REVIEWS

Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors, eds., *A New Literary History of America*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009. 1128 pages.

A special website created as an Internet advertisement for the 2009 Harvard University Press *New Literary History of America* edited by Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors welcomes its visitors with the following invitation: "Pick a card, any card." A deck of cards we are asked to choose from—a set of pictures from the book's dust jacket—shows various staples of American culture—not only of what is conventionally understood as *literary* culture. The very choice of dust jacket images (a portrait of Frederick Douglass, an electric guitar, Jimi Hendrix, some baseball players, a computer, an airplane) is significant in that it points to the fact that what the book offers is not just another periodization of American literature, but a rather curious intersection of history, literature, visual arts, music, folk/popular traditions, politics and social sciences, and mass-oriented culture, all of which, in the editors' view, can and should be gathered under the heading *literary history*.

Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors' effort is a successor of earlier attempts at providing college students and the so-called general reader with a literary history of the United States. To say that compilers such as Arthur Hobson Quinn, Robert E. Spiller, Emory Elliott, or Sacvan Bercovitch to name but four, completely ignored spheres of culture other than that of letters would not do their work justice; yet with Marcus and Sollors we have a culture-based approach at its apogee: we are constantly reminded that literature cannot be viewed on its own. It should always be analyzed within a larger cultural context, treated as an integral part of culture (culture understood, in an anthropological sense, as all human activity, be it political, social or artistic). Hence the editors provide the reader with informative entries on the first Asian Americans, the skyscraper, the birth of the *cool* aesthetics, the atom bomb, the song in country music, the word "multicultural" (supplied by Sollors himself), the invention of the blues, the matter of Haiti, the Salem witchcraft trials, Jim Crow laws, Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven" or Bob Dylan's "Song to Woody." The authors effectively provoke their readers to rethink the very notion of "a literary history," seemingly taken for granted by earlier editors, and, more specifically, the very meaning of the word "literary." In the introduction they bring

forth an interesting definition of the term: "literary means not only what is written but also what is *voiced*, what is expressed, what is invented, in whatever form" (xxiv, my emphasis). Interpreted in this way, a literary history means the history of human communication in general, an exchange of ideas through different means, not only through writing.

Acknowledging oral, speech-based forms of expression as "literary" is of crucial significance. By giving speech credit the editors automatically open up the canon, which I believe they consciously intended. Although they stipulate that "[t]he goal of the book is not to smash a canon or create a new one" (xxiv), it seems quite obvious that by "set[ting] many forms of American speech in motion, so that different forms, and people speaking at different times in sometimes radically different ways, can be heard speaking to each other" (xxiv), they do let into their story many voices absent from other *strictly literary* histories. They seem to bear in mind that the notion of "writing" in America has elitist connotations—after all, for centuries literacy used to be the privilege of white Americans of European descent.

I want to emphasize once again that by seeing culture as human activity in its entirety, as opposed to the activity of the powerful elite, white male *founders* of the country, portrayed by Robert E. Spiller in his 1946 *Literary History of the United States* and Arthur Hobson Quinn in his 1951 *Literature of the American People: An Historical and Critical Survey*, Marcus and Sollors invite to their pages those who built the country and contributed to forming its distinct culture anonymously and whose once nameless efforts were not chronicled by early (white, male) historians. They come to the aid of the underprivileged artists, "minor," or forgotten writers, especially those belonging to ethnic minorities. To give but one example, never before have I seen entries so elaborate and revealing on writers such as Phillis Wheatley or Charles W. Chesnutt in a non-specialist book.

In regards to Wheatley and Chesnutt, an important thing to notice is that the entire introduction is marked by the touchy question of race relations in the United States, as if it were the center around which the fragments of the story evolve. On the one hand, one may view it as a manifestation of political correctness. On the other hand, in macroscale, it can be seen as a metaphor for the powerful ("subjects" of history)—the powerless ("objects" of history) dialectic. Undoubtedly, such a dialectic is among the foundations of the Western culture, later transplanted onto the American ground. I view this important aspect of *A New Literary History of America* as an expression of longing for social and cultural justice. Showing how much American culture owes to native American and West African traditions as well as all the immigrant cultures, the editors speak against the marginalization of those groups. Paul Lauter, the editor of the canon-expanding *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, aptly notices that the shape of national culture is always determined by power relations: "[m]arginalized works are, largely, the prod-

ucts of groups who have relatively less access to political, economic, or social power. To say it another way, the works generally considered central to a culture are those composed and promoted by persons from groups holding power within it" (10). Lauter also observes that "[t]he United States is a heterogeneous society whose cultures, while they overlap in significant respects, also differ in critical ways. A[ny] normative model presents variations from the mainstream as abnormal, deviant, lesser, perhaps ultimately unimportant" (9). And that is exactly why Marcus and Sollors wish to drift away from any normative models. They give up all conventional, artificially imposed divisions into literary periods and genres, offering instead, in a form of a timeline, a collection of dates—some of which tell more and some less—which serves as a rough guideline for the reader. In this way they are on the safe side: by avoiding any direct causal relationships between phenomena, they put together a fragmentary story that does not seem authoritarian; the impression is that it is the reader who is asked to find a chronology of his/her own. They also emphasize that the essays collected in the book were written "from the vantage point of not a specialist but of an enthusiast, a skeptic, a digger, a reader, a listener, a viewer" (xxvi), as if they laid no claims to "objectivity" and "authority." Finding the very intention praiseworthy, I do not think that what they have achieved is entirely satisfactory.

Aware of their audience, Marcus and Sollors set some kind of norm, whether they want it or not. After all, what they claim to be editing is *a new literary history*, in itself a magnificent task. As the *authors* of such an adventurous undertaking, they must assume some kind of *authority* as much as they must present some kind of *vision* of American culture. Needless to say, absolute objectivity and neutrality are impossible to attain. Therefore, the question is *not* whether or not the editors present the readers with a "distorted" view of literature and history; it is about the way this view is distorted. I have an irresistible impression that some of the older writers who occupy more space in the earlier histories, or, conversely, the younger writers who, for obvious reasons, were not mentioned in them, are reduced to a brief remark or excised; whereas the widely read (mostly prose) writers, or the writers who are currently, for some reason, "fashionable," receive the most attention. That is not to say that Wheatley's, or Chesnutt's, or Adrienne Rich's, or Gayl Jones', or Toni Morrison's work should not be dwelled upon; it definitely deserves analysis, but why not someone else's too? Why, one might ask, did the editors decide to completely omit the entire avant-garde tradition in the poetry of the second half of the century? A key figure in the American avant-garde poetry, for both black and white experimental writers, Charles Olson, is mentioned only once on page 840 in the context of his critical study *Call Me Ishmael*. Language poets are referred to as "poets admired within the academy" only once on page 1032. Critic Stephen Burt, responsible

for one entry on new poetry, discusses briefly Rae Armantrout, Yusef Komunyakaa and C.D. Wright only, expressing a widely held view that "[a]nyone who followed American poetry at the start of the twenty-first century encountered repeated complaints that nobody read it" (1030). Even if poetry's popularity has been declining since the times of Robert Frost and Robert Lowell, should independent scholars such as Marcus and Sollors be in concert with this trend? There are more legitimate questions to be asked: what are the criteria behind the editors' choices? What do they want to achieve by interrogating the canon the way they interrogate it? Is it their aim to reexamine as much critically underrepresented work as possible in order to bring the readers closer to the entire spectrum of American *literary history*, or rather, do they want to promote a narrowed picture of American literature so that it is suitable for *literature consumers*? Although in their concluding note, Marcus and Sollors cautiously state that "[t]here is no attempt to give every name its due, to visit every state or the era of every presidency" (xxvii)—they are too smart not to be aware of the traps of institutionalized scholarship. They know very well that authoring a book such as *A New Literary History of America* is a political gesture, and claiming that "[t]here is no attempt to give every name its due" cannot de-politicize that gesture.

As a closing remark, it is absolutely necessary to remind the readers about Emory Elliott's groundbreaking *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (1988). Like Marcus and Sollors, Elliott was a scholar devoted to revising the canon and his efforts from the late 1980s cannot be overestimated. *Columbia*... in many ways resembles the organizational pattern of Bercovitch's *Cambridge History of American Literature*, although their scope is probably beyond comparison. As far as college instruction is concerned, *Columbia* will probably stay unsurpassed as a reference book, while Marcus and Sollors' volume will serve as an informative addition.

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Zbigniew Mazur, *The Power of Play: Leisure, Recreation and Cultural Hegemony in Colonial Virginia*. Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2010. 221 pages.

Zbigniew Mazur's book is a worthy contribution to the increasingly vibrant field of cultural history. It is an area that has been newly energized as scholars have come to

appreciate more fully than ever before that cultural distinctions and identities are crucial to understanding societies—whether in distant past or in distant areas of the globe. This understanding has penetrated even such disciplines as political science and economics, liberating them from such follies as the rational choice theory. For historians, this development has been especially fruitful, because it enables them to apply much of the recent progress in anthropology, semiotics, hermeneutics, and epistemology to interpreting the symbolic sphere on which the edifice of culture rests.

Mazur makes good use of all these tools to advance the main thesis of his book that recreational activities practiced by the eighteenth-century Virginia planter elite contributed to the power they held in colonial society. As he presents the rich variety of their leisurely preoccupations, he asks how these practices enhanced the coherence of social bonds, and especially to the ability of the elites to exercise influence over the rest of the population. It is this line of inquiry—how control by cultural means was wielded—that is the book's most interesting contribution to scholarship. Virginia was a non-urban, decentralized, and rural society lacking many social, legal, political, and institutional structures that in the metropolis enhanced the relationship of dominance between the rulers and the ruled. In this context, it makes good sense to investigate how provincial symbolic practices filled that void. Mazur makes the most of this opportunity by analyzing a wide spectrum of what he calls "the discourses of pleasure" (185) at both genteel and popular levels (although the book follows the written sources, and thus tilts rather heavily towards the elites). He unfolds a panorama of colonial festivities—each meticulously dissected as cultural text. They include balls and barbecues, horse races and rides, dining and dancing, billiards and cards, cock-fights and gambling, drinking and socializing in taverns, weddings and birthdays, hunting and picknicking, theater-going and fairs, as well as civic events such as assemblies, court days, militia musters, and various parades.

In terms of conceptual order, the author focuses on three social implications of play in Virginian culture: how it helped construct the identity of the elites, how it enhanced their domination as a political class, and how it boosted masculinity as a form of exerting power. To achieve these goals, he takes an anthropological approach, treating the various forms of play as rituals, and interpreting the significance of their symbolic meanings for these three areas. The volume is organized into six thematic sections: on the provincial elite's quest for gentility; on public ceremonies; on forms of entertainment expressing white masculinity; on recreations that conveyed the supremacy of the plantation gentry; on black leisure (briefly), and on the links between religion, particularly the Great Awakening, and popular recreations. In all, the interpretative axis is play as an expression of dominance.

