Reviews

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Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (2013)

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As the most sustained and persuasive analysis of the early American magazine's cultural significance that we possess, and as the most detailed account of its repeated failure to prosper, Gardner's book is notable for its ability to draw broad conclusions and strong claims from the material it treats. More specifically, Gardner develops the argument that late eighteenth-century American culture privileged what he calls the “editorial function” (x) over the more individualistic modes of self-expression we have come to associate with the figure of the author and the form of the novel. It is not only the case, in his view, that Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Coquette* and Charles Brockden Brown’s *Clara Howard* are “novels whose strange features look less anomalous and ‘primitive’ when read in relation to the periodical culture of the period” (7)—their debt to the form of the magazine points to the pervasive and dominant appeal of spending one’s career “as an anonymous editor of a text that is predicated on the disruptions and fragmentation of all the novel would make whole: plotting, characterization, and the authorial function” (6). Consequently, Gardner remarks at the end of his introduction that we need to “begin to rethink our literary history as focused around goals not entirely consistent with those of the nineteenth century novel” (29).

Linking his “more quixotic ambitions of offering a different take on early American literary history […] in which the novel and its rise is no longer the central story we tell and the celebrity and careers of authors is no longer the primary vehicle by which we tell it” to the relatively “modest” goal of trying to understand why so many “brilliant and rational individuals remained devoted to a form that looks, to our eyes at least, marginal, ephemeral, and most decidedly unprofitable” (38), Gardner considers in his first chapter the emergence of a fledgling American magazine culture during the colonial era. Here the long-lasting influence of British periodical innovators such as Edward Cave, and Addison and Steele, provides the framework for a highly engaging case study of Benjamin Franklin and Andrew Bradford’s competition to publish the first American magazine in the early 1740s. Paying close attention to the social institutions with which magazines were identified, as well as the distinctive patterns of transatlantic imitation and quotation pursued by Franklin and Bradford, Gardner...
offers a convincing rationale for why the periodical “with its regularity of publication, its spaces for direct interaction, and [its] practice of anonymous contributions” became “a favored form for provincial citizens seeking access to the textual commons of English letters” (39). Turning to the post-Revolutionary period, chapter 2 then further expands Gardner’s concern with the ideological function of the early American magazine by asking why it “was invested with [a] […] national significance” at this point, despite being “something of a literary suicide mission” (70). The numerous challenges of economics and personnel confronting these magazines, which are as finely detailed in this section as they are in the rest of the book, did not deter “otherwise rational, ambitious, economical and pragmatic individuals” (69), Gardner suggests, because the “very logic of the magazine depended on a celebration of the importance of [...] unity [and] of centralized authority” (74) that closely accorded with the federalist feelings of the era. Thus, figures such as Isaiah Thomas, who published The Massachusetts Magazine, or Noah Webster, who self-consciously pounded on the “editorial labor involved in making a magazine” (73) while at the helm of The American Magazine, persisted with their endeavors because they imagined the magazine “to be a very different space from both newspaper and book: orderly, dispassionate, rational, interactive, open to all political persuasions” (78).

It is this interactive dimension which comes to the fore in chapter 3, where Gardner considers the readers, correspondents, and contributors to the post-Revolutionary magazine. Although he admits that “archival evidence about the demographics of magazine readers is all but impossible to pin down” (107), he offers some inspired guesswork in relation to this question alongside a more empirically thorough and theoretically sophisticated account of the reader as contributor. For as he notes:

One of the central ideals governing the early magazine […] was that [it] should create a space whereby readers could themselves participate as writers. […] It is important to recognize how deeply collaborative […] the periodical space was meant to be, how very much it worked to collapse the distance between author and reader and create a space where both could converse as equals, overseen by the careful guidance of the editor. (103) Pursuing this insight through the various phases of Judith Sargent Murray’s periodical career, Gardner effectively conveys “the mise en abyme of the periodical form” (125), within which “one text inspires another, which in turn inspires further responses, retorts, accusations, and imitations” (111) before switching his attention to Joseph Dennie, “the writer who would stake the most on a periodical career [and] an individual in many ways not temperamentally suited to the anonymity, neutrality, and cacophony of the form” (125). Accordingly, the fiercely partisan and shamelessly Anglophile manager of The Port Folio, who “longed for his voice, and not just his editorial vision, to predominate over the conversation” (131), serves as a kind of limit case in late eighteenth-century terms, as well as a harbinger of the more “authorial” magazine style which would emerge in the mid-nineteenth century—his is “an anomalous periodical career, although also one of the most distinguished and influential” (127).

It is, finally, into the uneasy transition from the post-Revolutionary period to the Age of Jackson that Gardner plunges us in his fourth chapter, which looks at the moves Susanna Rowson and Charles Brockden Brown made to periodical work in the early 1800s, before focusing upon Washington Irving’s Salmagundi as “simultaneously [the] culmination and [the] end” (163) of the early American magazine mindset. “We are inclined to see [in] the repeated turn of the first generation of American novelists to the magazine […] apostasies, martyrdoms or personal tragedies” (145), Gardner observes of Rowson and Brown’s distancing of themselves from fiction in favor of engagements with The Boston Weekly Magazine and The American Register respectively. However, early American expressions of disillusionment with the novel are not always, as critics have tended to claim, instances of “latter-day Puritanism, cynical marketing, or subversive ventriloquism” (137), he argues—instead, writers like Rowson and Brown were genuinely attracted to “the possibilities of another model for a national literature that the magazine sought to provide” (136). Indeed, nowhere is this made clearer than in Gardner’s brilliant extended reading of The American Register as a continuation and amplification of the concerns found in Brown’s novels. Although this is the artifact from Brown’s career “most devoid of what we recognize as imaginative energies” (154), it is also “the site in which
he most fully experiments with his ideals for writer, reader, and the editorial function” (150). Irving’s parodic, non-interactive magazine work, on the other hand, explicitly refuses “the conventions and contracts that had long governed the form” (164), foreshadowing his eventual abandonment of the role of editor for that of the sketch artist.

If Irving represents a decisive turn toward antebellum conceptions of literature, however, Gardner’s own decision to foreground Rowson and Brown alongside him in this chapter perhaps points to a residual tension between authorial individualism and editorial collectivity that affects the book as a whole. After all, despite Gardner’s frequent and astute observations on the early American magazine as a “cacophonous, [and] largely anonymous form” (4), he chooses to focus on a series of remarkable, if generally understudied, “Names” (36). In this respect, he might have offered a little more “cold comfort to the literary historian, searching for clear authorial fingerprints” (140) by examining the trajectory of unattributable magazine material in greater detail or by embedding the pieces he does discuss more deeply in the variegated surroundings of their initial appearance. Some of the most fascinating passages in the book, for example, are those which consider how the distinctive fictionality of Murray’s “Story of Margaretta” and Rowson’s “Sincerity” is a consequence of being “inseparably bound up with the practices and miscellaneous forms of the periodical” with its inevitable “fits and starts” (119). Still, it is all too easy to criticize pioneering books for not doing what someone else should already have done, when they are themselves trying to do so much. So I shall henceforward resist that temptation. Those who require a more complete analysis of how anonymity, juxtaposition, and seriality function in the early American magazine would be wise to use this monograph as their lodestone. If future studies of American periodical culture are as bold and as intelligent as Gardner’s book, then I am confident that the field of magazine studies will not meet the swift and unfair death so often meted out to the titles he examines.

University of Nottingham Matthew Pethers


The traditional American narrative of the War of 1812 emphasizes that British maritime practices—mainly interferences with American merchant ships on the high seas—caused severe Anglo-American tensions in the early nineteenth century such that Republicans—in power in the United States since 1801—felt the need to declare war against the former mother country in 1812 in order to defend the nation’s honor. In the following so called ‘Second War of Independence,’ the U.S. Navy was able to win some impressive naval battles against the hitherto undefeated Royal Navy, the traditional story continues, and thus made Great Britain acknowledge American sovereignty in the Treaty of Ghent in 1814. The War of 1812 produced military heroes such as James Lawrence, David Porter, Stephen Decatur, and Andrew Jackson and thus promoted American nationalism, such that the initially divisive war ushered in the so-called Era of Good Feelings, the classical American interpretation concludes.

