REVIEWS

Nicolas Barreyre, Michael Heale, Stephen Tuck, and Cécile Vidal, eds. *Historians across Borders: Writing American History in a Global Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. 395 pages.

Globalization and internationalization of contemporary scholarship are processes of which academics are deeply aware, but which are often accepted rather unreflectively. *Historians across Borders: Writing American History in a Global Age* is an original and innovative book which explores the question of how the institutional and cultural factors shape the writing of American history in Europe. This carefully structured and well-balanced volume, the product of the cooperation of twenty-four scholars from eleven countries, offers a complex interpretation of the practice of American history by European scholars and the possible impact it has on American history in general.

Historians across Borders offers a skillfully drafted, multidimensional analysis of the overall state of American history of Europe and of its development in time, with each section of the book looking at a different general issue rather than focusing on a single national case. This structure gives a complex interpretation of the European practice of American history, but also leads to a few repetitions. In the first part, bearing the title "Historiography," the essay "Watersheds in Time and Place: Writing American History in Europe" by Michael Heale, Sylvia Hilton, Halina Parafianowicz, Paul Schor, and Maurizio Vaudagna contains a general overview of the (relatively slow and often problematic) development of American history in Europe as a field of research since the nineteenth century till the present day. It identifies the common patterns in the European historiography, and points to the significant moments in its chronological and spatial development (notably 1945, the mid-1970s, and the 1990s).

Part Two, "Structures and Context," focuses on the impact of European scholarship on U.S. history. The three chapters discuss, respectively, the significance of politics, institutions and academic structures, and audiences as the significant aspects which helped to forge the specific national shapes of European historiography of America. Chapter 3, "Institutions, Careers, and the Many Paths of U.S. History in Europe," by Max Edling, Vincent Michelot, Jörg Nagler, Sandra Scanlon, and Irmina Wawrzyczek, could be perhaps singled out here as a noteworthy attempt not only to provide a synthetic interpretation of the impact—sometimes

surprising—of the European institutions, job markets, and professional regulations on developments in the field of American history, but also as a brief introduction into the intricate workings of European academia, and even as a practical guide for aspiring young scholars.

The third part uses the findings of the essays in Part Two to identify the ways in which the features of the location where scholarship is done (its political, institutional and cultural specifics) can lead to reformulations of the established academic paradigms. Thus, Chapter 5 looks at the practice of comparative history in particular European countries and its recent evolution into transnational and global history. Chapter 6 offers a discussion of European research into diplomacy, migrations, and other forms of transatlantic connections, while in Chapter 7 Trevor Burnard and Cécile Vidal study the connections between the European locations of historians and their approaches to the basic conceptual frameworks of Early American history.

Part Four, "Perspectives from Elsewhere," widens the scope of the book even further. Four scholars, Thomas Bender from the U.S., Ivan Kurilla from Russia, Ian Tyrrell from Australia, and Natsuki Aruga from Japan, in their short essays reflect on the findings of the earlier chapters and provide more accounts of the internationalization of the practice of American history in different parts of the world. The authors of the two final essays, David E. Nye, who is an American historian working in Denmark, and François Furstenberg, a scholar of U.S. and French background resident in Canada, comment on how such transnational experience affected their own professional lives.

Historians across Borders is important both in showing how the European influences give new directions in American historiography and in pointing to the significance of place in the writing and teaching of history. It reminds the readers of the impact of various institutional and cultural issues on both education and research. The book stresses the unifying consequences of such factors as the dominant position of the English language in the academia, the growth of transnational and globalizing processes affecting academic exchanges, and the increasingly international character of education, but argues that most European historians of America remain largely influenced by with the ideologies and values originating in their native cultures and preoccupied by problems and concerns, both in terms of scholarship and professional life, derived from their home institutions.

The book could perhaps devote more attention to the discussion of the work of these European historians who are based at American institutions and yet, because of their education and career paths, represent a distinctly European element there. Among the few examples that the book points to is Michał Rozbicki, whose recent work on the American revolution is presented as evidence that his

"continuous engagement with both the European world and the American academy positioned him well to think of and conduct analysis which runs counter to many expectations of his American audience" (90). Another academic community whose role could be presented at greater length is composed of these scholars who divide their working time between institutions on both sides of the Atlantic. Both groups provide a mediating and bridging influence on the practice of American history both in U.S. and in Europe.

The fact that the essays devote little space to East European academic developments can be treated not so much as an omission, but as the confirmation of the relatively slow and late development of American history in this part of Europe. The authors correctly identify the causes of this delay in the Communist past of the Eastern European countries. The imposition of Marxist ideology, totalitarian control of academic activities, and the power of censorship led to multiple constraints on the writing of American history, amplified by the official designation of the U.S. as an enemy state with an unjust social system. The consequences of these past restrictions can be still noticed twenty five years after the end of Communism, as scholars in this part of Europe are even today more likely to study political, constitutional, and migration history, than, for example, social and cultural history of America. Poland is presented as the Eastern European pioneer in the development of the historical studies of America and the significance of both the American Studies Center in Warsaw and the Polish Association for American Studies is duly acknowledged (20, 46). Characteristically, however, the authors of the book, while devoting some attention to the descriptions of the institutional developments and the growth of the distinctive areas of historical research in Eastern Europe, fail to recognize any influence of historians based in this part of the continent on the reconfigurations of the paradigms of American history in general.

Historians across Borders presents the complex contribution of European scholars to the writing of American history and identifies these national and cultural factors which concurrently both put constraints on the work of European historians and give them new original interpretive opportunities. This book can be treated as an exploration in historiography, but it also sheds light on the practice of history in Europe in general, and assesses the potential role of European scholarship in writing American history, stressing the advantages of the global and transnational approaches for which cooperation of historians across borders is an essential requirement.

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Grzegorz Kosc. *Robert Frost's Political Body*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2014. 334 pages.

Grzegorz Kosc gave us a big and original book, perhaps best described as an unusual kind of Robert Frost's cultural biography. In Kosc's work the poet's politics and poetics throw light on each other when viewed through representations of human body as the figure of public authority. In the center of the author's argument lies his perception that "[i]n Robert Frost's poetry lives the figure of an authoritative public body: a physical human body that personifies classical liberalism, the value system inherent in the socio-political situation of the poet's region, his country, and his time (1). In eight chapters preceded by a concise introduction and followed by an even more concise conclusion, the author offers meticulously researched analysis of Frost's concern with aspects of this figure showing how throughout the poet's career, "the political body" functioned as a steady point of reference for Frost's political, ethical and aesthetic reflection.

Chapter One "Frost's Experiences and the Intellectual Traditions that Influenced Him" provides relevant biographical background and points to intellectual traditions that the author considers of special importance for the poet's lifelong concern with authoritative political body, its behavior and aesthetic implications. The political body in his poetics "seems to have germinated in Frost's childhood experience" (42). Emphasizing some crucial experiences of the poet's youth, Kosc then outlines Frost's later and "wider social experience" such as "the two Red Scares, the social surveillance during both world wars, and the various embodiments of authority by different US presidents" (43). Among the intellectual traditions important for the poet are listed "John Milton's writings on the human embodiment appropriate for republican, popularly shared power," "Chesterton's critique of the Puritan illusion of full self mastery," Emerson's concept of Brahma and his interest in obelisks, and also Santayana's "vision of the dramaturgical nature of human life" (43). In conclusion the author declares that "Frost had acquired his taste for the ideal poem's form mostly by contemplating the shape of a self-regulating, Puritan body that lies at the foundation of Western-style republicanism." "However… he was simultaneously antagonized by classical artistic forms that the Maya developed to demonstrate the charisma of their kings" and, more generally, questioned "many forms of art, including Western ones, developed for the spectacles of royal power" (43).

Helpful titles of subsequent chapters indicate specific art forms and figures of "the authoritative political body" discussed in the course of the book's argument and correlated with selected works by the poet. Chapter Two "The Undoing of Maya and Frost's Chafed Boulders" focuses on the Copan stele D of the Late Classic period. Its lithograph hung in Frost's living room in Amherst and, in Kosc's words, its carvings "betrayed the Maya's collective ambition to see coherence in

all nature in the symbol of their king's body" (51). The richly detailed stele is opposed to the "Western tradition of authority.... that relies on the bodily closure and smoothness" (68) as represented in Frost's poem "Of the Stones of the Place." The poem "seems to take issue directly with the aesthetics of the Classic Maya stelae" (68) while the tenderly treated "boulders that lie /As touching as a basket full of eggs" visualize the spiritual tradition of New England. Finally, a plain, sturdy boulder becomes "The portrait of the soul of my gransir Ira. /It came from where he came from anyway" (68). Each reader must decide for her/himself how "direct" s/he finds the relationship between Frost's thinking about the form of Maya stelae and the poem's tribute to New England field boulders. The chapter is full of fascinating details concerning Frost's familiarity with and thinking about the Maya art, including the fact that his interest in it "was a part of a local fad" (77, n. 22).

Kosc has read extensively in Frost's unpublished manuscripts and correspondence, also in the related correspondence of people who knew the poet. His wide research results in inferences from such knowledge of "lessons" that the poet could have drawn for his philosophy of life and art. The book, thus, grounds particular poems in specific interests and experiences of the poet and, more broadly, in the context of the cultural climate and realities of his time. It truly contains a wealth of cultural information.

Similarly to the Maya chapter, the following chapters are structured by juxtaposition of opposing figurations of "authoritative public bodies." Thus, Chapter Three "From Shelley's Revolutionary Body to Corporeal Power in Keats" discusses the rejection by the American poet of Shelley's feminized, too open body (and sensibility) as imaged by Edward Onslow Ford's Shelley Memorial. The poet was repelled by the sculpture when, during his 1957 visit, he saw it in Oxford. Kosc identifies Frost's consequent endorsement of "the power of the carnivorous body" with "his most clear turn" to Keats in "Lines Written in Dejection on the Eve of Great Success" (1959) and sums up his discussion of the poem in the following way:

> the farmer overpowering the unruly cow with the help of his teeth is a complex allegorical figure standing for a mode of life—and ultimately a poem—that in Frost's view has a healthy approach to experience. In addition, both symbols—the tough, middlebrow head (in 'Etherealizing,' A.S.) and the cow rider—convey attitudes that Frost's poems in general propagate, promoting healthy organization of political power in a republican society. (112)

Perhaps, but believing that form carries meaning, I can't help the feeling that the anecdotal nature and the tongue-in-cheek tone of "Lines Written in Dejection on

the Eve of Great Success" work against the ambitious scope of Kosc's argument. To my ear, the highly abstract claim made by Kosc for the poem's message and the poem's grotesquely down to earth imagery pull different ways.

Observing in Chapter Four ("The Poetic Form and the Vicissitudes of the Executive Body") that "US President's bodies were often construed as indicative of their political styles or even party affiliations" (118), the author goes on to state:

> Frost believed that the presidents' bodily frames, especially as they were imaged in official portraits and cartoons, were relevant to his poetry.… To put it simply, he felt that a poem should be shaped like the body of a politician who possesses the appearance that promises the fulfillment of the nation's hopes. (120)
> ….
> In search for the best shape, Frost seemed to aim at a mean between the two extremes of bodily compactness and looseness. (122)

The chapter contains interesting cartoons (published in *Puck* around the turn of the century) to illustrate the popularity with the period's satirists of the correlation between national politics and the shape of presidential bodies. The central visual contrast for this chapter's argument is provided by the 1903 portrait of Theodore Roosevelt—"Too Rough a Rider"—by John Singer Sargent and the 1911 portrait of William Howard Taft by Anders Zorn (both in the White House). Taft's corpulent body and easy going posture represent for Kosc an approach to experience evoked in the 1936 poem "A Record Stride." Such a comfortably moderate attitude remained "a permanent correlate of Frost's imagination" (153).

The next chapter "Frost's Browneian Critique of Randolph Bourne and the Monstrosity of Left-Liberalism" continues to analyze the metaphorical significance of the shape of public bodies. Drawing on Frost's letters to Louis Untermeyer which show that at the time of his involvement with the *Seven Arts* (a magazine founded in 1916) the poet was reading works of Sir Thomas Browne[1], Kosc suggests that Browneian skepticism, especially of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*—"a book Frost would later teach and quote from"—"negatively predisposed Frost toward the epistemological ambitions of liberal arts" (166) and toward the program of *Seven Arts* in

1 The works of Sir Thomas Browne were recommended reading in nineteenth century New England. For example, Samuel Phillips Newman's *Practical System of Rhetoric*, a popular college textbook, praised Browne as "an eccentric genius" characterized by "the extravagance of his style… [and] strange and unheard of combinations." Also Thomas Wentworth Higginson stressed Browne's "vital vigor" in his "Letter to a Young Contributor" published in the April 1862 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. Browne is usually mentioned among authors important for Emily Dickinson. (Capps, 66–68). Thus, as opposed to the "modern openness" of the *Seven Arts*, Frost's reading of Sir Thomas Browne grounds the poet's thinking still deeper in the conservative intellectual tradition of his region.

particular. The chapter provides ample evidence that Randolph Bourne's disfigured body was seen (not only by Frost) as a correlate of his radically liberal politics and of the too expansive aesthetics of *Seven Arts* with which Bourne (along with Van Wyck Brooks and Waldo Frank) was associated. Bourne's "anti-war essays published in the magazine scared off sponsors and alienated its general readership" (160). Hence Frost's limerick, which is the chapter's "main concern":

> In the Dawn of Creation that morning
> I remember I gave you this warning
> The Arts are but Six!
> You add Politics
> And the Seven will die a-Bourneing. (163)

The figure opposing the ugly openness of Bourne's body and his excessively tolerant sensibility is "that of Cyclopes, whose minds and faces are scrupulously closed – indeed, one eye away from being perfectly impenetrable" (184). Thus, "Frost's rejection of Polyphemus's mode of life counterbalances his fear of Bourne's" (189). The poet saw the aesthetic ideal in "the beauty of a normal human body and intuited "poems expressing the sensual scope of such bodies between those two extremes" (189–190).