The question of dominance is, of course, a time-honored topic, and modern inquiries into the relation of culture to power have produced some venerable studies, particularly those inspired by Antonio Gramsci with his concept of cultural hegemony, later by Michel Foucault with his concept of discursive practices, and more recently by Pierre Bourdieu with his symbolic power of language. These theoretical frameworks drew attention to the political implications of cultural symbols and symbolic practices, and specifically to the fact that elites of power—through their prestige, public voice, and the ability to generate legitimacy—are able to persuade the subordinate classes to accept the rulers' view of the world and the social structure that sustains their dominance. Mazur draws firmly on these frameworks in building his argument, but—to his credit—remains aware throughout that such supremacy through the symbolic sphere is only one of the many aspects of domination. Other factors such as coercion and economic power played equally important roles, and only in combination with them can culture exert its influence in reproducing power relations.

The book is well documented and based solidly on a broad spectrum of sources ranging from manuscripts and colonial newspapers to diaries, acts of assembly, and travel narratives. Notably, the author properly contextualizes the various examples of play under discussion, so that his argument is always rooted in a broad cultural matrix specific to eighteenth-century Virginia. This is important to his approach because it is this matrix that generated meanings. By the same token, one wishes that the author placed a bit less stress on the Virginia elite's cultural domination "disguised" in various forms of entertainment, and emphasized more the fact that culture is primarily made up of subjective meanings. We historians quite frequently get a bit carried away in using our hindsight and ability to create macro-scale, presumably objective, frameworks through which to view the past—such as, for instance, "hegemony." But subjectivity and agency are central to culture. The author's argument is entirely persuasive as he succeeds in convincing us that recreational practices contributed to Virginian elite's hegemony, but we should at least be aware that such large frameworks are ideal models, and were not on the minds of the contemporary actors. In other words, it is likely that many among the elite as well as the common folk in the Chesapeake region eagerly participated in games and races for the sheer fun that such pastimes provided, and not to symbolically signal this or that relationship of power. None of this, however, takes away from Mazur's considerable accomplishment. His book carries a wealth of insights and offers much that will be of interest to scholars and students. It is a laudable contribution to American cultural history.

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Marta Skwara, *"Polski Whitman": o funkcjonowaniu poety obcego w kulturze narodowej* ["Polish Whitman": The Functioning of a Foreign Poet in National Culture]. Kraków: Universitas, 2010. 476 pages.

"Polski Whitman": o funkcjonowaniu poety obcego w kulturze narodowej, Marta Skwara's beautifully designed and illustrated, elegant book, offers a pioneering, comprehensive overview of the reception of Walt Whitman in Poland. The mass of materials gathered (including 24 pages of bibliographical references) and the scope of the compilation make Skwara's book a unique resource for readers and scholars. As the author observes, the lack of a tradition of comparative studies in Poland means that contemporary scholars have to perform the arduous and thankless task of gathering basic source materials and constructing bibliographies: was there a more solid basis, "a Polish researcher at the beginning of the twenty-first century would not have to find herself in the somewhat schizophrenic situation of [combining] the ground work of a nineteenth-century scholar compiling for the first time a full bibliography of translations and reception... [with that of] a twenty-first-century neo-pragmatist reflecting on 'how it works,' or what the function is of a given text (writer, movement, school) in the national culture."[1] The ground work is perhaps the most valuable aspect of Skwara's book. Considering that, and the fact that the book approaches its subject from a variety of perspectives—from presenting texts on Whitman, through translations of his poems and original work which alludes to Whitman, to film—and attempts to account for no less than 150 years of reception, it is not surprising that the book lacks a single methodology. The author does, however, make a claim for the coexistence of translation studies and comparative literary studies, arguing that they mutually complement each other, the former addressing literary works from a linguistic and cultural perspective, the latter providing texts with social and political contexts. And while this "division of labor" may seem problematic to both some comparatists and some translatologists, Skwara makes a compelling argument about contextualizing the formal study of texts, so that our readings address also commentaries, interpretations, anthologizations, intertextual references, as well as comparative interpretations.

Skwara begins by discussing basic information on Whitman available to Polish readers, from *Wikipedia* to old editions of Polish encyclopedias. The randomness of information found in Polish *Wikipedia* is not that surprising (though the omissions, as Skwara briefly points out, are rather telling), but a similar arbitrariness of entries in the PWN

[1] Marta Skwara, *"Polski Whitman": o funkcjonowaniu poety obcego w kulturze narodowej,*" Kraków, Universitas, 2010, 11. All references in parentheses are to this edition. All translations from Polish are the reviewer's.

Encyclopedia, long considered the most reliable reference for Polish readers (and students at all levels of education), is truly shocking. Interestingly enough, Polish encyclopedic sources tend to freely copy entries from older ones, so that the level of knowledge on the topic remains unchanged for decades, with the same errors circulating in all available reference materials. Skwara's—necessarily brief—comments indeed shed dramatic light on Polish culture, and more specifically on the state of Polish knowledge and quality of Polish research. The structural limitations of the necessarily sketchy commentary Skwara can give to numerous brief texts take their toll in the discussion of biographical notes, where her critical comments occasionally become somewhat elusive. For example, it is difficult to say why Skwara finds inappropriate Stanisław Barańczak's use if the term "discipline" in relation to Whitman's poetry opposing it to "ceaseless search," a term used by another critic. Whitman's expansiveness, his long line and what one may call verbal "excesses" could be juxtaposed with the tightness and concision of, say, an Emily Dickinson lyric, and the prose rhythms of his long poem were indeed a conscious reaction to the highly crafted conventions of the traditional lyric, but that in no way denies discipline to his language or at least should leave the matter of discipline open to redefinition. A debate on interpretation, however, cannot be performed in a sentence or two. This is where the scope of Skwara's enterprise comes at a cost and one only hopes her book will allow future commentaries on Whitman's reception in Poland—including her own—the luxury of dwelling on particulars one cannot afford when performing a task of these proportions.

The first section of the book where Skwara allows herself a more in-depth analysis of specific texts is devoted to the politics of Whitman's reception. After reviewing the English and German tradition of leftist interpretations of Whitman's work, Skwara moves to a discussion of two—according to her equally problematic—modes of "politicizing" Whitman, which construct, respectively, a "socialist" and a "homosexual" Whitman. Polish post-World War II readings are mockingly disparaged for blatant propagandist tendencies and their "simplistic" quality apparently does not lend itself to an engaged reading. The topic of homosexuality addressed extensively in this chapter in fact recurs throughout the book. Skwara is clearly and openly uncomfortable with the "homosexual" readings of Whitman. The book does not avoid the topic of sexuality, almost obsessively returning to it so that it becomes one of its main stumbling blocks. A relatively long passage in the section on "politicized" Whitman is devoted to the reading of Federico Garcia Lorca's "Ode to Walt Whitman" and its Polish translation, which become a pretext for a discussion of homosexuality in Whitman's reception and criticism. Skwara mocks "the fervor of searching for homosexual symbols" (135) and prefers their sublimation into "the kinship of souls, the need for poetry" (136), finding it is

"problematic to inscribe Whitman into homosexual poetics" (139). The logic of her argument becomes questionable when Skwara claims that the word *maricas* is difficult to translate into Polish (and rejects the Polish equivalents of "pervert," "queer," "faggot" or "sissy" used in English translations), suggesting instead that "we remain with the opposition pure-impure" (132-3). Having performed this erasure of the homosexual trace in the text, she speaks of critical "abuses" which construct Whitman as a homosexual poet without textual evidence to support such claims. Needless to say, when referring to interpretations of Whitman which presuppose heterosexuality as the unquestioned norm, the author does raise similar concerns. And while her reservations about the uses of biographical evidence are well-founded, the overall argument she proposes is in fact based on unexamined heteronormativity:

> As I tried to show, I disagree with such politics of reading Whitman. Whitman uses a very diverse range of metaphors, trying to appeal to various ways of experiencing the world and is successful in that effort as far as the response of readers is a measure of a poet's success. The reading of his poetry was also an important experience for readers of various sexual orientations, religions, race or nationality.… I do not think therefore that narrowing the Whitmanian text to the problem of homosexual poetics is justified, what is more, such reading resembles the politicization such as was performed by Marxist manipulations: the oppressed working class is replaced by the oppressed class of homosexuals fighting for their social rights. (152)

Such comments raise a number of questions. Why are readings of heterosexual eroticism not equally limiting? Why does the naming of sexuality as *homo*sexuality somewhat preclude a "richness of metaphor"? Why cannot masses of readers of "various sexual orientations" enjoy that richness, if it comes from a poet of non-normative sexual orientation? And finally: is the reading offered by the quote above *a*political? Any less political than the readings of Whitman as a nonheterosexual writer? Obviously not, and necessarily so, because Whitman *is* a political writer, most expressly so when it comes to social justice. The perception of the transgression of heterosexual norm as limiting the poet and alienating the readers is what here seems to shut down the breadth of interpretive potential.

A particularly interesting section of Skwara's book is the chapter devoted to the reception of Whitman by specific Polish prose writers and poets. Doubtlessly, the opportunity to devote more space to each of those writers gives these readings a breadth and involvement of a more sustained discussion which is not possible in relation to brief notes and encyclopedia entries. Here we learn about Miriam's criticism of Whitman's

formal failure to write poetry "in the true sense of the term" (164; interestingly Miriam not only complains about the—fatal according to him—lack of rhyme and meter, but also denies Whitman rhythm...) and disapproval of the poet's use of references that are "trivial" and "in bad taste." He does, however, grant Whitman the "raw material for a poet." Not surprisingly, Miriam's translations aim at "poeticizing" the original, polishing and organizing it. Antoni Lange offers a more positive evaluation of Whitman's work, situating him firmly in the American context and pointing out his importance as the original American voice, a true "Yankee-poet," full of enthusiasm and free of the "melancholy" which burdens European literatures. At the same time, he searches out parallels between Whitman and the European Romantic tradition. Lange is obviously also a more attentive reader of Whitman, capable, for example, of recognizing the Biblical rhythms in *Leaves of Grass*, his translations doing justice to Whitman's extended catalogues as a crucial aspect of Whitman's poetic form. Stanisław Brzozowski is a writer who redefines his attitude to Whitman: initially, he blames Whitman for facile ecstasies, but learns to appreciate the writer after reading *Democratic Vistas,* to finally come to admire "a quieter, metaphysical Whitman" (182). Jerzy Jankowski finds a space for Whitman's love of democracy, his search for "the new man," and his anarchic attitude to tradition in the ideology of Polish Futurism. The most engaged readers of Whitman among those presented by Skwara are undoubtedly Julian Tuwim and Czesław Miłosz. Tuwim situates his own enthusiastic reception of Whitman in the historical context of the post-war years, with Poland's newly regained independence, a time when artists "rebelled against the pessimism and aestheticism" (191) of the pre-war writers of Młoda Polska (Young Poland). Whitman was an obvious choice: a poet of the new world, whose work, like that of Tuwim's contemporaries, aimed at being "universal and cosmic, spiritual and physical, religious and scientific... contemporary and democratic, teaching acceptance of life and death" (192). Tuwim values Whitman's prophetic voice, his "dithyrambic rhythm," colloquial language, the "modesty" of the title *Leaves of Grass*, and his vision of an all-embracing unity above the dictates of canon, dogma and routine. He is also the first to enthusiastically embrace Whitman's eroticism and physiology which, as he says, "our sloppy modernity has turned into a dirty secret" (196). Skwara emphasizes that Tuwim's views on Whitman undergo an evolution and is quite critical of the last stage where she sees Tuwim's work become mere propaganda. Similarly to Tuwim, Jan Stur emphasizes the unprecedented quality of Whitman's poetry, situating it in a world where "cities and city people are transplanted onto the primary, barbaric soil" (222). Stur praises Whitman, among others, for his "materialist-spiritual synthesis" (223) and "equality of all symptoms of life" (224). Czesław Miłosz's Whitman is called "the poet of epiphany" (229). Similarly to Tuwim's, his attitudes to Whit-

man are shown to have evolved, from his early encounters with Whitman in pre-war Poland, through emigration, where the major body of his work on and inspired by Whitman was produced, to his last years in Poland and the final vision of Whitman as "the great realist" and "the poet of epiphany" (230-1). At the same time, Miłosz most clearly argues for Whitman's own diversity as a poet, to whom he refers as "many Whitmans" and whom he situates in a variety of (not only Polish) literary traditions. In the discussion of these very different versions of Whitman in Poland, Skwara points out the importance of the availability of different editions of *Leaves of Grass* to Polish readers. For example, the popular English edition, put together by William Rossetti, which excised all the more erotically provocative poems, may have been responsible for some of the more sanitized readings of *Leaves of Grass* in Poland.