On the occasion of the bicentennial of the conflict, three works appeared that fundamentally call the assumptions of this narrative into question. Nicole Eustace, Associate Professor of History at New York University, called the war “a grave American embarrassment” (31), in which diplomatically and militarily the United States achieved nothing and which was marked by disastrous military failures on the American side. Andrew Lambert, Professor of Naval History at King’s College, London, found that “after a litany of defeats all along the Canadian border, the capture and destruction of Washington, bankruptcy and the loss of several warships, including the national flagship; the peace settlement had been a fortunate escape” for the American government (1-2). As both authors concur that America did not ‘win’ the War of 1812, they seek to understand—yet in different ways—why it boosted American patriotism and why it has been publicly remembered as an American success story. Paul Gilje, Professor of United States History at the University of Oklahoma, in the third book under review in this article, by contrast, seems at first glance to keep up the traditional American narrative of the War of 1812 when emphasizing Britain’s violations of American neutral rights and impressment on the high seas as the causes for America’s declaration of war. Possibly without intending to do so, however, he also raises troubling questions about the legacy of the American Revolution when he implies that the assertion of the democratic principles that lie at the bottom of American identity and that were symbolized by free trade and sailors’ rights allowed for no other alternative than to declare war against the former mother country. In this way, Gilje’s monograph also, albeit indirectly, undermines the standard interpretation by finding the war’s origins in Americans’ democratic mentality rather than in British maritime practices.

Eustace tries to explain why the war became “a popular success” (xi) by analyzing it not as a “military” but as a “cultural event” (x). According to her, the United States went to war primarily to expand westwards and to drive Indians off their lands in the West. The displacement of the Native populations, moreover, was a goal that united white Americans of all stripes. Eustace analyzes how Republican war supporters portrayed Indians as ruthless savages that mercilessly butchered white children and abducted and raped white women and how Republicans thus felt justified to expel Indians from their lands or even to exterminate them. “The tale of the bloodthirsty savage bent on violating women and children in the pursuit of a population competition that bordered on genocide usefully projected U.S. goals and tactics onto the nation’s enemies” (151). As their resistance was broken in the war and as they lost protection by the British who did not insist on taking their Indian allies’ interests into account in the peace negotiations, Republicans felt that their most important war aim had been achieved.

In a fascinating chapter on the public interpretation of the Battle of New Orleans—fought in January 1815 after the so called ‘Christmas Peace’ of 1814 had already been concluded—Eustace exposes that Republicans falsely claimed that the British soldiers had allegedly been promised the women of New Orleans as
their reward if they won against the American forces. Republicans concluded that American victory in the Crescent City thus ensured the safety of Louisianaan women. As a result, the War of 1812 could be depicted as a success, even though the original war aims—free trade and sailors’ rights—had not even been mentioned in the Treaty of Ghent, because—it would appear—“American men had protected their women” (216). Moreover, Eustace argues that the claim that it was only through Jackson’s victory at New Orleans that American women had been protected from sexual violence by British soldiers reinforced gender inequalities and contributed to the continuous denial of women’s right to politically participate in the American nation: “Framing Jackson’s victory at New Orleans as a strike against sexual assault helped men maintain the proposition that, even in the absence of any other economic or political rights, wives owed unquestioned allegiance to their husbands and their nation in return for simple protection from rape” (218).

According to Eustace, the major results of the War of 1812 therefore have little to do with the maritime disputes between the United States and its former mother country. Most importantly, U.S. troops had decisively beaten Indians in the Northwest and Southwest and thus opened the areas to white settlement, as the British chose to withdraw their demand for an independent Indian buffer state in the peace negotiations, preferring quick peace in North America after more than two decades of warfare in Europe against first Revolutionary and then Napoleonic France, thus effectively betraying their Indian allies: “The decision to do nothing at Ghent meant everything to the Indians who faced certain dispossession from that day forward” (227). The second important result of the War of 1812, Eustace argues, was of a domestic nature. As Republicans portrayed the war as a conflict between virtuous and brave American men and sexually depraved Indians and Britons, it contributed to the continued exclusion of women from full citizenship. As American men had protected them from assault, women were encouraged to marry soldiers who had defended their country and serve as ‘reward’ for their bravery. Moreover, after men had performed their military service to the country and opened the western land for settlement, women were expected to produce progeny for the emerging American nation and lay the foundation for future territorial expansion and Indian removal. The overall consequence of Indian defeats and the assertion of American manhood was the strengthening of white American reproductive facilities, territorial expansion, and American nationalism and consequently Americans came to regard the War of 1812 as a great victory.

By turning away from Anglo-American relations and instead focusing on white American perceptions of Native Americans, Eustace offers a convincing explanation for why Americans considered the war a victory despite their failure to attain any war aims with regards to Great Britain and the maritime issues. After all, large-scale Indian resistance against whites’ expansionism was broken once and for all. Whereas diplomatic historians have shown that alleged British support for Indians attacking settlers on the frontier played no role in the coming of the war and that the Madison Administration only added the accusation that Great Britain was behind Indian warfare to the list of complaints to make the war declaration more justified, Eustace shows that—whatever their reasons for supporting or opposing the war in 1812—Americans tended to unite behind efforts to displace Native Americans once war operations had commenced. By stressing Indian cruelties and threats to white American civilians, Republicans could generate support for a deeply divisive war. In other words: they tried to make Americans turn their eyes from the East to the West. It remains an open question, however, how influential the discourses Eustace discovered in presidential speeches, newspaper editorials, political cartoons, novels, plays, poems, and tavern songs actually were. Critics of the ‘expansionist thesis’—the claim that the United States declared war in order to conquer Canada—maintain that problems along the frontier concerned mostly Westerners and that those residing along the Atlantic seaboard were more concerned with trade. Moreover, Federalists remained vehemently opposed to the war until the British destroyed the American capital and demanded territorial concessions in the peace negotiations in 1814. It is doubtful whether the Republican propaganda efforts emphasizing the Indian threat had much purchase with them.

Lambert dissects the traditional American narrative of the War of 1812 by taking a “British perspective, focusing on the development of policy and strategy in London and
the conduct of war at sea” (3). According to him, the Madison Administration declared war against Great Britain in 1812, since they believed it was “a golden opportunity to seize land from the British” (3). When the United States declared war, Napoleon invaded Russia. Expecting the French dictator to win, Republicans decided to use the opportunity of British distress, Lambert argues, to take British North America—or Canada, as we call it today—and incorporate it into the union. In his analysis, Republicans’ complaints about British interferences with American trade and the impressment of American sailors were a suitable pretext for Republicans to declare a war actually embarked upon for territorial expansion: “In truth American statesmen were not fools; they saw a quarrel about maritime trade and neutral rights as an ideal opportunity to acquire land” (13). If America’s war aim was the conquest of Canada, Britain clearly won the war, since it repelled the American invasions of its provinces in North America, destroyed the American capital, defeated the American navy, and established such an effective blockade of the United States that the American government found itself bankrupt in 1814, customs from imports being the primary source of its revenue. Why—in view of these facts—Americans then boasted that the War of 1812 had been victorious is the question Lambert seeks to answer in his book.

He proceeds in two steps. On the one hand, he reinvestigates naval battles between the U.S. Navy and the Royal Navy in order to show that Great Britain won the naval war of 1812. In particular, he shows that the three small-scale naval combats that the American navy won in the early stage of the war and American historians have usually focused their attention on, pale in importance compared to the later frigate battles from which the Royal Navy emerged victorious. On the other hand, he analyzes how American contemporaries at the time have misrepresented the naval encounters and created myths around them to boost American nationalism, thus giving the impression that the United States had won the naval war of 1812.

Lambert dismisses America’s three early naval victories in 1812—the USS Constitution versus HMS Guerrière in August, the USS United States versus the HMS Macedonian in October, and the USS Constitution versus the HMS Java in December—since they were unequal contests: the U.S. 54-gun frigates fought against smaller and more lightly armed British vessels of only 46 guns. According to Lambert, there was little glory in these battles, since the American frigates were superior to their British equivalents in size, firepower, and crew. Moreover, the outcome of these encounters did not have an influence on the outcome of the war: “They did not affect the balance of power at sea, impede the reinforcement of the Canadian army, or raise British insurance rates” (102). The Republican Administration, however, used these naval exploits to arouse patriotic sentiment at home, which had suffered because of the failed invasions of Canada, and trumpeted the glory of the U.S. Navy. They tried to downplay the fact that Napoleon’s invasion of Russia had failed and French forces were in retreat at the end of 1812, such that Britain would subsequently be able to redeploy forces from Europe to North America and effectively blockade the American coast with its superior navy.