The title of Chapter Six "The Inscrutability of the Body as a Principle of Frost's Irony" offers a concise formulation of its central thesis: Frost recognized the fact that the behavior of the body is ultimately not only unforeseeable but also unreadable. It may deliberately mislead, present a mask, perform a role or simulate attitudes. His recognition of the body's ultimate mystery and, consequently, of the uncertain status of any interpretation of its behavior lies, according to Kosc, at the foundation of Frost's ironic poetics. Using "Brown's Descent" as the illustrative poem, Kosc points, moreover, to the way the poem links "the illegibility of the farmer's movements to the inscrutability of writing" (224). And so, Frost's poems suspend their meanings in between different, often conflicting possibilities of interpretation while "the figure of the political body also illustrates the behavioral duplicity driving Frost's ironic poetics, points to the social use of such duplicity, and helps explain the drama of many of his poems, a drama caused by the characters' recognition of the inscrutability of others" (225).

The seventh chapter "From Absolutist Colossi to Republican Figurines" interestingly juxtaposes the "representation of the absolutist sovereign body" from the engraving on the cover of the first edition of *Leviathan* (231) and the monuments of Easter Islands with the Tanagra figurines and late nineteenth century American plaster groups by John Rogers. While *Leviathan* is "a book Thomas Hobbes wrote, significantly, to counter the advent of parliamentary republicanism" and the Easter Island monuments are "forms of group expression of collective consciousness"

(234), the Tanagra figurines and Rogers plaster groups attracted Frost as forms of democratic art "enshrining the middle class, democratic lives of their owners as ideal by aestheticizing it (sic!)" (242). In the poet's notebooks, letters, and poems the chapter traces Frost's reactions to both the monumental collectivist art of the Moai and to the Tanagra figurines and Rogers' groups, finding there evidence of the process in which the poet conceived of "a poetic style that would be equivalent to the body of popular sovereignty, the universalized body of an autonomous citizen" (241). For Frost, Kosc concludes, "democratic, abstract portraits of common people striking a balance between idealization (of others or of self) and realism seem to resolve the dilemmas he sensed in poems equivalent to colossal public monuments" (248).

Introducing his discussion of Frost's interest in "republican figurines" as a reflection and analogy of the poet's resolution "to write poems 'for all sorts and kinds,' who 'buying books in their thousands,' could…. keep his parsnip buttered" (230), Kosc claims that "he succeeded in this better than anyone else before or after him, eventually running up to the pined-for thousands." This reviewer, however, cannot but recall here Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in whom Frost did have an equally or even more successful predecessor, both in ambition and achievement. At the time of Frost's poetic apprenticeship Longfellow was still the most popular American poet. What is more, at the start of his own career the young romantic hoped to be read by thousands, planning to write and publish ballads broadside style[2]. The title of Frost's first volume *A Boy's Will* clearly indicates that embarking on his journey to fame and financial independence, its author aimed at establishing continuity between his own work and that of the old master.

The book's eighth and final chapter "The Symbol of the Political Body: Frost's Portraits in *North of Boston* and *Mountain Interval*" discusses the poet's interest in the art of portraiture declaring that "to some extent he thought of himself as a portraitist" (255). However, more importantly for the argument of the whole book, the chapter interprets the frontispiece portraits of the author—De Witt Ward's photographs of Frost's head sculpted by Aroldo du Chêne—as symbols of Frost's aesthetics: "they bring together many of the threads that run through his imagery, his characterization, and his poetic choices in general, and they are intimately connected to his art in ways that have not yet been explored" (254). The chapter proceeds to pursue those ways through examining Frost's interest in the

2 In January 1840, having completed „The Wreck of the Schooner Hesperus," Longfellow wrote to George W.Greene "I have broken ground in a new field; namely ballads…. I have a great notion of working upon the *people's* feelings. I am going to have it printed on a sheet, with a coarse picture on it. I desire a new sensation and a new set of critics" (Samuel Longfellow I: 353–354, emphasis in the original). By 1854 the poet felt financially secure enough to resign his professorship at Harvard.

art of portraiture, his understanding of writing and reading as "self-portraiture," his vision of the ideal body as rooted in Miltonic Puritan republicanism and, more specifically, connected to "the body imaging of *Comus*" (270). The rejected opposite is represented by Dante's too stern visage with its "airtight, clenched jaws" (274–275). Frost's poem which directly "identifies the beauty of the poetic form with the ideally beautiful head" (277) is "The Aim Was Song" collected in *New Hampshire* (1923) but first published around the time when Ward's photographs of Frost's bust by Du Chêne were being selected for the frontispieces. Eventually, Kosc concludes, "the features of Frost's head as it is represented by du Chêne and in turn by De Witt Ward's photographs for the frontispieces of the 1921 reprint editions of *North of Boston* and *Mountain Interval* goes (sic!) far toward explaining the poet's sensibility and his poetics" (303).

In the end then, Robert Frost's political body proves also, or rather first of all, to be an aesthetic model defining the shape and proportions of his poems. To that extent the title of the book does not fully signal the direction in which its content unfolds. The book's emphasis lies on the visual material both as evidence grounding Frost's thinking in the cultural and political concerns of his time and region and as stimulus in the process of crystallization of his conception of poetry and poetics. Kosc's argument places Frost *vis-a-vis* the modernist practice of *correspondence des arts;* for Frost correspondence did not mean synthesis. Convinced of "a general failure to grasp Frost's intentions when he invited visual artists to collaborate with him on book projects," the scholar argues that "Frost tended to regard the images in his books in their own right—not as mere illustrations, but as parallel artistic efforts in a different medium" (254). He insisted, however, on the autonomy of each art, on its staying within the bounds described by its particular medium and denounced imagism as "monstrous" in its "unbridled craving for sensory and emotional experience" (183).

Reading Kosc's demonstrations of the poet's systematic transference of the model shape of human body onto the spheres of politics, ethics, and poetics, I can't help thinking that, in his interpretation, the well balanced human body functions for Frost similarly to the way the shape of leaf functions for Thoreau in the final chapter of *Walden*: "The Maker of this earth but patented a leaf" (203). The comparison may be instructive: for Thoreau the flowing leaf/lobe form organized the whole natural world with the human body emphatically within it. For Frost the well shaped physical human body becomes the model structure of human relations and activities, personal, social and artistic. The human body is not really seen as part of the natural universe but as the dominant power/aesthetic model for most aspects of human experience. Eventually then, Kosc's argument confirms the thesis that Frost is not a poet of nature. The study presents him, emphatically, as a poet of the classically balanced human order battling against

both chaos and excessive rigor. The book's weakness may be the imbalance I find between the wealth of detailed cultural and personal material and the actual readings of poems which at times do not seem quite convincing (as, for instance, in the case of "Stones of the Place" or "Lines Written in Dejection on the Eve of Great Success"). On the other hand, the impressive abundance of cultural facts, information and materials drawn from unpublished notebooks, lectures and manuscripts make Kosc's book not only interesting but truly original. Moreover, the extensive bibliography section in itself provides a valuable resource. Still, while the filter of "the political body" opens an unexplored perspective on Frost's poetry, the foregrounding of its classically balanced aesthetics shuts off its tragic dimension.

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Joseph Kuhn. *Allen Tate: A Study of Southern Modernism and the Religious Imagination*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2009. 524 pages.

Joseph Kuhn's book *Allen Tate: A Study of Southern Modernism and the Religious Imagination* is hefty and complex, and yet it is surprisingly readable and its reading highly rewarding. It offers a comprehensive anatomy—a "thick description" of sorts—of the imagination of Allen Tate (1899–1979), the most important figure of the traditionalist strain of American modernist poetry and a leading exponent of the Fugitive movement. True, Kuhn's main claim may raise no eyebrows—he asserts merely that Tate's entire work pivots on "a model of order," spiritual, moral, religious, semiotic, and aesthetic. That said, Kuhn's erudition and masterful knowledge of the subject matter, combined ingratiating critical style, make his book quite unique.

The above-mentioned model of order is rarely visible; it usually is only implicit in his poems and essays, charging most of their elements. Kuhn shows, for instance, that the religious, an important element of Tate's sense of lost order, is nothing but the "rumor" in the poems while the poet himself did not shy away from proclaiming himself an atheist, or at least he could not but surrender to what he called "our unbelieving belief." The poet couldn't do without the category completely for he felt it was potentially capable of better epistemology and conducive to perceiving the present experience in terms of myth. Paradoxically, Tate seemed to suggest even that writers find most favorable conditions in cultures moving away from those modes of thought and therefore making everyone miss those modes.

At the same time, Tate's "model of order" is shown to have been in the constant process of perfection—both intellectual and spiritual. A pure concept, it was being carefully separated from all of its accouterments. "The unity of being" was only an abstract ideal of his endless search. The Old South, for instance, is but a metaphor of spiritual community abstracted from the actual Old South and reminiscent of the religious experience of medieval Europe at its best, that is, as it might have become had it come to a full fruition. Over the years agrarianism for Tate became increasingly Southernless, universally Christian, profoundly conceptualized and abstract.

The sources of the poet's imagination are various. Sometimes they are predictable and to be expected—Virgil's mythology of the origins of the Roman *ecumene* and stemming from that the mind of Europe, especially in Eric Voegelin's account; Dante as the poet of the medieval world, of the comprehensive nature of sin, and of the symbolic imagination. At other times, those sources seem eccentric, paradoxical, and counterintuitive: one is repeatedly surprised to be made realize that Tate's traditionalism is shot through with modernist thought—for instance, with Oswald Spengler's ideas of the spiritual unity permeating each age and the unity's unavoidable decline; with A. N. Whitehead's notion of "prehensive unity" binding the object with its moment in time; finally, with Bergson's Long-View time sense. At still other times, Tate's inspirations seem—for a Southern Agrarian—somewhat impious: here I mean his evident borrowing, for his "imperative of reference," of the construction of the Medievalist imagination by the late Brahmins such Charles Eliot Norton, Charles Herbert Moore, and—most importantly—Henry Adams (his great indebtedness to T. S. Eliot is less surprising though).

Kuhn's unforced familiarity with the whole wide terrain of the Fugitive's intellectual history is daunting. Every ingredient of Tate's mind is traced, relentlessly, or with affection, to its multiple sources; the critic outlines each sentiment's history and the dynamics of its evolution in the poet's lifetime. His examples are fresh; he draws them from apparently remote quarters with astonishing ease and often with great taste. For instance, he evokes the capacities of the mind and the

power of perception of the Confederate general Stonewall Jackson (1824–1863) to explain the depth and comprehensiveness of Frank Kermode's "Romantic image" (23). The suggestion is memorable: envisioning the dynamics of the First Battle of Bull Run is analogous to envisioning a modernist symbol.

As the author shows, Tate, to illustrate the modern world wheezing under rampant dissociation of sensibility, began to rely on Edgar Allan Poe's "neo-Gothic," for it was Poe who was the first to be "principally concerned with the fantastic forms of materiality," "matterless matter," generated by the mind dislocated after the ages of the domination of Cartesian pure intellect (191). If Poe's aesthetics represented, in Tate's view, largely far-gone symptoms of the present malady, Tate liked to think he had a clear vision of the roots of that malady. Poe came to embody, frightfully, the dark tradition of "angelic"—overly intellectual and arid—imagination that began with the disowning of the senses by Abelard and then by Descartes; it was only later that Tate began to see Poe not only as symptomatic but also as having, at his best, some sense of the lost Aristotelian-Thomistic mind. Therefore Tate began to draw from Poe's imagery and symbolics.

Kuhn shows that ultimately Tate's work and imagination were predicated on a certain type of linguistic neo-medieval realism, originating from Thomistic realism, as described by Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson, opposing various strains of neo-Abelardian nominalisms which, in Tate's days, assumed new forms in the thought of Charles Morris, John Dewey, and, indirectly, in the criticism of I. A. Richards. In "The Man of Letters in the Modern World" (1952), Tate shows himself to believe—as apparently Richard Weaver (*Ideas Have Consequences*, 1947) and Walker Percy (e.g., *Lost in the Cosmos*, 1983) believed—in language as both "a bridge to an intelligible reality and as a medium of consubstantiality with others" (439). Every word reconnects the individual to the order of things, to the existing classes of things, but also reunites him with the community of others.

