

Reviews

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KEVIN SLACK, *Benjamin Franklin, Natural Right, and the Art of Virtue* (Rochester: Rochester UP, 2017), 305 pp.

This erudite study reconstructs Benjamin Franklin's political philosophy from the rich wealth of his essays written before 1760. Claiming that Franklin's "science of virtue" was fully developed before the process of the American Revolution set in, Slack convincingly demonstrates in an argument moving close to the sources and saturated with textual evidence that the most radically republican of all the American founders indeed was a political theorist in the Whig tradition of natural rights.

Slack's study proceeds in nine chapters that are as rich as they are dense. Chapter 1 shows how Franklin's early thought developing during his first stay in England (1724/25) was fundamentally shaped by the utilitarian ethics born from the political atheism of Bernard Mandeville and Anthony Collins. Denying the superiority of the community over the individual, Franklin conceived of man as a pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding being for whom both virtue and vice were but empty distinctions because he acted on the necessities of his animal nature. Slack represents Franklin's early political philosophy as a hybrid of the doctrines of necessity and political atheism, thus defining all the positions that Franklin overcame in the further development of his thinking about man, society and politics. Chapter 2 traces how Franklin abandoned Mandeville's relativism and amoral necessitarianism already during his voyage back to Philadelphia in 1726, replacing it with a position that held virtue as a necessity for human action and social relationships. Inspired by Shaftsbury's theory of common sense, Franklin began to feature the social nature of man and the function of language, dialogue and conversation as media of information, truth, self-knowledge, and correction. In this context, the concept of virtue as a necessary condition of both individual happiness and social relationships began to move center stage.

Chapter 3 reconstructs Franklin's thinking about religion. It demonstrates how Franklin, rejecting his earlier political atheism, put his emerging "science of virtue" on a religious footing while continuing to reject the idea of a Christian God revealed in Scripture. Embracing a Deistic view of the world, Franklin began to understand virtuous behavior and

a sentiment of gratitude as "acts of religion" in a polytheistic, pagan form of worship that looked into the "Book of Nature" for orientation and guidance. Virtue was seen as a way of rationally ordering one's life, and a virtuous life partook in the divine order of nature that mirrored God's great but impenetrable goodness. Chapter 4 continues this discussion by looking into Franklin's thoughts about providentialism and religion in general. Although he was hostile towards revealed religion, Franklin was convinced of the necessity of religion as a source of ethical conduct in private and in public. Harmonizing religious thinking with reason, Franklin held that man's use of reason and the proper ordering of his soul are exercises of a "true religion" that took the "law of nature" as a measure for moral teachings. Religiosity was thus both public and private virtue that ensured the tranquility of mind, triggered benevolence towards others, and inculcated a sense of unity derived from providential thinking. Chapter 5 analyzes Franklin's "Science of Virtue," his moral philosophy and his investigations into human nature. Accordingly, virtue for Franklin was the source of private and public happiness; it was based on self-love properly understood, not on self-denial. His "Science of Virtue" ably reconstructed here unfolded as the attempt to combine self-interest and public mindedness and to channel private and public virtue to good government and public happiness.

As constant "self-examination" for Franklin was the condition of possibility of virtue and happiness, chapter 6 probes into this matter demonstrating that "self-examination" came in two shapes and forms: individual introspection and the critical view of trusted friends as external observers. Self-examination, as Slack convincingly shows, revealed the multiple selves of a person, revealed his ambitions and passions, and was as such the basis for a systematic and rational self-improvement, the prime aim of which was the acquisition of a habit of humility as the basis for virtuous social conduct. Chapter 7 places Franklin's "Science of Virtue" into the context of the sociology of a free people. As "avarice," "ambition," "pride," and other human "passions" in Franklin's view were obstacles to a life of private and public virtue, passions that potentially could run wild in a free society, his ethic of virtue is preoccupied with channeling "passions" to private morality, public spirit and commitment to the coun-

try. Chapter 8 deals with Franklin's political thought as derived from his moral philosophy of virtue and thereby unearths the theoretical base of his radical republicanism. It discusses Franklin's Whig-theory of rights, and shows how the protection of rights, not popular sovereignty, was his main concern regarding the role and functions of government.

The final chapter 9 reconstructs how Franklin applied his Whig principles of natural rights, social compact theory, and the proper ends of government to colonial politics. With a prime focus on his political actions in Pennsylvania's colonial assembly until the mid-1750s, the chapter demonstrates that Franklin demanded from early on that the colonists be treated as equals and right-bearing subjects of the Crown, not as children or slaves. He was convinced that the colonists, for having worked and cultivated the land, had the right to representative government in their colony, which could not be substituted by 'virtual representation' in England's parliament. This position became manifest in his conflict with the proprietors during the 1750s already, and it was then applied to the imperial conflict with a mother country that was unwilling to treat the colonists as equals and 'Englishmen in America.'

Slack's analysis unfolds as the close reading of a vast number of Franklin's essays, whose line of argumentation is carefully reconstructed and knowledgeably contextualized into the intellectual and political contexts of the age. This ongoing scholarly commentary on Franklin's essays produces a rich wealth of insights into his thought and individual texts. Erudite and rewarding as Slack's study is, its minute reconstruction of Franklin's "Science of Virtue" has a tendency to get lost in the details at the expense of analytical clarity and argumentative stringency.

Still, Slack's systematic treatment of Franklin's ethics of virtue is a valuable book for all scholars interested in Franklin, the Enlightenment, and republican culture in colonial British North America. Much has been written about the functionality of Franklin's ethics of virtue for "economic man" and his commercial pursuits on a free market place. In the light of this study, this appears as an uncalled for reduction of a highly complex "Science of Virtue" that is about "republican man" in a civil society as much as it is about virtue as an end in itself and a manifestation of beauty.

Volker Depkat (Regensburg)

SABINE N. MEYER, *We Are What We Drink: The Temperance Battle in Minnesota* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2015), 288 pp.

Man sollte meinen, über die amerikanische Temperenzbewegung des langen 19. Jahrhunderts sei auf beiden Seiten des Atlantiks schon hinreichend viel geforscht und geschrieben worden. Es sei nur an die älteren Standardwerke von William J. Rorabaugh und Thomas R. Pegram sowie die jüngere, ausgezeichnete Darstellung von Thomas Welskopp zur nationalen Prohibition erinnert. Dennoch gelingt es Sabine Meyer, die jetzt als Assistentin in Osnabrück tätig ist, in dieser Rudolph J. Vecoli inspirierten und von Alfred Hornung in Mainz betreuten Dissertationsschrift, der Geschichte einen neuen, originellen und zugleich informativen Spin zu verleihen. Dies gelingt ihr, indem sie, einem neueren Trend der Forschung folgend, ihre Fragestellung lokal verortet und dies obendrein methodisch gut verankert, indem sie, neben den klassischen Fragen nach *race*, *class*, *gender* und Religion, nach der fluiden und durch mannigfaltige Formen und Varianten von Intersektionalität charakterisierten Identität lokaler Räume fragt. Gerade für St. Paul in Minnesota, das im Zentrum ihrer überaus flüssig geschriebenen, nuanciert und reflektiert argumentierenden Studie steht, lohnt sich der lokale Blick in besonderem Maße, mehr zumindest, als etwa in Cincinnati, Boston oder Chicago, die meist den nationalen Patterns folgten. Fast selbstverständlich stößt auch Meyer auf die üblichen Verdächtigen aus der weißen, angelsächsischen, protestantischen Mittelklasse, insbesondere Frauen, die vom späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert an in unterschiedlicher Intensität und Radikalität wahlweise für moderate Temperenz gegenüber dem oder radikale Abstinenz von dem als sozialem und moralischen Übel gebrandmarkten Alkohol antraten, gerne mit einem evangelikal-postmillenaristischen, perfektionistischen oder aufgeklärt-liberalen Welt- und Menschenbild im Hintergrund. Auch die erwartbaren katholischen Gegner fehlen nicht. Aber in St. Paul stellte sich die Gemengelage von Befürwortern und Gegnern der Temperenzbewegung deutlich vielfältiger dar als andernorts. Dies hing ganz eng mit den von der Verfasserin so sorgsam markierten spezifischen lokalen Identitätsbildungsprozessen zusammen, da in St. Paul seit den 1840er Jahren die katholische Kirche nicht vorrangig aus einer randständigen, soziokulturell margina-