The next year, moreover, witnessed British defeats of American frigates. The turning point in the naval war of 1812 came, according to Lambert, in June 1813 when the HMS Shannon defeated the USS Chesapeake, restoring British naval prestige in the North Atlantic. As Lambert found that the British frigate won the encounter because of superior seamanship, he is very critical of Americans’ excuses for their defeat. In an attempt to turn the American captain James Lawrence into a martyr, the court martial blamed the defeat on bad luck and thus transformed it into a moral victory, making the words Lawrence ushered when dying in battle into a national rallying cry: “Don’t Give Up the Ship” (184). By that time, however, British naval superiority had resulted in a close blockade of all important American harbors bottling up the remainder of America’s small navy as well as its merchant marine. As a result, only a twelfth of America’s merchant vessels were able to get out to sea in 1814 and the customs revenues of the federal government plummeted, depriving it of the means to keep up the war effort on a meaningful level. American privateering, moreover, increasingly lost in importance, as the Royal Navy established an effective convoy system protecting British merchant vessels and as an increasing number of American privateersmen ended up in British prisons: “After mid-1813 American privateers were responding to British measures. Fewer privateer commissions were taken up as the war
progressed, profit margins declined, and operations were conducted at ever greater distance from the home base” (226). At this point, according to Lambert, the United States had de facto lost the war.

In March 1814, U.S. naval operations in the Pacific came to an end when the U.S. frigate *Essex* had to surrender to a superior British force. According to Lambert, the American captain David Porter was to blame for the loss of his frigate since—in search for glory—he had deliberately sailed into the Chilean port of Valparaiso, even though he knew that the port was a trap in which a superior British force could easily blockade him. When he tried to escape, the *HMS Phoebe* wrecked his ship and he had to surrender. Instead of admitting his mistake in sailing into the Chilean trap, Porter blamed a series of misfortunes for his loss of the *Essex*. The Republican Administration—eager for good news to make up for the renewed failure to invade Canada—adopted Porter’s version and hailed the battle as an exemplary display of American heroism. Instead of chastising Porter for irresponsibly taking up a fight with a superior force, Republicans—desperately needing a new national hero—emphasized his unprecedented bravery. Consequently, Republicans prevented a court of enquiry from ascertaining the facts of the naval battle. Lambert is equally critical of Stephen Decatur who commanded the *USS President*. In January 1815, he had to surrender to the *HMS Endymion* after a fair fight in which the British gunnery had proven superior. However, Decatur would subsequently spread the lie that he had actually beaten the *Endymion* and that he had only surrendered after the *HMS Pomone* arrived and he was hence outnumbered.

In 1814, America’s economy lay in shambles, the federal government was functionally bankrupt defaulting on payments due on the public debt, its capital was in ashes, and its navy had either been beaten or was bottled up in American ports. In consequence, the Madison Administration instructed its commissioners in Ghent to accept a peace upon the terms of the status quo ante bellum, effectively giving up all its war aims in the face of defeat. Lambert ascribes British victory in the War of 1812 to the failure of American invasions of Canada and to the successful naval blockade of the American coast by the Royal Navy and its ability to put most of the U.S. Navy and American privateers out of action. Since the War of 1812 was a mere sideshow to Great Britain, few British contemporaries bothered to investigate the conflict, leaving the field open to American writers who, Lambert complains, have tended to distort the facts. As a result, many American historians have come to the erroneous conclusion that the War of 1812 had not been an American defeat but a tie between both countries.

The merit of Lambert’s monograph is that it provides a needed corrective to previous American interpretations of the naval aspects of the War of 1812. Together with Brian Arthur—who has already shown in 2011 that the Royal Navy won the naval war of 1812 and that Britain’s naval blockade of the United States in 1813 and 1814 decisively contributed to the Madison Administration’s decision to drop the neutral trade and impressment issues in the peace negotiations—Lambert demonstrates convincingly that the emergence of American national heroes in the naval war of 1812 had less to do with their accomplishments than with Republicans’ need for glorious news to generate support for the floundering war effort.1 Their works are particularly important, since the historiography of the War of 1812 has been dominated by American and Canadian historians, while British historians have so far neglected the conflict—understandable in view of the fact that, to the British, the War of 1812 was a mere distraction from their much more existential conflict with Napoleonic France.

Lambert’s deliberately British perspective, however, also makes him oblivious to Republicans’ motives, the domestic context of the war declaration in the United States, and the psychological needs of a postcolonial nation. For example, there is little appreciation for the complexities of Republican ideology when he writes that “Jefferson was, at heart, authoritarian and anti-democratic” (22) or when he detects in Jefferson’s policies a “trend towards totalitarianism” (22). Lambert also underestimates the implications of the British practice of impressing seamen from American merchant ships on the high seas for American nationalism when he dismisses American complaints by observing that “less than 10 per cent of the American

maritime workforce suffered” impressment and that “[n]o more than half the men impressed from American ships were actually Americans” (27). It is understandable that a newly independent nation would be sensitive to blatant violations of its sovereignty by the former mother country. Lambert is too quick in diminishing Republicans’ moral outrage by British maritime practices as mere rhetoric disguising their actual land hunger. The ‘expansionist thesis,’ originally brought forward by American historians such as Louis Morton Hacker and Julius Pratt, has been thoroughly repudiated by scholars such as Bradford Perkins and Donald R. Hickey, but Lambert does not engage this literature.² So his claim that Republicans declared war to annex Canada is not very convincing.

In contrast to Lambert, Gilje emphasizes that the protection of America’s foreign trade and her seamen were the primary causes of the War of 1812, dismissing the claim that the United States went to war to annex Canada or to end alleged British assistance to Native Americans along the frontier. However, he does not simply reiterate the maritime issues between both English-speaking countries, as many other scholars have done in detail. Instead, like Eustace, he takes a cultural approach to understand the origins and legacy of the War of 1812. He poignantly shows that, to Americans in the postrevolutionary period, free trade and sailors’ rights symbolized the success of the American Revolution and that they therefore interpreted their violation by Great Britain as an attack on their democratic aspirations. The Republican elite associated free trade with the Enlightenment belief that increasing international commerce would lead to world peace and those at the bottom of the social ladder hoped that free trade would promote economic growth and thus create more jobs and higher wages. Sailors’ rights were also deeply linked to the revolutionary heritage. In the colonial period, sailors had been considered the lowest class in a strictly hierarchized society. After independence, as Gilje points out, their treatment thus became a standard of measurement for American egalitarianism. No longer part of a rigid social structure, sailors were given full citizenship in the United States, according to Gilje, and their abuse by the Royal Navy was henceforth interpreted as a challenge to America’s democratic self-conception and perceived as a threat to the very success of the American Revolution. He concludes that free trade and sailors’ rights became part of America’s national identity and combined the Enlightenment hopes of the Republican leadership and the democratic aspirations of the common people. Their symbolic importance thus transcended the immediate diplomatic issues at hand and explains why the West and the South—sections of the country that were less involved in foreign trade than the Northeast—were vociferous in their support for the war.

More clearly than historians analyzing the strictly diplomatic aspects of neutral trade and impressment, Gilje demonstrates how free trade and sailors’ rights were symbolically linked to the heritage of the American Revolution and explains why Republicans interpreted their violation as an attack not only on American sovereignty but on the foundations of American identity that needed to be resisted by a recourse to war. Since Gilje is mostly laying out the larger cultural significance of free trade and sailors’ rights and does not analyze in detail the politics behind America’s war declaration, his account could leave one with the impression that the war was inevitable and that armed conflict was the only way to satisfy America’s democratic sensibilities. Even though it was probably not Gilje’s intention to declare the War of 1812 as unavoidable, his book thus raises an important issue about postrevolutionary America, namely that the American Revolution did not produce a peaceful nation content with its newly established democratic institutions but rather created a nationalistic, aggressive society that believed war was a suitable means to assert its political principles internationally. Rather than accepting Britain’s naval policies as a reaction to Napoleonic warfare on the Continent, Republicans believed they needed to militarily make their former mother country acknowledge the superiority of the American political system.

Gilje’s book portrays a nationally aroused American society that in 1812, by referring to the ideals of the American Revolution and the alleged threat Britons posed to them, felt justified in waging war against the former mother country in order to affirm their democratic principles. Eustace exposes how Republicans subsequently sought to unite

the divided nation during the war by inciting hatred of Indians and by clearing the lands in the West from Native American populations. Lambert’s book shows how Republicans used the War of 1812 to promote American nationalism by building up national heroes who had allegedly displayed better skills and more courage and thus demonstrated the superiority of republican over monarchical principles. The traditional narrative—blaming Great Britain for the War of 1812 and declaring the United States its victor—can no longer be upheld, as it has been exposed as a nationalistic American myth.