Kuhn's interpretations of poems are usually subordinate to the goal of explaining the origins and the structure of Tate's imagination. Given those limited objectives, however, his occasional readings are persuasive and useful. One finds occasional errors, wishing Kuhn had taken more time, or maybe had been given more help, to edit the volume. Also, cutting the book would have helped too—especially in places where it seems a bit repetitive or where it unwinds too much into a Chinese-box structure (as it does in the Poe chapter or in the final section on the post-Tateians). All in all, however, the book is well written—usually deftly and energetically—and for the most part it is lucid. For all the book's complexity and astonishing richness, I didn't find it excessive; it provides nothing less than what is called for by its ambitious objectives.

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Simone Knewitz. *Modernist Authenticities: The Material Body and the Poetics of Amy Lowell and William Carlos Williams*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter Heidelberg, 2014. 249 pages.

In the conclusion of her 2014 monograph, *Modernist Authenticities: The Material Body and the Poetics of Amy Lowell and William Carlos Williams*, Simone Knewitz points out "the intense preoccupation with the body in modern culture" (220) as well as a need for "the recognition of the pivotal role of the body in the modernist period" (215). The former inevitably translates into an increasing number of studies—in both article and book form—devoted to the corporeal itself or to the corporeal dimension of a particular scholarly problem or phenomenon; the latter justifies Knewitz's efforts which culminate in *Modernist Authenticities*, a book inscribing itself in what may arguably be seen as a major academic trend.

However, contrary to what its title suggests, the scope of Knewitz's study is not limited to either Lowell's or Williams's poetic *œuvre*. While focusing primarily on the two poets whose names appear in the subtitle of her monograph, the German scholar occasionally devotes her attention to other representatives of poetic modernism, namely Robert Frost, T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Hilda Doolittle and Jean Toomer. Nor does she take the subject of her monograph literally: Knewitz is interested not so much in actual representations of corporeality, the poetic iconography of the body or bodily imagery *per se* as in the formal and theoretical implications the body has for Lowell's and Williams's work. As the monographer herself observes,

> In the poetry and poetics of Williams and Lowell, the body is called up in two ways. First, both Williams and Lowell locate creativity in the material body, building their creative theories on somatic metaphors. Second, and more significantly, both authors turn to the body as a locus of performance, associating it with material presence. What perhaps connects Lowell and Williams the most is the theatricality of their poetry and the attention they give to surfaces. (220)

If one had to list the key words for Knewitz's study, "materiality," "authenticity," "performance" and "presence" would probably be the right choice.

The subtitle of *Modernist Authenticities* contains the phrase "the material body." Accordingly, the first of the five chapters which make up the monograph is devoted to materiality—rather than corporeality—as Knewitz looks at the poetic use Lowell and Williams, as well as a couple of other modernist poets, make of flower tropes. Taking the nineteenth century as her point of departure, Knewitz opposes modernism to the Romantic and Victorian traditions, showing how American modernists remake and reinterpret time-honored flower tropes, "by asserting the material [rather than transcendent] dimension of flowers and by

simultaneously emphasizing the materiality of the medium of language" (74) as well as underscoring the performative aspect of poetry. The points made by Knewitz in her first chapter set the tone for her overall reflections on modernist poetry as exemplified by Lowell and Williams: a poetry to which materiality, aligned with authenticity, self-referentiality and performativity are central. She also stresses the transition from poetry as representation to poetry as presentation, made by Williams, and shows how the queer dimension of Lowell's *œuvre* manifests itself in her flower poems.

In an effort to explain "why the modernists referred to the body as locus of authenticity as well as anxiety" (78), Knewitz chooses to examine Williams's and Lowell's poetry in terms of the ideas of François Delsarte, promulgated by the expressive culture movement, whose emergence in America coincided with that of modernism. The monograph's second chapter is devoted to the parallels between the movement in question and the formally innovative aspects of modernist poetry. It also reveals a preoccupation which recurs throughout Knewitz's study: that with "the relationship between body and text" (79). Lowell's correspondence with Samuel Silas Curry, a specialist in oratory associated with expressive culture, prompts the scholar to look at the American poet's work in the light of the latter's belief that poetry is to be spoken, not merely read silently, and that its dramatic dimension, inextricably linked with body language, is not to be ignored. Unconcerned with the oral aspect of verse, Williams is nevertheless concerned with the idea of "poetry as self-expression" (102). Knewitz distinguishes between Lowell's "turn[ing] her poems into dramatic performances" (110) and Williams's being "dramas of the mind" (110). The search for (self-)presence and authenticity is important to both poets, as is performativity as a means of attaining—or trying to attain—them, but they are also aware of this search being problematic and ambivalent. Knewitz also points to the theatricality inherent in both Lowell's and Williams's poetry.

Seeing immediacy as integral to Williams's *œuvre*, the monographer uses her third chapter to explore his volume *Kora in Hell*, with particular emphasis on its author's use of literary improvisation, which is, in the German scholar's opinion, Williams's "[largely unsuccessful] attempt to circumvent convention in order to relate somatically to the world, to 'write the body'" (132). Central to the chapter is *Borderline*, Kenneth Macpherson's 1930 experimental film featuring Hilda Doolittle, which Knewitz sets against *Kora in Hell* on the one hand and "Spring Day," an example of Lowell's polyphonic prose, on the other. The fact that *Borderline* is a silent film makes the role the body and body language play in it particularly prominent. An "attempt to create a cinematic language of the body" (120) or, in other words, "to 'write the body' in film," Macpherson's work is interesting in terms of the body imagery it contains, as well as the way it tackles the notions of authenticity and immediacy, inextricably linked with the corporeal. It is

therefore no wonder then that the third chapter discusses the somatic imagery in *Borderline* in detail.

Aware of "the influence of the new recording technologies on modernism" (221), the author of the monograph has film and photography, so to speak, at the back of her mind when discussing the corporeal and material dimensions of Lowell's and Williams's poetics. The fact that Eadweard Muybridge's photo depicting a female body in various stages of motion is reproduced on the cover of the book is more than fitting. In the first chapter, a discussion of poetic flower tropes is paralleled by that of early-twentieth-century photographs of plants. In the third chapter, the new media are represented by Macpherson's film. Both chapters are illustrated with reproductions of photographs and film stills respectively, which, of course, helps the reader visualize the points made in the study. The photographs reproduced in the fourth chapter, which focuses on bodily deviance, are those taken from a late-nineteenth-century work dealing with anatomical and physiological anomalies or what was considered anomalous at the time. The visual, as Knewitz understands, is allied to the bodily, and "the centrality of vision and visuality" (171) she detects in Williams's poetry is applicable to her monograph as well. The visual and the medical come together in the poetry and prose of Williams, the doctor-poet, and, in the monograph's penultimate chapter, the scholar explores voyeurism, which she sees as "self-reflective" (164–166), and the role of the observer as well as the treatment of femininity and the female body in his work, to which "the very power of the male gaze" (151) is important. Knewitz's interest in how Otherness and the Other(s) are represented—or perhaps presented—in modernist American poetry continues into the book's last chapter, devoted exclusively to Amy Lowell's *Pictures of the Floating World*. As in Williams's *œuvre*, the erotic—or, in Lowell's case, homoerotic—aspect is important. Knewitz examines "spectacles of deviance" (191) in Lowell's Orient-inspired poems concerned with "racial and sexual Otherness" (191), which is often treated ambivalently by the American poet, and her queer love poetry, focusing on themes connected with illicit sexuality, such as prostitution, on the one hand and homoerotic symbolism on the other.

Modernist Authenticities is not, of course, free from drawbacks. Its author makes comparatively little use of the considerable body—no pun intended—of theoretical writings concerning corporeality: the names of leading theorists such as Michel Foucault or Judith Butler, whom Knewitz is, by her own admission, "strongly indebted to" (30), appear on the Works Cited list, but the actual references to them are few and far between. Knewitz attempts to make up for this rather general treatment of body theory by referring to it in the monograph's introduction. This attempt, however, strikes the reader as rather hasty, as does the inclusion of the Harlem Renaissance and of references to cultural theory in

the coda. Though the author's decision to apply the conclusions of her research on Lowell and Williams to Jean Toomer and other Afro-American modernists is not unfounded or uninteresting, especially in the light of the book's overall preoccupation with race and Otherness, the coda seems to be an unlikely place to start a discussion of what, despite Knewitz's arguments, is another chapter in the history of American modernist poetry. On the other hand, the fact that *Modernist Authenticities* is a coherently structured book, whose author is careful to make connections between her arguments as well as between the different chapters and subchapters of her study, may, paradoxically, be problematic; simply put, Knewitz's conclusions are already included in the body—again no pun intended—of the monograph, which enables—but also, in a way, forces—her to make the coda open-ended, suggestive of ideas for further research rather than a recapitulation of the research of which the book is the fruit. It must also remembered that, inevitably, there is always something left unsaid in a monograph dealing with a poet—or poets—or *any* monograph for that matter; therefore, it is sometimes better to focus on the subject proper rather than begin exploring a new author: a case in point is Knewitz's discussion of Lowell's polyphonic prose, which is at times slightly undeveloped and inconclusive. There are also a few details I would disagree with: for example, I would challenge the view that Pound's best-known Imagist, haiku-like poem makes use of conventional metaphor, which—if I understand her correctly—is what the monographer seems to suggest. On a purely linguistic level, the monograph leaves little to be desired, though it would be worth eliminating the occasional lexical and grammatical mistakes (eg, *performance art* versus *the performing arts*, *to stand in for* versus *to stand for*) in subsequent editions. On a practical level, an index of names and perhaps titles would be desirable.

Far from being a monograph focusing on the body itself, Simone Knewitz's study also considers the notions of gender, sexuality and race, and takes into account both poetic content and form. Nor are Knewitz's interests limited to poetry or even literature, as considerable attention is given to the visual arts: film and photography. The main arguments of this elegantly written book are for the most part clear and easy to follow, but not simplistic. The points made by Knewitz are supported by numerous instances of close reading, and her poem analyses are both extensive and convincing. Additionally, the necessary background is always traced, though the reader is not overburdened with irrelevant information. While the fact that Knewitz refers to American modernist poets other than Lowell and Williams may be seen as slightly distracting, it has the advantage of creating a modernist continuum and thus of contextualizing the two poets central to the study. In this way, the monographer avoids scholarly solipsism; moreover, she demonstrates that her general knowledge of American modernist poetry is solid. On balance, *Modernist Authenticities* is a well-written, well-documented and infor-

mative book which gives us several interesting insights into American modernist poetry.

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Conseula Francis. *The Critical Reception of James Baldwin, 1963–2010*. Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2014. 174 pages.

In her most recent book, Conseula Francis examines five decades of scholarship devoted to the person and creative output of James Baldwin. She analyzes the trajectory of Baldwin's critical reception and rigorously positions the debates revolving his writings in their historical contexts. Due to the complexity of Baldwin's *oeuvre*—which spans fiction, essays, plays, poetry and a photo-book, and engages with the most pivotal issues in postwar American culture—Francis's project becomes a microhistory of trends in literary theory and criticism since the 1960s, scrupulously registering the emergence of black, gender, and queer studies.

The first part of the study divides the corpus of selected scholarship into three periods. The first decade, 1963–1973, witnessed the publication of the most canonical of Baldwin's texts as well as the peak of his public presence and political activism. Francis points out how the critical debates, at the time closely linked to the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power discourse, negotiate between the politics of reconciliation offered in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and the more radical politics of *The Fire Next Time*. Many critics analyze the problematic Wright-Baldwin relationship and the issue of racial representation and authenticity. The most radical voices of the time find Baldwin's approach too subtle and ambivalent, which is most poignantly illustrated in the infamous homophobic attack launched by Eldridge Cleaver in *Soul on Ice*. The second chapter scrutinizes the years 1974–1987 and a dramatic reversal of the previous trends and interests. Baldwin's public popularity wanes, which is reflected in the diminishing number of texts devoted to his writing. Yet in contrast to the 1960s, when the relationship between personal, public, and literary realms was at the center, subsequent critics tend to give formalist and poststructuralist readings of his texts, which position *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, *Another Country* and *Giovanni's Rooms* in the canon of American literature as texts of universal significance. The years following Baldwin's death in 1988 offer a significant rereading of his writings, which stems from the growing dominance of gender theory and cultural criticism, whose attention to intersectional identities and interdisciplinary research make Baldwin a

particularly appealing writer. The true game-changer, however, is the emergence of queer studies, which put his works in the spotlight and substitute *Go Tell It on the Mountain* with *Giovanni's Room* as the Baldwin classic. Throughout her examination of critical history, Francis refers to contemporary public debates. Such a historicized juxtaposition shows how profoundly our academic readings are shaped by contemporary trends and available tools, which change the points of emphasis in the analyzed texts and reshape the canon.

