- and form-oriented discussion analogous to that received by the male writers in the collection.

This, however, does not diminish the value of the two essays included in the book: the articles differ considerably in terms of approach, but they work well in tandem, exemplifying various positions of the female Beats within the period's cultural site. Piechucka's sketch on Johnson's memoir *Minor Characters* offers very interesting insights into the diverse social roles played by the women in the Beat

movement. The argument is structured along then dominant gender codes (mother, wife, and lover), but it lacks contexts broader than the autobiographical or a clear critical perspective which could problematize the women's (and Johnson's own) contribution to the movement. For example, it would be interesting to discuss the primacy of memoir in the writings by the Beat women and the issue of gender performativity (cf. Thomson). The scholar works primarily with the source text, which is both an advantage and a certain limitation—the reader receives a more sustained and vivid portrait of Johnson but the lack of the current scholarship on the subject is rather poignant and ultimately narrows down the author's conclusions. Regrettably, the thematic sections' quirky subtitles adopted from Polish literature and popular culture obscure rather than clarify the author's observations, weakening the argument about the literary and cultural significance of Johnson's text (also through their slightly dismissive and flimsy tone).

While Piechucka's findings confirm the ancillary position of women in the Beat circle and present their artistic identities as incomplete projects, dependent on their male contemporaries and partners, Paryż's study of di Prima attempts to counteract this popular dismissive reception of the Beat women's creative work. Namely, it uses the memoir to trace its author's search for greater aesthetic independence and her need to carve an identity for herself within the predominantly male "gang" which tended to marginalize, dismiss and objectify women members. Focusing on di Prima's use of pornographic conventions and the self-reflexive character of the memoir, Paryż persuasively shows how the poet probes and stretches normative perceptions of sexual, familial and gender relations, to make visible women's desires and limitations and to challenge the masculine dominance over artistic innovation.

A similar desire to remedy important omissions in the Beat popular canon can be found in Ewa Łuczak's essay on the relationship between the movement and African-American poetry. As shown also in other texts in the volume, although African American culture provided the Beats with a language as well as certain formal and social paradigms, black writers are rarely discussed in connection with the movement's literary scene. The critic singles out one of the most prominent members of Black Beat—Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones. As noted by the author, the poet went through various stylistic and ideological incarnations, moving from a Beat-inflected confessionalism towards a black-nationalist orientation. Łuczak convincingly examines the seeds of that transformation evolving from his early volume *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note* (1960). As is evident in the stylistic and thematic focus of those early poems, Baraka was initially attracted to the Beat aesthetic, expressive of disillusionment with mainstream culture and its conformity, but soon he radicalized his views and found the self-centered, bohemian and apolitical mode of the Beats insufficient. In her close reading of the poems, Łuczak reveals the tension between the Beat individualist spirit and Baraka's budding activist ethic which led to his later vision of poetry as a form of political intervention. The article is very interesting and I regret that the author has limited her findings to Baraka,

leaving out other poets who rebelled against the Beat interracial bohemia, (e.g. the jazz-surrealists Bob Kaufman and Ted Joans) as a broader and more comprehensive investigation of the Black Beat poets would deepen our understanding of the Beat's political commitments.

Apart from the above attempts to remap as well as enlarge the social and aesthetic landscape of the Beat movement, the volume also complexifies the popular reception of the group's key members. A very good example of this tendency is Krzysztof Majer's well-researched and informative essay which examines Jack Kerouac's French-Canadian origins, tracing the poet's counter-cultural status and original idiom to the subversive thrust of the Quebecois literature and ideology. As persuasively argued by Majer, who follows the recent francophone reception of the author in Canada, Kerouac's vision of literature could have been shaped by his split cultural identity, the core of which is informed by the tension between the Quebecois obsession with memory and the past, and the American urge to "make it new."

Another take on the two "Kings" of the Generation—Kerouac and Ginsberg—can be found in the essay by Jerzy Durczak, devoted to their epistolary exchange. The letters prove a rich and illuminating source of the Beat leaders' opinions, dreams, anxieties and aesthetic quarrels, and the juicy fragments cited in the study create an appetite for a more detailed analysis of the collection. As interestingly shown by the scholar, the popular image of the poets as restless spiritual questers, illuminated hipsters, liberal thinkers and social rebels fighting for the freedom of expression does not find its confirmation in the letters which, somewhat surprisingly, often reveal the less bohemian and more conservative views.