Paris

Jasper M. Trautsch

With persistent attention to the role of German-Americans before and during the Civil War, it is refreshing to see a study that encompasses this important era but also explores the decade that followed. Efford undertakes the critical examination of the German-American commitment to African American suffrage and citizenship. Her thoroughly documented research takes advantage of the entire range of published and archival resources and delineates an era that begins with the 1848 revolution and concludes with the contested presidential election of 1876. The study highlights the ‘German Triangle,’ Ohio, Missouri, and Wisconsin and, in particular, the metropolitan centers: Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee. Efford considers this segment of the Midwest worthy of special attention because of a prevalent view that here German-Americans held the power of swing voters. The German newspapers of the Midwest, published in the cities of the ‘Triangle,’ provide valuable evidence of representative political positions and their evolution. Efford identifies an unexpected shift in what she considers the captivating image of the ‘freedom-loving’ German-American, “an immigrant man who asserted the value of cultural diversity while he took on slavery” (54). In the 1850s, the outspoken radicals were the major spokesmen for their ethnic community. They went beyond Abraham Lincoln’s moderate position on race; they demanded the abolition of slavery and advocated citizenship and voting rights for freed African Americans. Nationally, German-American Midwesterners had reshaped the party that brought Lincoln to power. During the Civil War, the reputation of Germans as ‘freedom loving’ increased. The momentum of such reputation advanced the voting rights for freed slaves, contributing in 1870 to the passage of the fifteenth amendment, prohibiting racial discrimination in voting.

Ironically, the year 1870 can also be seen as a significant turning point in the German-American support for voting rights. It was the year of the Franco-Prussian War, in which Bismarck could claim a decisive victory over France. The Iron Chancellor took steps to unite Germany and thereby achieved one of the goals for which the Forty-Eighters had fought. A nationalistic fervor pervaded German immigrant communities throughout the United States. The strong empathy for the fatherland had consequences for the immigrants’ attitudes toward African Americans. Influenced by Germany’s successful unification, German-Americans retreated from their support of black voting rights and reframed the debate in favor of national reconciliation. The shift also involved a movement away from the focus on equality to a view of ethnic superiority. In Efford’s view, this shift derogates the popular image of the ‘freedom loving’ German to a myth. Since her book is, on one level, a political biography of Karl Schurz, the dramatic metamorphosis is also seen in this former Forty-Eighters’ political career. In 1859, Schurz had declared that true Americanism profited from the all-assimilating power of freedom; it allowed “every people, every creed, every class of society” to contribute (81). After having supported African American suffrage in the 1860s, Schurz, as a United State senator and later as secretary of the interior, moved to a political stance that focused on conciliation and put less emphasis on African American citizenship. Efford’s impressive study opens up new ways to understand the arc of radicalism that the refugees of the 1848 revolution generated. In that sense, the concept of the German-Americans as ‘freedom loving’ was, at least for the early phase of this history, not just a myth. Further research could clarify the extent to which the retreat from ensuring voting rights for African Americans was due primarily to the initiatives of German-American leaders or, in the broader context, to a powerful wave of retrenchment evident in both American political parties. There was, after all, a general loss of interest in reconstruction. The nation was turning its back on the problems of the South. Efford’s well documented study nevertheless makes a strong case that the German-American leaders, influenced by the nationalistic and conservative trends under Bismarck’s Germany, abandoned their earlier activism for African American suffrage.

Lawrence, KS

Frank Baron

The nineteenth-century American cultural landscape bears witness to a large variety of reform movements. Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights, edited by Christine L. Ridarsky and Mary M. Huth, approaches the diverse field of American women’s involvement in these reform movements from a historical perspective. In outlining the multifaceted struggle for equal rights, the collection of essays focuses on the life and work of one outstanding figure among women reformers: Susan B. Anthony. The seven essays compiled in this volume explore the manifold sides of Anthony’s involvement in various reform movements such as women’s rights, temperance, and antislavery. While the collection successfully conveys a differentiated picture of the interconnectedness and involvement of this wide range of nineteenth-century reform movements and Anthony’s influence on them, it remains vague in positioning itself in existing scholarship. More direct theoretical explanations and references would have been indispensable for demarking the innovativeness of the collection’s approach and for drawing a concise and distinguished picture of Anthony.

Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights is divided in four parts: ‘Constructing Memory,’ ‘Anthony and Her Allies,’ ‘Broadening the Boundaries of the Equal Rights Struggle,’ and ‘Reconstructing Memory.’ Four out of seven essays are concerned with portraying Anthony and her involvement in various reform movements, whereas the three remaining essays are devoted to shedding light on the lives and works of lesser known activists and their involvement with the struggle for equal rights of marginalized groups such as Native Americans or African Americans. The collection employs memory politics, both in the sense of constructing a certain story and reconstructing that story as history, as its structuring principle. The first essay by Lisa Tetrault investigates Anthony’s role as a historian and her fascination with creating and controlling future generations’ memory of the woman suffrage movement. In “We Shall Be Remembered,” Tetrault proposes to rethink the image drawn of Anthony and the suffrage movement along the lines of memory construction. The essay gives a careful account of the long and tedious process of compiling the History of Woman Suffrage, authored by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Susan B. Anthony. In unearthing “surprisingly unknown” (16) details about the editorial process of the History, Tetrault points to the importance of collaboration among women’s rights activists and to their collaboration with other reform efforts, such as the abolitionist movement, in achieving their cause of universal suffrage. While the collection initially addresses Anthony’s personal concerns with memory construction, it closes with Ann D. Gordon’s “Knowing Susan B. Anthony,” which traces the process of memory reconstruction from Anthony’s contemporaries to scholarship and popular preconceptions today. Gordon compellingly argues that the process of memory reconstruction always stylizes Anthony as a singular persona, which then gets appropriated for particular causes by various groups and individuals (cf. 201). The multitude of images drawn of Anthony was equally appropriated by her supporters and opponents within the movement, as well as by scholars and biographers. Recent examples of engaging Anthony in public discourse include her invocation by anti-abortion activists or the unease communicated by the general public over the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin. Gordon thus expounds the ongoing process of memory reconstruction as distorting the image of the historical Anthony. However, the essay, as well as the thrust of the whole collection, remains vague in its construction of a concise memory of Anthony. While pointing to the multiplicity of images present in scholarly and public discourse, the collection refrains from taking a clear position. The closing words of the volume “[...] as long as we have a politics of gender in America, we will have a politics of Susan B. Anthony’s memory,” and the remark that Anthony “will endure as a symbol in political culture of ongoing contests over women’s rights” remain strangely obscure (227). Thus, in attempting to grasp the complexity of memory (re)construction in nineteenth-century reform movements, the collection comes up short in drawing a distinguished and precise portrait of Anthony.

As the collection of essays is concerned with exploring Anthony’s involvement in various reform movements, the second part of the book, “Anthony and Her Allies,” describes Anthony’s basic politics as originating from religious motivations, which lead her to reach
out and collaborate with the abolitionist movement. Kathi Kern traces the roots of Anthony’s political activism in radical Quakerism, and Laura E. Free shows how the egalitarianism promoted in the circle of Progressive Friends prompted Anthony to believe in the universal category ‘citizen.’ Anthony’s religious beliefs, which are also the reason for her engagement with the temperance movement in her early career, eventually made her seek new opportunities for reform work in the antislavery and women’s rights campaigns (cf. 94). The two essays in this part of the collection convincingly argue that Anthony’s politics are based on her faith in human equality, regardless of gender and race. Anthony’s belief in the potential of merging women’s and African Americans’ efforts to achieve universal suffrage eventually induced her to found the American Equal Rights Association together with Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Especially the rendition of Anthony’s and Stanton’s passionate speeches in front of the New York State Constitutional Convention of 1867 illuminate the great difficulties and disappointments the reformers had to endure in their fight for universal suffrage.