In the second part of the book, Francis offers two analyses that meaningfully supplement the survey of in the first part. She analyzes here popular reviews of Baldwin's texts and shows how they have shaped the scholarly debate. Another chapter discusses critical studies of his most often anthologized short-story—"Sonny's Blues." Such zooming in on one text interestingly complements the general overview in the first part, but more importantly Francis pinpoints the reasons for the text's immense popularity. "Sonny's Blues," all critics seem to agree, is a well-crafted, self-contained text. Its craftsmanship invites close readings, whereas its ambiguity enables an array of, often conflicting, interpretations. It is, however, its avoidance of radical politics and explicit sexuality that are decisive and make it neatly fit into the canon.

The last chapter introduces the most recent voices in the burgeoning field of Baldwin scholarship. At the onset of the twenty-first century, he continues to be at the center of black and ethnic studies, gender and queer studies, as well as cultural and American studies. Francis claims that so many critics find him invaluable since both in his fiction and non-fiction, he remains "a model of critical engagement with the world around us" (139). In turn, due to the complexity of Baldwin studies and Francis's conscientious analysis, scholars of many academic disciplines will find *The Critical Reception of James Baldwin 1963–2010* useful and engaging.

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Jean-Jacques Malo, ed. *The Last Time I Dreamed About the War: Essays on the Life and Writings of W.D. Ehrhart*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014. 284 pages.

> This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War.

> Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.
> My subject is War, and the pity of War.
> The Poetry is in the pity.
> Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. *All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful.* (Owen 31; emphasis added)

Although these words were penned in 1918 by Wilfred Owen (1893–1918), one of the most renowned soldier poets of the Western Front, they could also preface any volume of poems by William Daniel Ehrhart who devoted his post-soldier life to educating Americans about the truth of the Vietnam War. He went to Vietnam, "imagining that he might become the Wilfred Owen of the Great War" (*Last Time* 142), but the years of service in the Marines, including thirteen months in Vietnam, "the madness of it all," led him to find his own voice, his own words which, once articulated, have earned him the status of the Dean of Vietnam War poetry, and one of its Poets Laureate.

Author of "some of the finest poetry to emerge from the Vietnam War" (Hillstrom and Collier Hillstrom 269), so far he has written nine books (among them *A Generation of Peace*, 1975; *To Those Who have Gone Home Tired*, 1984; *Just For Laughs,* 1990; *The Outer Banks…*, 1984; *Beautiful Wreckage,* 1999*; From the Bark of the Daphne Tree*, 2013) and ten chapbooks of poetry (published between 1975–2013), and compiled, edited and co-edited several highly regarded anthologies of veteran verse (*Demilitarized Zones,* 1976*; Unaccustomed Mercy,*1989*; Carrying the Darkness,* 1989), also on the Korean War (*Retrieving Bones,*1999). The prose books he has produced over the years contain a trilogy of polemical, critically acclaimed memoirs (*Vietnam–Perkasie*, 1983; *Marking Time*, 1986; and *Busted*, 1995), and many essays collected in *In the Shadow of Vietnam* (1991), *The Madness of It All* (2002), and *Dead on the High Hill* from 2012. To this impressive list Donald Anderson adds *Ordinary Lives* (1999), a searingly honest (Wilson) account of the experiences of the volunteers from Platoon 1005 and the paths their lives have taken since Parris Island and Vietnam (Isaacs).

Similar to other veterans of the Vietnam War, the most notable being Jusef Kommunyakaa, John Balaban, Jan Barry, Bruce Weigl etc., Ehrhart's themes address such issues as

> the horrors of war, the deaths of innocent civilians, the tragic ending of youthful lives, and the general sundering of moral and ethical values. Reflecting the consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s, however, [many poems] mirror the feelings of all participants as America's longest war began to seem more and more unwinnable: the sense of loss of individuality, the feeling of guilt at having

> participated, the impossibility of anyone's understanding the totality of the experience, the realization of having been betrayed by higher authority, and most often, the anger and bitterness at feeling like… not a cog in a mighty machine but merely 'a slab of meat on the table.' (Pratt)

No wonder Ehrhart took it upon himself to assume the position of a contemporary witness and unlie Vietnam "the single most important experience of [his soldier poet's] life" (Pratt)—the core of darkness he still carries within, yet one which inspired many of his best poems. In *Worlds of Hurt* Kali Tal states that "education became one of Ehrhart's passions, a duty to a younger generation. 'If our children,' [she quotes him,] 'are to help us build the kind of world they deserve, they must know what kind of world they live in, and how we got where we are. All of us must be teachers. It is not an option. It is an obligation'" (Tal).

Comparing the poet's task to that of the "farmer of dreams" from his poem ("Farmer"), Ehrhart allegorizes his efforts as an anti-war activist: he, too, "labors to relieve" and knows "what it means to be patient." Hence, having sown his field of words, he goes out to see "what is growing and what remains to be done" (*Last Time* 48). Like students in Mr. Ehrhart's class ("The Teacher"), readers learn how important they are for the poet's success and what feedback they can expect: "I need your hands to steady me," he writes, "I need your hearts to give me courage / I need you to walk with me / Until I find a voice / That speaks the language that you speak" (198). A poet whose profession is peace (156), he is always "on patrol" ("A Relative Thing"), a soldier "harnessed with our terrible knowledge," and haunted by questions with which he has to live. Questions which are also applicable today in the context of the increased militarism that defines the world, American culture and character. Questions whose study reveals a grim prophecy of an impending catastrophe, of another war which he sees "coming / one more time" ("A Warning to My Students").

*

Coming out at a time when people still really need to relearn the lessons taught by anti-war poets, *The Last Time I Dreamed About the War* (2014), edited by J. J. Malo, is a significant book of essays devoted to one of the major contributors to American literature of the Vietnam War. Scholarly and comprehensive in scope, they are, at the same time, accessible elucidations which altogether pay tribute to W.D. Ehrhart, his life, his peace-making efforts and, above all, his writings. The volume takes its title from Ehrhart's poem which retells the story of his being healed by a woman who had the courage to stay with him through the worst.

> She wanted to run, she told me later,
> but she didn't. She married me instead.
> Don't ask me why. I only know
> you never know what's going to save you
> and I've never dreamed again about the war. (*Last Time* 266)

Ten years after Vietnam, he was "saved" because somebody gave him the chance to open up and unbottle long-suppressed nightmares. He could thus declare an end to the war and its horrors, grateful for the patience and kind understanding, which he can but wish and hope for in his readers.

A long overdue retrospect, *The Last Time I Dreamed About the War* contains an array of original and engaging essays written by twenty authors who, characterized by different degrees of involvement with Ehrhart, diverse backgrounds, nationalities, attitudes to/ involvement in the Vietnam experience, as well as professional and literary interests, all combine to offer a varied, pluralist and truly international (USA, Japan, India, France, England, Austria, the Netherlands) perspective on W.D. Ehrhart. Neatly organized, the volume falls into four thematic sections, each of which of elaborates on one specific aspect of the contributors' assessment of Ehrhart: his prose writings (I), his poetry (II), his influence on other writers (III) and his presence in the classroom (IV).

Part I concentrates on Ehrhart as the author of essays and memoirs. The discussion of their merits naturally corresponds with an analysis of the writer's goals, as well as the impact of his intellectual honesty on Ehrhart's status as a writer, still functioning only "outside the widely accepted discursive frames." Whereas Donald Anderson ("Darkness Carried: W.D. Ehrhart's Memoirs and Essays") offers a fresh and insightful reading of Ehrhart's memoir trilogy, and Subarno Chattarji ("The Chameleon War: *Passing Time* and the Remembrance of the Vietnam War") narrows down his focus on memoirs to *Passing Time*, David A. Willson ("W.D. Ehrhart, Essayist: Musings of a Librarian and Friend") scrutinizes Ehrhart's trilogy of essays (1991–2012). Willson's "multiple perspective combin[ing] the experience and expertise of reference librarian, Vietnam veteran and bibliographer" (3) shows itself, among others, through his meticulous study of book covers, photographs, illustrations, acknowledgements as well as indexes.

Praising Ehrhart as a diligent scholar and researcher, the essayists themselves support their views with the opinion of such leading critics of the Vietnam canon as P. Beidler, V. Gotera, D. Ringnalda, K. Tal or J.C. Pratt. Extensive quotations from Ehrhart's essays and memoirs enable the reader to appreciate his experiential and intellectual honesty, and they shed light on the variety of important issues he tackles: the chameleon-like / transformational potential of the war, the

victimization of the veterans, the complex interplay between history and memory, nostalgia and patriotism. They also try to fathom why Ehrhart's superb non-fiction has found neither the larger audience nor the critical response it so clearly deserves (18).

Part II embraces a bulk of eight essays which, one way or another, enhance various aspects of Ehrhart's poetic achievement. Here, too, the contributors concern themselves with the evolution from patriot to peacenik, examining the artistic aspects of his war poetry and its moral responsibility, and the memorialization of the war. His early works, dealt with by Ammiel Alcalay ("Relieving the National Debt: W.D. Ehrhart and the Wages of Memory), reveal some interpretational avenues to be further explored by other contributors. They include a price of memory, the role of the imagination in the perception of anti-war poetry, and its therapeutic function which, allowing the artist to perfect his art of resistance, at the same time aims to "reopen lines of recognition to oneself, and then to form the basis of resistance rooted in the integrity of one's experience" (LD 56). Adam Gilbert ("'We are the ones you sent': Moral Responsibility and War in the Poetry of W.D. Ehrhart") concerns himself with the theme of moral responsibilities in Ehrhart's poetry, not infrequently depicting soldiers involved in the many conflict zones the world over (Cambodia, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Granada, El Salvador, Kuwait, Pakistan etc.). Especially stressed is the motif of America's guilt and its evasion of complicity and, resulting from Ehrhart's awareness of this, his own refusal to soothe the conscience, perpetrate indifference, or silence an injustice. Hence, many of his works feature an anti-war propagandist who either bears witness to the horrors of war, or denounces the mechanisms of deception and manipulation. But then, Erhart is true to his goal: "my poetry", he writes, "is an ongoing attempt to atone for the unethical, for my loss of a moral compass when I was a young man" (71).

Setting the selected works of J. Kommunyakaa and D. Anderson against Ehrhart's "The Wall" and "The Invasion of Grenada," Diderik Oostdijk ("W.D. Ehrhart at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial") compares the treatment of monuments in the poetry of Vietnam veterans, and reminds us that they are, in fact, merely "empty gestures" and "awful clichés," and that the granite colossi still exude "the smell of rotten dreams, covering unpleasant truths" (76).

Nicolle Gollner ("From Patriot to Poet to Peacenik") charts Ehrhart's evolution from patriot to peacenik, whose work, making Vietnam poetry a "fully fledged and accredited literary genre," legitimized the soldier-survivor's right to openly speak of his feelings. Ehrhart is perceived as a representative voice of "the tragic generation," people who, like the combatants of the Great War

came home, home to a lie,
home to many deceits,

> home to old lies and new infamy;
> usury age-old and age-thick
> and liars in public places? (Pound 346)

One of those who "walked eye-deep in hell / believing in old men's lies, / then unbelieving," he feels an uncompromising urge to tell the truth, and to encourage people to stay watchful and alert (93). Gollner points to Ehrhart's clever deployment of propagandist poetics (the use of the first person speaker and his authentic, the first-hand experience, the questioning of official truths, the solid historical and psychological contextualization, and the cathartic function of poetry) and draws many parallels between the themes in his poetry and the works by the soldier poets of WWI (martyrdom in the trenches versus Christ's crucifixion, the retelling and re-experiencing of the trauma, anti-war protests, the criticism of civilians etc.).

In order to explain the reasons for Ehrhart's staying "outside the traditional heroic canon," Dale Ritterbusch ("Poetry and the Art of Resistance: the Literature of W. D. Ehrhart"), portrays W.D. Ehrhart's struggle to remain an independent voice, not softened by collected readers/editors' demands and their political correctness. He emphasizes Ehrhart's goals: to serve as provocateur and fight against a history "filled with arrogance, half-truths, obfuscations, falsehoods, deceptions and lies" (102–103). Finally, he draws attention to the unquestionable didacticism of Ehrhart's poems, which, compared to "didactic sermons", invariably point to the interconnectedness (international/universal nature) of the problems and contexts he considers.

A fresh angle of approaching war poetry via visual interpretation appears in Yoko Shirai's ("W.D. Ehrhart and Chimei Hamada: War Memories of a Poet and of a Print Artist") discussion of Ehrhart's poems which she reads through Hamada Chimei's haunting art inspired by his experience of war in China. The enclosed illustrations, a war prisoner captured in the process of taking his own life ("Elegy for a New Conscript"), and the huge, terrified eyes of children/civilians watching the war ("Unforgettable Faces"), bring forth those aspects Ehrhart the Vietnam veteran also addresses, for instance in such works as "Full moon" or "Guerilla War." Veterans, Schirai reminds us, are those who have to live with the memory that they "were inextricable accomplices / in this travesty of dreams [and that they] are not alone" (118).

One of the longer essays in the collection, N. Bradley Christie's ("The Poetry of W.D. Ehrhart: A Bibliographic Essay") looks at Ehrhart's publishing and editorial careers through his books, thus compiling the "first comprehensive, descriptive bibliography of his output" (2). In this "role of honour," each volume is mentioned, with Christie offering a detailed commentary of its representative texts, sometimes highlighted by a discussion of the changes introduced, and/ or his own opinion of them. The scrutiny of over four decades (1972–2013) of Ehrhart's writing, including his books of poetry and prose, his chapbooks (even the

samizdat ones), and anthologies (edited and co-edited) demonstrates how indeed strong his position is as a man of letters.