Justyna Kociatkiewicz's rereading of *On the Road* has a similar function in the volume—using bebop as a formal and political paradigm for the study of Kerouac's "spontaneous prose," the author critically interrogates the ideological underpinnings of the narrative, demonstrating a contrast between, on the one hand, the loose, improvisational form and its attendant ideals of freedom, inclusiveness, democracy, and openness, and, on the other, the often racist and misogynist content of the narrator's outpourings. In the analysis, Dean Moriarty—the novel's exemplary bohemian figure—proves a rather careless and narcissistic man, focused mostly on his own disillusionment and confusion, and incapable of seeing the suffering of others on the way to his self-discovery. The reading moves the usual focus from the autobiographical to the formal and social contexts, tapping into the most current scholarship which evidences the group's imbrication in the era's social norms and political codes. The juxtaposition of the novel's jazz form with its solipsistic concerns enlarges our understanding of the Beats' superficial relation to the hipster language and ethos as well as the limits to their identification with the worldviews of disenfranchised cultures and social groups.

Kerouac is also the subject of Łukasz Muniowski's article on Jack Duluoz—the writer's alter ego, whose development is depicted in a cycle of lesser-known novels, including *Visions of Gerard*, *Doctor Sax*, *Vanity of Duluoz*, *The Town and the City*, *Lonesome Traveller*, *Tristessa*, *Satori in Paris*, *Maggie Cassidy*, *Dharma*

Bums and *Big Sur*. Muniowski discusses the latter three in greater detail, focusing on the topic of self-creation, the resonance of the Beat ethos and the trajectory of the writer's formal growth. The article extends the popular reception of Kerouac which rarely goes beyond the legend of *On the Road*, but it also examines the writer's life struggle with the aura of the "King of the Beats," which ultimately proved a heavy and destructive burden for his literary ambitions and later writing.

An interesting revisionist view of the Beat canon is offered by Jacek Gutorow, who examines Allen Ginsberg's early poetry, usually dismissed by critics, and discusses it as an important and formally imaginative foundation for the development of his mature style. The essay focuses on the poem "Siesta in Xbalba," written during Ginsberg's 1954 sojourn in Mexico. Gutorow offers an astute, broadly contextualized, and meticulously argued study, not only very sympathetic to the poet's early development—certainly encouraging one to seek more connections between the early and later Ginsberg—but also revealing the poet's creative absorption of and dialogue with modernist aesthetic practice, especially T. S. Eliot's understanding of tradition and his mythic method.

Given the above, the collection is an engaging, diversified and informative read, although individual essays can be slightly uneven. With the notoriously eccentric and scandalous careers of the Beats, there is always a danger of overemphasizing the autobiographical element in critical studies, and some of the articles in the volume are not entirely free of that bias. The collection could have also benefited from more synthetic overviews of the movement's gender, ethnic and racial dynamics. However, the general picture of the Beats which emerges from the study is multi-dimensional, rich in contexts, and of potential interest to both the general and more specialized reader. The value of both the individual studies and the overview articles is that, while showcasing certain (often less-celebrated) figures of the group, they relate to larger social, aesthetic and cultural concerns that are involved in the Beat history and writings, outlining the grounds and directions for further, more detailed investigations of the movement's enduring legacy.

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Paulina Ambroży
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Philip Loeffler. *Pluralist Desires: Contemporary Historical Fiction and the End of the Cold War*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2015. 182 pages.

The title of Loeffler's book is very promising as it implies a discussion of a literary genre in a time of upheaval that has undermined forty five years of precarious world balance. The starting point of Loeffler's argument is Spielberg's movie *Saving Private Ryan* which, the author claims, may serve as an example of a replacement of "the idea of historical truth with that of historical experience" (1), that is of an attempt "to privatize history" (5), a tendency characterizing the cultural production of the post-Cold War period. The focus on the individual experience of the historical, on "writing of history as a private, idiosyncratic form of self-creation" (6) and a search for meaning "in a time when meaning seems absent" (10) will be the basis for Loeffler's in-depth analyses of selected novels by Don DeLillo, Toni Morrison, Philip Roth and Richard Powers. At this point one may ask if there is such a thing as "historical truth" and if so whether to expect it of historical fiction, whose purpose has always been the presentation of individual experience within a larger historical context, and if writing has not always served as a means of self-creation and of orchestration of external (and internal) turmoil.

The introductory Chapter One ("The Uses of History: From Nineteenth-Century Historicism to Twenty-First Century Pluralism") might provide answers to these questions, yet it proves more puzzling than clarifying: peppered with erudite references to numerous philosophers, including Darwin, Hegel, Marx, James, Nietzsche, Hartman and de Man, the argument dismantles the major points of the title's promise. Thus the author first deflects the validity of his own presentation of the tradition of plurality (26), and then undermines the logic of his choice of literary texts to be discussed as they "have occurred in tandem with, but by no means in reaction to, the end of the Cold War" (29). The reader is left with an unpleasant feeling that the catch phrases of the title are glued onto a not-quite-coherent whole. Indeed the reading of the subsequent chapters seems to confirm this feeling: there

is no apparent link between the four analyses Loeffler offers apart from what he has already pinpointed as his arbitrary construction—the texts were published after 1989 and they refer to American history. In other words, *Pluralist Desires* is simply a collection of four essays on four contemporary American writers, arbitrarily put together under nice-sounding but vague generalities. The lack of definitions that would regulate and unify the argument is perhaps the reviewer's major reservation. As it is, Loeffler makes use of various concepts he delineates in the introduction to structure subsequent chapters, but the connection between the particular analyses remains unclear.