In reference to a number of these writers, Skwara describes a very peculiar mode of reception where paraphrase, translation and interpretation often merge and become indistinguishable. Quotation marks may bracket a paraphrase which freely disposes of some passages while expounding on others. Direct quotation may be woven into the text without acknowledgment. A model of literary criticism emerges which is very different from its Anglo-Saxon counterpart—in itself an interesting cultural phenomenon. Polish commentary on Whitman tends to be essayistic, free-floating, impressionistic, affective and rarely analytical or structured by interpretative discipline. As Skwara notices in her discussion of Tuwim, "references to Whitman... had to be transcended to be creative. And this is what happens in Tuwim's poetry, perhaps at the expense of 'the Polish Whitman,' but to the advantage of Polish poetry" (212).

Perhaps the most engaging (though also most difficult to paraphrase) chapter of *Polski Whitman* is the one which undertakes a comparative analysis of various translations of individual poems. The comparison of the similarities and differences in the translators' choice of diction, sound, rhythm, line break, voice and intertextual resonance often leads to interesting conclusions about the aesthetic, philosophical and political positions adopted by the translators, at the same time situating them in the Polish cultural context. Skwara discusses "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," "We Two, How Long We Were Fool'd," "Miracles," section 11 of "Song of Myself" ("Twenty-eight young men..."), part 6 of "The Sleepers" and "The Noiseless Patient Spider," in translations by, among others, Ludmiła Marjańska, Stanisław Barańczak, Czesław Miłosz, Andrzej Szuba, Julian Przyboś and Krzysztof Boczkowski, The topic of non-heteronormative readings of Whitman returns here again, this time discussed in reference to specific translators' choices. Skwara demonstrates a particular linguistic difficulty Polish translators confront when faced with gender ambiguity or gender fluidity which is such an important marker of Whitman's work (one could argue that the category "queer" is particularly

useful in defining that quality, but Skwara never employs the term in her study, preferring to work with binary oppositions of hetero/homo-sexual and man/woman). In Polish, gender markers are much more fixed (by noun, verb, adjective endings, numerals, etc.) and therefore the translator's decision usually comes down to an arbitrary assignation of gender. And while the penchant for preserving Whitman's ambiguities is understandable, it is less obvious why the preference for such assignation of gender as would make any potential coupling heterosexual. Skwara insistently claims that underlining heterosexuality allows for the an opening out of interpretive possibilities and readings which are universally applicable, while a suggestion of homosexuality necessarily narrows down the poem, so that it becomes a poem *about* that (see her discussion of "We Two...," ""Song of Myself," "The Sleepers" and, later, of Iwaszkiewicz's "Tatarak"). The claim that one cannot speak of "lesbian desire" where "there is no touch," only "enchantment," "recognition of sensuality," and "a teenage girl's infatuation with a woman" (329-32) suggests a misunderstanding of the critical category of "desire," while comments on the "typical phenomenon of a girl falling for a woman, often described in developmental psychology, which rarely takes on a sexual form" (331) take a discussion of lesbian sexuality almost a hundred years back, for even Freud was willing to speak, in 1920, of "a case of homosexuality in a woman" in reference to a girl who was in love with (though clearly did not have sex with) an older woman. This consistent resistance to homosexuality which, again, limits Skwara's interpretative scope is somewhat compensated for by a great find and a beautiful reading of Ludmiła Marjańska's translation of a passage from "Song of Myself" ("The twenty-eight bathers") which opens the text to the potentiality of figuring a female orgasm—unlike any of the men translators. Occasional attempts to judge (rather than simply situate, analyze and compare) the translations (what does it mean that a given text is "most poetic"?) seem less productive here than the culturally based argument about how contingent the translator's text (and its appeal) is on the context of its production, and in fact run counter to the argument about "many Whitmans"—to use Skwara's quotation from Miłosz—whose emergence Skwara's book so painstakingly and engagingly documents.

A chapter on Whitman's presence in texts by Polish writers is a fascinating record of how texts travel. Skwara discusses Żeromski, Miciński, Staff, Wierzyński, Kurek, Gałczyński, Różewicz, Mostwin and Iwaszkiewicz, demonstrating the broad scope of—often incompatible—readings and appropriations of Whitman's poetry in Polish. After brief commentary on Whitman's more recent presence in Polish consciousness via American movies, in the last chapter of the book, Skwara compares the reception of Whitman in Poland to that of Frank O'Hara, an American poet for whom the Whitmanian heritage was particularly important. And while she is perhaps unduly critical of the

phenomenon of "O'Harism" in Polish poetry of late twentieth century, she rightly points out that both Whitman and O'Hara appeared as valuable models in Polish poetry at times of political change (after World War I and after 1989, respectively), providing the paradigm of "strong poetic identities rooted in reality" (401). At the same time, however, neither of the poets ever had a broad readership or following in Polish culture "which valued more the high model of intellectual poetry based on refined linguistic and cultural practices." One may only hope that this will change and Marta Skwara's detailed study will require further supplementation.

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Marek Paryż, *Figures of Dependence, Figures of Expansion: Representations of the Postcolonial and Imperial Experience in the Discourse of American Transcendentalism*. Warsaw: Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, 2009. 270 pages.

Marek Paryż has already established a solid reputation as a scholar of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American literature through articles on Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. *Figures of Dependence* extends his studies in discursive traits and rhetorical strategies characteristic of the period by examining nineteenth-century tensions between American postcolonial identity and national expansionist impulses. Paryż posits that certain Transcendentalist writers—namely, Henry David Thoreau, Emerson, and Walt Whitman—explored persistent contradictions between the postcolonial implications of anti-British sentiments and the "imperial" push to expand US territorial holdings in spite of others' claims to the land. These writers pursue such paradoxical attitudes through recurring tropes, topoi, and the narrative speakers that articulate their textual arguments.

One of the most impressive strengths of *Figures of Dependence* exists in its author's familiarity with Transcendentalist literary criticism and postcolonial theory. Characterizing postcolonial theory as both "a tool of historical diagnosis" and "an interpretative model," Paryż links its resonance within early American discourse to the country's origins in colonial settlement (15). Sensitive to their country's vexed beginnings, Transcendentalist writers created textual structures that could help them investigate the philosophical manifestations of national identity, drawing on a set of shared "rules of utterance" to do so (28). Paryż's insight into the theoretical bases of these writers' discursive strategies is due in large part to his broad knowledge of both contemporary analyses and recent critical work. In every chapter, he illustrates both the work that has preceded his own and the important interventions that his book makes. Such a demonstration of the

book's worth is especially crucial in a field like nineteenth-century American literature, particularly the period of Transcendentalism, to which so many scholars have already staked claims. Paryż's argument also positions both emerging American national identity and the writers themselves within a transnational context that challenges the more insular perspective on Transcendentalism that many earlier critics have offered.

Paryż identifies key distinctions among his study's three central writers in their interpretations of the country's current stage of cultural and intellectual development, noting, for instance, that Emerson sees the country hesitating at the end of an era, while Whitman perceives a new beginning (253). In his three chapters on Emerson's essays, Paryż describes "Emerson's America" as a nation still progressing toward maturity; this early sense of nationhood renders Emerson more ambivalent than unreservedly patriotic (38). Because Emerson feels that the nation still has tests to pass before it can prove itself to be wholly independent, he also perceives both imperialist and postcolonial tendencies as latent rather than manifest (53). Paryż examines Emerson's slowly emerging sense of American national strength in the context of travel writing, a genre that his collection *English Traits* helped to adapt to extra-British sensibilities. The collection in fact foregoes a taxonomy of specifically American characteristics in favor of an explication of the country's current postcolonial status (90). Emerson also altered his discursive representations of the US over time in order to grapple with "the issue of American expansionism," an important key to codifying national identity (98). Paryż notes that Emerson explains expansionism as "a form of response to the land" in which inhabitants' actions depend upon the transcendent qualities of the land itself (108, 110).

Paryż's analysis of Thoreau's attitude toward the state of the new nation identifies both "postcolonial sentiments" and "the rhetoric of empire" in his work (126), on the other hand, suggesting that he contributed more deliberately to the conflicting politics of the period. Like Emerson, Thoreau adds to the genre history of travel writing; however, his exploration narratives, such as *The Maine Woods*, carry a much stronger imperialist flavor (154). Though he employs the personal journal and the scientific report as a means of exploring "ways of relating selfhood to nationhood" (155), his "double focus on the exploration of the place and the encounter with the natives" resonates with French and British colonization narratives (156). The ambivalence that Thoreau does express, unlike Emerson's, is tied to his depictions of nature, which Paryż interprets as meaning that he "found the discourse of empire appealing and inspiring" but "did not support the imperial political plans of his nation" (170).

Paryż discusses the figure of the speaker in both Emerson's and Thoreau's work, but it is not until his analysis of Whitman that he distinguishes the poet as a key individual contributing to the formation of national identity (190). Like his fellow writers, Whitman

explores both "postcolonial and imperial discursive strands" in his work (192), but his poetry's uniqueness exists in part in its "combative" nature (203). Though he may aim to create "a subtext of Western imperialism," Paryż asserts, he also "casts doubt on the political priorities of the imperial project" (221-22). Whitman clearly doubts the ultimate goals of American imperialism, as his many poetic ruminations on human nature suggest, but he also contrasts dynamic American national traits with Orientalist ones, which he interprets as static and emblematic rather than specific in such poems as "Passage to India" (237). Here Paryż draws on Edward Said's seminal work in order to define the paradoxical nature of Whitman's political position: the "imperial zeal" he depicts derives from a "lingering sense of... colonial anxiety" (245).