len Position heraus agierte, sondern aufgrund der frankokanadischen Gründungsgeschichte eine selbst von vielen Protestanten anerkannte moralische Führungsposition innehatte. Das daraus resultierende Selbstbewusstsein verhinderte jene militant ultramontane Tonlage in der katholischen Agitation, die für den Rest der USA typisch war. Dies wiederum verband sich mit den höchst konkreten Bemühungen des französischen Bischofs Joseph Cretin und seines irischen Nachfolgers Erzbischof John Ireland um eine Amerikanisierung in erster Linie des irischen Katholizismus in ihrer Diözese. Während Cretin erst im Laufe der Zeit von einer typisch französischen, moderaten Position, die in regelmäßigem, aber mäßigem Weinkonsum kein ethisches Problem sah, zur Temperenzbewegung fand, hatte Ireland bereits als Jugendlicher gegenüber dem irischen Temperenzapostel Fr. Theobald Mathew, OFM Cap. den Abstinenzeid abgelegt. Mit Hilfe katholischer Temperenz- und Abstinenzorganisationen wirkten die beiden hohen Kleriker in die irische Gemeinde hinein, die sich ihnen unter dem Gesichtspunkt sozialen Aufstiegs und nationaler Integration zwar nicht mehrheitlich, aber doch in hinreichender Zahl anschloss. In den 1880er Jahren fand sich dann sogar Papst Leo XIII. zu einer Apostolischen Breve bereit, welche Erzbischof Irelands Position ausdrücklich und zur Überraschung vieler billigte. Der moralische Furor des hohen Klerus, der für die USA höchst untypisch war, sorgte indes innerhalb des Katholizismus vor Ort für einen scharfen Konflikt, da deutsche Katholiken, gemeinsam mit der überwältigenden Mehrheit ihrer migrierten Landsleute schlicht zu diesem Akt der sozialmoralischen Assimilation nicht willens waren. Vehement agitierten sie gegen die Abstinenzgesellschaften, denen sie „Muckertum“ vorwarfen. In Cincinnati redete man demgegenüber gerne von den „Temperenzbestien“. Meyer geht dann zwar am Rande noch darauf ein, inwiefern dieser Konflikt dann auch im bekannten Amerikanismusstreit zwischen Teilen der irisch-amerikanischen katholischen Kirche und dem Vatikan unter Leo XIII. eine Rolle spielte, nützt aber das in diesem Umstand liegende analytische Potential, das ihre Thesen nur noch mehr bestätigt hätte, nicht vollkommen aus. Dafür zeigt sie sehr schön, wie sich irisch-katholische Frauen mit Mittelklasseaspirationen durch den hohen Anteil protestantischer Mittelklassefrauen in WCTU und ASL veranlasst sahen, ebenfalls politisch

aktiv zu werden. Und politisch wurde der Konflikt, je länger, umso mehr. Während Irland und Teile der irischen Reformer den Republikanern anhängen, wandte sich eine Mehrheit der Katholiken und anderen Migrant*innen, von denen dann vor allem die Skandinavier in der Temperanzbewegung auftauchten, den Demokraten zu. Aus einer moralischen wurde eine politische Debatte, deren Fronten gleichwohl durchweg fluide blieben.

Umgekehrt kann Meyer auf lokaler Ebene den von der jüngeren Forschung – es sei nur Charles Postel erwähnt – konstatierten inneren Zusammenhang von Populismus und Progressivismus in der Alkoholdiskussion von

St. Paul präzise belegen. Dazu zählt vor allem die evangelikal-postmillenaristische Grundierung der populistisch-progressivistischen Weltanschauung, deren Perfektionismus sich unmittelbar aus der zweiten Erweckungsbewegung speiste und nur notdürftig säkular-liberal übertüncht war.

Sabine Meyer hat ein inhaltlich wie methodisch überzeugendes, sorgsam reflektiertes, aber jargonarmes Buch vorgelegt, das sich vorzüglich dazu eignet, die Stärken eines bewusst lokalgeschichtlichen Zugriffs anschaulich zu machen.

Michael Hochgeschwender (München)

MEHRING, FRANK, *The Democratic Gap: Transcultural Confrontations of German Immigrants and the Promise of American Democracy* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2014), 403 pp. European Views of the United States 5.

Frank Mehring's award-winning study is a much-welcomed addition to several areas of American Studies: It provides an original contribution to the cultural history of American democracy (and its discontents), to the vast scholarship on German-American immigrants, and to the growing research on cultural exchanges between African America and Germany. Mehring coins the term "the democratic gap" to capture the "discrepancy between democratic ideals and reality" (2) which has long been observed, articulated, and discussed by political commentators, scholars, and artists on both sides of the Atlantic. *The Democratic Gap* examines how six (more or less) paradigmatic German immigrants have tried to reconcile their notion of American democracy with their actual experiences in the United States—from the *Vormärz* era to the mid-twentieth century.

Rather than focusing on issues of cultural preservation, Mehring draws attention to the ways in which these immigrants fashioned themselves as model American citizens. He analyzes their negotiations of the (unfulfilled) promises and (unrealized) fantasies of American democracy and situates them within "force fields of [transcultural] confrontation," namely "abolitionism, female emancipation, debates over cultural pluralism, patriotism in times of war, [...] the evolution of a Holocaust consciousness" and the "American experience of Afro-Germans" (8). Taken together these six case studies recast the history of German immigrants, especially intellectuals, as a "history of confrontations rather than a continuous success story of integration and cultural contributions" (23).

The analyses are attuned to the political, performative, and aesthetic dimensions of German intellectual emigres' claim to Americanness and reveal what Mehring calls their "patriotic dissent." Each analysis moves from an exploration of the immigrant's German background and image of America to an examination of the "moments of friction and various response patterns," and, finally, to a juxtaposition of the German-American intellectual's political stance with that of an African American artist and/or activist (10). These

confrontations result in complex negotiations of national identities, dissent, and democracy. Mehring discovers and develops interesting and sometimes even surprising connections between the respective two intellectuals. These connections, however, are established on different levels: for instance, some thinkers/activists actually collaborated, some influenced each other, more or less directly, and some never met in person but are contextualized within the same force field. The rationale behind the specific confrontations selected for each field is not always equally convincing, but they successfully show German-American investments, cultural and political, in an idealized American democracy and in activism against its most obvious failures (i.e. enslavement, racism, and discrimination).

In the context of abolitionism, Mehring singles out Charles Follen (1796-1840) as the prototype of an intellectual immigrant from the German *Vormärz* era who became a controversial American reformer and abolitionist spokesperson. Follen fashioned himself as a model American and performed a patriotism less shaped by "the resistance of a German patriot hero against tyranny," but more by "the insistence of the Founding Fathers on independence, freedom, and equality" (84). David Walker, whose famous *Appeal* influenced his work, serves here as a "foil to bring Follen's patriotism into focus" (86). This patriotism then emerges as largely devoid of religious rhetoric, invested in citizenship, and based on the foundational documents of the US. Similarly, Ottilie Assing (1819-1884) "placed Americanness at the center of [her] democratic dissent" (148). She is positioned in the force field of women's emancipation and represents the reform agenda of a new generation of German immigrants. Assing's self-fashioning as a "cosmopolitan" (103), her influence on Frederick Douglass, and her commitment to the women's movement on both sides of the Atlantic are compared with Sojourner Truth and her call for "female emancipation, albeit from a racial perspective and a history of slavery" (104). In contrast to Assing, Truth's rhetoric relied on "humor, satire, and sarcasm" as well as on dialect to evoke a "sense of unpremeditated urgency, authenticity, and Americanness" (138). Yet, Mehring claims, they not only crossed the color line but also shared a common political goal.

From nineteenth-century social movements and reform agendas, *The Democratic*

Gap takes its readers to the transatlantic art scenes of the early twentieth century. Winold Reiss (1886-1953) addressed the democratic gap through his art rather than through political activism. Guided by his interests in travel accounts and folk culture, the painter became famous for his portraits of African Americans and Native Americans that arguably transcend stereotypes. His artistic work bespeaks the discrepancy between his experiences in the United States (esp. racial inequality) and his expectations of American democracy. They create a vision of Reiss' democratic ideal as well as a notion of "cultural pluralism" (180). Especially his collaboration with Alain Locke, which made him an influential figure in the Harlem Renaissance, "reveals the international dimension of their strategy to use art and culture for unlearning xenophobic forms of racism" (195). The composer Kurt Weill (1900-1950) similarly used musical theater to transgress racial boundaries—most prominently in his collaboration with Langston Hughes and through incorporating elements from African American musical traditions into his oeuvre. His work is situated within the force field of *Amerikanisierung*/Americanization which "challenged traditional notions of national identity" (198). Weill had modelled himself into an American even before he immigrated and thus claimed a kind of "cultural citizenship not restricted to territorial belonging" (224). His work reflects a staunch patriotism that allows for a critical stance towards American ideals without compromising its decidedly democratic impulse.

With Hans J. Massaquoi (1926-2013) and Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) Mehring's study, finally, turns to immigrants who left Germany during or after World War II. Massaquoi later chronicled his experiences of "growing up black in Nazi Germany" in his 1999 autobiography *Destined to Witness* and reflected on his coming to the United States in *Hänschen klein, ging allein ... Mein Weg in die Neue Welt* (2004). His life and work draw attention to democratic gaps on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly with regard to racism and white supremacist thought. Massaquoi turned to journalism not only to "write against racial discrimination" and to "gain recognition

[and] self-respect" but also to meet some of his childhood heroes, e.g. Joe Louis (279). The postwar years especially showed the hypocrisy of a United States set on bringing democracy to post-fascist Europe while tolerating and promoting segregation, racism, and discrimination 'at home.' Juxtaposed with Malcolm X, whom he interviewed for *EBONY* in 1964, it becomes clear that Massaquoi does not ascribe to a radical agenda of black liberation; rather "his patriotic dissent followed similar patterns like that of white German intellectual immigrants preceding him" (299). The postwar years also generated a new force field in the form of "Holocaust consciousness," which is explored through Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). Arendt's writings are examined with a keen eye to their inherent linkage of literature and politics. She is cast "as a poet who expressed herself not so much via poetry but the art of essay writing and public dissent" (316) and, like the other protagonists of this book, she "positioned herself as a model American par excellence" (331). The analysis covers Arendt's ambivalent perspective on the Civil Rights movement and compares her work to that of Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison. This comparison, Mehring holds, indicates "that the literary work, the use of language, and the process of fashioning oneself into an American dissenter are linked by transatlantic traumas" (352) and evidences the powerful workings of literature against and across democratic gaps.