Chapter Two, devoted primarily to Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, attempts at covering major points in the critical discussion of the novel including the relationship between baseball and the Cold War, the failure of postmodernism "as a meaningful theory pool of the 1970s and 1980s" (46), and the means of "self-creation that will define life after the Cold War" (47). Yet instead of taking into account the totality of DeLillo's text to suggest the directions such self-creation may take, Loeffler moves on to discuss *Mao II* and *Cosmopolis* which, even if they fit this point of the author's argument, have no claim to be historical novels. It is also unclear why he chooses to attribute to DeLillo a "quite specific interest in historical writing" (59) when *Underworld* is DeLillo's only historical novel to date. Perhaps a definition of the term "historical novel" would dispel readerly reservations, but no such definition is offered.

The discussion of Morrison's work in Chapter Three is better sustained and more coherent, even if the thesis makes it unclear what the word "history" means when used in the phrase "historical novel" as a genre and in the phrase "historical experience" of Morrison's protagonists. A picky reader would also point out that Morrison's earlier novels, published before the end of the Cold War, display the same characteristics that Loeffler discusses, while *Beloved* and *A Mercy* seem to fall into a familiar Morrison paradigm of re-telling Afro-American history in an Afro-American manner.

Chapters Four and Five are much more interesting in that they deal with slightly less critically popular texts (Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* trilogy and Richard Powers' *Plowing the Dark*), which gives Loeffler space for his own interpretation and argumentation. Yet again, neither the notion of "pluralist desires" nor of the "historical novel" seems to play a particular role in the discussion. In both chapters Loeffler refers to the Nietzschean notion of "plastic power," the artistic talent of a good historian to organize the chaos of history, but it is unclear whether this power is to be attributed to the writers themselves or to the (artistic) characters they create. And again, Loeffler unwittingly indicates his problem in defining the historical novel when in one paragraph he seems to use three terms—"contemporary novel," "contemporary historical novel," and the novel as a genre (127)—as if these were fully synonymous.

The very brief "Epilogue" which serves in the place of conclusions repeats the reservations set in the opening chapter of the book concerning the historical and

cultural importance of 1989 as a caesura. Interestingly, avoiding a restatement of a common point of his argument, Loeffler uses the phrase “the larger idea behind that project” (144), in a way confirming the reader’s feeling that there is no clearly stated thesis that would circumscribe and structure his discussion. In effect, one may ask to what kind of audience Loeffler’s book is addressed—a question that gains more and more importance in the field of humanities. An uninitiated reader will find Loeffler’s text too inaccessible with its references to philosophy and high-brow literary criticism; a student will struggle with its convoluted style marked by heavy reliance on litotes, as well as its meandering between critical terminology and the simplifying use of “we” denoting the totality of (reading) community; a fellow academician, lured by the title, may bemoan the vagueness of the discussion and its lack of actual novelty. For all its proclaimed ambitions, *Pluralist Desires* seems yet another book necessitated by the bureaucratic requirements of academic promotion.

Justyna Kociatkiewicz
University of Wrocław

Małgorzata Rutkowska. *Koty, psy i ludzie. Zwierzęta domowe w literaturze amerykańskiej* [Cats, Dogs, and People: Pets in American Literature]. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2016. 228 pages.

Małgorzata Rutkowska’s book about pets in American literature is part of the outburst of interest in animal studies, which has taken the American humanities by storm and which is clearly making its way to Poland. Within literary criticism, the animal studies perspective has opened the possibility of novel and fascinating readings of well-known literary texts. The sheer enthusiasm of animal studies scholars reminds one of the early days of feminist criticism, as critics take on Melville’s and Hemingway’s oeuvres using a new critical lens. However, this is not what Rutkowska does. Her enthusiasm is equally strong, yet her goal is to analyze non-canonical fiction, usually considered minor literature. The lynchpin of the texts she is interested in is the foregrounding of the figure of the domestic animal; either as the narrator (animal autobiographies) or as the main subject of the book (contemporary pet memoirs). The author also takes on the challenge of simultaneously presenting and analyzing American texts that have largely not been translated into Polish for the Polish reader. The Polish title of the book is somewhat misleading: Rutkowska writes not only about cats and dogs but also about other pets: including a turtle and a pig. The problem is, of course, largely linguistic: the lack of an exact equivalent of the word pet in Polish is itself worthy of academic analysis. Rutkowska’s probing of the wild/domestic boundary also requires incorporating texts that feature wild animals. In fact, the main thesis of the book is that the entire tradition of the “pet memoir” is a form of resistance to the cult of wilderness in American fiction.