Part Three of the book, “Broadening the Boundaries of the Equal Rights Struggle,” sheds light on the lives and works of lesser known activists, such as Matilda Joslyn Gage or Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and their respective involvement in the struggle for equal rights of marginalized groups such as Native Americans or African Americans. In her essay, Alison M. Parker discusses the black woman reformer Frances Ellen Harper as a symbol for the potential, and at the same time, failure of a true interracial women’s collaboration in affecting constitutional change. Harper put her faith in a strong central government to empower African Americans by guaranteeing them full rights as citizens (cf. 145). She eventually sought white women’s support by turning to the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union as her vision was to build a Christian community that could serve as a model of interracial cooperation (cf. 153). However, her belief in a common humanity was disappointed as white women’s prejudices and racism persevered. Similarly, Melissa Ryan explores the ambiguous attitudes of white women reformers towards their Native American sisters. In tracing the reform work of women like Alice Fletcher or Matilda Joslyn Gage, she convincingly argues that white women’s definitions of Indiananness are shaped by their rhetorical needs of the moment (cf. 123). Whereas Ryan and Parker are concerned with expanding the boundaries of the equal rights struggle in the direction of race, Tara M. McCarthy moves it towards the issue of class, more precisely towards the reform work of Irish American working-class women. McCarthy shows how the potential for reform originally directed towards the improvement of working conditions for a certain social class, such as the work the Ladies’ Land League attempted to achieve, can cultivate a tradition of activism that is concerned with more universal topics such as equal rights and economic justice (cf. 190).

Each essay expertly discusses its subject matter and gives voice to another facet of the equal rights struggle. However, it remains unclear how much the portrayal of these minor figures and their reform work contributes to our understanding of “the ways that Anthony helped shape those struggles” (1) as the introduction promises. At best, Anthony is mentioned in an anecdotal manner in these essays. Thus, the reader is left wondering what the main focus of the volume is, whether it attempts to give a comprehensive overview of women’s involvement in various reform movements in the nineteenth century or seeks to expand and differentiate our understanding of Anthony’s reform work. It is precisely here where the main problem of the collection is rooted. Growing out of a conference, the collection struggles to cohesively present Anthony’s role in the complex struggle for equal rights. To explore “the rich and variegated tapestry formed by women’s rights campaigns in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States” (2) and, at the same time, attempting to offer a revision of Anthony’s image constructed by her contemporaries, scholarship, and the public today, remains an only partially successful endeavor. While Lisa Tetrault’s “We Shall Be Remembered” explicitly points to the danger of constructing a certain image of Anthony by reading the History of Woman Suffrage as if it were an archival record rather than a highly subjective work pieced together by Anthony and her coauthors, and while Ann D. Gordon notes in “Knowing Susan B. Anthony” that biographers such as Ida Husted Harper, Rheta Childe, and most recently Kathleen Barry over time created their own narrative of Anthony, the collection remains vague in constructing...
its own narrative. Tellingly, Nancy A. Hewitt concludes the introduction by asserting that Anthony “left her powerful imprint on both the battle for equal rights in America and on the stories we continue to tell about it” (11). She does this without further specifying how the collection positions itself in the ongoing process of reassessing Anthony’s role in the nineteenth-century reform movements.

One would have wished for more direct theoretical explications and references to existing scholarship on Anthony and her reform work. Hewitt notes in the introduction that, in recent decades, “historians have documented myriad paths to women’s advancement and gender equality” (2) and declares that *Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights* “extends these analyses in new directions” (2). Yet neither the introduction, nor the individual essays clearly position the collection within existing scholarship on Anthony. Such explicit demarcations would have been essential for gauging the innovativeness of the collection’s approach. Instead, Hewitt mentions existing scholarship in passing only (cf.1).2 Despite these shortcomings, the essays collected in this volume offer excellent insights into the interconnectedness of the multitude of reform movements in the nineteenth century and give new impulses in reconsidering the role that Susan B. Anthony played in them. The volume might be especially useful for readers who wish to get a first yet differentiated understanding of Anthony’s politics and her manifold involvement in different strands of reform.

Mainz Franziska Schmid

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In this historical study of the overlapping but often presumed separate African American Civil Rights period and the Era of Decolonization, Plummer shows that these pivotal movements were related and that black leaders saw the future of African Americans tied to Africans in the future decolonized world. In Search of Power is a needed reminder to scholars and students focusing on this period and the aftermath that while we rightly examine the parallel struggles of blacks in America and those in Africa and the colonized Americas, the struggles were not identical and the failed expectations for African American rights in the United States can be better understood by looking at the relationship of these two struggles. Plummer’s study is a comprehensive one: the book is organized into nine chapters that are encased by introductory and concluding chapters that build the framework for the body of the book and offer a coda that reflects on the implications of the findings in this scholarship. The author methodically outlines the book’s aim to investigate how and why the anticipated changes for African Americans during the almost twenty year Decolonization Era, 1956 – 1974, went ultimately unrealized. Plummer’s study is grounded in careful research, evident in the vast primary and secondary sources from which she draws. This includes black newspapers and magazines from the era under study, government archives, private communications, and she also addresses the works of contemporary historians, sociologists, and political scientists to offer a highly critical look at this age.

Plummer cogently captures the milieu of her study’s beginning, particularly weaving a history that shows how academia, intellectualism, literature, politics, and economics of the late 1950s reflect “A Great Restlessness” as she entitles chapter one. Here she explains the historical setting that gave rise to leaders and institutions such as Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, and to reactions such as black expatriation. She then shows how these dynamics converged to influence black American interests in the affairs of continental Africans and Africans across the globe. Plummer’s insightful summation of Henry Kissinger’s assessment of the nation’s problem with racial discrimination underscores her reading of the eventual failure to realize the 60s aspirations for racial equity. Plummer cites Kissinger’s 1957 response to Urban League director Lester Granger regarding his policy paper on the race problem. Kissinger wrote to Granger that his paper suggested “‘the manner and method of presenting our case rather than to the substance of the issue itself, which in the long run is the only sure way of improving attitudes abroad.’” Plummer explains that “The White House and the State Department thereafter followed this advice. They did not have to solve the U.S. racial problem; they only had to manage the way the world perceived it. The permanence of racism was implied” (63).

In Search of Power details the complex policies of presidents during this era, illustrating how no matter the administration and its followings, policies and concerns for African American interests as well as blacks internationally were not at the forefront of national aims. She reminds us that despite President John Kennedy’s romanticized legacy as defender of civil rights, he “was never fully attuned to either Africa or African Americans” (99). She points out, for example, that “[b]lack New York politicians Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and J. Raymond Jones had pressured Kennedy to attend to urban affairs in exchange for their support” (104). Plummer also captures the complex aims of African American leaders and organizations that led to diverse visions of African American ties to and interest in continental Africa and blacks in the Atlantic world. Levels and notions of shared struggles were informed by such matters as black interests in U.S. assimilation, concepts of identity as national or international, and concepts about coalition strategies. Often the perception was that rights for one black group had to be traded or sacrificed for another—on both a national and an international stage. Most problematic for Pan-Africanists was the matter of postcolonial African nations that erupted into bloody political confrontations within. How could the struggle be imagined when race was not the outward marker or source of the strife? And as Plummer points out through the examples of Kennedy and Johnson policies in countries such as the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, South Africa, and Algeria, black interference that strayed from official U.S. policy was unwelcomed and quickly quelled.

The Johnson presidency marked the signing of the historic 1964 Civil Rights Act and
the 1965 Voting Rights Act; however, African Americans remained stifled by poverty, substandard housing, and limited economic opportunities, and despite the shift from the South’s Jim Crow label to the newly tagged Sun Belt brand, life for black southerners remained a struggle. With rising numbers of blacks in the military and increased black interest in U.S. international policies with brown and black nations, Johnson’s relationship with them grew more strained, despite his signature on these historic pieces of legislation. As Plummer explains, Johnson’s handling of race matters and leaders left him little if any political gain: while he distrusted King, the president thought that Roy Wilkins identified too closely with the White House. Wilkins’s loss of African Americans’ trust would thus diminish his value to Johnson. It was a curious situation: “Johnson could not benefit from either his black friends or his black enemies” (189).

It is chapter five that marks Plummer’s study as clearly true to the book’s subtitle “African Americans in the era of Decolonization.” The previous chapters seem more a history of state department or presidential race policies that affected the course of black civil rights and black international campaigns for racial equality. From chapter six forward, Plummer draws a history of the period through the prism of black activism that was spawned through both formal and grassroots leadership. She traces well the import of black literary figures during this period, illustrating how well-known figures such as James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Amiri Baraka, and Maya Angelou were shaped by but also helped shape the black liberation movement at home and abroad. Plummer maps out the complex and diverse cross-continental alliances, coalitions, and conflicts that developed out of African American activism during the era under study. This includes coverage of black organizations such as SCLC, SNCC, OAU, NAACP, and the Black Panther Party as well as key organization figures ranging from the more conservative Martin Luther King, Jr., Adam Clayton Powell, and Roy Wilkins to more radical figures such as Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, and Bobby Seale.