In general, *Figures of Dependence* is a useful text for scholars wishing to gain a solid grounding in Transcendentalist scholarship or those seeking to understand the United States' peculiar status during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a former British colony struggling to come to terms with its pioneering, expansionist present. Though such postcolonial contexts are more familiarly associated with South Asian countries, Paryż demonstrates that the theory can be usefully applied to a new country with an emerging imperialist mandate. Overall, the book is recommended as an up-to-date resource that synthesizes and explicates new perspectives on American Transcendentalism.

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Karsten Fitz, *The American Revolution Remembered, 1830s to 1850s. Competing Images and Conflicting Narratives*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 337 pages.

Karsten Fitz, in his book on the visual representations of the American Revolution in the antebellum period, demonstrates that in the 1830s through 50s American artists were preoccupied with the legacy of the Revolution in no lesser degree than the political leaders of the nation. These decades constituted a particular historical moment when writers, thinkers, visual artists and politicians converged in their attempts to search for what Fitz calls—after Van Wyck Brooks and Henry Steele Commager—a "usable past" (22). Understandably enough, the American Revolution served as a basis for re-imagining the nation, and the past achievement offered a frame of reference for those who defined the current political goals. It goes without saying that acts of commemoration not only evoke the past, but also provide a key to the present state of culture and politics. This double bind between the past and the present is adequately reflected in terms such as "collective

memory" or "cultural memory" around which Fitz has structured his theoretical argument in the first two chapters of the book. Fitz draws from the work of prominent scholars in the field of memory studies, among others Pierre Nora and Michael Kammen, to show that remembering, in its cultural manifestations, is dynamic and creative. And it is this dynamic, processual quality of cultural memory that makes it inextricable from identity understood as a shared quality and value. Accordingly, acts of commemoration introduce, sanction and strengthen ideas and visions that ultimately form social, cultural, and political hierarchies. These hierarchies, in turn, substantiate the ideological content of national narratives in which certain kinds of experience have been acknowledged, while others have been erased. Therefore, as Fitz rightly points out, the discussion of cultural memory entails the recognition of cultural amnesia.

Chapter Three, the first devoted to the analysis of historical visual material, concentrates on the construction of what Fitz calls an "overarching narrative" (75) which revolved around the analogy between American colonists successfully confronting the British army and the biblical David defeating Goliath. The point of departure in this chapter is Paul Revere's famous 1770 picture of the Boston Massacre, the work which resounded, in various ways, in antebellum visual representations of the American Revolution. Revere's engraving shows a regular British regiment literally slaughtering helpless American civilians, thus juxtaposing the military power of the oppressors with the moral superiority of the victims, which is very much in keeping with the David vs. Goliath-motif. The civilian victims, presumably yeomen farmers, represent the social class that would soon establish militia forces capable of resisting the British. Therefore it comes as no surprise that, in the course of time, the figure of the minuteman/yeoman became a national and cultural icon, recurring in the pictorial renditions of the Revolution in the antebellum years. The main reason why this image appealed so much to the imagination of Americans at that time was that the myth of the farmer turned minuteman had strong agrarian underpinnings. The use of agrarian imagery emphasized the moral aspect of the involvement in the Revolutionary struggle. Antebellum visual artists repeatedly referred to the combined symbols of the plough and the rifle, as symptomatically shown in a series of book illustrations produced by Felix Octavius Carr Darley in the 1850s. The epitome of the farmer who immediately becomes transformed into a soldier was General Israel Putnam who fought at Bunker Hill. According to Fitz, the choice of Putnam as the personification of David was not accidental, given his actual commonness, which distinguished him from many other Revolutionary leaders. However, George Washington was also a protagonist of a number of visuals which emphasized his background as a farmer. An interesting variation on the David vs. Goliath-motif was the attribution of the features of savagery to the British troops in the pictures that depicted

the tragic consequences of the alliance between the British and the natives against American colonists. In such pictures, Indian violence was perceived as an extension of British tyranny.

Chapter Four deals with the visual representations of the African American participation in the Revolutionary War and, like the previous chapter, it begins with a reference to Paul Revere's *The Bloody Massacre*. Fitz argues that Revere's picture is characterized by a meaningful omission, namely none of the figures in it is black. The point among the men who were first killed in the Boston Massacre there was an African American named Crispus Attucks, the "Black Indian" as he came to be called because of his mixed ancestry. Fitz analyzes a selection of antebellum visual presentations of the Boston Massacre and highlights the differences in how particular works re-acknowledge Attucks' contribution to the patriotic cause. These differences attest to a fundamental difficulty in accounting for African American patriotism. Thus, William C. Nell, in an illustration for a broadside commemorating the ninetieth anniversary of the Boston Massacre, envisages Attucks as a patriotic martyr and shows the black hero dying in the arms of a white man. William L. Champney goes much further than Nell and portrays the African American in an active pose, a true leader just a split second before his death. For a change, in Alonzo Chappel's painting the face of Crispus Attucks is barely visible in the crowd of rebels, but it is there notwithstanding. In general, the differing visual interpretations of Attucks' role in the Boston Massacre can be seen as an expression of a great ambivalence about the place of African Americans in American history, cultural memory, and current life. The same kind of ambivalence seems to infuse those visual depictions of the Battle of Bunker Hill which mark out the space for Peter Salem, a black patriot who reportedly shot one of the highest British officers. Finally, Fitz discusses two analogous pictures of George Washington's family—one from the 1790s, and the other from the 1840s—and comments on the absence of Washington's black servant, William Lee, from the latter. This erasure is symptomatic insofar as it expresses the tendency shared by antebellum visual artists to avoid associating great historical leaders with the institution of slavery. The narrative of the American Revolutionary origins that thus emerges clashes with the narratives acknowledging the African American involvement in the Revolution.

Chapter Five is devoted to the constructions of womanhood in antebellum visual depictions of the Revolutionary period. Fitz writes that, in the 1830s and subsequent two decades, the growing interest in how American women had been affected by the War of Independence was not accidental, given the rise of female literary authorship, the popularity of sentimental fiction, and the appearance of the first postulates regarding women's rights. There was a natural correspondence between the conventions of representing female experience in literature and in visual arts. Importantly, this correspondence mani-

fested itself in the clash of two models of constructing womanhood: that which emphasized female submissiveness and passivity, and that which foregrounded female agency and initiative. The epitome of the former type of womanhood was Jane McCrea, the heroine of quite an impressive number of visuals produced in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1777 Jane McCrea was killed, during a journey to meet her fiancée, in a fight between her Iroquois escort and another group of Iroquois Indians. The typical visual renditions of this event show a terrified, helpless woman on her knees, assaulted by two violent Indians. This narrative about the predicament of the woman who has left her domestic environment was challenged by the narrative about a heroine who easily performed male tasks in a strictly male domain, which was the battlefield. This heroine is Molly Pitcher, described by Fitz as "the universal female patriot" (241). Fitz identifies two historical figures who served as models for Molly Pitcher, but the pictures in which she appears rather ignore this subtle fact. Molly Pitcher features—sometimes prominently—in a number of depictions of the Battle of Monmouth of 1778. In most significant cases, she is portrayed standing by a cannon which she helps to operate on a par with its male crew, her posture expressing total dedication and immense activity. More nuanced portraits of American women at the time of the War of Independence can be found in Elizabeth Ellet's historical book *Women of the American Revolution* (1848), which provided a direct inspiration for a series of paintings and lithographs created in the 1850s.

Chapter Six, as Fitz announces its subject, "discusses variations on the theme of *Washington Crossing*… as they inscribe American history in a mythologized form into an American national and cultural memory" (267). First and foremost, he probes the reasons why Emanuel Leutz's 1851 painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware* surpasses all other visual versions of the same or related themes in its contribution to the establishment of the trope of *Washington Crossing* as a site of cultural memory. Therefore, Fitz compares and contrasts Leutz's work with the representations of the same scene by George S. Lang, Thomas Sully, and George Caleb Bingham. Admittedly, Leutz's painting is much richer in positive symbolic meanings than any other variation on the subject, and this enhances the mythologizing effect of the picture. Fitz argues that in comparison with the works by other visual artists Leutz's painting has a much greater ideological impact, which has to do with the painter's departures from the historical truth in order to emphasize Washington's monumentality and the historic significance of his actions. The image of the strong, active, confident, and visionary leader appealed to the imagination of American people at the time of the continental expansion. In the metaphorical sense, Leutz's Washington determines the course to be followed by the subsequent generations. It is interesting to mention, after Fitz, that the east-west movement of Washington's boat shown in Leutz's painting is a reversal of the actual west-east move-

ment (280). Leutz portrays Washington as "the *pater patriae*, the mythic father of an idealized nation, a fearless, statuesque and invincible leader of unmatched determination and unprecedented moral values" (282). This image can be seen as a powerful summation of the imaginings about George Washington as reflected in the visual depictions of this national hero in the course of seven-eight decades between Washington's rise to glory and Leutz's emergence as a leading myth-maker among American painters.

Karsten Fitz's *The American Revolution Remembered* is a thoroughly researched and meticulously documented monograph. It is richly illustrated, although apparently the inclusion of an extensive visual material proved to be a major editorial problem, because at places one finds smaller or bigger blanks where neither text nor illustration could be fitted. This editorial drawback is more than amply compensated for by the quality and coherence of the argument. The central thesis about "competing images and conflicting narratives," as stated in the subtitle, is developed as convincingly as it only can be on the basis of examples which are varied as much as intriguing.

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Eva Boesenberg. *Money and Gender in the American Novel, 1850-2000*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 525 pages.

The volume by Eva Boesenberg, impressive in its scope, examines the intersecting themes of money and gender in American literature over a period of 150 years, presenting an analysis of thirty-five novels, grouped into nine chapters. The texts include canonical classics, lesser known texts by canonical authors and a few gems rarely discussed in survey courses. The list includes Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Edith Wharton's *The Custom of the Country*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, but also H.D's *Hermione*, Fannie Hurst's *Luminox*, and Meridel Le Sueur's *The Girl*. The key for organizing the chapters is chronological and while the novels may seem to be chosen arbitrarily, Boesenberg's analysis is applicable to practically all works of American literature. The author's primary interest in this study, that is the function of money in the construction of femininity and masculinity, is a cross-cutting issue in American fiction. The book opens with an introductory chapter presenting the economic history of the United States as related to changes in gender norms and, particularly, women's increasing economic agency. Boesenberg notes that securing the possession of money, as a goal of one's life, has been intertwined with American individualism (and thus American masculinity) since Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* established the blueprint of the American "rags to riches" narrative. Her readings of the numerous novels quite often focus

on how male writers have grappled with this aspect of the American Dream and how female writers have challenged or—albeit much less often—supported women's exclusion from the sphere of economic agency.