Overall, the vast scholarly resources, wide-ranging primary material, and broad knowledge of cultural contexts and transatlantic history Mehring condenses into each chapter (and the extensive footnotes) could have easily been turned into a multi-volume work. *The Democratic Gap*, in this sense, actually presents several books in one—it covers the biographies and some major works of its six protagonists in depth, encompasses six force fields of transcultural confrontations, and rewrites the history of German-American immigration to the United States. This may also be regarded its main flaw but it is most definitely its major strength.

Katharina Gerund (Erlangen)

HEIKE BUNBERT, *Festkultur und Gedächtnis: Die Konstruktion einer deutschamerikanischen Ethnizität 1848-1914* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016), 637 pp.

German immigrants in the United States held on to their customs and traditions, replicating many of them in the New World. This included numerous festivities, often conducted by one of the many German-American associations and clubs (*Vereine*). Heike Bungert gives a detailed study of German-American celebrations and makes the convincing argument that this festival culture was a key element for the construction of a German-American identity and ethnicity.

German-American festival culture is widely acknowledged as a crucial factor in shaping and creating German-American communities. Still, apart from an introductory article by Kathleen Conzen¹ and Anke Ortlepp's study on women's associations in Milwaukee² that mention the importance of German-American festivities, there are very few reference works on this particular topic. Heike Bungert fills this gap with her outstanding monograph. *Festkultur und Gedächtnis* is a revised version of her habilitation dissertation submitted at the University of Cologne in 2004. In her book, Bungert compiles the currently most complete overview of German-American festivities, from celebrations of the many singing clubs, shooting associations, Turner and worker societies to festivals commemorating Friedrich Schiller or Alexander von Humboldt. This careful analysis and in-depth study is the definite new standard reference on German-American festival culture and its impact on German-American life between 1848 and 1914.

The three key terms in Bungert's study, as outlined in the introductory chapter, are *memory*, *festivity* and *ethnicity*. Heike Bungert argues that festivities were a means for German-Americans to remember the past and build a future in America while constructing a collective German-American cultural memory and

ethnicity (13). Bungert necessarily restricts her study to four major cities that witnessed German immigration: New York, Milwaukee, San Antonio and San Francisco. Her research focuses on the types of festivals that German-Americans organized, as well as gender relations and how German-Americans formed an ethnic group by way of organizing festivals. The account solely sheds light on German-American cultural festivals, leaving out religious celebrations since these often included other ethnic immigrant groups and did not contribute to the formation of a specifically German ethnicity (37). Bungert analyzes a wealth of different sources and most importantly German-American newspapers, which serve as the primary resource on German-American cultural life. She also consults festival programs and festival newspapers, as well as local historical archives and the archives of German-American associations (*Vereine*) in cities like Milwaukee.

The chronologically arranged work starts out with the period between 1848 and the breakout of the American Civil War in 1861 (chapter 2). Soon after their arrival, Germans established German clubs, including singing and Turner societies. These communities served several purposes. They provided stability and continuity, and a home where Germans could connect with their fellow countrymen. Unlike American clubs, German *Vereine* were often political and Germans were known to be very enthusiastic about their typically German celebrations which always included musical entertainment: "Music is a passion with the German" (157). In these early years of German-American *Vereinswesen*, the large festivals were often still a money-losing business. This changed in later years as new waves of immigration brought many new, German-born club members who were eager to participate in a burgeoning German-American festival culture, as Bungert argues.

In chapter 3, Bungert traces German festive culture from the Civil War era through the foundation of the German Empire in 1871. Next to revived Turner activities, two new festival types emerged: marksmen's festivals (*Schützenfeste*) and carnival celebrations (based on the Cologne carnival) with masquerade balls. Bungert astutely analyzes how Germans, the Turner members in particular, actively participated in the war effort and how this identification with their new homeland manifested itself in a newfound American

¹ Kathleen Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: German-America on Parade," *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollors, (New York: Oxford UP, 1989), 44–76.

² Anke Ortlepp, *Auf denn, Ihr Schwestern! Deutsch-amerikanische Frauenvereine in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1844-1914* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004).

patriotism displayed in German-American festivals. The Franco-Prussian war and the creation of the German Reich led to increased re-identification with the Old World they left behind and resulted in festivities commemorating the events in a reunified Germany. Bungert's analyses throughout the book are accompanied by charts illustrating which occupational groups made up the committees organizing the respective festivals.

German America between 1870 and 1890 experienced major immigration waves reaching a new peak in 1890. German clubs gained thousands of new members, especially in New York City and Milwaukee, where more than 300 German associations shaped German-American life by 1900 (244). As the number of *Vereine* grew, they became more specific and included regional clubs and subsections much more so than in years prior. According to Heike Bungert, this was especially true for the singing societies. Women also played a greater role in German-American cultural life as *Ladies Auxiliaries* of clubs emerged that had previously been dominated by men. With the introduction of public festivals, new forms of mass celebrations attracted both German-Americans and Anglo-Americans. Bungert compiles evidence for this, including pictures depicting German customs that were part of these public celebrations. Swabian migrants for example replicated the *Cannstatter Volksfest* in New York, which had much of the same characteristics of the original public festival in Stuttgart (281-84). While public festivals still upheld German *Gemütlichkeit* and included no shortage of beer and German food, new festivals were introduced such as the *Bicentennial* commemorating 200 years of German immigration to the U.S. in 1883 (342). Bungert gives a detailed report on how festivities that were distinctly German assumed a German-American character in their own right, lead-

ing to the emergence of a German-American ethnicity. Her fine-grained analysis of German-American club life gives new valuable insights into this important time for German America's heyday (chapter 4).

Chapter 5 is a detailed study of German-American festival culture between 1890 and 1914. Bungert observes that German-American festivals became more elaborate and included many new commercial elements. In addition, German-Americans built statues for their German icons like Goethe and Schiller, and for German-American *culture heroes* like Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben. Bungert claims that festivities were characterized by a "threefold nationalization" (518). The powerful position of the German Empire resulted in the implementation of military elements and celebrations commemorating the Kaiser. At the same time, German-Americans developed a sentiment of American patriotism identifying with their adopted fatherland (*adoptiertes Vaterland*) more so than ever before. And third, German-Americans grew in confidence and proudly displayed their own German-American ethnicity.

The book ends with a summary of the most important findings outlining how German-Americans both honored the memory of Germany and constructed a German-American ethnicity. Heike Bungert's study provides an excellent account of German-American festival culture. The great strength of this book is its attention to detail as it covers all aspects of German-American festivals, including well-chosen pictures and detailed charts illustrating which groups organized and attended the various festivities. Heike Bungert's *Festkultur und Gedächtnis* should be of great interest to German-American historians and German scholars interested in the field of German-American History alike.

Viktorija Bilic (Milwaukee)

PAMELA RINEY-KEHRBERG, *The Nature of Childhood: An Environmental History of Growing Up in America Since 1865* (Lawrence, KS: UP of Kansas, 2014), 273 pp.

Starting from her personal childhood experiences in Denver, Colorado, Pamela Riney-Kehrberg takes up the challenge of writing an environmental history of childhood of the past 150 years for the American Midwest. In a very personal take on a topic that has recently garnered renewed attention in a transnational perspective,¹ she focuses on the freedom of children to explore nature. Beyond her personal experience, she broaches this important and neglected subject from the perspective of interviews that she conducted, photographs, diaries, periodicals, films, and other primary sources as well as children's books such as Laura Wilder's autobiographical novel *The Long Winter* (1940). She makes use of a substantial number of manuscript sources, some unpublished and most from Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, and demonstrates how children's relationship to nature has changed drastically over the past 150 years. She encourages one to examine more carefully the historical context of reform pedagogy that gave rise to the dogma of experiential learning. After distinguishing between adult and child perspectives on nature, and making clear that her focus is on "the Midwest and Great Plains with some attention to the major cities of the east," she points out that the Far West and the South deserve their own treatment, while the Mountain West has already been dealt with (3–4).² In light of these restrictions in the introduction, it quickly becomes clear to the reader that the scope of her work is much more specific than suggested by the title of the book.

Following Elliott West,³ she is interested in determining how children appropriated the landscape and made it their own, which pertains especially to a children's history of the Western American States. Furthermore,

¹ Sarah Mill and Peter Kraftl (eds.), *Informal Education, Childhood and Youth: Geographies, Histories, Practices* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

² Elliott West, *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (Albuquerque, NM: U of New Mexico P, 1989).