In Search of Power follows the achievements and the triumphs of civil rights activism but shows how ultimately key shortfalls at sometimes key moments among organizational leadership, coupled by a government that was unwavering in its indifference to equal opportunity, paved the way for the unfulfilled aims of this movement. Plummer poignantly traces how the Cold War and American corporate interests at home and abroad also shaped policies that undermined promises of racial equality in the United States and autonomy for continental Africans and blacks in the Caribbean. She offers a look at the muddied influence of communism in civil rights activism, showing the U.S. government’s manipulation of the very term to raise fears about black leaders and organizations and to then sanction actions against them. She reminds readers also that academia played a role as well in disseminating information that played to conventional white racism: “predominately white universities, many of them effectively segregated, profited from Cold War driven payouts from foundations and the government as social scientists prognosticated on the requisites for Third World growth and prosperity” (225) Her account of the transformation of the South from Jim Crow to Sunbelt reveals the economic and corporate liaisons that paved the way for companies in search of lower operating costs and higher revenues. With a Nixon presidency that deemed the source of the race problem simply a matter of blacks themselves, black protest was further painted and handled as criminalized behavior (cf. 250). The added mix of poverty and drugs that was prevalent in numerous African American communities provided an ideal platform from which to reign in the more threatening black activists.

The era ends, as Plummer explains, with civil rights legislation in America and overtures to emerging nations in Africa and the Caribbean. With U.S. policies and actions as well as failed or short-sighted efforts by black leaders, however, the struggle for power and opportunity sought in this era of activism has fallen short of the mark.

Atlanta, GA
Elizabeth West

Thomas King’s *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* is not a historical account of the indigenous peoples of North America, nor does it qualify as anthropological or sociopolitical study; it is a manifesto in the tradition of Charles Eastman’s *The Indian Today* (1915), D’Arcy McNickle’s *They Came Here First* (1949) and Vine Deloria Jr.’s *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969) and as such a must-read for every student, scholar, and aspiring scholar of Native American and Postcolonial Studies. Discarding the cloak of objectivity usually required for writing that wants to be taken seriously, King provides a narrative of North American dealings with Native affairs that reaches from the past to the imagined future(s): after exploring the realm of legends that reaches from the past to the imagined North American dealings with Native affairs, Thomas King thus paints a humorous, yet dark picture of Native-white relationships throughout the centuries and unveils a repetitive pattern of imperialist claims on Native land that reaches far into the twentieth cen-
Moving Indians around the continent was like redecorating a very large house. The Cherokee can no longer stay in the living room. Put them in the second bedroom. The Mi’kmaq are taking up too much space in the kitchen. Move them to the laundry. The Seminoles can go from the master bedroom into the sunroom, and lean the Songhees against the wall in the upstairs hallway. We’ll see if that works. For the time being, the Ojibway, the Seneca, the Métis, and the Inuit can be stored in the shed behind the garage. And what the hell are we going to do with the Blackfoot, the Mohawk, the Arapaho, and the Paiute? Do we have any garbage bags left? (97)

King sarcastically unveils the absurdity of the so-called Indian problem—a problem, as King specifies, that is still extant today because after 400 years of colonialism, “a condition much like Malaria” (128), “Indians were still being Indians” (107): the indigenous people of North America still cling to their cultures despite residential school re-education. While King’s criticism is poignant and outspoken, it is not only the content but the perspective that matters: if you read *The Inconvenient Indian* solely for historical anecdotes you will miss half of what is being said. King never eschews to take a clear position, to assume responsibility for his words on the page: he allows for mistakes, partiality or misinformation on his part, his call for change that looms over every page of *The Inconvenient Indian* is aimed not so much at non-Natives but at the indigenous people of North America who alone can change their condition. I said before that King’s book does not require a reader well versed in Native American Studies and issues; that is true. It does, however, require an attentive reader, the more so since the book is a quick read and can be too easily dismissed as entertaining yet superficial.

Aside from its nature as the socio-political manifesto of an Indigenous writer, *The Inconvenient Indian* subsumes Thomas King’s personal artistic program since it features the central ideas and techniques (borderlines, land claims, metatextuality, the importance of stories, etc.) from his former works such as his novel *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993), or his short story collection *The Truth About Stories* (2003). In his insightful review, Michael Bourne traces the impact of *The Inconvenient Indian* as King’s thirteenth published book in the United States and Canada, concluding that it has had a curious history itself: it was rejected thirty-one times by U.S.-publishing houses until finally being accepted by the University of Minnesota Press only to trigger a poor, solely academic, echo in the United States; in contrast, the book topped bestselling lists in Canada where it won the British Columbia’s National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction on February 21, 2014. It did not stop there: one month after its publication in November 2012, the Idle No More movement kicked off, a national movement of Canadian Native rights activists, First Nations, Métis, and Inuits protesting for the government’s respect of treaty rights and indigenous sovereignty. According to Lynn Henry, publishing director at Doubleday Canada, the protesters were responding to an inconvenient question that has never been seriously considered throughout the last centuries and that is central to Thomas King’s *The Inconvenient Indian*: “In essence: ‘What do Indians want?’ was the question; and this book gave a frank answer.”

Würzburg
Kristina Baudemann

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2 Henry, Lynn; qtd. in Bourne (2013)

Clark begins his latest literary study, The Radical Fiction of Ann Petry, with a claim that calls for a complete reframing of Petry’s oeuvre: that Boston University’s Ann Petry archive demonstrates, through Petry’s letters and records, that she was much more politi
cally minded and involved than previous critics have acknowledged. Clark argues that
Petry’s writings should not be pigeonholed in the genre of Naturalism, nor should she be
endlessly compared and subordinated to male writers such as Richard Wright. Unlike many
of her contemporary male writers, who were interested in representing African American
male protagonists as equally masculine to their white counterparts, Clark argues for
what he terms a “radical aesthetic agenda,” which includes questioning “essentialist de
finitions of gender for male protagonists” (4) and demonstrates how the lives of WASPs
can be as nightmarish and pathological as those blacks confined to a plantation” (5).
This is just one among many new looks that Clark takes at Petry’s fiction that makes his
study a must-read for students and scholars interested in the understudied works of authors
publishing between the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement.

To date, Hazel Arnett Ervin’s 2005 The Critical Response to Ann Petry contains the
most comprehensive collection of reviews of Petry’s work and criticism on her fiction from
the 1970s to the early 2000s. Ervin’s collection captures the development in Petry criti
cism over several decades. Early Petry criticism focused on the inability of black, often female, characters to achieve the American Dream. Petry critics such as Vernin Lat
tin, Richard Yarborough, and Bernard Bell analyzed The Street against its contemporary
texts If He Hollers Let Him Go and Native Son to assert that it was another example of
a naturalist text but one authored by a woman writer and with a female protagonist. Later
critics, such as Marjorie Pryse and Calvin C. Herton, began analyzing Petry’s black female
characters in The Street in contrast to Lutie, the novel’s black female protagonist, address-
ing failures of Lutie’s and, more general, black women’s motherhood. More recently, Nellie
McKay, Kimberly Drake, and Heather Hicks place Petry back in conversation with Wright,
Himes, and Ellison claiming that, through her female protagonist, Petry demonstrates
the complex meanings and double standards of women’s lives and experiences. Although
The Street is by far Petry’s most analyzed text, some critics have examined Country Place
and The Narrows for their critiques of white
ness as a race and therefore also a part of the
social constructions of racism (Ervin). Unlike
the critical essays in Ervin’s collection, Clark’s
The Radical Fiction is one of few works that
takes on Petry’s short fiction, specifically plac-
ing it in conversation with her longer works,
and also analyzes Petry’s male characters.