The gist of the first chapter is devoted to a discussion of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pet autobiographies, that is stories and novels written from

the perspective of the animal. The emergence of this genre is tied with the rise of the animal rights and anti-vivisection movements and the books, inspired by Ann Sewell's *Black Beauty*, were written with the overt intention of evoking sympathy for the plight of abused animals. The author interestingly points out how these stories utilize the conventions developed in women's sentimental fiction and best known to the average reader from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Even Mark Twain, in "A Dog's Tale" (1903), employs the strongest sentimental motif of maternal loss—with a twist: the mother who loses her child to cruel vivisection is a female dog—to argue against cruelty to animals. Rutkowska's analysis is steeped in a thorough exploration of the role of class and gender in these stories: the sentimental is, after all, a typically feminine convention and the anti-vivisectionist movement is a movement of white middle-class women.

Chapter Two takes on contemporary texts narrated by "learned animals" and it is here that the species under discussion exceed cats and dogs: one of the texts is narrated by a pig and another by a turtle. However, this shift allows the author to employ a postcolonial reading of the condition of the pet animal using an example—that of the turtle—that drives the point more clearly than if the argument had been attempted on the example of a dog. Rutkowska also makes a much-needed genealogical connection between the sentimental narratives of the nineteenth century and the contemporary texts. While the modern narratives use the same technical device of the animal narrator and show the narrator's alienation from the "natural world," the animal narrator's point of view reflects a posthumanist sensibility: the animals are often scathingly critical of their human's behavior and of anthropocentrism in general. Chapter Three begins with an analysis of what he by now become a canonical work for animal studies scholars: Virginia Woolf's *Flush* (1933). However, the turn to British literature is necessary for an analysis of three contemporary American novels, which are narrated by dogs. Paul Auster's *Timbuktu* is probably the best known of these. Rutkowska reads these contemporary novels as directly engaging Woolf's *Flush* through their focus on the animals' internal emotional lives. These stories, as Rutkowska argues, are stories of interspecies love. They are also rooted in a posthumanist sensibility but their overt goal is not a critique of anthropocentrism but an analysis of the potential for the transcendence of rigid species boundaries offered by human-canine relationships. A similar point is made in Chapter Four, which discusses so-called pet memoirs: texts narrated by humans but focused on the bond between the human and the canine. Rutkowska contextualizes the emergence of this genre within the memoir boom, visible in (not only) American literature since the 1980s. The popularity of the genre of the pet memoir is such that Rutkowska actually suggests a potential typology, dividing the books she analyzes into three sub-genres: memoirs of life with naughty, disobedient (but lovable!) dogs, ethological observations of life with dogs and memoirs of pet loss. All of these books reflect the shifting place of pets within the American household: their growing emotional significance for their guardians, their incorporation into the definition of family and the potential for the redefinition of kin that such relationships offer.

Here, the author attempts to theorize these changes using, among other concepts, Haraway's by now well-known term: "companion species."

Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet* (2008) and *Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) also form the theoretical framework of the last chapter, which deals specifically with texts that focus on the pitfalls and potential of interspecies communication. Significantly, the texts analyzed in this chapter focus on the narrator's attempts to consciously shape their relationships with their dogs in ways that are not based on an inseparable mix of dominance and affection. The narrators—the texts under discussion are again memoirs—turn to ethology and behavioral science in an attempt to comprehend their non-human partners; often stepping outside of their comfort zone, finding themselves involved in activities that they would not have undertaken if they did not have a pet. Communication here is seen as a two-way endeavor: Rutkowska argues that these memoirs transcend the easy anthropomorphism of nineteenth-century animal narratives and reflect the complexity of the current debates on the status of animals.

Rutkowska's book is a fascinating account of the changing representations of companion animals in American literature. It does have a weak point: I would like to see the author fill in the space between Chapters One and Two. The hundred-year-long leap is explained away in two sentences and can basically be summarized as: "pets disappear from high literature in the twentieth century and become the province of children's stories." It is true that within animal studies modernism is often analyzed in relation to the disappearance of the animal—this is Steve Baker's argument in *Postmodern Animal* (2000)—but this disappearance requires a more detailed explanation even if the author, understandably, does not wish to engage juvenile fiction. In fact, even if the nineteenth-century texts discussed in Chapter One were written for an adult audience, they were obviously produced with a didactic (even political) purpose in mind, just like the mid-twentieth-century children's literature that is omitted by Rutkowska, including *Old Yeller*, *Big Red*, etc.