³ *Ibid.*

she aims at retrieving an environmental history of childhood from "social, policy and cultural histories" where it is presently embedded (5).

Overall, the great merit of the work lies in Riney-Kehrberg's suggestion that the potential gradual loss or regimentation of children's outdoor experiences and spaces over the past 150 years may prove an unheeded obstacle to conservation efforts. The large field of urban versus rural environments and corresponding migrations poses the most obvious challenge to this study, for it constitutes a complex field of social geography that the study can at best do limited justice to (6). Rather than focusing on the field of environmental health, which has already received much scholarly attention in several studies (213n3), Riney-Kehrberg is interested in the social and educational as well as ecological aspects of her topic. Using longer quotations from primary and secondary sources as well as chapter epigraphs, she brings together material from this disparate field to flesh out a highly readable and suggestive environmental history. Although her view is at times nostalgic and romanticizing, this helps her readers imagine central elements of her descriptive history. In mining photographic archives, she brings to light gems that illustrate her narrative. She chose historically and artistically valuable photographs which help to reinforce the significance and neglect of her topic in scholarship (cf. 23; 51; 182).

In seven chapters, she analyzes rural childhood (ch. 1), urbanization c. 1870–1950 (ch. 2) and the ensuing substitutes for experiences of nature (ch. 3), the commercial institutionalization and medialization of such experiences in the mid-twentieth century (ch. 4), urban wild spaces (ch. 5), the move of childhood to the indoors at the end of the twentieth century (ch. 6) and the reaction against this move starting in the 1990s (ch. 7). She thus extends her narrative from childhood in the nineteenth century to the present "No Child Left Inside" movement.

In stylistically pleasant fashion and through primary sources, Riney-Kehrberg shows that children in the nineteenth century were "outdoorsy" by force of their family's rural living conditions, as they were brought up in a world radically dependent on nature (12), in which boys were generally better positioned than girls due to the gendered division of labor (13). Early on, beginning with the first waves of industrialization, the ethical importance

for children to grow up in close contact with nature was realized (24).

In environmental terms, she points to natural (or agricultural) disasters such as the Dust Bowl of the 1930s (31). She makes clear that educational policies such as Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission suggested that the solution to stem the tide of migration towards the cities and the exodus from the countryside lay in the improvement of rural schools (32). She suggests that ideas of experiential learning stipulated for this improvement may have influenced concepts of reform pedagogy in general, inviting social geography to take up questions of the history of education.

One point of critique worth mentioning—which does not take away substantially from Riney-Kehrberg's achievement, but does point to further avenues of research which she herself intends with her book—is that she might have reflected on the linearity of the history she thus writes, which makes the reader wonder what other aspects and dimensions of the environmental history of childhood may be added to this narrative. While she nicely conveys the ambivalence of rural existence in the West and foregoes the danger of writing a simple pastoral jeremiad, it is not exactly clear what she means by the "moral" advantages of a rural childhood (24). Charles Loring Brace's New York Children's Aid Society tried to win

over urban families to send their children to rural families in need of cheap labor between c. 1850–1920 (24-25); this movement may be comparable with European child labor migration at the time. An additional minor critique is that her work would have been more useful if the images had been dated and if the book included a complete list of all the illustrations.

Without bias or tendentiousness, Riney-Kehrberg nonetheless succeeds in drawing attention to the field of environmental history of childhood, while saving several important topics from oblivion and thereby counteracting and preempting presentist, "adultist," and utilitarian tendencies in both environmental and historical discourse. She also succeeds in keeping her personal investment, history, and experience as transparent guiding forces of her narrative without ever venturing into the banal. The meticulously edited volume contains endnotes, historical photographs, a short bibliography (249-61, including numerous websites as guides to further research), and an index. Both as a springboard for further research (4) and as a highly readable and convincing first foray into a neglected field, it is an excellent addition to libraries of children's literature, education, and sociology, and to anyone interested in the environmental history of childhood.

Philipp Reisner (Düsseldorf)

LEIGH ERIC SCHMIDT, *Village Atheists: How America's Unbelievers Made Their Way in a Godly Nation* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2016), 360 pp.

When Samuel Porter Putnam sat down at the end of the nineteenth century to write his history of atheism, he faced some tough editorial choices. Who to include under the banner of “freethought”? Not B.F. and Sara Underwood. Though the couple had actively advocated for unbelief from California to New Zealand, they had also dabbled in spiritualism. They weren’t good representatives of the cause. Nor was James L. York. The freethought lecturer was famed for his ability to ridicule religious belief, but too buffoonish, Putnam thought. Neither was George Chainey. Though long considered the movement’s golden boy, Chainey had had an ecstatic encounter with an angel named Lily Dove and then renounced and denounced all materialist philosophies. No, for Putnam, the history of atheism needed to be a march of progress, from victory unto victory, and he didn’t have time for those who veered off course. He left these people out of his massive *400 Years of Freethought*, published in 1894. He “tidied up the messy contingencies of unbelief,” writes Leigh Eric Schmidt, an eminent religious historian at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. “Putnam took the zigzagging perplexity out of liberal secularism and mapped it as a triumphal march forward” (59).

The greatest accomplishment of Schmidt’s new book, *The Village Atheist: How America's Unbelievers Made Their Way in a Godly Nation*, is that it puts the zigzagging perplexity back into the story. Schmidt has an eye for the historical contexts of unbelief and directs the reader to the complexities of the construction of the atheist identity in American culture during the heyday of the freethought movement at the end of the nineteenth century.

Schmidt tells the stories of four unbelievers. He starts with Putnam, a son of Puritan New England who imagined atheist stories, including his own, as *Pilgrim's Progress* in reverse. *Village Atheists* continues with Watson Heston, a cartoonist who raised questions of the importance of decorum in atheists’ debates with their religious neighbors; Charles B. Reynolds, an atheist lecturer who was tried for blasphemy in 1887; and Elmina Drake Slenker, who was prosecuted for obscenity the same year. Each represents an aspect of

how the atheist movement positioned itself in the public discourse. Atheists had their differences, but were all “aggrieved contrarians,” according to Schmidt, “stunned at the moral shabbiness of scriptural stories or the manipulative theatrics of popular revivalists” (18). They crafted their non-religious identities out of dissent. They constructed a movement in the likeness of their antipathy for American moral norms.

Their unbelief, critically, was not just a matter of metaphysics. It wasn’t just personal decisions not to affirm the existence of God and gods. As Schmidt explains, “village atheists, by self-profession, minded this world, not things spiritual, and their stories are told here with the mundane materiality very much in view” (18). It would have been a disservice to this history to pay attention only to atheists’ ideas. Schmidt expertly puts these four atheists’ lives in the contexts of their time. The results are admirable, offering significant insight into the cultural and social reality of not believing in America.

Village Atheists is a major contribution to the small field of atheist studies. Early scholarly work in the history of American atheism, such as Martin Marty’s *The Infidel* (World, 1961) James Turner’s *Without God, Without Creed* (Johns Hopkins UP, 1985), tended to focus on the fractures in Christian thought that opened up space for nonbelievers and Christian leaders’ responses to real and imagined atheists. There has been an increasing interest in the history of atheists themselves since the “New Atheists” rose to prominence following the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, and since demographers reported on the sharp increase religious disaffiliation (the so-called “nones”) following the end of the Cold War. Some popular works, such as Susan Jacoby’s *Freethinkers* (Metropolitan Books, 2004), have started charting the history of American atheism, but not with the academic rigor that Schmidt brings to the task. Schmidt’s work may well define the field for future scholars. At the very least, *Village Atheist* is a promising start to a full historiography of the men and women who dissented from belief in the nation that has so adamantly insisted that it is “under God.”

Schmidt’s work does have a few weaknesses, however, that future scholars would do well to correct. First, Schmidt struggles to articulate the warrant for this study. At the start, he justifies *Village Atheists* by pointing to the liter-

ary figure of the village atheist, such as the fictional Judge York Driscoll in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Schmidt, however, does not establish the relationship between actual atheists and the literary character and is not, anyway, really interested in cultural representations. That explanation of the project is unconvincing. Later, Schmidt frames *Village Atheist* as the prehistory of twentieth-century court battles over the separation of church and state. His nineteenth-century atheists, though, are not mainly concerned with secularizing public space, but rather with the end of religion altogether. Even Charles B. Reynolds, who was convicted of blasphemy and fined \$25 by the state of New Jersey, was less invested in the defense of free speech than he was in preaching secular salvation, "salvation from error, bigotry, fanaticism, and ignorance, insuring a more useful, better, nobler, and consequently happier life" (178). Reynolds' story and the stories of the other atheists included in this study sometimes connect to twentieth-century Supreme Court decisions, but the latter hardly seems like the justification for the former. Honestly, however, *Village Atheist* doesn't need such an elaborate warrant. It would be enough to say America has frequently understood itself as a Christian nation, and this is a study of how some people dissented.