Scholarship such as William Scott and Meg
Eby’s 2008 article concentrate on the trope of
the American Dream and Benjamin Franklin
themes that are found in The Street. Though
recent, their analyses do not challenge conven-
tional readings of Petry’s work. Clark claims
that what previous critics have argued as natu
ralism can instead be read as part of the Amer-
ican gothic genre. This again is the importance
of Clark’s study: it takes Petry studies into a
new direction. The Radical Fiction broadens
our understanding of Petry’s writing by in-
cluding the much-discussed The Street with
lesser-known Petry texts. Clark analyzes Petry’s
canon through a biographically focused lens,
elevating the reading of her private papers by
giving them as much import as The Street, her
most famous novel. Elizabeth Petry’s 2009 At
Home Inside: A Daughter’s Tribute to Ann
Petry contains Petry’s biography and letters,
and by analyzing this material in his book as
well, Clark adds to our understanding of how
Petry’s personal life informs her literary work.
Clark examines Petry’s personal writings, her
political activities, and her relationship with
her father for a better understanding of her fic
tional work. Additionally, and delightfully dif
different, is that in this study Petry is not reduced
to a mid-century black female writer who may
have been influenced by Richard Wright. In-
stead, he situates her as a precursor to writers
such as Ralph Ellison, especially in her use
of jazz elements in her fiction to connect to a
larger tradition of black art.

Overall, Clark’s study is a rereading and
refocusing of Ann Petry’s collective works of
fiction against interviews, letters, and records
from her life. In the first three chapters, Clark
analyzes Petry’s male protagonists. Unlike
critics who typically focus on Petry’s female
characters, Clark chooses to analyze Petry’s
portraits of black masculinity (9). In Chapter one specifically, Clark connects Petry’s literary past to her ancestral past and uses Petry’s descriptions of her father to explain that her black male characters defy categorization. Clark argues that Petry’s fiction challenges head-on prevailing paradigms of race and masculinity: “Her men transcend the drawing notion that white masculinity is the sole touchstone for black male subjectivity” (17). Although Wright and Ellison are commonly discussed in conjunction with Petry’s work, she can also be compared to Hawthorne and Poe, authors Petry places in the literary education of The Street’s Lutie. Clark highlights gothic elements in The Street and The Narrows as the “black community’s failure to address the psychological health of its male children” (22), which Clark labels “Afro-Gothic.”

The third chapter continues the constructed gothic lens with a look at Petry’s short stories. Here Clark demonstrates how Petry challenges perceptions of masculinity while also critiquing what he reads as Petry’s portrayal of gay men in an overtly stereotyped form as a way of challenging gender norms. Chapters four and five work more in depth with the gothic themes Clark begins developing in the first chapter. Here it is worth noting that his chapter on The Street follows what previous critics have demonstrated as naturalism in Petry’s work, and that the chapter has an unclear distinction between naturalistic and gothic genres that Clark more strongly argues and develops in his earlier chapters.

The final chapters move away from the gothic argument developed in the first chapters. Chapter six analyzes why Petry moved from a race-based first novel in The Street to the raceless, or white, Country Place, and here Clark compares her to Richard Wright’s departure from Native Son. Clark argues that the absence of race “enabled [Petry] to focus her artistic lens almost singularly on those who are denominated as raceless—the always normative, always unmarked, always aproblematical: whites” (163). This permits Petry, as a black woman writer, to critique white hegemony through her invisibility as the author, rather than having a black character visibly finding fault with whites. The final chapter argues that Petry’s “In Darkness and Confusion” demonstrates domesticity and terror differently than Petry’s white authorial counterparts. Clark argues that Petry’s writing serves as a critique of white female authors depiction of The Cult of Domesticity, portraying the home as a “dungeon-like enclosure” (182). Similarly, black female authors “have fictivized the miseries of patriarchy and untrammeled phallocentrism” but have done so “in decidedly raced ways” (182), situating black women’s domestic terror within black female authors’ canon.

Clark concludes with a brief examination of Petry’s 1960s short stories. Despite Petry’s lack of overt political involvement in the 60s, her later works still reflected “black sensibilities” (203), such as how “black identity in the mid-1960s was still laden with agonizing contradictions that too often proved psychologically debilitating” (204). The immense value of Clark’s book is clear. He seeks not to discredit previous critics’ analyses of Petry as a naturalist writer. Instead, he works to broaden the scope and study of Petry, focusing on how her writing successfully analyzes and defends broad ranges of gender identities. Moreover, Clark works with both Petry’s fictional work and the archive at Boston University to argue that the full range of Petry’s work should be included in the main of American literary study, and in doing so Clark reveals how the personal is indeed political in the life and work of this revered, though little understood, American writer.

Kentucky Julie Naviaux

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

In the first trajectory, the introduction offers a précis of current criticism discussing what is at stake when we as humans claim that the very things that are not human impact our lives but also have a life of their own. In a refreshing move that foregrounds the semantics of life over that of things (cf. 18-22), Tischleder calls attention to the psychological implications that inform the fictional representation of subject/object relationships as they unfold in both space and time. Thus positioned, the study takes measure of the mostly Marxist driven field of thing theories and their various object-centered arguments. Moving deftly from Arjan Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff’s take on commodification and the social life of things to Marcel Mauss and John Frow’s competing notions of gift economies—the author’s argument for the importance of matter’s agency is motivated by two thinkers in particular.

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

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

Using fiction by Harriet Beecher Stowe, the first chapter charts the strategic deployment of decommodified objects during the era of conspicuous consumption. Setting aside the much-debated object narrative of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Tischleder concentrates on stories and essays collected in Stowe’s *House and Home Papers* (1864). In particular the story “The Ravages of a Carpet” provides the anchor for revisiting older arguments about the dangerous allure of commodity culture in which the sin of material consumption tends to be pitted against the guiltless pleasure of owning well-used goods. The author sides with the assessment that Stowe eschews a critique of capitalism in favor of the pre-Civil War ideology of sentimental domesticity. But whereas earlier criticism demonstrated how material culture caused the commercialization of both family life and inner selfhood, Tischleder affords material possessions a more therapeutic function. Stowe’s
writings envision domestic environments in which people and things not only cohabitate but where objects help produce an ecological balance between the demands for domestic order and the characters’ emotional state. Much of this balance Tischleder attributes to the way in which the objects’ “patina” (71) mediates different life experiences. The simultaneous accretion of personal and material experience transforms objects into affective sources shaping a social order centered on the family unit rather than the mechanics of the marketplace.

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

Similarly, Wharton’s novel explores realist and naturalist fiction depicting the psychological predicament of an object-oriented subjectivity set adrift by the surplus experience of objects. By concentrating on the use of sensory perception, in particular “scent” (134-148), Tischleder posits Wharton’s characters as composite selves, mutually constituted as subject and object, whose sense of selfhood is ultimately predicated on aesthetic experiences. Drawing on Bourdieu’s discussion of taste, the chapter shows how the habits of aesthetic competence come to dominate the physical experience of the material world. In contrast to the traditional rules of good taste, according to which objects became subordinated to the subjectivity of the beholder, Tischleder’s astute assessment reveals the rise of a parallel material universe governed by the rules of taste. By examining the olfactory experience of scent as the last vestige of material memory, she shows how in Wharton’s fiction objects operate in diverging patterns, providing, on the one hand, a key to self-reflection and conduit for intimacy, while, on the other, stimulating the senses to the point where characters lose the capacity to feel.

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

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

The Literary Life of Things is an intense and rewarding read, even if at times its desire for complexity interferes with its many won-
derful insights. Its explanations of how fiction makes things come alive might cause some specialists to quibble with particular close-readings. And the omission of addressing the actual materiality of things from Stowe’s Brussel carpet to Franzen’s upholstered armchair will strike students of material culture as a missed opportunity. That said, the book on the whole offers new perspectives for re-examining key paradigms of thing theory and object-oriented ontology. By dint of its critical acumen and comprehensive range this book will be at the center of future discussions addressing things in American literature.

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In 2013, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society bestowed its highest honor—the “Lifetime Achievement Award”—on Dieter Schulz and thus recognized him as one of a very small group of scholars whose work has fundamentally shaped our understanding of Emerson and the Transcendentalists. Schulz, who now finds himself in the company of such luminaries of Transcendentalist scholarship as Kenneth Walter Cameron, Robert Richardson, Barbara Packer, Stanley Cavell, and Lawrence Buell, is the first scholar from outside the United States to receive the award. The Emerson Society’s decision is all the more remarkable considering that Schulz’s writings on Emerson and Thoreau have so far not been widely available internationally. His monograph Amerikanischer Transzendentalismus: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller (1997), while considered a benchmark introduction in German-speaking countries, has not been translated into English, and even the majority of his numerous essays on the Transcendentalists have been published in venues that are most often dismally ignored outside of German academe. To make things more complicated, some of them were written in German without having been translated into English. While experts have long been in the know (as the choice by the Emerson Society’s award committee attests), the publication of *Emerson and Thoreau, or Steps Beyond Ourselves: Studies in Transcendentalism* finally fills the urgent need of collecting the key essays of Schulz’s oeuvre on Transcendentalism in a nicely edited English-language paperback edition.