To conclude, Rutkowska's book is a valuable contribution to reflection on the role of animals in American literature. What also makes this book truly exceptional is Rutkowska's incorporation of both American and Polish animal studies scholarship. While the casual references to Polish fiction, popular science and theoretical writings may make it more difficult for the author to publish the book on the American market—which I believe she most certainly should—the strategy not only allows her to achieve a truly intercultural perspective but also to position herself within the Polish animal studies community: not as an outsider, whose knowledge of American literature and theoretical perspectives sets her in the position of an expert, but as a member of the growing Polish animal studies community, someone familiar with the discussions and texts taking place not only in the US. At the same time the book of course does serve its role of familiarizing the Polish reader with American literature and does it in a very reader-friendly manner.

Justyna Włodarczyk
University of Warsaw

Mita Banerjee, ed. *Comparative Indigenous Studies*. Heilderberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2016. 383 pages.

“Water Is Life” was a central motto of a series of peaceful protests organized in 2016 by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe against the North Dakota Access Pipeline project that posed threat to the community’s drinking water and to their sacred burial grounds. Having garnered international media attention, over the months the grassroots movement grew to a global solidarity campaign for the protection of human and environmental rights. Despite international criticism, in January 2017 president Donald Trump granted permission to build the oil pipelines. Although the Sioux continue their battle in court, the globally recognized movement has attested to the power of international tribal solidarity that stems from indigenous people’s mutual recognition and understanding of their complex power relations with the nation-states across the globe. Most importantly, the movement has proved against the myth of the “vanishing Indian,” becoming a celebration of what Ojibwa writer and critic Gerald Vizenor defines as tribal “survivance”—“an active sense of native presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion” (“Aesthetics” 1).

The celebration of indigenous survivance across the globe and the acknowledgement of international indigenous connections are at the heart of *Comparative Indigenous Studies*, a collection of critical essays edited by Mita Banerjee. The seventeen texts that represent such fields of study as the humanities and social sciences, law, cultural and literary studies, economics, and medicine create an interdisciplinary and transnational dialogue about indigenous cultures representing the Americas, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. As the editor states, the idea for the volume is to provide a global comparative framework for indigenous studies that will foster a better understanding of the complex socio-political, historical, and cultural processes that indigenous people across the globe have been part of. The wide-ranging discussions that stem from the collection not only testify to the continuous presence of indigenous people within the borders of modern nation-states but also stress the importance of tribal voices in the global debates about the state of modern societies.

Drawing on the already well-established as well as recent scholarly research, the contributors to the collection stress the need for more tribal voices in this field of indigenous studies. Prioritizing indigenous scholarship, Banerjee states, is a crucial step in overcoming the discursive violence that, similarly to Edward Said’s “orientalism,” explores and defines indigeneity while simultaneously ignoring or minimalizing Native voices in the academic debate. Composed of articles by non-Native scholars, the anthology is meant as a self-reflective “deconstruction of whiteness” with the essays “set out to interrogate spaces (historical, cultural, institutional) from which Native presences have been excluded and erased” (11).

As Banerjee aptly posits, although ambitious in its goals, the idea of comparative indigenous studies can nevertheless pose considerable risks. Referring to Chadwick Allen’s critical work *Transindigenous: Methodologies for a Global Native Literary Studies*, the critic maintains that the global comparative framework

may lead to overgeneralizations and misinterpretations of indigenous experiences, consequently to further perpetuation of the above mentioned discursive violence. What is then crucial in scholarly discourses is to maintain the right balance between the amount of attention given to the tribal-specific problems and to the notion of an indigenous internationalism.

Such balance indubitably characterizes the volume which represents a well-researched and innovative analysis, addressing indigenous issues on both tribal and international level. Although the topics of the essays vary, Native people's struggles for self-determination remain the central theme of the collection. It is well exemplified in Michael Bachman's essay on Gerald Vizenor's use of theatrical discourse. As the critic demonstrates, when seen as a performative act, Vizenor's postindian offers a powerful critique of the simulations of Indianness ascribed to indigenous people by the settler nation-states across the globe. The question of indigenous identity formation is also presented in Jan Kusber's essay in which he discusses Siberia as a space of complex socio-political and cultural power relations that have impacted the situation of Siberian autochthons and their relationships with the people who migrated to the region.