The extensive scope of the analysis is made possible by Boesenberg's broad understanding of the concept of money. The volume opens with an overview of the different definitions of money, mostly as discussed by major economists (Keynes, Galbraith, Friedman), pointing out that the absence of a "concise, practicable definition may not be a serious handicap" (2), for it opens up interpretive possibilities. Even though the author announces that her study will concern "money in all its manifestations, as income, property, unit of value, coin, bank-note, etc." (3), in praxis this far-reaching goal is extended even further and the book becomes a perceptive analysis of the intersections of gender and economic relations. What may seem to be a shortcoming of the volume can also be seen as its asset: the book delivers more than it promises. However, the vagueness of the author's definition of money may, occasionally, lead to confusion. What seems particularly worrisome is the periodic use of the word "money" as something of a shorthand for both "capitalism" and "economic self-sufficiency."

In the part of the volume devoted to nineteenth-century literature, money is understood more through association than through an encyclopedic definition; and, in that time period, the association stemmed from the ideology of separate spheres. Money, alongside countless other attributes, is ascribed to the domain of the public and thus of the masculine, along with "self-interest, reason, politics and the law" (84). Boesenberg's analysis of Beecher Stowe's monumental *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reveals how this ideology engendered "oxymoronic effects" (85) in the perception of money. Boesenberg recounts the by now classic argument that Stowe uses the ideology of separate spheres—and particularly the ideology of motherhood—as a powerful tool against slavery. In fact, she shows slavery to be a result of valuing money over Christian morality and the family (84-85). In the division of attributes of each of the spheres, within the framework of the "cult of true womanhood," money becomes an antithesis of virtue (88). It is the commercialization of the mother-child tie, the most sacred bond in sentimental discourse, which serves as the strongest argument against slavery and which is aimed to elicit empathy of the white female reader for the plight of the slave.

Boesenberg then proceeds to reveal the contradictions within the ideological framework of Stowe's novel. She does this with flair, showing how Stowe sometimes uses the logic of the market to further the abolitionist agenda. Some of the examples include Stowe's endorsement of free-labor over slave labor as more profitable in the long-term, demonstrated in the fate of George Shelby's liberated ex-slaves who remain with him and contribute to maximizing his gains (94), or in the final chapter which authenticates

the experiences of fugitive slaves by providing an account of their monetary value, thereby reducing them to the status of property, in a similar manner as the discourse of slavery did (93). Notwithstanding—and Boesenberg is well aware of this—such a portrayal of ex-slaves was a tactical maneuver meant to emphasize their self-reliance, ability to lead independent lives and success, which must necessarily be measured in dollars.

Boesenberg argues that money management skills are linked to manliness (91), and that in order to create a stronger argument for the capability of ex-slaves to lead self-sufficient lives, the book must depict black men as endowed with skills for managing and multiplying money. And here she provides the example of Tom, whose proficiency at managing his masters' money (first of Shelby, then of the particularly effeminate and utterly wasteful St. Claire) proves, she claims, "his manliness and sterling character" (88). However, this example seems ill-suited as Tom—as was pointed out as early as 1949—has been "divested of his humanity, robbed of his sex" (Baldwin 18) and can hardly serve as an example of "manliness." Notwithstanding this example, the author's analysis of the—logically incoherent yet strategically necessary—reading of money in abolitionist discourse, as both the ultimate evil which entails the outrages of slavery and as a structural element of the construction of free masculinity, is logical and innovative. The only shortcoming of this argument is, as I have stated above, the definition of money. If one replaces the umbrella term "money" in the above sentence with more precise terms, such as free-market capitalism on the one hand and economic self-sufficiency of the individual on the other, the result may be confusion.

A major shortcoming of this book is its lack of grounding in Marxist theory. Discussing the role of money in the construction of gender in America without, however briefly, mentioning Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* a classic text proving that the link between the Protestant ethic, which lies at the foundations of America, and capitalism, was visible long before Franklin, decreases the credibility of the author's perceptive close readings of literary works. Nonetheless, this highly interesting and inspiring volume is most certainly proof of Beosenberg's awe-inspiring fluency in literary criticism and constitutes a significant and most welcome addition to scholarship on the construction of American literary masculinities and femininities.

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Janet Floyd, Alison Easton, R.J. Ellis, Lindsey Traub, eds. *Becoming Visible. Women's Presence in Late Nineteenth-Century America*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010. 370 pages.

The title of this interdisciplinary collection is already an attempt to transgress binary dichotomies in rendering spatiality; the volume functioned under the working title of *Stepping Out* until the editors realized that by adopting such a title they would, paradoxically, be strengthening the public/private and inside/outside oppositions which they were aiming at revealing as not just constructs to be overcome, but also as parameters that are insufficient for describing the lives of many American women at the end of the nineteenth century. The title was thus changed to *Becoming Visible* in an effort to emphasize the degrees of change rather than its radical either/or character. The lives of the women discussed in the collection—including Ida B. Wells, Mother Jones, Jane Addams, Rebecca Harding Davis, Willa Cather, Sarah Orne Jewett, Louisa May Alcott and Kate Douglas Wiggin—show the complex interweaving of the public and the private, the instability of these domains, and their numerous overlappings.

The essays are quite an eclectic collection, including historical research documenting women's lives, essays analyzing the lives of individual women as representative of larger changes taking place in the American society at the time as well as texts presenting critical readings of nineteenth-century literature by women. In fact, the position of literature seems a bit privileged but the volume was inspired by a colloquium organized under the auspices of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers. The interdisciplinary approach allows the editors to present a fuller picture of women in the Gilded Age and, inevitably, reveals the interconnected nature not just of the supposedly separate spheres but also the need for a methodology that surpasses the boundaries between the various disciplines, a trademark maneuver of outstanding volumes from the field of gender studies.

This goal is most poignantly achieved in the essay by one of the co-editors of the collection, Alison Easton, titled "'Outdoor Relief': Sarah Orne Jewett, Annie Adams Fields, and the Visit in Gilded Age America." In an unorthodox gesture that transgresses disciplinary boundaries and methodologies, Easton compares two books published by the two life companions, Jewett's third novel *The Country Doctor* and Fields's manual *How to Help the Poor*, and analyzes the trope of visiting as a narrative device providing a link between these two texts and exposing the transgressing of boundaries between the public and the private in the lives of middle-class women. Visiting was, as Easton notes, something "Fields organized and Jewett imagined" (134). In each of the two very different books visiting was an opportunity for entering the private realm of another family or individual while performing public obligations.

Easton explores the surprisingly subversive aspects of the socially conservative activity of philanthropy. Fields's manual concerns a form of charity work referred to as "outdoor relief," that is establishing the actual needs of the poor through house calls or visits. The author does not simplistically rejoice in the possibilities for "stepping out" into the public sphere which such activities opened up for women, but points out the tensions related to intersections of gender and class implicit in the process: "if middle-class visitors… were less concerned with working-class privacy… it was because charitable visitors deemed these home conditions a matter of public concern" (133). However, the (female) visitor was not simply a representative of the law, anointed with the power of the public sphere. Her gender made carrying out such work particularly uncomfortable and, as Easton puts it, forced the visitors to step "out of their own safety zone" (137). Jewett's *A Country Doctor* also utilizes the trope of visiting in a similarly multi-layered manner. The main protagonist, Nan Prince, boldly enters the medical profession, a task which, in the countryside, requires making numerous house calls. Easton notices that Nan's visiting is both "legitimate (doctors step in between public and private) and alarming (women entering a male profession)" (140). It does matter that Nan's paternal family are upper-class and they are the ones who try to persuade her to give up professional work and limit her activities to housekeeping. Easton's unusual comparative reading of the social-work manual and Jewett's novel (and a few other works of fiction) reveals that the distinction between the private and the public was a fiction that only the rich could afford to maintain.

Brilliant readings like Easton's are complemented with historical analyses like S.J. Kleinberg's article on women's employment in the period 1880-1920, illustrating the reality of women's wage labor in the late nineteenth century. Kleinberg presents data, in graph form, showing the racial and age stratification of women working in white-collar, agricultural, service, and manual jobs. The overwhelming "popularity" of the service sector (maids, housekeepers and cleaning ladies) proves the points made by Easton and other contributors, that is that paid work, usually conceived as located in the public sphere, in reality was (and often still is) located in the private homes of upper class families. This argument is only augmented in Margaret Walsh's chapter "Visible Women in the Needle Trades," which through a historical analysis of the working conditions reveals that in the Gilded Age the private space of the home of working-class women became public as "most entrepreneurs used outside workers whose home was their site of gainful employment" (71).

Other contributors take on the definition of women's visibility more directly, a case in point being the essay by Lindsey Traub, also one of the co-editors of the collection, on Louisa May Alcott's narrative experiments related to depicting female visibility. Traub

explores how in Alcott's fiction "through internalization and continuous modification of the effect of their visibility, women can sometimes exert a degree of control over it" (157). Furthermore, she contextualizes Alcott's particular emphasis on visibility in the context of nineteenth-century ideas of femininity, Alcott's own life and the literary genre of domestic fiction she was engaging. Traub notices that Alcott's strategies for negotiating visibility had to necessarily be more subtle than those used in the convention of the gothic fable, which used exoticism to achieve the necessary distancing, thereby preventing "any suggestion of reader emulation or moral sanction" (159). Subtlety, however, does not equal a lack of subversive possibility and Traub splendidly reveals how the agency of Alcott's characters is related to the control they have over their visibility, and, in contrast, how a woman being watched unaware, as Sylvia Yule is in the opening of *Moods*, is in fact shown as vulnerable, as prey of the man who watches.

Many of the remaining essays are no less interesting than the ones referred to above, although the collection does suffer from a certain unevenness. Even though the main premise of the volume is not groundbreaking—an analysis of how the private/public distinction had been constructed has been taken on by many scholars from the field of gender studies (and these are dutifully referenced by the editors)—the book vividly contextualizes how the distinction influenced the lives of women in the Gilded Age and, most importantly, how understanding women as confined to the private sphere constitutes an oversimplification of the complex roles they played.

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Astrid Franke, *Pursue the Illusion: Problems of Public Poetry in America*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. xiv + 281 pages.

Having acknowledged conventional reasons for the claim that poetry may be "the least" public of all genres (2), Astrid Franke performs a *volte-face*, asserting that this may be precisely the source of its strength and of its "dangerous" potential as a political medium. In an impressively intricate introduction that leaves few loose ends, she explains that precisely *because* you cannot take poetry's political potency for granted, the genre's traditional public commitment has required constant rhetorical and formal innovation. The author argues that poetry calls forth its reading public, shapes it and raises it to collective self-consciousness in ways best described by Dewey. She also claims that it is American pragmatism that offers a more useful paradigm for literary studies than Habermasian 'public sphere.' Franke's is a fresh approach to the question of public poetry, an interesting contribution to the field dominated in the last two decades by scholars

like Cary Nelson or Michael Thurston. Unlike them, she is not interested in the recovery of socially engaged poets snubbed by the academia which still adheres—though it can no longer explain why—to the criteria of stringent literary excellence. Paradoxically, her freshness consists in that she engages well-known public poets, almost cardboard literary history figures, such as Longfellow, Whitman or Eliot. Zooming in on the literariness of their poems, she offers nunanced "Adornian" readings. Franke often looks for unresolved formal tensions that betray anxieties in the way poets address the intended public, align themselves with a "we" or separate themselves from others.