A second issue is that there are instances where the historian's sympathy for his subjects seems to lead him to claims that are not quite substantiated. Schmidt argues, for example, that Elmina Slenker was not really prosecuted for obscenity, but for her atheism. His account

doesn't bear this out: Anthony Comstock, the United States Postal Inspector who used all the power he could muster to prosecute every violation of Victorian sensibilities, went after Methodists, Episcopalians, and Jews just as vigorously as "infidels." Comstock may have thought atheism logically led to moral depravity, but he opposed obscenity wherever he saw it. Slenker, for her part, really was interested in subjects considered obscene, both then and now. Schmidt seems to want to protect Slenker from herself. He says, for example, Slenker's defense of bestiality was really only an argument for open inquiry. Perhaps, but such a claim requires more than an assertion. Historians of American atheism will have to find ways to reckon with their subjects' unlikability.

These issues do not detract from the merits of this marvelous monograph. Schmidt's work is engaging, readable, and eminently teachable. Perhaps most importantly, *Village Atheists* suggests new questions and new studies on every page. His detours—on how atheists used anti-Catholic rhetoric against Protestants (98-103), on an African-American atheist who billed himself "the only negro infidel" (140-41), on moments of Christian-atheist cooperation (185), on atheist efforts to get the Bible ruled obscene (241-43), and on and on—are themselves worth the price of the book. With *Village Atheist*, Schmidt draws the reader into the many and multifaceted questions of atheist life in America, and shows how four atheists made their zigzagging way in a Godly nation.

Daniel Silliman (Valparaiso, Indiana)

RHODRI JEFFREYS-JONES, *We Know All About You: The Story of Surveillance in Britain and America* (Oxford UP, 2017), 304 pp.

The 2013 NSA scandal triggered by whistleblower Edward Snowden intensified fears that new technologies and government surveillance had ushered in an era of “post-privacy,”¹ the age of the “surveillance society.”² While mass data collection, online-tracking, the advent of social media, and the ubiquity of smartphones certainly call for heightened attention to privacy concerns in the early 21st century, Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones reminds us of the long history of surveillance. In his study *We Know All About You*, the author surveys the history and current state of surveillance in the United States and the United Kingdom, beginning in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and leading up to Snowden and the Obama-Cameron era. A negotiation of conflicting needs guides many of the questions that his study addresses: How do governments and their intelligence agencies balance national security and individual privacy? Which factors contribute to a shift from benevolent vigilance and protection to overzealous spying and social control? What is the role of the private sector in modes and practices of surveillance? And how do Americans and Britons attempt to curb surveillance excesses and implement reform? Jeffreys-Jones speaks to these and more questions in his overarching narrative, masterfully combining insightful case studies with in-depth historical analysis. His focal point is a shift of emphasis from governments to the role of the “understudied phenomenon of private surveillance” (3) which often proves to be intricately linked with state surveillance.

In the introductory chapter entitled “A Survey of Surveillance” the author establishes the ambivalent role of the United States in the history of surveillance: on the one hand, he asserts, it was often the US who played a pioneering role in anti-surveillance efforts; at the same time, however, he stresses the leading role of the United States in the rise and intensification of surveillance, which he claims

is predicated on “the distinctively American combination of weak government and strong business” (13). An important and unexpected strand of surveillance is explored in chapter 2: private detective agencies like the Pinkerton National Detective Agency not only made surveillance in the 19th century “an American, and a private, affair” (20), but also ushered in more concerted efforts to monitor and disrupt unions. The rich and detailed account of the Pinkertons’ activities—they were hired by employers to infiltrate unions and intimidate labor movement activists—sets the stage for the next chapter. The intriguing case study of Englishman Tom Watkins, who was unable to find work after participating in a miner’s strike, illustrates the insidious system of blacklisting. This pervasive practice, which heavily relied on private informers, deeply affected workers and their families in both the United Kingdom and the United States and was fueled by the anti-left and anti-communist sentiments of the early twentieth century.

While blacklisting was and remained a contested issue, it was, according to Jeffreys-Jones, “the advent of middle-class concern that made surveillance a universal debating point” (74). Here, the author turns our attention to the United States and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s role in paving the way for the surveillance state by granting the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover unprecedented powers in bolstering security against communist and fascist activities within the United States. Despite the intense political surveillance conducted by the FBI, the author concludes that “America was far from being a police state” and urges the reader to resist the temptation to assume that “the concealment of evidence by the president and the FBI director meant they were engaged in a deep-seated conspiracy to spy on all Americans” (92). While the story of the FBI under FDR is insightfully described—Jeffreys-Jones is, after all, a historian of American intelligence and has published extensively on both the FBI and CIA—a discussion of the introduction of the Social Security Number in 1935—a pervasive system that for the first time made Americans identifiable and traceable—could have further supported the notion of FDR as a trailblazer for today’s surveillance state.

Jeffreys-Jones’s narrative and analytical skills are on fine display when he takes on McCarthyism in the following two chapters, outlining the development of the American

¹ Joshua Meyrowitz, “Post-Privacy America,” *Privatheit im öffentlichen Raum. Medienhandeln zwischen Individualisierung und Entgrenzung*, eds. Ralph Weiß and Jo Groebel (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2002), 153.

² See: http://www.surveillance-studies.net/?page_id=119.

‘original’ first, then dissecting the British version which he describes as “silent McCarthyism that affected millions but attracted little attention” (107). Under Margaret Thatcher, the Conservative prime minister who viewed the 1984 miner’s strike as subversive and strikers as the enemy within, the United Kingdom’s secret service MI5 drastically increased the surveillance of union leaders. Politically motivated surveillance, however, went well beyond the labor movement, Jeffreys-Jones notes, and included activists championing denuclearization and civil liberties proponents (123). Once again, the author highlights the intersection of state and private surveillance, for example through McCarthy’s reliance on the “Loyal American Underground – civil servants who informed (or misinformed) on their colleagues” (103)—and vividly illustrates the corrosive effect of mistrust and mutual spying on the social fabric.

Chapter 7 tackles the story of the FBI’s secret COINTELPRO program, which served to spy on and disrupt a number of targets since its inception in 1956: the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, the KKK, Black nationalist groups, and, starting in 1968, the New Left. Far from being the only surveillance program, Jeffreys-Jones observes that in the 1960s “government surveillance was becoming an ingrained tendency in American life” (133). The backlash against this development is analyzed as “An Age of Transparency” (chapter 8), when government and presidential transgressions—the Watergate scandal broke in 1972—created disillusionment and fostered mistrust in authorities. Information leaked to the press and the Church Committee’s hearings disclosed the appalling practices of the US intelligence agencies, leading to sinking approval ratings of the FBI, CIA, and NSA—and ultimately paving the way for more regulation of governmental powers with the Privacy Act of 1974, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA), and the Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Act of 1988. These restrictions, Jeffreys-Jones emphasizes, serve as a “benchmark for future political discourse” (164) and “help[ed] to inspire reform in the United Kingdom and elsewhere,” making the US a pioneer in the “rebalancing of national security and civil liberty” (169).

In the wake of 9/11 and the ensuing PATRIOT Act of 2001 surveillance intensified drastically, however, and “new attitudes and politics scarcely had a chance to bed down”

(183). The new terrorist threat increased public acceptance of surveillance, while the FISA court proved to be “a pushover, with few requests turned down” (180). Later, the author warns that “where governments possess surveillance powers they will, eventually, abuse them,” and calls for “credible legislative and judicial oversight” (246). Turning away from state spying to “Private-Sector Surveillance in the Twenty-First Century” in the next chapter, Jeffreys-Jones argues that the contemporary surveillance practices of private actors not only led to new allegations of blacklisting practices (187), but made one thing clear: “the main threat to privacy is private, and not the public apparatus of an Orwellian state” (188). Again, Jeffreys-Jones draws our attention to the public/private nature of many surveillance activities, focusing on intelligence agencies: By 2006, he states, “70 per cent of the \$28 billion US national intelligence programme consisted of private contracts,” making the state a “progenitor of a boom in the private security industry” (189). While private sector surveillance is hardly an understudied phenomenon per se—the academic literature on digital surveillance by private companies is extensive, but does not figure prominently in *We Know All About You* (Google and Facebook are barely mentioned)—it certainly rings true that the media and public tend to focus on the trope of Big Brother and more often than not view state surveillance as the bigger threat to privacy and civil liberties. Here, it would be interesting to look beyond corporations or agencies and focus on the individual’s role in today’s surveillance society, especially with regard to online behavior. Critics like Zygmunt Bauman have argued that a “confessional society” has ushered in a culture of self-surveillance, enticing users to engage in a “voluntary, do-it-yourself form of surveillance, beating hands down [...] the specialist agencies manned by professionals of spying and detection.”³

Two factors make Jeffreys-Jones analysis more than worthwhile for both the interested public and scholarly readers: First, the continuing focus on labor surveillance allows the author to uncover the long history of today’s practices of monitoring workers’ com-

³ Zygmunt Bauman and Leonidas Donkiss, *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 57-58.

munication and anti-unionism. Second, the comparative approach to the topic elegantly narrates the entangled stories of UK and US surveillance. Noting that the United States was quicker to implement reform with regard to state surveillance, but stressing that UK citizens demonstrated a higher degree of wariness towards private sector surveillance (but failing to implement serious regulations), Jeffreys-Jones convincingly reasons that Americans' reverence for private business and UK citizens' higher level of acceptance of government surveillance account for these differences.