A number of essays discuss literary and visual arts as tools of indigenous criticism of western (neo)colonial forces. René Dietrich analyzes N. Scott Momaday's life-writing text *The Way to Rainy Mountain* as a tribal critique of settler colonial biopolitics while Mita Banerjee uses indigenous literature and film to offer a transnational perspective on the destructive forces of the white man's "civilizing missions" in Canada, Australia, and the US. Drawing on Canadian Native literature, Sabine Kim addresses the problem of commoditization of Canadian First Nations' cultural objects, pointing to transnational indigenous connections that have allowed tribal people to achieve more control over the process of international tribal commodity exchange. Independent film as a tool of indigenous struggles for human rights and environmental justice is the topic of Sabine Meyer's essay. In her work the critic analyzes the role of Joe Berlinger's film *Crude: The Real Price of Oil* (2009) in the process of documenting the Ecuadorian indigenes' legal battle against the American oil company Texaco's exploitation of the Amazonian lands.

The problem regarding the protection of human and environmental rights is also undertaken by Eva Riempp who presents a comparative study of the ecological and social consequences of gold mining in South America, and their impact on the situation of tribal communities of Guyana and the indigenous and Maroon groups in Suriname. In her study of the indigenous groups living on the West Coast of Mexico, Leslie Korn focuses on the communities' struggles to preserve their traditional lifestyles, especially the rights to protect and cultivate their knowledge concerning the traditional ways of healing.

Indigenous (re)envisioning the world through art is the topic of four articles included in the volume. Hsinya Huang's fascinating analysis of "the Pacific" presents it as a contact zone and method that illuminates the complex relationship between the human and the non-human. Focusing on the selected indigenous literary

works from the regions of Taiwan, North American west coast, and New Zealand/Aoteora, Huang puts them in a trans-Pacific/trans-indigenous context to offer an oceanic poetics shared across the region. Anton Escher analyzes *Powwow Highway* (dir. Jonathan Wacks, 1989) as a dream film that refers to the indigenous tradition of visionary quests for a sense of self. Drawing on the Cheyenne traditional tribal thought, the movie, according to Escher, can be interpreted as a modern vision of the symbolic rebirth of the Cheyenne tribe. Dieter Dörr's in-depth study of the history of Cheyenne displacement provides a very useful background to the above mentioned cinematic production. In her article Katja Sarkowsky demonstrates how contemporary Native writers use their work to reclaim the Atlantic region as the "Red Atlantic" inscribing it as part of Native tribal modernity. As Sarkowsky argues, rewriting colonial history, indigenous writers not only challenge the Western dominant narratives of "discovery" but also question the notion of "modernity" as a Euro-American concept. Frank Schulze-Engler's critical analysis focuses on Native Canadian, Aboriginal Australian, and Maori fiction to illuminate the role of transcultural memory in the process of reclaiming indigenous people's presence in the national narratives about World War I and II.

Although casinos have always been part of Indian stereotypes, their role in the reshaping of the economic situation of contemporary tribal communities has not been fully discussed in the academic world yet. A case study of the Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort, undertaken by Franz Rothlauf, Claus-Peter H. Ernst, and Rafaél Rivera, offers an interesting look at the problem. Analyzing four factors, i.e., land, labor, capital, and knowledge, the authors study the mechanisms of tribal gaming business to determine the reasons behind tribal casinos' economic success, or lack thereof. A short article by Elke Wagner, in which the author analyzes the use of the mass media by the modern-day reservation inhabitants, can serve as a valuable addition to the topic of tribal casinos. Finally, Ulrich Breuer's critical look at Karl May's *Winnetou* trilogy as an alternative model to the educational discourse of German high culture represents a very interesting example of deconstructing "the white man's Indian." Breuer's work is an insightful critique of May's simulations of the Indian that continue to shape German popular culture.

Without a doubt *Comparative Indigenous Studies* is a collection of original, in-depth, and invigorating analyses that foster a new understanding of indigenous studies by expanding tribal-specific scholarship with new "globally Indigenous fields of inquiry" (Allen xiv). An interdisciplinary dialog created by the contributors offers the possibilities of new, much broader critical approaches to the problems discussed in the volume. Such a dialog also has the potential to stimulate a much needed process of "indigenizing" various academic fields which have not yet paid enough attention to Native voices. Consequently, comparative indigenous studies can become a platform for indigenous people to voice their concerns and to participate in public academic, socio-political, and cultural debates. It can help indigenous communities form and strengthen international and intertribal relations which in turn can enable various Native groups to maintain control over the process

of self-determination. Finally, the role of comparative indigenous studies is also to voice criticism of western scholarship and its impact on the state of contemporary indigenous world. Such critical reflection, implies Banerjee, is necessary so that indigenous studies can develop properly and be part of the process of reconciling/healing that indigenous people ask for.