Her analysis of Phillis Wheatley is exemplary. Franke explains how Wheatley's frontispiece and her poems in the tradition of the Puritan funeral elegy project a diversified audience; how they make an irrefutable claim to a variety of sentiments and traditions, moderating its racially subversive impact. Such attitudes of the elegiac tradition as humbleness, expert bereavement by African Americans, special veneration for the dead who happens to be a British aristocrat cannot be repressed or denied but they win over emotional acceptance for a different political landscape. I am won over by her argument that the kind of cultural work performed by politically "dangerous" poems takes place in our participation in the poem's attitude. Reading a poem is entering a "state of being" "participating in a manner of speaking" (27). The reverse side of Whitley's poem's awkward performativity is that they also make evident various rifts running across American society—the divisions between Christians and secularists, or loyalists and patriots.

Between two poets Vachel Lindsay and T. S. Eliot, neither of whom she considers truly public, Franke strings a continuum that will help her assess the achievements of others. Lindsay doesn't address, to say nothing of calling forth, any self-aware public that can be moved by a cause to an action; in his determination to reach the mass audience he became something of an Aeolian lyre of popular entertainment, advertisement, commodity culture and the ruling ideologies of his time. Curiously, T. S. Eliot does not fare any better: he reached ever abstract levels of self-awareness to find himself thoroughly immobilized and alienated. The two failures—at least from the perspective of the public sphere—embody the hazards that William Carlos Williams and Muriel Rukeyeser effectively avoided.

Painstakingly researched and highly readable, though resolutely pedestrian in style, the book comprehensively contextualizes the rhetorical situations of public poets and their precarious position. Franke discusses them in pairs, as if they were coming in generational waves. Different as they are each time—you do not see Lowell compared with Hayden often—they give a better view of the larger shifts of public culture and of variety of possible responses. Very carefully thought out, the book explores and maps all the nooks and crannies of her theme with admirable attention. It offers an original interpre-

tive approach which must have been very challenging in the works, though the results are deceptively and refreshingly easy to read. Franke is always attentive to the formal features of language, never neglecting to comment on meter or an assonance scheme.

Perhaps occasionally the author seems to be yielding to a dissertation-derived regime of "thesis plus five applications." For what else may have pushed her to offer a very competent but nothing-out-of-the-ordinary reading of Lowell and his overdiscussed public poems such as "For the Union Dead," "Memories of West Street and Lepke" or *Near the Ocean*? The claim that he developed the paradoxical voice of the "silent majority" and achieved the stature of a major public poet precisely by articulating the position of powerlessness, passivity and disillusionment is not anything surprising; Franke herself points out that such a take on the author of *Life Studies* has many progenitors. Ultimately, Lowell's rhetorical stance serves mostly as a handy contrast to illustrate Hayden's self-positioning as a black poet. Hayden could never claim anything approaching Lowell's natural authority to speak for the nation at large. With his address on Beacon Hill, Lowell made everyone—including, rather famously, Elizabeth Bishop—green with envy; hence Hayden's neomodernist impersonality.

Though all chapters deserve praise, the most *useable* perhaps will be the one on the more recent trends in American public poetry. In this final, unabashedly evaluative section, Franke sifts through hundreds of poems to isolate a trend which, to her mind, demonstrates the enduring relevance of the genre. She homes in on the work of Haryette Mullen, Alicia Ostriker and on the more recent work of Adrienne Rich, and argues that they may represent the most promising development today, swerving as it does from the deconstructive mode practiced not so long ago by the Language poets. Instead of warring against the construction of the self and the world, they emphasize it and build upon it. In a manner that reminds me of Frank Bidart, they develop intensely cognitive and emotive modes to arrive at a better understanding of their "relation to the world." Thus they recover their sense of their wider responsibilities and restore their ability for empathy and the possibility for action.

Craftily planned out and splendidly executed, the book draws richly from the work of European philosophers and leading European Americanists. Adorno and Habermas set the terms for her discussion; Heinz Ickstadt and Marc Chénetier are found most helpful. Needless to say, one expects nothing less from the winner of a newly established Rob Kroes Publication Award and a book that has the recommendations of the European Association for American Studies (EAAS), bent, I am sure, on maintaining the reputation of its imprint as an unfailing guarantor of scholarly excellence and of the European perspective.

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Andrew S. Gross and Susanne Rohr. *Comedy—Avant-Garde—Scandal: Remembering the Holocaust after the End of History*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 206 pages.

Sophia Komor and Susanne Rohr, eds. *The Holocaust, Art and Taboo: Transatlantic Exchanges on the Ethics and Aesthetics of Representation*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 272 pages.

As artists first began to imagine the Holocaust, questions of ethics and the conventions of such representation were raised. What were the limits of representation? What could and could not be represented? What did authentic depiction of the catastrophe look like? Additionally, what were the conventions (thematically and structurally, at least) of representing the Holocaust? What were adequate modes of representation? Finally, should the Holocaust be depicted at all?

In those moments, Holocaust representation entered a historical process that began with attempts at depicting the reality of the event. The traditional didactic demand was that representation should function as a way to teach the "lessons of the Shoah." These early generations of artists focused primarily on how to depict the Holocaust toward that didactic end. In their useful Introduction to *The Holocaust, Art, and Taboo*, editors Sophia Komor and Susanne Rohr identify a paradigm shift in Holocaust representation that occurred decades later. The book consists of contributions to the international conference of the same title, held at the University of Hamburg in June 2008, along with a few additional writings on the theme. They show that the pedagogy moved from earlier demands for a direct didacticism, illustrated by an almost complete adherence to realism in representation, to a search for new ways of expression. The immediate reaction to this new kind of art, which broke long-held taboos, was outrage and indignation. These generic and thematic shifts were seen as a transgression of established forms of representation, and instead of offering Holocaust art as a lesson, provoked viewers to remember. To illustrate the transgression, each of the authors included in this volume investigate the paradigm shift from a different perspective.

In *Comedy—Avant-Garde—Scandal,* authors Andrew S. Gross and Susanne Rohr also discuss the idea of artistic transgression of conventional modes of representing the Holocaust as a provocation to remember. They find the foundation of this theory within modernist aesthetic debates between questions of mass culture as "mystifying" or the equation of popularity with bad taste. Is shocking Holocaust art insensitive or simply a "(cultural) return of the (historically) repressed" (9)? Yet, they observe a consensus among all critics that assumes the Holocaust to be pervasive and significant and at the same time unsignifiable. This paradox argues against a propriety of Holocaust images, allowing new strategies to open up in representation.

Examined in isolation or as part of the book, the essays in both fine collections take a long and wide look at the Holocaust through the question of cultural memory. The questions they raise are absolutely pertinent to our contemporary moment, where the need for the new must still include acts of (even sentimental) remembrance. New commemorative art must forge a connection to the past. Can avant-garde strategies help us traverse this terrain? Can we read transgression as a form of commemoration? A central theme in both books concerns American cultural memory in particular. Is the Holocaust an American memory? What is the international memory discourse?

The essays acknowledge and closely examine, through a diversity of genres of Holocaust art, this paradigm shift from a purposeful and didactic demand to a variety of representations and different points of view. There are several possible moments which date this shift; they point directly at one in particular, but another follows close behind. The first, the release of the 1997 film *La vita e bella* (*Life Is Beautiful*) by Roberto Benigni, caught the public off-guard. Winning several Academy Awards, the film eventually won over the public, shown by comments made by the national director of the American Anti-Defamation league, Abraham Foxman, a Holocaust survivor, who saw it as a new strategy of Holocaust representation.

Taboos continued to be lifted, and an important example of what became scandalous art was the "Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art" exhibition held at the Jewish Museum in New York in Summer 2002. This exhibition was paramount in challenging the focus of Holocaust representation. The 13-artist exhibition focused on perpetrators rather than victims; with varying degrees of confrontation they force us onto morally ambiguous terrain. The "LEGO Concentration Camp Set," in particular, created an international commotion resulting in outrage and indignation in communities around the world. In the preface to the catalogue, Joan Rosenbaum, the director of the Jewish Museum, wrote that the artists "dismiss classicism, edifices, and memorial rituals. They replace them with a disquieting, demanding, and jolting approach, which asks us over and over again to look deeply into human behavior." New questions emerged from the images and our reaction to them. What did the face of evil look like? Did one depict images of suffering, or the evil-doers who caused such suffering?

As history recedes, what approach leads to deeper knowledge of these events and to deeper understanding of the human condition? Do we sanctify the unmediated memoirs and realistic depiction of Nazi persecution, created in the first few decades after the Holocaust, or as James Young observes, do we see the "vicarious and hypermediated" experience of those born after the Holocaust as a necessary obsession of second and third generation children of the catastrophe?

Since the 1990s, Holocaust art has presented a radical departure from earlier decades in the content and presentation of Holocaust imagery. It moved from relatively conventional formats, identified clearly in national terms, to forming a prominent theme across borders in American, European, and Israeli art, literature and film. Much of this art attracted international attention by breaking a number of taboos. The untraditional modes of representation were highly provocative, even scandalous. Implicit and explicit comparisons to other atrocities was shocking. Art Spiegelman's graphic novels, *Maus I* and *Maus II,* which describe the author's father's experience during the Holocaust while presenting the author's own experience as a child of survivors, won a Pulitzer Prize Special Award in 1992. Noted in the *New York Times*, was the observation by members of the committee, that it was hard to classify the cartoonist's depiction of Nazi Germany. Was it history, memoir, or a comic book? The inability to understand not just the generic classification but the author's intent and artistic motivation challenged the critical climate such works were born into.

Both of these volumes concentrate on the international rupture caused by the widespread nature of the controversies of these individual pieces and curated exhibitions. By addressing several key questions, the editors and authors present their understanding of what this paradigm shift meant at the time and what it suggests for the future of Holocaust imagery. Why did the Holocaust become so prominent in transatlantic art in the 1990s, and why did so much of that art court controversy? The authors and editors of these volumes carefully argue for the global effect of the Holocaust and its growth into an event whose memory is influenced by global intellectual shifts. Taken together, both volumes are keen to help us understand that contemporary culture re-shapes images of the past to suit present memory. Holocaust imagery became inadequate once it was understood that it was beyond the limits of understanding.

The present collection of essays proposes that avant-garde presentation of the Holocaust has caused yet another paradigm shift—from outrage and indignation to nonchalance. Komor and Rohr question whether the Holocaust has entered a media-saturated moment and thus lost its special status, and become just another subject for art to deal with. After such films as *Life Is Beautiful* were released, one asked whether a comedy set in a concentration camp crossed the line in artistic representation of the Holocaust. The public willingly rode out that debate, and is still traversing the terrain of viewer discomfort. But being able to ask a question about such representation already signals a different set of central questions. How would such new strategies function? Would they teach the same questions? Are there new lessons to learn?