While class issues and workers' rights figure prominently in *We Know All About You*, a broader view of social inequality and surveillance would make Jeffrey-Jones' story of surveillance even more compelling. Biometric and video surveillance, for example, often prove to be ineffective in fighting crime, but intensify social sorting and racial profiling.

Studies have examined the racialized⁴ and gendered nature of surveillance and contributed to our understanding of the unequal distribution of the surveillant gaze, and the policing of and scrutiny towards the female body are pertinent to the study of surveillance.⁵ These minor points of criticism aside, Jeffreys-Jones presents readers with a very readable, accessible, and informative comparative history of US and UK surveillance practices. Spanning several centuries and drawing on a wealth of vividly narrated case studies, Jeffrey-Jones' rich transatlantic analysis and masterful storytelling make *We Know All About You* a fascinating read. A historical perspective on surveillance is a valuable contribution to a discourse that is all too often overshadowed by alarmist notions of an unprecedented surveillance crisis that invoke an Orwellian dystopia and routinely proclaim the death of privacy.

Bärbel Harju (Munich)

⁴ Simone Browne, *Dark Matters. On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke UP 2015).

⁵ Rachel E. Dubrofsky and Shoshana Amielle Magnet (eds.), *Feminist Surveillance Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke UP 2015).

MONIKA SAUTER, *Devoted! Frauen in der evangelikalen Populärkultur der USA* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017), 204 pp.

In *Devoted!*, American studies scholar Monika Sauter introduces the reader to an eclectic selection of contemporary published and broadcasted materials—from novels, self-help books, fitness guides, films, and documentaries to the homepage of a chastity organization—which she uses to investigate the construction of evangelical femininity. Following a particular interest in feelings, Sauter focuses on the topics of sexuality, love, body image, and patriotism. She argues that evangelical culture cannot be strictly separated from mainstream or secular culture; rather processes of cross-fertilization and overlapping meaning not only exist but explain the crossover appeal of certain evangelical products—what Sauter calls “corresponding feelings” (11). Evangelical consumer capitalism thus forges a “postfeminist” image of women as simultaneously submissive and self-assured, as caretakers of families and independent businesswomen and consumers. Sauter argues that normative evangelical femininity congeals in the image of the white, heterosexual but chaste before marriage, fit and beautiful middle-class woman with rural and patriotic sensibilities.

The book’s thesis that there is no binary division between secular and religious marketplaces is both predictable and misleading. For most of human history a division between religious and secular aspects of life was unthinkable and even contemporary believers neither necessarily aspire to nor successfully implement a compartmentalization of their lives into private-religious and public-secular realms.¹ Accordingly, there has never been a neat separation of religious and non-religious aspects of life—or commerce. Consumption is colored by desires and beliefs, including religious ones. Modern U.S.-American evangelicals, for example, skillfully used marketing strategies to sell religion, for example in the form of non-denominational Bible institutes or print products.² Following the business-turn

¹ See David Kim, David McCalman and Dan Fisher, “The Sacred/Secular Divide and the Christian Worldview,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 19.2 (August 2012): 203-08.

² See Timothy Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the*

in religious studies, scholars have emphasized the interconnectedness of money, markets, marketing, and religion.³ What seems truly surprising is not that an evangelical product like the highly successful *Left-Behind* book series made secular best-seller lists (14) but rather that secular businesses largely ignored the huge evangelical market during the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, since the turn of the century, large non-religious publishing firms such as Bertelsmann and Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation have bought evangelical publishing houses.⁴ Current scholarship on evangelical media production emphasizes the exploitation of market segmentation strategies that have replaced outdated mass-marketing strategies.⁵ Emphasizing niche-marketing strategies and highlighting the diversification of the products complicates the narrative of an evangelical consumer capitalism as told by Sauter. In her reading, evangelical popular culture can only be an “evangelical appropriation and (re-)sacralization” (my translation, 22) of different genres that are thus coded as nonreligious. In contrast to scholars like Darren Dochuk or Timothy Gloege who have shown that people could be both evangelical and business innovators, shaping U.S.-American economy, culture, and politics, Sauter implicitly frames evangelical popular culture as a reaction to trends within secular culture. This is also echoed in her thesis about evangelical femininity, which she describes as “postfeminist,” suggesting not so much an interaction and shared repertoire

Marketing of Modern Evangelicalism (Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 2015). On print and media cultures see Daniel Vaca’s forthcoming work on *Commercial Religion: Media, Markets, and the Spirit of Evangelicalism*.

³ See Amanda Porterfield et al. (eds.), *The Business Turn in American Religious History* (New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2017).

⁴ Evangelical imprints now constitute the religious segment of most commercial publishers, though some publishers also have distinct Catholic imprints. On Evangelicalism and mass media see: Anja-Maria Bassimir and Kathrin Kohle, “Evangelikale und Massenmedien, Strukturen in den USA,” Frederik Elwert et al. (eds.), *Handbuch Evangelikalismus* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 409-423.

⁵ See Daniel Vaca’s forthcoming work on *Commercial Religion: Media, Markets, and the Spirit of Evangelicalism*.

but a chronology: evangelicals react to secular culture.

Sauter's book originated from her PhD thesis in American Studies at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, and it conforms to the classical German dissertation structure: There is a thematic introduction, a thorough literature review and an elaborate theoretical treatise followed by four analytical chapters—also densely interspersed with quotes from and references to secondary literature—and, finally, a short conclusion recapitulating the main arguments. The book is written in German but, as is still common, quotes are given in English.

In her theoretical chapter, Sauter reviews a broad spectrum of theories, including affect theory, theories of implicit knowledge and presence, and theories of the public sphere. She argues that feeling is central to evangelical religiosity, making the experience of the sacred an integral part of the implicit knowledge of the world—including what it means to be a woman—and—because this “corresponds” to notions of femininity shared by secular culture—creates a “public feeling” that appeals to religious and non-religious consumers. Despite her impressive command of theories, key terms such as “evangelical” and “popular culture” remain diffuse. In both instances the author affirms that she uses the terms in their “broad” meaning. Tracing the history of white evangelicalism in the particular vein of neo-evangelicalism and the political New Christian Right, Sauter then uses “evangelical” as an umbrella term for conservative Protestants that also includes black and other ethnic evangelicals and Pentecostal Christians whose histories she does not recount. The discussion of the term “popular culture” is relegated to a footnote. Sauter reviews various definitions, including John Storey's assertion that “popular culture” is an “empty conceptual category,” concluding that she adheres to a “broad concept of culture” (my translation, 40). The insubstantiality of these terms is problematic because *Devoted!* is supposed to be a work about evangelical popular culture.

This fuzziness of definition is intensified by the fact that Sauter does not reveal her criteria for the selection of the materials she analyzes. She chose heterogeneous print and broadcast materials that include works of fiction as well as advertisement and documentaries. Since Sauter talks about popular culture and cross-over appeal, I assume that these are

products that are consumed by a large number of Americans, but in the book I found few numbers to substantiate that guess. Are these works the most popular in a given category? Footnotes, for example in the chapter on chick and sistah literature, conversely show that the selected novels were a choice among many possibilities (97). Do these works best illustrate her arguments? The analysis of black sistah literature and the affirmation that this genre appeals to and creates a distinct black female identity (111) complicates Sauter's claim of whiteness as part of normative evangelical identity. Do these works showcase ideals of evangelical femininity? At least in the case of the documentary *Fire from the Heartland*, directed by former Breitbart News' Steve Bannon, a devout Catholic, the focus is on political conservative activism rather than religion and the protagonists include evangelicals but also Catholics like Phyllis Schlafly and conservative activists whose religious ties are not well known, like political commentator Ann Coulter, whose religion is described as nondenominational, or TV host S.E. Cupp, an alleged atheist. Do these products have a unique appeal for evangelical women? The book does not talk about reception. Were these works created by devout evangelicals or according to a certain strategy of marketing to evangelicals? The book does not discuss authorship, the process of product development, or marketing. In the case of the TV show *Preachers' Daughters*, Sauter herself wonders whether this is a fitting example, admitting that the show cannot be read exclusively as an evangelical discourse (81). In several cases, it is unclear what the object of analysis is. For example, *True Love Waits* is a company that sells paraphernalia for purity rituals where girls promise their fathers to remain chaste until marriage. Sauter recounts the history of the company, cites the company's instructions for purity balls and purity prayers, and analyzes customer reviews for purity rings posted on the company's website. Where exactly does she locate the “evangelical construction of femininity” (my translation). With the company, the product, the event, the consumer, or the customer reviews? It is not evident why these materials permit an analysis of evangelical popular culture.