Part Two, somewhat disappointingly, closes with J. J. Malo's interview with Ehrhart which, in comparison with the other essays, addresses rather trivial but interesting questions. For instance, one can learn that Ehrhart always composes in longhand and that his poems hardly ever rhyme and that he dislikes the notion of therapeutic or pacifist poetry. Other aspects of the interview include his handling of writer's blocks or the influence of nature/culture upon his work. Legitimate as they are in an essay entitled "The Art of Writing Poetry," the in-depth nature of the study made me expect a much more scholarly-oriented enquiry, a more profound questioning, directed, for instance, toward Ehrhart's literary likes and dislikes, his favorite (war) poem(s), his views on other big names of Vietnam Literature, etc.

One other flaw in the collection seems to be the absence of a study dealing specifically with Ehrhart as a lyric poet, with a focus on the bulk of his work that *does not* deal with the war but with the poems about his live engagement with the world and nature, about his family and friends, his city and his journeys. Nevertheless, apart from these imperfections, Parts I and II make for very rewarding reading and are, in my opinion, the greatest asset of the collection.

The two remaining sections demonstrate Ehrhart as an influential writer, yet whereas in Part III his impact manifests itself through his relationships with such writers /editors/ fellow veterans as Jan Barry ("Ehrhart Effect"), Edward F. Palm ("The Importance of Being Earnest With One's Public and Oneself / A Veteran's Eye View of W.D. Ehrhart's Vietnam Poetry and Prose"), Robert C. Doyle ("Authentic voices.: Echoes of Bill Ehrhart and Me") and Gary Metras ("W.D.Ehrhart and Adastra Press: A Publisher's Perspective"), Part IV—through the essays of Martin Novelli ("Bill Ehrhart as Educatior"), Joseph Cox ("W.D. Ehrhart: Transformational Teacher"), Matthew K. Irwin, Charles L. Yeats ("'I have learned by now where such thoughts lead': W.D. Ehrhart's Poetry and Rethinking How We Study and Teach History") W.D. Ehrhart: Teacher-Poet") and Clint Van Winkle ("Making the Wreckage Beautiful")—testifies to Ehrhart's charisma as an educator.

Many of these contributions rely on their authors' recollections of contacts with Ehrhart and they infrequently return to, and thus illuminate, the issues already deemed important by the other essayists: Ehrhart as a vital, though hugely underrated, representative of the literature of trauma, his relentless push to publish veritable literary works probing every aspect of the war in zones of conflict other than Vietnam (156), or his superb instinct as an editor. Even more significantly, one learns that his authentic retelling of the experience, which provides a paradigm of Vietnam experience from enthusiasm to disillusionment, makes his works extremely useful in many programs helping spur participants to tackle the war demons (165). Last but not least, Ehrhart's indefatigable determination to educate people is brought

forth. Nevertheless, characterized in his many capacities as a lecturer and conference speaker, a participant of debates and poetry reading sessions, he is most frequently praised for his "electrifying presence in the classroom" (Yeats, Irwin), invaluable in stimulating students' interest and motivation to learn and remember. Thanks to this presence the essayists, many of whom are themselves teachers (Novelli, Cox, Doyle) in universities or high schools, realized the need for changes in the methodology of teaching history, emphasizing now the importance of first hand contact with witnesses, and of poetry as a legitimate source of knowledge.

The volume closes with a selection of Ehrhart's poems which, chosen by the essayists as especially representative of the issues discussed, allow the readers to have their own **tête-à-tête** with the master, and see for themselves to what extent his profession is peace and how hounded he is by history. The texts make for compelling reading. We can admire Ehrhart's renewed sense of moral clarity (Yeats) and his language and image expertise, yet it is his gift of human kindness and empathy that 'writes' his best poetry, for instance, "The Lotus Cutters of Hô Tây," about people who do not think of danger but "[g]ather morning" into their small boats. "Who would come… to bomb them? what have they done but keep the sun from falling?" (261).

Equipped with an appendix of Ehrhart's military history, a bibliography of his works and a list of critical elucidations about him, not to mention an index, designed to help the reader find information quickly and easily, Malo's collection of essays seems to be an excellent introduction for students and scholars alike who would like to go deeper into the subject of Vietnam War literature. All in all, *The Last Time I Dreamed About the War* extends and develops the key themes of his works and more than confirms his reputation as a major Vietnam War poet. The book deserves praise for its structural cohesion and dedication to the cause and, most importantly, for its well-argued and well-researched points. Let us hope that this holistic approach, capable of attracting the attention of a wide range of readers, can finally let Ehrhart win their hearts and minds.

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Alan Gibbs. *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014. 296 pages.

Alan Gibb's discussion of recent American trauma narratives contests the widespread notions of trauma and its specific model of PTSD, as represented in the trauma theory initiated by Cathy Caruth, as well as its aesthetic encodings in diverse literary works published in the USA in the early twenty-first century. The author develops the already existing critique of PTSD to study and challenge the well-established and sometimes uncritically replicated ideas about trauma, showing, through analysis of carefully selected trauma texts, how limiting the rigid formula of traumatic experience has become, and how the best literary representations of trauma have broadened and problematized the notion itself and the aesthetic means at the writer's disposal.

In his book, Gibbs first of all takes to task several ideas about the mechanism of traumatic experience included in the highly influential interpretation of Freud in the work of Cathy Caruth, notably her *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* of 1995, and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* of 1996. The first of Freud's notions underscored by Caruth which he finds problematic is the idea of *Nachtraglichkeit* [belatedness], described by Freud as the more or less deliberate and conscious obliteration of the traumatic event from memory, which Caruth in her dissociative model interprets as involuntary and unconscious. As it has been recently argued, the traumatic event may not so much be forgotten or repressed,

as rather left unrecorded in memory. Moreover, the disruption of memory in the experience of trauma may in fact be common to all other types of memory and not unique to trauma only, thus making the notion of belatedness irrelevant in trauma studies.

However, the major disagreement with Caruth foregrounded by Gibbs in his introduction concerns the fact that trauma functions in much more complex ways than Caruth's dissociative model allows. After critics such as Ann E. Kaplan and Susannah Radstone, Gibbs underlines the constant presence of trauma in the patient's memory where it is reworked and affected by fantasies: "it is not an event, which is by its nature 'toxic' to the mind, but what the mind later does to memory" (Radstone, "Trauma Theory," 17; Gibbs, 13). As Gibbs argues, traumatic memory inflects the mind and remains active, sometimes leading to fantasy identifications with the perpetrator.

Another significant concept concerning traumatized memory that Gibbs questions is the literal quality of recollection in the form of flashbacks and nightmares that trauma sufferers experience. Again, the author calls the idea simplistic and unfounded, yet remarkable for its far-going consequences in cultural and literary criticism. The allegedly literal character of traumatic memory has led some critics and artists to the conviction that trauma is unrepresentable in art and literature, or, if at all, only through radical narrative fragmentation and experimentation. Equally controversial for Gibbs, among others, remains a punctual model of trauma in which the traumatic event is described as occurring suddenly and having a devastating and overwhelming impact on the sufferer's mind. To counter this concept Gibbs points to representations of trauma in postcolonial narratives in which trauma has as a rule a protracted, insidious character.

Gibbs's two significant contributions to PTSD and trauma theory are his polemical problematizations of the perpetrator trauma and the idea of so-called collective trauma. Both of these began to be studied more closely after 9/11, though PTSD as a phenomenon originated as early as the Vietnam experience. Gibbs points out to the difficulty with perceiving and describing perpetrator trauma due to the fact that cultural trauma studies have their roots not only in Freud but also in Holocaust studies where objections to examining the trauma of the perpetrator might have a strong ethical foundation. On the other hand, he denounces the notion of collective trauma as a dangerous ideological construct leading to justifications of highly dubious political and military decisions and literal persecutions of minorities.

One of Gibbs's preoccupations in his book is offering an overview of American trauma narratives belonging to what he calls the trauma genre, a subcategory of which being defined as trauma metafiction, characterized by a parodic treatment of trauma and based on the already well-established postmodern metafictional devices.

In spite of the daring and novelty of Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, representative of successful postmodern experimentation within the trauma genre, Gibbs claims that in some authors similar innovations in fact concealed their indebtedness to the well-established body of existing trauma literature (33), only contributing to the production of rigid and formulaic representations of trauma within the further limited, blindly emulated and highly conventionalized trauma genre. Fortunately, the author also comes up with a study of alternative trauma writings, among which he includes more realistic representations of trauma, and claiming that it is precisely this convention, labeled here as neo-realism or neo-naturalism, that ensures a less formulaic and less pseudo-experimental mode of trauma narrative.

In chapter one, Gibbs provides an analysis of twentieth-century trauma fiction on the example of selected writings by J.D. Salinger, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, E.L. Doctorow, Tim O'Brien, and Toni Morrison. He concentrates on three generations of writers dealing with historical and contemporary trauma experience, first using experimental form to create an effect of shock and at the same time convey political critique, then trying to reinvigorate the already blunted impact of postmodern avantgarde experimentation through a recourse to more conventionally realistic techniques. What is especially important in Gibbs's study, here and further on, is his steadfast attention paid to the powerful and negative influence of misdirected literary criticism on the quality of the trauma genre: he quotes the example of the blunting effect of trauma representations in historiographic metafiction, due to its being named and defined by Linda Hutcheon, by this turning them into a "more readily imitable typology." Criticism dealing with trauma narratives in the late twentieth century greatly contributed to the glib acceptance of the formulaic concepts suggested by PTSD and Carruthian theoretical models, turning them into a "monolithic explanatory code" through which both writers and critics embraced the desired characteristics of paradigmatic narratives.

The comprehensive analysis of Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) in chapter two goes counter the usual reading of the novel as a *tour de force* of postmodern experimentation, amounting to a vision of reality as text. Gibbs, however, observes in the texture of Danielewski's work the activity of what he calls the inscribed narrator and his inscribed narration, which he reads as a trauma narrative whose completion has failed. The story of Johnny Truant's internal wound originating in his childhood, and the labyrinthine construction of the novel only confirm the suitability of postmodern metafiction for narrating trauma, instead of simply forming a pseudo-experimental act to support the principles of a theory. What becomes a specially subtle tool for highlighting the novel's successful experimentation is a latently parodic treatment of some of Johnny's experience, which problematizes a fixed formula of trauma in contemporary culture. In fact, Johnny as an unreliable narrator-writer-editor probes into "the very project of

postmodernism—its challenge to the foundations of Enlightenment thought and its dismantling of ontological certainty… and its consequences are found to be fundamentally traumatic" (114).

Chapter three of the book, devoted to responses to 9/11 and analyzing in detail Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), examines the effectiveness of selected postmodern techniques in rendering the experience of trauma. While Foer is accused of relying on the worn-out devices of the postmodern avantgarde, Spiegelman in his comic strip form manages to convince the reader of the reality of the unbearable, though the trauma he depicts concerns not so much the attack on the Towers as rather its social and political effects. A special issue in this context becomes the notion of collective trauma which is questioned by Spiegelmann, and directly rejected by Gibbs as an ideological fraud. The critically political and public preoccupations in Spiegelman's comic strip representation of 9/11 stand in stark contrast to Foer's traditional by now focus on the private inner torment of the traumatized subject, which effectively eliminates the historicized contextualization of the cause of the trauma and diverts the reader's attention from its dire political consequences. It is Spiegelman within his novel formal frames who exposes a recourse to racist stereotypes, retreat into nationalistic obsessions, and "the widespread xenophobic paranoia" observable in New York after the attack, moving from the author's personal case of Holocaust postmemory to the terrifying effects of the traumatic experience at hand.

In the following passages of Gibbs's argumentation, we are invited to observe how the Gulf War memoirs tend to deny the American armed forces agency, aggression and responsibility for violence, and redirect them onto the other. Gibbs's discussion covers a representative number of the Gulf War narratives in which American soldiers are described as suffering from "a complex matrix of trauma" caused by their status of both victims and perpetrators: Anthony Swofford's *Jarhead*, Joel Turnipseed's *Baghdad Express* (both from 2003), Evan Wright's *Generation Kill* (2004), Nathaniel Fick's *One Bullet Away* (2005), Kayla Williams's *Love My Rifle More Than You* (2006) and a selection of short works collected in the anthology *Powder: Writing by Women in the Ranks* (2008). Experiences of seeing decomposing or burning corpses, murder or suicide, facing incidents of death caused by a booby trap in the post-war clean-up, or the panic of suddenly coming under enemy or friendly fire have been rendered in these narratives through reportage-like depictions of post-traumatic behavior, mostly reconfirming the generic conventions of war literature. In the chapter, Gibbs questions Dominick LaCapra's insistence that the readers should invariably feel "empathy with the victim and repulsion toward the perpetrator." (LaCapra 133, Gibbs 167), and by claiming that in combat the soldier becomes both, he concentrates on the

previously introduced concept of perpetrator trauma. This category of traumatic experience subverts both definitions of PTSD and the Caruthian model of trauma as caused by a single, shattering event, suggesting instead that it rather consists in a gradual and insidious process and accretion of guilt.