Since the volume is thoroughly referenced, with an impressive amount of indigenous critical works, it will be of great asset to scholars interested or working in the field of indigenous studies. What is missing in the anthology though is a list of short biographical notes on the contributors. The information on which academic centers engage in the development of indigenous studies would be very useful. One more shortcoming is the lack of consistency in the formatting style of the volume. These two shortcomings do not however affect the quality of the scholarship represented in the collection.

Bringing together scholars from diverse fields of inquiry, *Comparative Indigenous Studies* is an example of a dialog which goal is not only to foster a better understanding of indigenous people but also to celebrate their presence across the globe. Acknowledging and supporting tribal survivance, the volume cultivates what Rudolfo Anaya describes as “the flowering of the human spirit, not its exploitation” (383).

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Ewelina Bańka

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

**Beata Zawadka, ed. *Performing South: The U.S. South as Transmedial Message*.
Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2015.
246 pages.**

The collection of the eleven essays of which the volume reviewed here consists is, as the editor admits in the introduction, “an extension of presentations and talks given on the occasion of the 25th anniversary meeting of the Southern Studies Forum” (15) held in Szczecin in September 2013. The articles, grouped in three sections titled: “(Post)Spiritual Performances,” “(Post)Gender Performances,” and “(Post)Cultural Performances,” respectively, focus on various performative aspects of southern culture. What their authors suggest—and prove viable—is applicability of some of the theories of performance studies to the analyses of a whole range of southern

social phenomena, including those finding their reflection in southern literature.

The opening essay of the first section, “Remembering Colleagues, Remembering Friends, Remembering Peter Nicolaisen and Noel Polk,” authored by Agnieszka Salska, commemorates the two late Southern Studies scholars whom the author knew personally. Salska has written a poignant essay, referring both to personality traits and academic achievements of the two, paying most attention to the way they contributed to the development of Southern Studies. A large section of the article focuses on that part of Polk’s seminal 1997 publication *Outside the Southern Myth*, related closely to the theme of “Performing South,” where Polk is trying, among other things, to answer the question about the extent to which the southern myth has become a reality shaping people’s attitudes and responses.

John Andreas Fuchs’ article “The Church Performing in the South: From Catholicism to Evangelical Catholicism,” which appears second, is a condensed history of Catholicism in the U.S., which started out in the South and developed into American Catholicism, whose distinctive features, as well as their gradual development since the seventeenth century, are the subject of analysis by Fuchs. The essay is highly informative, and focuses mainly on the Southern/American Catholic church, which in the recent decades has experienced a significant increase in the number of parishioners, mainly due to economic migration from the rustbelt, as well as a steady influx of Hispanic immigrants. However, as the author stresses, Southern Catholicism can be perceived as quite remote from the traditional one: evangelical Catholics, consoling Catholicism with American beliefs, stand here to illustrate the point. The article has an impressive—and potentially helpful—bibliography as well as suggestions for further reading, which is its additional asset.

The remaining nine articles contain analyses of selected literary works. Marcel Arbeit’s “Performances Religious and Secular in Chris Fuhrman’s *Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys*” opens with brief characteristics of Catholicism in the South to provide a wider context for the discussion of the novel set in 1974 Savannah. Following Ronald L. Grimes’ definition of performances as “pretending or playing a role” and rituals as “doing or accomplishing” (34), Arbeit discusses religious, artistic, racial and private performances and rituals which the novel’s teenage characters participate in or create themselves. Fuhrman’s novel, in Arbeit’s interpretation, suggests that the ability to distinguish between “role playing and serious doing” (78), i.e. between performance and ritual, is a “sign of maturation” that the protagonist does not reveal.

Gilèle Sigal in “Drama and Trauma in Elizabeth Madox Roberts’ *My Heart and My Flesh*,” before providing a detailed analysis of Roberts’ novel, refers to the author’s overall literary output, stating that in her novels “the South becomes a stage” (81), to paraphrase Shakespeare’s line from *As You Like It*. Bearing that in mind, Sigal discusses *My Heart and My Flesh*, published in 1927, focusing first on the deconstruction the main character undergoes, and the way in which the novel reflects “the whole tormented history of the South” (88) in the troubled relationships and entanglements between the characters, to finish with the recovery found through the healing power of nature and community life, with which the novel ends.

Susana María Jiménez Placer in “Performing Southern Womanhood in Katherine Anne Porter’s Miranda stories” selects two stories by Porter—“Old Mortality” and “The Old Order”—to discuss the destructive effects of “discursive excesses” (107), i.e. of the observable gap between the Southern discourse and Southern reality, on the life of the female characters: Miranda’s grandmother and—most of all—Aunt Amy. In the world of Miranda’s family the official discourse is constructed by the myth of the Old South, within which Amy had a clearly assigned role, which she contested, wanting not to perform, but to live.