In the first analytical chapter, Sauter investigates the online presence of the organization *True Love Waits* (founded in 1993), the first series of the TV reality show *Preachers'*

Daughters (Lifetime, 2013), and the novel *The Last Days of California* (Mary Miller, 2014). She traces the arguments for why women should remain “pure” and examines how purity is construed as a predominantly white privilege. The chapter works without the labored references to the concept of “presence” and is strongest in showing the conflation of marriage and purity rituals as well as the diversion of women’s desire away from sexuality and towards market consumption. In the following chapter, Sauter examines the notion of romantic love in the (white) chick literature novel *The Whitney Chronicles* (Judy Baer, 2004) and the (black) sistah literature novel *He’s Fine But Is He Saved?* (Kimberley Brooks, 2004). Adhering to established patterns of romance literature, the protagonists in both novels are searching for the perfect man. Sauter shows that in the context of these novels a perfect man is synonymous with a godly, Christian man. Furthermore, both novels follow a “postfeminist” logic of simultaneous empowerment and domestication by portraying the female protagonists as strong, independent characters who want to become good wives. The normative evangelical beauty standard is that of a slim, white woman, Sauter argues in the next chapter; yet, given that the analysis is based on an inspection of evangelical fitness guides, the emphasis on a fit body comes as no surprise. Finally, the last analytical chapter looks at conservative political activism, focusing on the narrative of a former Planned Parenthood director turned pro-life activist in the autobiography *Unplanned* (Abby Johnson, 2010), and on female conservatives like former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin, author Deneen Borelli, and Tea

Party Patriots co-founder Jenny Beth Martin portrayed in the documentary *Fire from the Heartland* (2010). Sauter argues that appeals to the experience of or potential for motherhood became effective emotional tools in the repertoire of conservative political activists.

Sauter claims that evangelical constructions of femininity draw upon implicit knowledge that affirm evangelical identity and function as a bridge into secular culture; she writes: “Constructions of evangelical femininity make present implicit knowledge, which not only affirm a distinct evangelical identity, but provide an intracultural ideological coherence between nominally evangelical and nominally secular culture” (my translation, 177). Since believers’ self-identification, theological distinctions, or differences in religious practice are disregarded, it appears that “evangelicalism” in this book is not a religious category. Instead, Sauter’s study appears to follow a certain unstated logic that refers to all moral and political conservatives as evangelicals. In this respect, Sauter is in good company. Long-time political observers Ted Jelen and Kenneth Wald lament that pollsters and journalists have dismissed religious differences to the extent that “evangelicalism” is now a political designation.⁶ With the disclaimer that the book has little to say about religion and despite the fact that the “construction of femininity” remains a strangely authorless concept because the process of construction is never addressed, the book presents an interesting exploration of a particular image of conservative femininity in the contemporary United States.

Anja-Maria Bassimir (Mainz)

⁶ Ted G. Jelen and Kenneth D. Wald, “Evangelicals and President Trump: The Not So Odd Couple,” Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox (eds.), *God at the Grassroots 2016: The Christian Right in American Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 28.

INA BERGMANN and STEFAN HIPPLER, eds., *Cultures of Solitude: Loneliness – Limitation – Liberation* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2017), 330 pp.

Cultures of Solitude is not only a collection of 17 essays that focus on the implications of solitude in American culture with a particular emphasis on loneliness, limitation, and liberation—a highly successful alliteration—but also one that gathers a wide range of international scholars from Germany, Austria, France, Denmark, Ireland, China, Canada, and the United States, who significantly enhance this field of studies with their respective expertise. The collection is based on an international and interdisciplinary conference on “Cultures of Solitude” held in Würzburg, Germany, in 2015, and organized by the two editors. In addition to the conference participants, the editors were able to recruit additional experts for this publication. Furthermore, the scholars do not just represent internationality but also interdisciplinarity since they work in a variety of disciplines such as American Studies, Literary and Cultural Studies, American History, Intermediality Studies, Comparative Literature, British Literature, Art History, Sociology, Religions Studies, Environmental Studies, and Psychology. Some of the scholars work at the intersection of several of these disciplines and at various career stages.

Focusing on the social phenomenon of “solitude” and adding cultures as reference points already indicates the phenomenon’s contingency on its cultural surroundings and, consequently, its characteristics of historical, cultural, and social variability, changeability, and development. Thus, solitude is never one-dimensional, which is what the impressive range of contributors show. Yet, in all their variety, the contributions also testify to common ground and discuss questions directly or indirectly such as the relationship between the public and private spheres, between the individual and society, and between the individual and technology. Concepts of identity, gender, and ethnicity also take solitude as an impact factor into consideration.

Any collection of essays with such a wide range needs what Ina Bergmann offers in her introduction, namely, a narrative that gives coherence to diversity. Her theoretically and historically well-founded overview offers the framework for all contributions, unfolds the range of meanings of the concept, and ex-

plains the further subdivision of the volume. Bergmann distinguishes between two basic types of solitudes, one freely chosen by the individual, one imposed on the individual. Both types indicate a critical stance toward society.

As Bergmann explains in her introduction, the collection “explores specifically American cultures of solitude and their representations in cultural products” (13), for cultures of solitude “in the US are of particular interest because solitude is directly related to concepts of individual independence and liberty which are venerable American ideals” (13). Freedom, for Bergmann, is one of the most essential features of “reclusiveness and eremitism” (13), which are two forms of self-chosen solitude. Hermits living in “the hut in the wilderness” (14) are strongly associated with American culture—if we just think of Henry David Thoreau’s legendary life at Walden Pond. Yet, deprivation is always also present. Bergmann goes on to discuss related concepts such as dichotomy and liminality, archetypes and universality, religion and spirituality, mental deviation and pathology, art and creativity. As she finally concludes, literature and culture are full of solitude and solitary figures. However, despite this phenomenon’s widespread presence, not too many scholars have tackled it in its broad range and certainly not from an interdisciplinary perspective. This is the gap that *Cultures of Solitude* fills.

Apart from the introduction, the collection is divided into six sections. In the section on “Early Solitude: Language, Body, and Gender,” the essays by Svend Erik Larsen, Kevin L. Cope, and Coby Dowdell trace solitude from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century in transatlantic and diachronic perspective. The first issue raised by Larsen is the paradox that lies in the simultaneity of solitude as an individual experience and its representation in language as a collective medium. Cope explores the stereotypes and values associated with the recluse while Dowdell discusses female seclusion after the American Revolution with reference to Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Coquette* (1797). The section on “Solitude in the Nineteenth Century: Gender, Politics, and Poetics” offers three contributions by Ina Bergmann on Julia Ward Howe’s *The Hermaprodite* (written in the 1840s, pub. 2004), Margaretta M. Lovell on Thoreau, and by Hélène Quanguin on Garrisonian abolitionists’ politics of isolation and reform. Women’s reclusiveness may imply freedom from social

restraints but also limitations whereas for men it is often associated with a view on nature—as in landscape painting—that results in insight and wisdom, as Bergmann and Lovell argue respectively. As Quanquin shows, reclusiveness offers a space on the margins of society and politics, as can be seen in abolitionism in the nineteenth century.

The section on “Solitude from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Century: Society, Spirituality, and Religion” consists of Ira J. Cohen’s exploration of solitary withdrawal as a sociological phenomenon, focusing on Thoreau, Thomas Merton, May Sarton, and Kevin Lewis’s analysis of lonesomeness in American literature, music, and fine art. The chronological sequence is continued in the section on “Solitude in the Twentieth Century: Space, Gender, and Ethnicity” where the “cabin scenario” (Randall Roorda), the representation of Emily Dickinson in plays (Nassim Winnie Balestrini), and female reclusiveness in Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* (1984) (Jochen Achilles) are key concerns. Two more essays in the section entitled “Solitude from the Twentieth to the Twenty-First Century: Space, Identity, and Pathology” look at David Foster Wallace (Clare Hayes-Brady) and turn-of-the-century American films (Rüdiger Heinze), the latter particularly focusing on *Finding Forrester* (2000).

The final section on “Solitude Today: Technology, Community, and Identity” takes us all the way into the twenty-first century with its pressing concerns about technology and social media. While Stefan Hippler reads Dave Eggers’s *The Circle* (2013) and its criticism of tech-

nology’s impact on individuals as an example of solitude in the digital age, Scott Slovic presents students’ fieldwork at the University of Idaho and its “Semester in the Wild” program. His premise is that people look for solitude in order to think about society. For Slovic, the experiment’s most important result is that students learn to “use their writing and public speaking in order to imagine themselves as engaged citizens” (283). Robert J. Coplan and Julie C. Bowker conclude the section and the book by discussing psychological perspectives on the costs and benefits of solitude. They argue that seeking solitude in order to avoid social interaction has to be viewed critically whereas the desire to reach a state of solitude for its own sake is to be preferred.

All contributions are preceded by a very short abstract and a detailed bibliography that give readers orientation in this variety of approaches to solitude, as do subdivisions within each article. Many of the essays perform an in-depth analysis of American literature and cultural phenomena and give additional insights into other disciplines’ approaches. The volume offers an impressive overview of solitude as a cultural phenomenon from the Middle Ages all the way into the twenty-first century. The collection’s comprehensiveness turns it into a reference work for anyone eager to learn more about one of the most common but also most under-researched questions of—at least—Western and, in particular, American culture. Anyone interested can also find the book online.