A distinctive characteristic of perpetrator trauma is memory torn between two conflicting urges toward silence and confession, the degree of the sense of guilt and the urge to confess depending on the consensus about the war in the home country. The stylistic means to express both guilt and victimhood include the use of the continuous present, and of second-person address, as well as fragmentation and a heightened awareness of detail. The traditional, observable as early as in modernist texts, soldiers' experience of anger at being cheated by institutions and authorities, frustration, alienation, and the sense of all-pervasive boredom seem to contest the established, event-based model of trauma in these narratives.

Another characteristic aspect of the Gulf War memoirs is the tendency, especially among members of ethnic minorities serving in the American army, to look for affinity with the invaded population, expressed in the language implying growing empathy toward victims of violence, as well as sensitivity to a complex position of women fighting in the U.S. forces. This seems inseparable from the institutionally imposed concept of the individual human body as a mechanized and efficient cog in the war machine, totally devoid of feelings dismissed as feminine, which eventually leads to the process of alienation and reification as described in Marxist theories, notably that of Frederic Jameson. Transforming army men into obedient robots involves profound traumatizing effect on the body and mind: the realization of one's inability to act individually, the ensuing disillusionment and frustration result in the growing awareness of a political unconscious which for some in the military may produce deep perpetrator trauma. An interesting addition in this context is a by-effect observable in the remote operators in Nevada, controlling the Predator drone aircraft performing missions that involved killing enemy on other continents. The use of remote military robotics made these operators live in two worlds: the "normal" one, and the life in virtual combat, which exposed them to stress and trauma comparable to those experienced by soldiers on the ground.

Special attention in Gibbs's analysis is given to women soldiers' trauma during the war, exemplified by Kayla Williams's memoir which shows women in the military as doubly victimized, as soldiers and as females. Even though her memoir shows a movement from perpetrator to victim similar to that in the narratives by male authors, it also depicts constant sexual discrimination, sexist behavior, harassment and exploitation that women in the US army experience on an almost daily basis, making them fall victim to an "enemy in the ranks." One edge to their often humiliating treatment by male soldiers and officers is using them in interrogations of Iraqi prisoners only because interrogated by a woman

an imprisoned Muslim soldier feels additionally degraded.

The last chapter of Gibbs's book is devoted to American counterfactual history novels, out of which the author selects three for analysis: Paul Auster's *Man in the Dark* (2008), Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (2007), and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004). This type of fiction relies on imagining alternative histories and counterfactual reality, and appears to originate in the yearning to rewind real history in order to escape the consequences of real life experiences of trauma, as well as to show that historical necessities are in fact contingent and non-deterministic. All three novels analyzed reach a positive conclusion which rests on familial attachments within some form of family, which leads some critics to wonder whether this kind of solution makes these works implicated in the conservative ideology of the nuclear family. Gibbs points out that a similar narrative in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* problematizes to some extent the values of the nuclear family, interpreted in McCarthy's novel as a destructive force under the extreme circumstances of a dystopian future.

Ultimately, in Alan Gibbs's book the reader finds an impressive survey of trauma narratives of diverse formal, generic, and stylistic qualities, whose main concern is to study literary representations of traumatic historical events in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as well as of their impact on individuals and communities in the contemporary USA. For those of the readers who enjoy and appreciate engaged, sometimes even emotional critical texts, the nearly missionary zeal of some of Gibbs's argumantation and his sharp rhetoric in confrontation with the oversimplified and uncritically emulated models of trauma in contemporary fiction and criticism will considerably add to the unquestionable value of this informative and insightful study. In this Marxism-inflected take on literary treatments of trauma, examining the socio-cultural context of the traumatic event seems to play a much more vital role than performing the traditional—conceptually and aesthetically—psychoanalysis of the traumatized individual subject.

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Sylvia Mayer and Alexa Weik von Mossner, eds. *The Anticipation of Catstrophe. Environmental Risk in North American Literature and Culture*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014. 227 pages.

We no longer live in the age of *unexpected* consequences of our environmental choices. Taught hard lessons by the Dust Bowl, Chernobyl, Exxon Valdez, Deep Water Horizon, Catrina and Fukushima, to name only a few of the worst man-caused ecological disasters of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, we already know humanity is courting a major global catastrophe or a series of catastrophes by taking far too many environmental risks. We live actually *anticipating* and fearing the consequences of our own exponential growth in numbers, of man-caused climate warming, depletion of the world's biodiversity, chemicization of agribusiness, as well as experiments with nuclear energy and genetically modified organisms. Our growing certainty that taking environmental risks entails facing environmental consequences has been documented by a whole body of cultural texts produced in North America in the last couple of decades, many of which are focally concerned with *anticipation* of the environmental catastrophe. These texts, on the one hand, articulate popular fears about the globe's environmental future and, on the other, contribute to making imaginatively and emotionally meaningful those aspects of the environmental mess humanity got itself into that seem so huge and so abstract as to elude an average person's responsive capabilities—eg. global warming. How those cultural texts bear witness to the North American state of mind in the era of environmental anxiety and how they participate in shaping that state of mind is the subject of *The Anticipation of Catastrophe*, a volume of ten ecocritical explorations of American and Canadian novels, films, poetry, journalism and video games that address the subject of environmental risk.

"Risk society," "environmental risk(s)," "manufactured risks," "risk environments," "riskscapes," "risk narratives/fiction"—the sheer recurrence of these terms in all of the articles gathered in the collection edited by Sylvia Mayer and Alexa Weik von Mossner communicates irresistibly a sense of a new sub-category of ecocriticism establishing itself on the international critical scene—the literary risk criticism. Its practitioners draw heavily on the work of the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, especially on his three seminal studies, *Risk Society: Towards the New Modernity* (1992), *World Risk Society* (1999) and *World at Risk* (2003), and on the breakthrough ecocritical publication by Ursula Heise *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (2008). At the same time, literary risk criticism remains indebted to American founders of the ecocritical school—Lawrence Buell, Scott Slovic and Leonard Scigaj. Following Ursula Heise, contributors to *The Anticipation of Catastrophe* view culture as a repository of "tools for organizing information about risks into intelligible and meaningful stories"

(qtd. 12). These tools include worldviews, narrative patterns, model protagonists, rituals, symbols, images and metaphors, whose role it is to articulate and interpret risks as well as to posit modes for confronting them, all in the effort to maintain the individual's sense of identity and efficacy in the face of dangers. Some literary and cinematic genres, as the contributors to the volume demonstrate, have been employed in this service more often than others, evidently because they are deemed to be especially effective in translating the abstractions of global environmental risks into moral and emotional complexities of individual experience. In addition—predictably—to the genre of the apocalypse, they have included the *bildungsroman*, the picaresque, detective story, the elegy, the domestic narrative, the tragedy. Adapting these genres to spin stories of individuals confronted with various environmental hazards or catastrophies, North American novelists, poets, journalists and filmmakers articulate popular fears and draw scenarios of possible responses to dangers which the risk societies need badly in order to rise out of their environmental stupor and sense of individual and collective helplessness.

The Anticipation of Catastrophe is divided into three sections. The first comprises articles devoted to fiction of global climate change. This most serious of current environmental risks is also the least palpable in day-to-day experience and least digestible to the individual imagination, and so, as Axel Goodbody writes, "everyday life goes on as if [the problem] does not exist" (39). As a "mega-fact," it remains conveniently abstract, or even more conveniently, continues to be denied (despite the near complete agreement of the scientific community about its reality) because ignoring or denying it alleviates in the individual a sense of his or her helplessness and ineffectuality in the face of a challenge so completely outside one person's powers. This widely shared attitude of abdication of a sense of responsibility has not deterred several North American writers from tackling global climate warming in their fiction. As Sylvia Mayer and Axel Goodbody demonstrate it in their articles, Barbara Kingsolver's latest novel *Flight Behavior* is exemplary of "the climate change novel" (again a new ecocritical category, it seems) in which the *buildungsroman* format is employed to give a human face to an abstraction. Kingsolver's main protagonist's growth from an environmentally ignorant Appalachian housewife to a an environmental activist not only translates a global issue into local specificity and social and moral complexities, but also treats with social sensitivity and understanding the confusion of climate change deniers. Goodbody contrasts Kingsolver's hopeful tale of environmental and feminine empowerment with an elegiac German climate change novel, Ilija Trojanow's *Melting Ice* which appeals to the readers' moral conscience by telling a story of a personal tragedy acted out against the background of the melting Arctic. Exploring yet another climate change text, Steven Amsterdam's *Things We Didn't See Coming,* Antonia Mehnert focuses on one of the least understood yet

potentially harrowing consequences of global warming, massive migrations, to report the writer's very counterintuitive reflection on rootlessness as actually an asset in the future world. According to Amsterdam, in the world reshaped by rising water levels, rootlessness is likely to become a survival strategy for people forced to endlessly resettle from one non-place to another. On the formal level, this generically problematic novel codes its conclusions about rootlessness through disruptive narration, lack of closure and unexpected developments, all of which locate it outside the categories of environmental discourse identified by Lawrence Buell in his *Writing for an Endangered World*.

Section II of *The Anticipation of the Catastrophe* zeroes in on the nuclear risk. In the article that may be the most memorable in the entire collection, Holger Kersten provides an overview of American press's depiction of radium in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This is a report of the almost unlimited faith in science, almost total ignorance of the effects of radiation, dismissal of the solitary bell-ringers, and boundless optimism about the myriad applications of radium, not only in industry but even in private households, in cosmetics and refreshment drinks. The shock quality of this study derives, of course, from the hair-rising realization that it offers an indirect commentary on the naiveté or irresponsibility or fraudulence of much contemporary popular scientific reporting which—even in the age of far greater skepticism about both science's morality and the reliability of corporation-sponsored research—continues making enthusiastic claims about genetically engineered crops, wonder-working pesticides and nanotechnology that supposedly will take humanity to the next level of fulfilment, comfort, and safety. More recent cases of nuclear risk representation—in contemporary films and in a contemporary comic novel—are analyzed by Alexa Weik von Mossner and by Anne Thiemann respectively. Weik von Mossner studies *The China Syndrome* and *Silkwood* as "emotional machines" (106) which use plotlines driven by anticipation of nuclear contamination to generate real-feeling experiences of risk and thus translate an abstraction into cognitive and emotional reality. Thiemann in turn looks at a novel by Elizabeth Stuckey-French, *The Revenge of the Radioactive Lady*, to comment on the writer's innovative use of the comic mode in risk fiction.

Of the four contributions to section III ("Environmental Risks Across Media") one stands out as a surprise and thus, indirectly, as a commentary on the almost full focus of environmental criticism on literature, journalism, and film to the neglect of the electronic media (which, likewise, have generated a separate critical universe of their own). Colin Milburn's "Video Games and Environmental Risk" reaches out of that critical separatism and considerable mutual ignorance of the new media and the literature critics. While acknowledging the political, economic and environmental crimes of video game industry and video game playing, Milburn

discusses video games as also contributing to green consciousness rising. This is usually done in the most predictable of ways—by casting the game-player as a virtuous green hero (in evident denial that his playing is an act of environmental consumerism) and pitting him against environmental offenders. But the author also identifies two games (*Tasty Planet* and *Shadow of the Colossus*) which in fact craftily open the player's eyes to his/her own complicity in environmental exploitation, and in the end trap him/her in a most uncomfortable moral choice between losing the game and contributing to the destruction of the earth—on the screen, but by implication also in reality.

Another noteworthy essay in this final section is by Karin Höpker, who interprets Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* as a posthuman novel. It is one, as Höpker argues, not only by virtue of its theme—a story of a single survivor of the apocalypse that wiped out mankind and spared only a bioengineered species of posthumans—but also by virtue of its criticism of the humanistic hubris. Atwood's novel imagines the post-catastrophe reality to expose the precariousness of human self-definition which depends on denigrating all other life forms, and she denounces the exploitative and nonsustainable practices which such a definition makes possible. Moreover—and this is a particularly intriguing argument in the essay—Atwood exposes the arrogance of the contemporary tendency to view risk as calculable and thus controllable, and in consequence to mistake scientific fantasies for sound foundations for decision-making. Although Höpker's style here and there makes following her arguments quite a challenge, the effort is certainly worth it.

With all but three contributors to *The Anticipation of Catastrophe* being German scholars, the book demonstrates the scope and the seriousness of German ecocriticism. Evidently, the ecocritical school, until fairly recently dominated by American and British voices, is quickly acquiring a more global countenance and is being reshaped and refocused by critics from non-Anglophone countries. The success of Ursula Heise, who challenged in her study *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* American ecocriticism's preoccupation with the local to redirect its gaze towards the global, is only one of the manifestations of this highly desirable tendency. Contributors to Mayer's and Weik von Mossner's volume bring into their ecocritical explorations of North American literature and culture their European environmental biases. The very emphasis on *global* risks—climate change, nuclear hazards or large scale human migrations—is evidence of what troubles most the European minds, even when they study American cultural texts which, like Kingsolver's novel or *China Syndrome,* are very place specific. There's as yet little effort to venture into comparative ecocriticism in this volume—only Axel Goodbody brings into discussion a German environmental novel—but the differences which he points out between the German and the American

authors in the level of environmental optimism or in their perception of science, expose as culture-specific certain environmental and ecocritical habits of thought.