Irina Kudriavtseva in “Homo Performans in Erskine Caldwell’s Short Stories” borrows from Victor Turner the Latin term used in the title to analyze functions of performance in selected short stories by Caldwell. She refers, among others, to the performative character of social gatherings and to the southern need “for public display of power and status” (124). The author analyzes briefly numerous short stories coming from the 1996 collection *The Stories of Erskine Caldwell*, providing evidence for Caldwell’s use of performance-oriented strategies of narration, characterization and plot-building.

Emmeline Gross in “The Masquerade of Masculinity in *Gone with the Wind*. Per(e)forming Men Through Emotions” examines the way in which Margaret Mitchell’s novel explores the subject of performance of both femininity and masculinity, as well as its centrality to the narrative. Dwelling upon the opposition between “sincere expression of self/individuality and debased/calculated performance/deceit” (138) the author focuses first on Scarlet’s performance of extreme femininity aimed at hiding the real self, and then proceeds to discuss what she calls the “fictionality of masculinity” as illustrated by Ashley, Rhett or Gerald O’Hara, and the clothes/uniforms/“costumes” they wear. The performative aspect of southern masculinity, the theatricality of it, seem to deny “an authentic access to manhood” (152) and prevent going beyond the apparent superficial manifestations.

In “Performing Ethnicities, Performing Regions: The Crossroads of Time, History and Culture in Alfred Uhry’s *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*” John Wharton Lowe analyses Uhry’s play written for the celebration of the opening of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, which seems to be a reflection upon the ways in which Jewish immigrants of the first and second generation tend to perform regional modes and mannerisms. Although Lowe refers briefly to the history of the Jewish diaspora in the South, he focuses mainly on the way in which the play set at the moment of the overlap between three festive events: the 1939 Atlanta premiere of *Gone With the Wind*, the celebration of Ballyhoo, and Christmas explores the carnivalization of Atlanta culture through the prism of ethnically specific experience. Having classified the play as “a comedy of redemption,” the author argues that the well-being of the main characters, all of them Jewish, depends heavily on their ability to remain “true to their heritage,” rather than elect “southernness as their new identity” (175).

Another play by the same author is analysed in Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis’ “Come Dine With Me. Or Not: Performing Racial Relations in the Domestic Sphere in Alfred Uhry’s *Driving Miss Daisy*,” in which the dining rituals and spaces

reflect, as the author suggests, racial tensions and hierarchy in the segregated South. Niewiadomska-Flis stresses the spatial—and social—separateness of the kitchen and the dining room areas and presents how the evolution of Daisy and her African-American chauffer Hoke's relationship is reflected in the way in which the two characters encroach (or not) on each other's dining territory or interfere in the eating habits.

“‘Manners Are Not Intelligent. They're Just Automatic.’ Performing the South in Elizabeth Spencer's *For Lease or Sale*” is Gerald Preher's essay devoted to Spencer's only play, first staged in 1989. Preher places Spencer's text within the tradition of the Southern Gothic, but refers also to the way in which the play deals with the southern myth and focuses on the symbolic role the Glenns' house plays. The final part of the article is devoted to Edward Glenn, one of the main characters, known also from Spencer's fiction, and leads the author to the conclusion that Edward evolves throughout the play into a southern gentleman. The play, set in the Mississippi Delta, shows the South on the verge of change (the bulldozers demolishing the neighborhood provide background noises throughout the play), with the survival of the region being seemingly dependent upon the preservation of southern manners—on the South's capability to perform itself.

Carmen Rueda-Ramos' essay which closes the collection is titled “Staging Southern Culture: Liminality and Cultural Performance in Donald Davidson's *The Big Ballad Jamboree*.” The author chose for her analysis Davidson's only novel, which, despite being written in the mid-1950s, was published posthumously in 1996. Although *The Big Ballad Jamboree* is not considered to be the Agrarian poet's major achievement, it provides exciting material for an analysis of the white culture of the mountain South. Davidson uses music—the old folk ballads and hillbilly music popularized by the radio—as the medium through which he shows the changes taking place in southern culture at the end of the 1940s, and Rueda-Ramos in her essay discusses the representation of the conflicting forces of the Old and the New South. The musical shift from the folk ballads to hillbilly music marks not only the shift from private to public performance, but also reflects the changes the society formerly faithful to the Agrarian values underwent.

Rueda-Ramos opens her considerations over Davidson's novel with the statement that “The South has a long tradition of staging its culture” (217). I would consider this sentence to be the best summary of what the essays in the anthology discuss; i.e. the long-observed and documented performative potential of the Southern culture, and the Southern society's urge to use it. The variety of literary texts and topics discussed work to the volume's advantage, as it becomes an inspiring collection for all those interested in looking at Southern society through the lens of performative studies.

Elżbieta Rokosz-Piejko
University of Rzeszów