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ANNIE McCLANAHAN. *DEAD PLEDGES: DEBT, Crisis, and Twenty-First-Century Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2017) ix + 235pp.

Any discussion of twenty-first-century debt and economic crisis in the United States will necessarily involve some very large numbers. As Annie McClanahan notes, there were 8.2 million mortgage foreclosures during the Great Recession (2007-2009) and its aftermath, while in 2015 student loan debt stood at \$1.3 trillion and mortgage debt at \$8.2 trillion (8). Aggregate household debt in the United States has continued to increase since the time of McClanahan's writing, reaching a record high of \$13.29 trillion in the second quarter of 2018 (Center for Microeconomic Data). (Also troubling, though not obviously to McClanahan, the national debt of the U.S. has increased pretty much unremittingly for many decades—the exceptional late Clinton years noted—standing at almost \$22 trillion in late 2018 [“US National Debt”].) Staggering figures all.

McClanahan draws the title of her book from “mortgage,” Old French for “dead pledge,” wherein collateralized property becomes “dead” to the lender if the debt obligation is fully met, or then “dead” to the borrower if it is not (126). To be clear, although there are different kinds of debt—governmental, corporate, entrepreneurial—some of which are indeed productive and enabling in polymorphous ways, she examines here a particular type of personal *consumer debt*, that which has gone very poorly for borrowers and into “crisis.” In line with works like Maurizio Lazzarato's *The Making of Indebted Man* (2010) and David Graeber's *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (2011), among others, McClanahan views debtors solely as victims of all manner of systemic injustice, due notably to government policies and non-policies, the legal and illegal predations of financial institutions, and general income inequality, which is often gender- and race-inflected.

The important contribution of *Dead Pledges* is its linkage of the causalities and consequences of unmanageable debt, and especially that arising during and beyond the Great Recession, to various cultural forms, mostly American: literature, art, photography, poetry, and film. In her construction, consumer debt is “uniquely situated between our everyday experience of the economy and the economy's larger structural dynam-

ics, which function far *beyond our agency, knowledge or control*” (4, my italics). In this reading, consumer debt then fully disempowers individuals, especially those in economically precarious circumstances, and she is especially critical of behavioralist economics which assigns to individuals causal power. She singles out two Nobel Laureates in Economics, George Akerlof (2001) and Robert Shiller (2013), for particular criticism, attributing to their jointly-authored *Animal Spirits: How Human Psychology Drives the Economy and Why It Matters for Global Capitalism* (2009) an unconvincing “thin” psychologizing, a view that underestimates I think both the important quantitative work that the former have undertaken over many years, as well as the formative role that narrativization plays in so many aspects of economic life (26). So, given these premises, McClanahan trains her attention here on those cultural works that confirm her claims regarding the systemic disempowerment of individual economic actors.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on contemporary American fiction. McClanahan quickly dismisses from consideration certain novels that, for her, untenably assign responsibility for personal debt crises to individual fecklessness and miscalculation, works such as Jess Walter's *The Financial Lives of Poets* (2009), Sam Lipsyte's *The Ask* (2010), and Eric Puchner's *Model Home* (2010). Actually, pretty much every novel dealing with the debt crisis that I know of attributes some degree of responsibility to individual decisions, so McClanahan is a bit hard pressed to find exemplars that assign causality solely to systemic machinations. In Chapter 1, she settles on three “credit-crisis” novels—Adam Haslett's *Union Atlantic* (2010), Martha McPhee's *Dear Money* (2010), and Jonathan Dee's *The Privileges* (2010)—that, while admittedly focusing on the “greed and hubris of individual bankers,” also “seek to capture the reality of a structural, even impersonal, economic and social whole” (24). (Curiously, Paul Auster's *Sunset Park* [2010] and Dave Eggers's *A Hologram for the King* [2012], which deal with McClanahan's central concerns—the Great Recession housing crisis, runaway education debt, and income precarity—and validate her views on systemic causalities, do not come up here.) Chapter Two extends the discussion of American fiction, examining how credit scores are, like novels themselves, invested in the “characterization” of individuals. To illustrate this,

she offers a clever reading of Gary Shteyngart's near-future dystopian novel, the super funny *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010). As with the "qualitative narrative model of credit evaluation," Shteyngart reduces characters to *caricatures* and *stereotypes*, making them "emblematic of the contemporary regimes of credit scoring" (68).

McClanahan turns to other cultural media in Chapters 3 and 4, photography and "credit-crisis" horror films. Detroit, Michigan is everybody's favorite embodiment of urban disaster, a Rust Belt city at the end of its tether for decades; Anthony Bourdain even did an episode on it for his *Parts Unknown* TV show. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Detroit had the *highest* per capita income in the United States in 1960, and was once the fourth-largest city in the country. Its decline is a well-known story, but one that is still evocative to the onlooker, and certainly profoundly tragic to pauperized Detroiters who live amidst endemic decay, ruin and crime. The Packard Automotive Plant closed in the late 1950s, and has since become a photographic cliché of sorts, as has the decaying Fisher Body Plant. Still, these and other images that Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre capture in their series, *The Ruins of Detroit* (2009), remain provocative and highly affective. Similarly disturbing, other photographic series analyzed by McClanahan such as Bruce Gilden's *Foreclosures: Florida* (2008) and John Francis Peters's *Foreclosed: 2008-2010*, among others, capture the agony of dispossession and loss during the Great Recession. In her last chapter, McClanahan looks at a cluster of horror films, three of which offer predictable depictions of wrathful evicted owners visiting mayhem on their successors: *Drag Me To Hell* (2009), *Mother's Day* (2010), and *Crawlspace* (2013). A fourth film, Pang Ho-cheung's campy and very violent *Dream House* (2010), is the most intriguing. Set in the frenzied real-estate bubble that followed Britain's handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997—and that bubble continues largely unabated today—the film depicts a serial killer who manages to get a great deal on an expensive Hong Kong condo by murdering several of the building's residents and therein garnering a self-dealt "impairment" discount because of the building's new forbidding notoriety.

The Coda that concludes *Dead Pledges* looks at a type of debt well-known to academics in the United States, whether directly or

indirectly. As noted earlier, U.S. education-related debt has reached stratospheric levels, and has grown to \$1.5 trillion dollars in mid-2018. McClanahan makes a number of telling points here. A college education is indeed no longer a guarantee of future economic prosperity, though she makes no differentiation across disciplines and professions. For example, given parlous job markets, a law (JD) degree from a lower-tier, yet expensive, law school is no longer a good economic bet, and some American law schools are even closing, e.g., Whittier and Valparaiso, while others are merging to avoid that same fate; and David Colander and Daisy Zhuo have gone so far as to say that the PhD in English—and I think, by extension, in other Humanities disciplines—is in effect for many a "luxury consumption good" (148). Still, a law degree from an upper-quartile law school yields good employment prospects, as does training in STEM disciplines. To one of her points, certainly universities do profit financially from student loans, and I would note endowment-rich American universities have been challenged in recent years to pay out more in tuition grants to needy students, and some have proposed a tax on large endowments that do not allocate a stipulated minimum percentage for annual payout. To be sure, McClanahan's observation that stagnant wage growth in the United States, the long decline of manufacturing jobs, and increases in income and wealth disparity, have greatly increased student and other debt, cannot be gainsaid, and these circumstances have led to, among other things, support across the political spectrum for the trade tariffs (and even trade wars) that we see today.

On balance, the thesis of *Dead Pledges*, that "... debt is not an investment in the future but a confrontation with economic coercion and exploitation in the present" seems insufficiently nuanced and a bit overwrought (196). Millions of American citizens do in fact advance themselves through debt, whether for housing or education, thereby serving themselves in both the present and the future. (A deeply ingrained, even irrational, American willingness to [over]pay for post-secondary education to attend a private college, or an expensive out-of-state public one, should not go unremarked.) Regarding residential mortgages, and in no way dismissing the tragedy millions experienced in the U.S. during and beyond the Great Recession, housing has been a good

investment for many Americans; the median sale price of houses has gone from \$18,000 in 1963 to \$325,200 in 2018, an eighteen-fold increase, and well above inflation (\$18,000 in 1963 dollars equals \$148,500 in 2018). Admittedly, prices have varied from city to city and region to region; then again, of course, you have to pay to live somewhere (U.S. Bureau of the Census). A good education remains one of the best preparations for the job market, although specializations do matter. As for the incurring of credit-card debt and exorbitant interest payments, it is lamentable, but for the most part voluntarist. Debt can kill, but it doesn't always. In any event, *Dead Pledges* is a welcome addition to an area of growing importance, the "economic humanities." Its

author commands a disparate and complex body of economic thought and economic history. There is, however, something disempowering finally about her claim that people have no agency. Fredric Jameson has famously observed that "[i]t is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism" (76). If capitalism remains the most probable form of political economy for the foreseeable future, it behooves individual citizens to concern themselves with their individual economic circumstances, and to take advantage of all individual agential power they have to eschew debt when they can, and to manage it sustainably when they cannot.

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