If there is anything the reader may find somewhat disappointing about this otherwise very insightful and satisfying publication, it is the absence of ecocritical reflection on several nonliterary and noncinematic cultural forms which in the last few decades have engaged powerfully in representing environmental risks—forms, such as painting, photography, performance, popular music and music videos. Alexis Rockman's paintings and Chris Jordan's collages, Edward Burtynsky's and Louis Helbig's photography, Neil Young's musical-environmental crusades, and Greenpeace posters have been serious and original contributors to contemporary North American risk discourse and yet have so far received less than enough serious ecocritical attention. However, this is only a prompting from a reader whose appetite has been whetted by reading these thoughtful and academically impeccable essays. Ecocriticism, because of its ancestral roots in literature departments, has been preoccupied with literature and film, while the public imagination has already been stolen by other media. These other media call for a disciplined and theoretically informed ecocritical analysis. That the volume ends with an essay on computer games seems to promise that this next step is being contemplated.

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Marek Paryż, ed. *Cormac McCarthy*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2014. 233 pages.

2014 was a good year for Cormac McCarthy readers in Poland: it saw the republication of *No Country for Old Men* in a new translation by Robert Sudół, followed by a release of the first Polish companion to the writer's *oeuvre*. Given the fact that the re-edition of *No Country for Old Men* capped the decade-long endeavors of Wydawnictwo Literackie to publish all of McCarthy's prose works upon his sudden rise to popularity following the Oscar-winning adaptation of the novel, the companion appears to have arrived at the right juncture. The third volume in the series *Mistrzowie Literatury Amerykańskiej*, intended by the Section of American Literature at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw as a Polish counterpart to Anglo-American companions to leading literary voices

of our time, *Cormac McCarthy* joins its predecessors in what has seemingly become a sustained effort into bringing contemporary American writers nearer to the local readership.

Edited by Marek Paryż, the collection comprises ten essays examining McCarthy as both novelist and playwright. The monograph bears in mind that the road of the writer's output to his Polish readers had been long and winding, for many among his Polish translations were published in a somewhat aleatory order dictated by the demands of the local literary market. The editor of the book thus strives to outline McCarthy's production in a chronological fashion. In a brief introduction to the volume, Paryż provides a clearly delineated overview of the main themes, influences, and formal devices which permeate McCarthy's writing, as well as a brief timeline of his literary career. This introduction precedes a string of texts in which leading Polish Americanists address McCarthy's individual works and his two theatrical plays. Apart from Paryż, who beside editing the companion also contributed two of his own essays, the list of authors includes Kacper Bartczak, Julia Fiedorczuk, Zofia Kolbuszewska, Agnieszka Kotwasińska, Adam Lipszyc, Maciej Masłowski, Piotr Paziński, Alicja Piechucka, Anna Warso, and Mikołaj Wiśniewski. Although the contributions constitute independent entities, their chronological arrangement aids the overall cohesion of the book, assisting the Polish reader in tracing the various thematic, stylistic and formal developments in McCarthy's literary works. Informative but far from dry, the essays assembled in the collection make for a great read for academics and laymen alike, as they help navigate through the ever-expanding criticism on McCarthy while often contesting that criticism with perceptive insight of their own.

The compendium opens with Alicja Piechucka's analysis of *The Orchard Keeper*. In line with its title, Piechucka's essay interprets McCarthy's debut as a travesty of Transcendentalist notions of nature and non-conformism inscribed in the context of the Great Depression. Drawing from Emerson and Thoreau, and citing numerous parallels between McCarthy's first novel and Faulkner's seminal novella "The Bear," Piechucka traces the roots of the writer's trademark naturalism to a subversive reading Transcendentalist tropes, and demonstrates the influence of the Southern Gothic on the book's elegiac revisionism, while also exploring *The Orchard Keeper* as an exposition of themes (journey, violence, liminality, disintegration of traditional communities) and devices (irony and the grotesque) which pervade McCarthy's subsequent production. Maciej Masłowski's take on *Outer Dark* inspects its topography as a "radical challenging of the mimetic paradigm" (46; trans. J. J.) resulting in the novel's rather unique departure towards oneiric yet palpable nihilism which Masłowski elucidates through the lens of Jams R. Giles's concept of the fourth space, Heideggerian expositions of Nietzschean dionysianism,

and Derrida's ruminations on the significance of blindness in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which assist him in underscoring the ambivalence embedded in the transgressive allegories McCarthy employs in his second work. Julia Fiedorczuk's essay on *Child of God* picks up on the theme of transgression, investigating the emotive aspects of communal violence, legalism and empathy in view of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Girard's concept of mimetic violence. Adding to the extensive scope of interpretations of violence as present in the novel, Fiedorczuk perceptively scrutinizes Lester Ballard as a grotesque manifestation of liminality, whose freakish qualities trigger his exclusion from the symbolic order of the community and his subsequent reification, which the scapegoat later perpetrates towards his female victims. Fiedorczuk also points out how, in contemplating transgression, McCarthy plants its seeds in the reader, commanding compassion in a string of bizarrely sympathetic accounts of Ballard's perversities. Concluding the presentation of the so-called "Tennessee Period" is Marek Paryż's engaging discussion of *Suttree* as an errand into existentialism. Paryż reflects on the uncharacteristic genealogy of the novel, tracing its origins to the realist novel of the absurd as defined by David Galloway, on the one hand, and to traditional tall-tales on the other. Identifying diversely pronounced traces of the picaro, the saint, and the tragic hero in the eponymous character, Paryż expounds on the darkly pastoral qualities of *Suttree* which, contrary to many other American novels of the absurd, effectively thwart its unequivocal classifications.

Upon outlining McCarthy's early works, the volume discusses his Western novels, beginning with *Blood Meridian*. Widely considered as the writer's most famous work, *Blood Meridian* is examined in two texts contributed by Zofia Kolbuszewska, and Adam Lipszyc, Piotr Paziński and Mikołaj Wśniewski, respectively. Kolbuszewska's deciphering of McCarthy's seminal Western as a neobaroque narrative takes as its point of departure the Deleuzian concepts of major and minor strategies as adopted by William Eggington in his analysis of the ideologies of neobaroque aesthetics, which she uses to investigate the clash between the two main protagonists in the novel, paying particular attention to its oft-neglected epilogue. Kolbuszewska shifts her focus from Judge Holden, traditionally elected by critics as the pivotal character in *Blood Meridian*, towards the Kid, whom she deliberately dubs "the Child," to better expound the fundamental differences between them. This recalibration leads Kolbuszewska to contend that the mutual interdependency of the two strategies endows McCarthy's novel with an aura of grotesque hybridity, which aids the dialogic depiction of the complex history of the Frontier as an arena for the clash between the center and the periphery. On a formal level, this dialogic interplay carries over to the second text dedicated to *Blood Meridian*, in which Lipszyc, Paziński and Wiśniewski engage with Harold Bloom's canonical interpretation of Judge Holden as an impenetrable figure of

Shakespearian proportions, evaluating the shortcomings of Holden as a Gnostic demiurge, the new Ahab, Kurtz in reverse and "noir Whitman" (148; trans. J. J.). The voices of the three scholars overlap in a polyphonic and mutually complementary dialogue, furthering the points made by Kolbuszewska in the preceding essay. Eventually acknowledging Holden's imperfectly epic status, they agree it is strictly conditioned by the Kid's "impermeable materiality" (135; trans. J. J.). Not insignificantly, the conversation soundly demonstrates that *Blood Meridian* owes as much to the allegorical tradition as it does to McCarthy's thorough historical research which successfully prevents the relegation of the novel to an abstract moral treaty or a catalogue of depravities. Instead, the novel forces upon the reader the role of a witness to a retelling of history, despite the overwhelming fatigue entailed in this demystification. Agnieszka Kotwasińska's analysis of the Border Trilogy (*All the Pretty Horses*, *The Crossing*, *Cities of the Plain*) probes beyond the ostensibly conventional elements of the novels which earned McCarthy popular recognition. In keeping with the title of her essay, Kotwasińska examines the destabilization of narrative formulas in the trilogy as manifested through various methods of temporal representation, such as nonlinearity, a sense of belatedness, and cyclical repetition. Inspired by Deleuze's concepts of machinism and deteritorialization, Kotwasińska convincingly suggests how the three novels amount to a profoundly ironic metanarrative which enables McCarthy to chart a rhizomatic map of US-Mexican borderlands that spans beyond hierarchic dichotomies traditionally embedded in the Western genre and its revisions.

The final three essays in the volume cover McCarthy's latest two novels along with his theatrical enterprises, examining the writer's turn towards minimalist narratives. In her lucid musings on *No Country for Old Men*, Anna Warso provides a close reading of what many critics consider as McCarthy's most accessible and least effective novel. Objecting to reductive interpretations which cast it as an unoriginal derivative of Mc'Carthy's early metaphysics of violence, Warso decodes *No Country for Old Men* as a narrative devoted not so much to evil itself as to its perceptions sifted through the figure of an aging everyman thrust into a world in which things fall apart at an unprecedented pace. Adding much original insight to Jay Ellis's reading of the novel, Warso draws parallels between its formal and narrative facets as filtered through the book's central character, while also tracking how it readdresses some of the key themes of McCarthy's writing and indeed pokes fun at the conservative ideologies some attribute it with. In the penultimate chapter of the collection, Kacper Bartczak ventures an ambitious study of *The Road*, tracing the evolution of its minimalist language through *Blood Meridian* and *No Country for Old Men*. Bartczak approaches McCarthy's last novel to date as "an experiment in the field of realism" (188; trans. J. J.), an exercise in representing a rapidly vanishing materiality. Interweaving Auerbach's monumental

study of mimesis with studies on Gnosticism and philosophies of late modernity, Bartczak ponders over the increasingly pluralist potentialities of McCarthy's literary language in its changing renditions of materiality. Bartczak's intricate approach enables him to arrive at truly poetic conclusions as he compares the austerity of the book's post-apocalyptic realism to a state of "ontological emergency" (203; trans. J. J.) which enables McCarthy's protagonists to re-entrust crumbling matter with significance and "reverses the hermeneutic cycle initiated in Blood Meridian" (213; trans. J. J.). Closing the volume is Marek Paryż's presentation of McCarthy's theatrical output. Reflecting on *The Stonemason* and *Sunset Limited*, Paryż considers the extent to which McCarthy manages to translate the existential problems inherent to his fiction onto stage environment. Deriving the two plays from the traditions of great American family tragedy and theatre of the absurd, respectively, Paryż interrogates the consequences of the supplantation of implicative qualities of McCarthy's prose with those of direct dialogue in his dramas, perceiving this substitution as a limitation to the critical reception of the ethical dilemmas ingrained in McCarthy's literary output. Encoded within unambiguous rhetoric, he argues, the themes of nostalgia, loss, and epistemological erosion, among others, drift towards unconcealed moralism and thus compare rather unfavorably with McCarthy's dense fiction.

All in all, the companion makes a valuable contribution to the series. Intelligible and discerning, *Cormac McCarthy* provides the Polish reader with a long-awaited introduction to one of America's seminal writers. True to its mission, the compendium clearly delineates McCarthy's revaluations of genres and traditions. A comprehensive review of McCarthy's literary production, the book offers an extensive and up-to-date survey of critical sources, while also contributing refreshing analyses of its own. Although its respective essays rely on diverse methodologies, the collection nonetheless retains substantial cohesion thanks to numerous thematic overlaps which are easily graspable thanks to the sequential order of presentation of individual novels. As such, the publication successfully mirrors what Paryż terms a "homology of style, symbols, and themes" (15; trans. J. J.) which binds the writer's works together. The ability to reflect this homology in the companion will likely enable the local readership to delve beyond Harold Bloom's famous blurb, readily reprinted on each and every cover of McCarthy's Polish translations. Speaking of which, the University of Warsaw Press deserves praise for the series' consistently minimalist layout, a pleasant rarity in the Polish publishing sector.

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Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis, ed. *Dixie Matters: New Perspectives on Southern Femininities and Masculinities*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013. 224 pages.

The collection of essays under review here provides the reader with a reframed analysis of gender in the South—a place that has been, in past and present, tagged by others rather than being allowed its own articulation of identity. Hence, the field of Southern Studies benefits from new critical and scholarly considerations on how cultural artifacts have provided the South with a voice of individuality. Literary and filmic representations in this volume stress how southern gender unveils its multifaceted and dynamic nature when studied in relation to race, class and sexual identity. Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis has edited a very accomplished book that demonstrates two fundamentals of southern femininities and masculinities: they elude any simplistic definition and they are constantly in flux.