*Emerson and Thoreau, or Steps Beyond Ourselves* collects eleven of Schulz’s essays on Emerson and Thoreau written between the mid-1990s and 2010, two of which are published here for the first time. They develop ideas from his 1997 book, and, indeed, his critical project here is thematically continuous with his earliest publications from the early 1970s. Throughout this decade-spanning intellectual endeavor, Schulz has developed a mature, distinct voice, which comes to full fruition in these essays: he abstains from the attempt to score points with claims that are original at all cost and instead articulates positions that combine clarity—even a proclivity for the commonsensical—with at times unexpected insights gained from connections drawn to the Western philosophical tradition, including most centrally the Presocratics Saint Augustine, George Berkeley, and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

While his early work was dedicated to the quest motif in American fiction (his article on Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly* as quest romance, published in *American Literature* in 1971, remains a classic), his monograph Amerikanischer Transzendentalismus re-conceptualized the quest’s mobility as ‘walking’ and opposed it to Emerson’s and Thoreau’s complementary figures of the house and the act of world-building.1 Finally, in the present essays Schulz pays renewed attention to the wanderer and conceives of Transcendentalism as a “large-scale effort to revitalize the metaphor of the way” (4). Captured in this phrase are two interrelated projects. First, Schulz’s essays can justly be regarded as contributions to the field of metaphorology, though characteristically he has little patience for its technicalities and restricts himself to drawing on the bottom line of recent interdisciplinary findings on the centrality of “metaphors derived from sensory experience” (2) for even the most abstract concepts. The Transcendentalists, he suggests, have been privy to this insight all along and have thus relied “on stimulating tropes rather than conceptual thought” (76). Second, Schulz’s fascination with the “metaphor of the way” arises from its conceptual knotting together of the image of the open road, the activity of walking, and the scientific method. It is here that Schulz’s indebtedness to Gadamer’s hermeneutics is most pronounced. Like Gadamer, Schulz upholds the Presocratic notion of method (which, as he points out with an acuteness to etymology, “is a compound consisting of the noun *hodos*”

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– way, and the preposition meta–along with, after”) over against the objectivist ideal of Francis Bacon’s scientific method: “In different ways, [...] Thoreau, Emerson, and Gadamer [...] recapture the original meaning of the word” (133). While for Bacon, Descartes, and their nineteenth-century followers, method assumes “an autonomous intellect confronting an object that we can know in a verifiable way only in so far as we distance ourselves from it,” the Presocratic notion “envisages a methodos that enables us to share the path of things” and thus “takes for granted the unity of mind and being” (134).

From this hermeneutical starting point, Schulz develops a number of intriguing observations. He connects the necessary interrelatedness of knowledge—the experiential component in the capturing of the object—to the topos of the ‘Book of Nature’ and thus puts Emerson and Thoreau in deep conversation with a tradition that ranges from medieval theological theories of God’s two books (the Bible and nature) to Neoplatonism and George Berkeley. Berkeley, Schulz points out, became, in part via Coleridge, a source of inspiration for Transcendentalists (and even for modernists, as he argues in his essay on William Carlos Williams) because Berkeley compellingly combined Locke’s belief in the arbitrariness of human language with a conviction in the motivatedness of a natural language, “which, as God’s language, is universal and absolutely dependable” (207). Humans, in other words, may be symbolic animals; this, however, does not set them apart from the rest of creation but rather emplaces them in its midst. And once human language becomes reconnected to its natural source, the unity of mind and being will be reestablished.

While this interpretation has the obvious benefit of accounting for Emerson’s hopes for the recovery of an Adamic language (especially prominent in Nature), in which words and things are reattached to each other, it also lets Schulz clarify the fact that Thoreau’s frequent proclamations of the language of nature are in no way meant as an analogy but, dead-seriously, as the postulation of an “ur-language.” (184) the recuperation of which he made his writerly task by means of a poetics centered on etymology and punning (cf. 184–87). Thoreau scholars and ecocritics will be particularly interested in the ramifications of Schulz’s analysis. While environmental critics have long debated whether Thoreau’s writings are best described as anthropocentric or biocentric (the debate between Leo Marx and Lawrence Buell on this point has become part of the field’s narrative identity), Schulz insists that Thoreau combines and alters both positions: “On the one hand, Thoreau’s approach appears biocentric inasmuch as his object lies in a ‘wildness’ beyond the reach of civilization. On the other hand, he shares an anthropocentric concern with nature as something that is of greatest interest to us” (209). In Schulz’s reading, the unity of mind and being, while growing out of traditions steeped in mysticism, can be regarded as a radically modern intervention into the split between the sciences and humanities as analyzed by C.P. Snow. As Schulz remarks repeatedly (unfortunately without ever fleshing out his point), “another look at Thoreau’s excursions has considerable potential for overcoming the two-cultures dichotomy” (223).

The ideas outlined so far recur so frequently in Emerson and Thoreau, or Steps Beyond Ourselves that at times they begin to feel redundant, especially when reading the book cover to cover. On the other hand, these reiterations have the advantage, exactly as Schulz hopes in his preface, of conferring cohesiveness on essays of an obviously miscellaneous origin. Moreover, Schulz—a consummate prose stylist throughout—largely avoids the identical repetition of phrases even when he draws again and again on the pillars of his intellectual framework. One final such pillar needs to be considered here, not least for its contentious qualities. For Schulz, Emerson and Thoreau, as well as the Puritans and modernists who surround them in his book, all belong to a distinctly American tradition; even more, he insists that for the most part they thought of their work in those very terms. While recent influential readers, say Buell or Wai-Chee Dimock, have rejected the imputation of such a nationalist project to the Transcendentalists, Schulz maintains that Crèvecoeur’s question “What is an American?” reverberates “nowhere with greater urgency than in Emerson’s ‘Experience’” (90), and that the heroes of Emerson’s Representative Men, from Plato to Goethe, “remind us of Emerson’s own ambition to [...] provide a stimulus for the renewal of American culture” because they offered “glimpses of reconciliation and wholeness” (73). If there is a certain stubbornness in his conviction that these writers were preoccupied with America even when they
were engaged in creating a canon of cosmopolitan minds (as Emerson was in Representative Men), the reason, I suspect, lies in his own investment in America. It should be noted, of course, that any scholarly engagement with America is marked by an investment in the object of study of one sort or another. For Schulz, American writing—and ultimately, America itself—is characterized by the provisional, the improvised, and the hopeful emphasis on new beginnings rather than endings (this may make him sound like a Pragmatist, which he is not; in his reading, the Transcendentalists’ improvisational style grows out of their deep trust in metaphysical unity). These qualities are precisely the outlook he ascribes to his favorite authors, hence their seemingly predominant concern with America.

The collection’s final article on Martin Walser’s Amerikareise most fully brings to light Schulz’s affective involvement with America. Schulz turns to Walser—and effectively makes him the mouthpiece of his own creed—in part because Walser stands apart from most other German intellectuals (as epitomized by Adorno), who could not overcome their anti-Americanism even after years of living there, and in part because Walser adopts the future-mindedness Schulz analyzes in his preferred writers. In Schulz’s reading, Walser is a follower of Whitman in his conviction that the United States, despite its dismal condition in the present, “will sooner or later astonish the world by a spiritual and cultural renewal matching its political and economic strength” (265). Schulz is right, of course, if he means to say that the idea of renewal still functions as one of America’s most potent myths. But he does not stop there. Whitman and Walser appeal to him precisely for their commitment to the idea of the “open road” (268), the philosophical articulation of which is Schulz’s great project throughout these essays. The “open road,” Schulz explains, describes “an experiment whose outcome is uncertain. This is the truth underlying the stereotypical references of the ‘American Way’” (268). But why should the truth of the openness of experiments, widely applicable as it is, be in any way tied to America? Schulz’s answer betrays a bedrock of faith in his lifelong object of study that grounds his impressive: the optimistic openness that runs through American writing, Schulz insists by echoing Walser, is no less than America’s “dynamic center, the idea that energizes its people” (268).

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