Artists discussed in these volumes inherited rather than experienced the Holocaust. As a result, we can observe that the main artistic aim now has become the reflection of Ho-

locaust rhetoric. These writers, and the art they examine, analyze the shift in perspective and time by closely investigating both traditional and unconventional forms that are particularly illustrative: testimony, visual art, theater, literature, popular culture, and theory. They look at transatlantic art that ruptures any comfortable sense of an ethics or aesthetics of representation. They present debates that help re-frame questions for our contemporary times, where our reaction to such art has moved from outrage to a kind of nonchalance. These are big questions which understandably concern memory most of all.

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Joanna Durczak, *Rozmowy z ziemią: tradycja przyrodopisarska w literaturze amerykańskiej* [Conversations with the Earth: The Tradition of Nature Writing in American Literature]. Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2010. 278 pages.

It is with great joy and gratitude that I greet Joanna Durczak's pioneering work, whose impressive record is to be found in her latest book *Rozmowy z ziemią: tradycja przyrodopisarska w literaturze amerykańskiej*. Tracing the development of a specifically American genre of nature-writing, Durczak's work addresses a number of issues which are conspicuously missing from Polish critical debates concerning the tasks of literature and its relation to the non-linguistic world. Though the book is devoted almost exclusively to the discussion of selected U.S. nature writers (Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, Kathleen Dean Moore) with only one chapter reserved for a survey of examples of Polish nature-writing, the larger concerns it expresses reach beyond the context of American literature and open up new possibilities for thinking about literature as such. Durczak's work invites a reconsideration of such fundamental issues as the status of the author (who, in the light of the ecocritical approach her analysis often employs, is no longer dead), the validity of knowledge literature is capable of transmitting, and the textual strategies developed by different writers to engage the readers in the process of acquiring this knowledge and thus to invite them to revise their received responses to the natural world.

Why would American nature writing be interesting from the perspective of Polish readers? As Durczak explains in her "Introduction," there are several reasons why now, in particular, this genre deserves a careful examination. First of all, in the face of the current ecological reality—the possibility of a global ecological crisis—American nature writing with its variously expressed eco-awareness has become more valid than ever.

Moreover, the specificity of American literary accounts of nature lies in the fact that they connect the broader philosophical, political, economic or ethical question with the perspective of particular lived experience, thus appealing to the sensitivities of individual readers.

The capacity to address human imagination is of crucial importance, because it is through the appeal to particular readers who live their lives in specific environments that writing may become activism. As the proponents of ecocriticism have repeatedly stated, the belief in the ecological potential of literature is grounded in the conviction that the roots of the modern ecological crisis lie not only in wrong political or economic decisions, or in what traditional Marxism would define as the "base" of social organization, but also in the "superstructure," namely, in the harmful ways in which we, people of the Occident, have figured the relationship between ourselves, other animals, and the earth. The authors discussed in *Rozmowy z ziemią* challenge or at least problematize the anthropocentrism of Euro-American culture. The questioning of anthropocentrism—the foundational premise of humanistic philosophy—is already clearly discernible in the work of Henry David Thoreau, whom Durczak sees as one of the originators of the American tradition of nature writing. It is because of Thoreau's ambivalence towards the humanistic understanding of nature that the author of *Walden* eventually parts way with Emerson. Unlike Emerson, Thoreau perceives clearly that nature does not serve any human purpose, not even the purpose of the contemplation of divinity. Consequently, there are no correspondences between the shapes of the natural world and the construction of the human mind, which further entails the impossibility of a full understanding of nature. Respect for non-human nature's resistance to comprehension and representation is one of the distinctive features of nature writing as understood by Joanna Durczak.

Although Thoreau is a figure no student or practitioner of nature-writing can afford to ignore, it would be wrong to assume that those who follow in his footsteps merely reiterate the ideas presented in his essays and journals. The specificity of Aldo Leopold's work, for instance, is that he believes the conservation of wild nature should be motivated by ethical (and not, for instance, aesthetic, economic or scientific) reasons. What is more, the ethical challenge posed by the otherness of non-human nature is to be answered not only by institutions or organizations but primarily by individuals (*Rozmowy z ziemią* 140). Leopold's ideas are partly derived from his innovative (for the times) reading of some fragments of the Bible. What official Christianity ignored was that some passages in the Old Testament (for instance in the Book of Ezekiel) explicitly condemned the exploitation of forests and waters (115).

The next author and activist discussed by Durczak is Edward Abbey. She notes important affinities with Thoreau, notably in Abbey's most esteemed book, *Desert Soli-*

taire. The similarities concern not only the worldviews of the two writers but also rhetorical devices they employ in their work. Abbey's explanation why he decided to spend time in Archers National Park (we get a fragment in Joanna Durczak's efficient translation) echoes a famous passage from *Walden*:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms. (394)

Abbey, too, speaks about the desire to stand "face to face" with life, regardless of what the costs of this encounter may turn out to be. He goes as far as to say that he would be willing to put his own humanity at risk, as authentic existence is always connected with risk. Though clearly inspired by Thoreau, he radicalizes his predecessor's work, both in terms of style (by adding elements derived from American naturalist tradition) and in terms of conservationist activism. In an important footnote, Durczak presents the recent outcomes of a campaign initiated by Abbey in 1975 to destroy Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River (188). What seemed to be a utopian idea thirty years ago, is now presented by most commentators as an inevitability.

The last of the American nature writers discussed in the book is Kathleen Dean Moore. Here the divergences from Thoreau's proto-ecological philosophy are marked most clearly, not least because the author is a woman. In the chapter devoted to Moore—arguably the most interesting part of *Rozmowy z ziemią*—the author also presents a brief history of women's nature writing. It does not come as a surprise that the exploration of nature, both in reality and in creative work, was traditionally the domain if men. Consequently, the early instances of feminine nature writing copied male paradigms. Kathleen Dean Moore, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and University Writer Laureate at Oregon State University in Corvallis, enters into a courageous dialogue with her male predecessor's. In Durczak's view, one of the distinctive feature of Moore's feminine environmentalism is its insistence on the collective character of human encounters with wild nature, as opposed to male (post)romantic valorization of solitude (Durczak points out that male writers, for instance Thoreau and Leopold, often purposefully omit the fact that during some of their contemplative experiences they were accompanied by other people). Moore is never alone in her books and the presence of others—students, friends, family—does not impoverish but, on the contrary, intensifies her experience of the

world. The fact that one's encounter with the world outside of the confines of one's self is never completely solitary is reflected in Moore's writing also through her extensive dialogues with other thinkers and writers (Socrates, Plato, Bacon, Kant, Thoreau, Leopold). Moore also deconstructs the myth of wilderness as that which must pose a dangerous challenge. Contact with wild nature is not *heroic* in her account, rather, it belongs to the realm of everyday life, work, or recreation. Moreover, she explicitly criticizes Thoreau for choosing "wilderness" (to the extent that the woods around the Walden pond might have been considered as "wild") and opposing it to what she labels as "morally abandoned" landscapes. She challenges contemporary writers to establish meaningful connections to places that are all but wild: cities, farms, suburban fields and fallow lands. It is through this reorientation of the nature writer's interest that she develops her environmental care ethics, which is in keeping with the contemporary tendency, in environmental writing and ecocriticism, to problematize the nature/culture binarism and to reach "beyond nature." [2]

Durczak's compelling work might have been made even more stimulating had the author included more of second-wave ecocritical perspectives in her analysis of the texts discussed in the book. One issue which might perhaps be developed is the problem of anthropomorphic representations of animals in writing and other art-forms. Traditional, "first-wave" ecocritical line, reiterated by Durczak in her introductory chapter, is that anthropomorphism is a form of colonization by means of the imagination. By assigning human features to animals, one denies their otherness, their ultimate unrepresentability. However, one could make an argument which goes in exactly opposite direction. In the light of the radical otherness of non-human nature is not self-conscious anthrophomorphization the most *honest* of all representational strategies? Is not the very notion of representation already deeply embedded in the strictly human way of relating to the world? By pretending that the human imagination can transgress its tendency to anthropomorphism, one would be suggesting that a truthful (objective) representation of non-human nature is possible, at least as a kind of a theoretical ideal, whereas the very idea of "an objective representation" is simply a contradiction in terms. Antrophomorphisation can thus be read as a signal of the artist's awareness of his or her own irreducible position as a human being who observes, understands and re-presents the non-human reality from a certain limited perspective. But this comment should not be read as criticism: rather, as an invitation to further discussion and analysis.

[1]The titles of some of the most significant 21-century ecocritical publications reflect this turn. See, for instance, *Beyond Nature Writing* (ed. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace, University Press of Virginia, 2001) and Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

What needs to be emphasized is that Joanna Durczak's work provides a bridge not only between two cultures (American and Polish) but also between the two respective languages. The majority of the works and critical sources quoted in the book have not yet been translated into Polish, which means that the author had to do all the translation work herself. The sheer immensity of this task deserves admiration. The few instances where more fortunate solutions are possible in no way diminish the great linguistic achievement of the book, but they ought to be mentioned for the sake of its further perfection: the Polish phrase "literatura środowiskowa" does not really convey the same meaning as the English expression "environmental literature"; and "środowiska ochroniarskie" (English: "conservationist circles") bring to the mind of the Polish reader the idea of some sort of association of companies offering security services. These, let me reiterate, are minor complaints about a book whose merit, as a work of literary scholarship and an act environmental activism, is unquestionable.

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Sascha Pöhlmann. *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 381 pages.

Not only is Sascha Pöhlmann's engaging book *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* a cogently and thoroughly argued new contribution to Pynchon studies, but it is also a critical intervention which substantiates the thesis put forward by Aníbal Quijano, a Peruvian sociologist and thinker, that the specific historical-critical imaginary bound up with historical-critical knowledge, or critical theory—a utopian horizon—has been lately restored and is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Like Thomas Pynchon in *Mason & Dixon*, Quijano emphasizes in "The Return of the Future and Questions about Knowledge" that a new horizon projected by the inception of America "created a different meaning for each history, in each space/time" by promising the time that "was far more than a mere continuation of the present. It was something new, it involved change, and it announced or promised what was desired or hoped for, perhaps even dreamt about" (75).

Quijano further explicates that "[t]he idea of a future horizon as a new time for social existence, and hence, as the bearer of a new understanding of history, whether total or partial, radical or superficial, clearly points to a specific perspective on the imaginary di-

mension: that of a historical imaginary" (77). He invokes the historical defeat in the 1980s of this imaginary dimension "linked to liberating people from power—from all power" through "[t]he struggle for the expansion and deepening of democracy in society and not only in the nation-state," as well as through "materialization of the idea of social equality of peoples and … legitimation of their diversity as a form of day-to-day relations among peoples in every sphere of social existence throughout the world" (82).