American novelist Marilynne Robinson concluded the following on the concept of family, comparing it to other components of selfhood such as race, gender or culture: "The attempt to impose definition on indeterminacy and degree and exception is about the straightest road to mischief I know of, very deeply worn, very well traveled to this day" (87). In their attention to major authors, along with lesser known ones, from early Reconstruction narratives to recent filmic representations of the history of the South, these nine essays, together with Niewiadomska-Flis's introduction, show that the uniqueness of the South has not been artificially created through manipulative literary or historical texts; it is, on the contrary, palpable; and the reader of this volume will perceive this distinctiveness in what the editor defines as "an array of contrasting voices" (16) that do not supply an ultimate classification of southern gender, but do shed light on the contradictions and complexities of male and female representations in the literature of the American South.

The book approaches the matter of southern gender identity from four different perspectives that function as dividing sections. The first organizing theme investigates the relation between female identity and race in the domestic space. The coexistence of black and white women in the limiting frontiers of the home created routines that formed complex emotional connections. The established relations expanded the physical borders to psychological and cultural boundaries that recreated, within the microcosm of the home and its chores, the gender, race, and class struggles experienced in the South.

The second group of essays deals again with the triangle "gender, race and social space," but this time, in the public arena. While these matters pertain to subjectivity, they become perceivable as they materialize in societal structures and behaviors; thus, the evolution of southern masculinities and femininities ought to be affected by their contemporary context; in the case of the South, this is

a social and cultural context that has undergone multiple alterations throughout history: new laws, urban and rural landscape modifications, civil rights, or labor conditions, just to name a few.

The subsequent section in the volume reveals an insight into the southern persona. The book progresses from the intimate southern spaces of the home, onto the communal elements that shape gender constructions, thus, it organically follows with a study of the performativity of male and female identities; that is, how men and women act out selfhood in society. The southerner projects upon his or her physical surroundings sexual, cultural and social interpretations, and in the interaction with this environment, which is charged with meanings, gender develops. As Judith Butler explained in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*: "As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established" (191). In the convoluted southern past of permanent change, performing gender renders intricate fictional representations of identities in the social stage of the South.

Even though each essay delivers textual illustrations of the respective theorizations of gender, the last section of the book centers specifically on one of the most popular and quoted books and cinematic adaptations about the South: *Gone with the Wind*. Margaret Mitchell's novel (1936) and Victor Fleming's film (1939), even though disregarded as romanticized renderings of southern history, embody, as James C. Cobb explains "a more critical and complex" representation that it may have initially seemed (134). Both have challenged the cavalier and southern belle myths, as well as different New South racial and economic establishments. Consequently, recent concerns with further rewritings of this story prove relevant to engage with a deeper understanding of southern masculinities and femininities.

The volume's purpose of presenting new considerations of southern gender is accomplished to the benefit of the reader due to the diverse range of literary periods and styles considered, which provide an arching overview. Southern historical categorizations have often undermined the cultural affluence of the region but, as these essays demonstrate, originally restrictive designations can also function as sources of research advancement. Toni Morrison claimed in 2013 in an interview with American writer and theatre critic Hilton Als for *The New Yorker* that she accepts labels attached to her work—in her case "black" and "female"—as they can also trigger inspiration: "being a black woman writer is not a shallow place to write from. It doesn't limit my imagination; it expands it" ("Ghosts in the House"). Similarly, southern labels are here reconsidered to reveal new meanings of gender, sexuality, race and class.

The first article following the editor's introduction, Youli Theodosiadou's "The Slave and the Mistress: Opposing Definitions of Womanhood in the Antebellum

South," focuses on how white and black femininities have had to evolve in patriarchal systems of oppression. To illustrate the analysis in the antebellum context, the author centers on two autobiographical texts: Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (Chesnut's diary, covering the years 1861 to 1865, and first published in 1905). Theodosiadou makes clear that the white and black perspectives kept in these personal narratives worked as ways of preserving these women's identities amid experiences of abuse and subjugation—obviously suffered to different degrees, as the texts' authors are a black slave and a white aristocrat, respectively.

Secondly, Susana Mª Jiménez Placer's "Segregation and Civil Rights in the Domestic Sphere: The Mammy Image in *Like One of the Family* and *The Help*" elaborates an analysis of the mammy stereotype in the southern household through these two novels; the first written by Alice Childress, published in 2001, and the latter by Kathryn Stockett, published in 2009. The essay stresses the multiple motherly figures of the black servant, who had to take care of the house, the white children and her own. Jiménez Placer describes how the white lady professed her affection for her servant but remained faithful to segregation and racist social guidelines of behavior. Equally, the white offspring admired and obeyed the mammy but, as they approach maturity, often turned their backs to the woman that infused values and love. Both novels portray the performance of gender and race that took place within these segregated domestic spaces of the South.

Thirdly, and closing the first section of the volume, Marie Liénard-Yeterian compares Stockett's novel with its film adaptation, directed and written by Tate Taylor (2011), in an article entitled "*The Help*: Southern Womanhood Revisited." The fictional setting in both cases is Jackson, Mississippi, in 1962, where segregation and Civil Rights clashed. Liénard-Yeterian states that the story ponders on the attainability of friendship between the white mistress and the black servant, and the possibilities left in such a historical moment for female agency. Skeeter, the main character, is a young white lady who rejects the racist structure where she was brought up, resents her mother for her strict and suppressing rules, and wants to become a writer. She interviews the black female servants of her community, in an attempt to make society appreciate their sacrifices and wisdom. Even though the story gives a white point of view on black history, its relevance, as Liénard-Yeterian explains, lies in the fact that the act of writing strengthens the assertion of southern femalehood.

The forth essay, by Gérald Préher, revises two short stories that have portrayed the conflicts derived from integration of African American children in southern schools. Préher, in this article entitled "Paving the Way for Change: The 1960s South in Shirley Ann Grau's 'The First Day of School' and Joan Williams' 'Spring is Now,'" examines these two texts by white southern women writers, published in

1961 and 1968, respectively. Préher approaches the stories through careful close readings that contemplate the symbolism of details. For instance, in Grau's story, the author has indentified in the careless painting of the school's door, which still shows old layers of color, the failure of desegregation measures in truly changing people's perception of race. In Williams' story, Préher chooses the image of a white girl's lost gold pin, which is eventually found by a black boy from school with whom the girl becomes friends. Once she recovers the pin, she decides not to wear it again, as she equally decides to refuse the concept of race adults around her defend. The selected short fiction discusses the problematics of segregation at a time when it was still an avoided topic, adding to race the perspective of gender.

The subsequent analysis concludes the book's segment on gender, race and the public space. The article by Agnieszka Matysiak is entitled "In the Circles of Dirt and Desire: The Jacobean Spectacle of Cruelty in Rebecca Gilman's *The Glory of Living*" and presents an examination of this highly acclaimed 1999 drama around its main female and male characters, together with an exploration of images of dirt. Matysiak employs the term Jacobean in her study. It refers to the period 1567–1625, when James I was king, first of Scotland, later, in 1603, also of England. In literature, specifically in drama, this era demonstrates an interest for the morally suspicious, and for extreme emotions and behaviors (betrayal, incest, madness, sexual desire, etc.). Contemporary readings of Jacobean excessive tragedies, and their liminality in terms of established values and identities, may remind the reader of the social restlessness of southern history. Matysiak looks at the metaphoric understanding of rubbish and debris in the play, set in Tennessee, in relation to the teenage girl protagonist's strain to build an identity among violence and male dominance.

Constante González Groba's article, "Southern Fictional Tomboys Destabilize Traditional Gender Roles and Dominant Notions of Whiteness," opens the subsection on gender and sexuality performance in the South. It exposes the rewriting of femininity that started in the nineteenth century and contrasted with the ultimate southern female ideal. Due to health concerns, women were encouraged to become stronger and more resilient. In this new performance of gender, women could adopt physical traits and demeanors that had been associated with black women. González Groba expounds how the figure of the tomboy, hence blurred the defined lines of female categorizations, avoiding the terrible consequences of the southern belle stereotype. To illustrate his analysis, González Groba considers five novels: E.D.E.N. Southworth's *The Hidden Hand* (1859); Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* (1946) and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940); Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960); and, finally, Fannie Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes of the Whistle Stop Café* (1987). These four southern women writers,

according to the author of the essay, provide her female characters with an alternative to normative gender portrayals, which can be achieved through sexual ambiguity.

The seventh article in the volume, "Between Permeability and Peculiarity: The Poetics of Gender in *Jingling in the Wind* by Elizabeth Madox Roberts" by Gisèle Sigal, approaches this white Kentucky writer from a lesser known novel: *Jingling in the Wind* (1928), which is a fantasy that singles out the book from the accurate historical representations from women's perspective, found in her main novels. However, Sigal demonstrates that Roberts's interest in the female inner world remains central in this fanciful story. This is because in this mystical world of two rainmakers, a man and a woman, the chaos and harmony that coexist can function, according to this scholar, as representatives of female and male identity subtleties. In this combined genderization of her fiction, Roberts can expand her more frequent female stance. Therefore, Sigal points out that, in this fantasy, emotions and sensitivity become common to both female and male personalities, in order to make room for fluidity in gender definitions.

The last two chapters of the book read as thought provoking reconsiderations of *Gone with the Wind*. Firstly, Emmeline Gross presents the essay "Hidding in Plain Sight: The Vanishing Male Figure in *Gone with the Wind*," studying Margaret Mitchells's novel within the frame of masculinity studies. Gross underlines the deficit in evaluations of male characters due to white heroes being the norm. Thus, white men in fiction have been placed on the position of role models of masculinity, preventing the emergence of diverse discussions on the complexities of southern manhood; and, in that manner, male characters have been made metaphorically invisible as subject of research in the field of Southern Studies. As the author of this article establishes, gender constantly develops as a social and cultural element; thus, it proves interesting to examine the characters of Ashley and Rhett in opposition, in a book that seems to be used as refuge from the reality of the ever-changing South. Initially both characters appear to be stereotypical: Ashley, the gentleman who fights for the Confederacy; and Rhett, the mischievous Carpetbagger. However, through a more detailed reading, these hyperbolic representations offer complex definitions of masculinities and the male body. Here, the war hero does not comply with the expectations of the male ideal, and the rebel proves to be able to act according with prescribed masculinities. The combination of both characters is presented as an alternative to subvert rooted gender identifications that would more suitably fit the transfiguring South.

Beata Zawadka brings the volume to an end with her essay "I Have (Not) Forgot Much, Cynara! *Gone with the Wind* as Global Sensibility." The title of Mitchell's novel was inspired by the Decadent English writer Ernest Dowson's 1896

poem "Non Sum Qualis eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae," which is the title of Horace's *Odes* (Book 4, 1), and translates as "I am not as I was in the reign of good Cinara." Dowson's Cinara represents, as British poet Carol Rumens explained for *The Guardian* in 2011 ("Poem of the Week"), a fixation with a past lover: this idea resonates with *Gone with the Wind*'s Scarlett and her loss of the old South, Tara, Ashley, Rhett, her daughter, and father, among others that could be identified in the novel. The author of this essay studies six rewritings of Mitchell's novel: Alexandra Ripley's *Scarlett* (1991); Régine Deforges's *La bicyclette bleue* (2000); Julien Green's *Le pays lointains* (1987); Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976); Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* (2001); Donald McCaig's *Rhett Butler's People* (2007); the TV series *Scarlett* (1994), an adaptation from Ripley's novel; and the film *Noce i dnie* (1975), based on Maria Davrowska's eponymous saga (1931–1934). These examples are selected in order to illustrate that the original pastoral convention of *Gone with the Wind* can be read, not only as a white romanticizing of the past of the South, but, alternatively, as a popular cultural phenomenon that touches on the complexities of masculinities and femininities not only in the slave plantation context, but even in later and also contemporary representations of democratic structures in literature and film.

The nine chapters in *Dixie Matters*, along with Niewiadomska-Flis's introduction, prove both timely and relevant to the emerging concerns with gender within the field of Southern Studies. The essays are not cohesively linked to one another but each individual study contributes extensively to the ultimate success of the present volume: offering new considerations on and readings of masculinities and femininities in the history of the South and its fictional representations. As well as that, the book includes a unique constituent that connects the different analyses: the collection of illustrations by Polish painter Leszek Niewiadomski. He specifically created for this publication the oil pastels that precede each chapter, as well as the cover. Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis curated the paintings and they represent the main theme of each article, and, all together, render an additional artistic dimension to this critical study.

For me, the reading of this volume evokes the words of eminent African American scholar Anna Julia Cooper (1858–1964) who, in *A Voice From the South* (1988), reflected on race and gender in the following way: "[African Americans have been a muffled force in the history of the South]. And of that muffled chord, the one mute and voiceless note has been the sadly expectant Black Woman" (10). *Dixie Matters* contributes to the prevention of any further minority voices being gagged within Southern Studies thanks to its inclusive considerations of fictional representations of gender, race, class and sexuality. On the whole the book works exceptionally well, presenting innovative explorations of well-known novels and films, as well as discovering less studied works of different periods and

nationalities. And, even though the reader would have welcomed a unifying final conclusion, the four thematic sections that organize these contributions create a coherent core argument on new nuanced interpretations of southern masculinities and femininities.

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