Quijano traces this defeat back to Eurocentric perspective of critical thought and critical theory of society, growing technocratization inherent in the social theory developed within the Eurocentric cognitive perspective, and the worldwide hegemony of historical materialism as "the most definitely Eurocentric of the versions" (83) of the critical thought and its concomitant critical theory. He points out, however, that the end of the 1990s also marked the end of this defeat due to the worldwide resistance against capitalist globalization: "the worldwide resistance that has got under way implies—or may imply—the reconstruction of a critical imaginary and the rebuilding of a new horizon of future quite different from the one that has been extinguished" (84). The Peruvian sociologist conjectures that it is the "disputes and combinations between the modern nation-state and the new community" that will stake out new ground for "the search for new institutional forms of authority in which power is not present or is reduced and kept under control" (85).

In *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* Sascha Pöhlmann goes further and explores the critical theory and practice of the postnational as projecting an even more radically utopian future horizon and historical imaginary: "[t]his utopian element renders the term *postnational* useful even in a world that is not *temporally* postnational" (18). He defines the postnational as "anything that works towards dismantling the hegemony of nation-ness as a metanarrative" (8) and stresses that "postnationalism seeks to emphasize and maintain diversity and radical pluralism while challenging those (meta)narratives that seek to curb it" (17).

The epigraph to the introductory chapter "Pynchon and the Postnational World(s)"—a short passage from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*—aptly identifies the concept pivotal to Pöhlmann's considerations. The idea that things could be other than they are bespeaks both his critical formulation of the concept of the postnational and ways of carrying it out and the discussion of Pynchon's postnational imagination because, as Pöhlmann's considerations self-reflexively foreground, "[w]hat makes literary texts especially significant postnational material is their capability to create worlds instead of describing 'the' world" (19). The last four chapters of his book are devoted to the author's interpretation of Pynchon's novels *Mason & Dixon*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and, briefly, *Against the Day*, through the lens of the critical reflection developed in the chapters two and three. At the same time, however, his conception of the postnational is put to test and

proves an apt and efficacious tool in the process of interrogating Pynchon's non-linear narratives. It provides new perspectives on the writer's representations of nation-ness, his critical view of an alleged necessity for a particular geopolitical order to emerge and the extent of its biopolitical rule.

Importantly, Pöhlmann takes into consideration the phenomenon of negative potentiality in the form of oppression or an entrenchment of alterity, which also inhere in the radical openness. He clearly shows that what makes Pynchon's texts compelling is, among other aspects, the fact that their postnationalism is twofold. On the one hand, "*Mason & Dixon* and *Gravity's Rainbow* form *part of* a postnational imagination in that they seek to imagine other worlds than this national one" (21). On the other hand, "they also *describe* this postnational imagination in that they demand for it a multiplicity of ideas instead of the hegemony of a single metanarrative" (21).

It thus comes as no surprise that although chapter two, "What is postnationalism"—the longest in Pöhlmann's book—presents and discusses an array of views, theories and philosophical thought which contribute to the articulation of his original definition and understanding of the phenomenon of the postnational, the words 'imagination' and 'the imaginary' claim the readers' attention as they appear in the first and in the last sentence of this section of the book. As in the introductory chapter, the author emphasizes here a tremendous role played by imagination and the collective imaginary as a social force in the emergence of postnationalism, while the radical character of the notion of the postnational is indicated by the epigraph taken from Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions*: "And every nation will burn" (qtd. in Pöhlmann 25).

In dismantling the metanarrative of nation-ness, Pöhlmann draws on the long tradition of social constructivism. He comments on the works by Ernest Renan, Ernest Gellner, and Benedict Anderson as theorists of nation-ness whose reflection indirectly gestures towards postnationalism. In the section devoted to the discussion of the views of thinkers consciously articulating what can be interpreted as postnationalist ideas, Pöhlmann interrogates the writings of Jürgen Habermas, Martin Albrow, Arjun Appadurai, as well as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, all of whom point to the necessity of thinking "outside the national categories that prove to be insufficient in the contemporary world" (70). By reaching as far back as Ernest Renan's reflection on the nation as a social construction in his lecture "What is a Nation?"(1882), the author shows that the roots of thinking in postnational terms and the questioning of the essentialist claims of nation-ness can be found in the late 19th century in the midst of the surge of nationalisms and the rise of nation-states. Moreover, Renan's reflection on the relationship between nation-ness and history and his meditation on *forgetting together* as opposed to *remembering together* invoked by nationalists as crucial to creating a national bond, make the French philosopher a predecessor of

thinking in terms of non-linear para-histories so important for the emergence of postnationalism.

Ernest Gellner's definition of nationalism proposed in *Nations and Nationalism* where he shows it to hold that the political and national entities should be congruent, is very useful as a negative comparison in Pöhlmann's later apology of non-linearity, alterity, difference, polivocality, multidimensionality, and potentiality of postnationalism. Gellner's emphasis on the emotional entanglement of nationalism and the power of eliciting loyalty comparable to that of religious metanarrative help Pöhlmann explain the tenacity of the grip of nation-ness and show why it is still a relevant issue that to a certain degree still contributes to the shaping of our worldview. In discussing Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* the author considers, among other ideas, the performativity of nation-ness and the national identity, which leads to the conclusion that "the postnational imaginary can create new communities" (66).

In "The Postnational Constellation" (1998/2001) Jürgen Habermas points to the necessity for the democratic process to transcend the nation-state borders, but simultaneously fears that outside its traditional habitat democracy might evaporate. Although he thus introduces a negative reflection on the scope of globality which produces challenges beyond democratic control, he nevertheless postulates cultural solidarity as a decisive factor contributing to the success or failure of a community. Pöhlmann believes that postnationalist project can contribute significantly to the creation of a pluralist collective identity based on an expansion of solidarity beyond national borders, but he is also aware that "[i]f postnationalism attacks rigid structures and identities, it must be careful not to establish some itself" (79).

Martin Albrow theorizes a paradigm shift in *The Global Age* where he considers the displacement of the modern age by the global age, which will result in the radical change of the point of reference for individuals and groups in terms of social organization and practice. However, the postnational critique, according to Albrow, cannot engage only nation-ness but also capitalism and modern rationality as they all create an intricate network of symbiotic interrelationships and mutual constructions. It is on the territory of the global culture that the hegemony of the idea of nation-ness fades because of culture's fluidity and unpredictability.

In *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai expresses an opinion that the materials needed for the emergence of postnational imaginary are to be found around us already. By employing them the work of imagination can freely transcend the boundaries of nation-ness. This can happen, for instance, in the process of launching "subversive micronarratives" (qtd. in Pöhlmann 98) through which individuals and groups seek to implement the idea of 'self-making,' a strategy that evokes a space of contestation poised between the utopia of the purely emancipatory and disciplining policies. As Pöhlmann points out, "Pynchon's

novels are precisely that material" (99), because they probe into the narrative(s) of America as the space of both a defeat and a possibility of postnationalist utopia's interplay of micro-narratives.

In *Empire* Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri warn us against a new sovereignty, which has risen along with the crossing over from a modern to a postmodern mode, in the process of "relocating from the nation-state to transnational structures" (Pöhlmann 114). They call Empire a series of national and supranational entities operating under what they designate as the single logic of rule, whose goal, "like that of nation-ness, is to be inescapable" (119). In *Multitude*, in turn, Hardt and Negri explore the concept of the multitude—an alternative, or a "constructive countermodel" (115)—ensconced in and growing with Empire, which they define as "biopolitical self-organization" (qtd. in Pöhlmann 133). Multitude is an open "network that provides the mean of encounter so that we can work and live in common," in which "all differences can be expressed freely and equally" (qtd. in Pöhlmann 115). In being "always fictional, no matter how real it may be" (138), the multitude remains in the dialectical relationship with Empire. Thus, "motivated by postnational desire, the multitude cause[s] the creation of Empire; on the other hand it remains directly opposed to it" (125). Pöhlmann summarizes Hardt and Negri's position insightfully and elegantly by pointing out that although they "deal with this world… they also imagine another world; their use of fictional strategies—carried out more self-reflexively than by many historians after Hayden White—is in itself an illustration of what they theorize" (115).

In discussing Thomas Pynchon's texts as postnationalist, Pöhlmann demonstrates that it is a consideration of possibility that most efficaciously questions the myth of necessity. Therefore, "[p]ostnational thought attacks the self-proclaimed necessity of nation-ness by showing alternatives to it and celebrating the possibilities it excludes" (134). Pynchon's postnational strategies are aimed at laying bare the mystification of "the bizarre natural-ness" (135) of both capitalism and nation-ness. In the chapter "Postnational Parageography," Pöhlmann draws the readers' attention to a passage from *Mason & Dixon*, ignored so far by critics, which introduces the term "parageography" understood as "superimposing of alternative maps of the world upon the more familiar ones" (142).

Parageography and "parahistory" modeled on it are fundamental postnationalist practices both represented and engaged by Pynchon in his interrogation of the mutual related histories of Europe and the USA in *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Mason & Dixon*. While in *Gravity's Rainbow* "rationality, capitalism, and nation-ness" work together in Pynchon's representation of the relation between the histories of Europe and the USA "to limit the potential to the actual for purposes of sovereignty" and "America as an open space of potential [is represented as] ruined by the forces that limited it to a place subsumed under the narrative of nation-ness," *Mason & Dixon* can be considered "a representation of that open

space under attack by these forces" (153-154). Pöhlmann's postantionalist perspective on *Gravity's Rainbow* demonstrates, however, that besides representing—in the postnationalist spirit—of "the consequences of this closure," the novel can also be regarded as "a meditation on possibilities of resistance and the potential of space opening again" (154). This interpretational gesture on the part of Pöhlmann thus performs the postnationalist restoration of the utopian horizon, whose demise and recent resurgence has been announced by Quijano.

It must be emphasized that not only is Sascha Pöhlmann's *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* an outstanding contribution to the body of scholarship on Thomas Pynchon as well as being a groundbreaking critical intervention developing ideas connected with the concept of postnationalism, but it is also an excellent didactic aid, a handbook usefully ordering and commenting on the foundational texts pertaining to the concept, critical theory, and practice of postnationalism. Moreover, Pöhlmann's book creates a multidimensional postnationalist space in its own right, conducive to the presentation of multiple views, alternative ethical and aesthetical perspectives and interpretations, and open to possibility, where the readings of Pynchon's representations of openness and closure are in constant flux, concomitant with the emergence of utopian imaginary and critical practice at the cusp of philosophy, sociology, politics, and literary imagination.

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Dominika Ferens, *Ways of Knowing Small Places: Intersections of American Literature and Ethnography since the 1960s*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2010. 199 pages.

As most books touching the live tissue of current cultural debates, Dominika Ferens's study initially appears too heterogeneous in its analytical material, hardly coherent in its overall argumentation, and rather wayward and amorphous in its structure. But soon these objections turn out to be just first impressions, and any eventual reservations as regards matters of form and thesis dissolve on reaching the end of the work. This book simply had to assume the shape it did in order to embrace most of the diversity and nuances of its subject which concerns the multiple and complex interrelations of aesthetic and ethnographic writings in America, from the 1960s until the present.

Ferens's book develops its argumentation on the basis of specific, provisional as she cautions, generic categories of these interrelations which the author scrupulously distinguishes and names in her introductory chapter. These are ethnographic fiction (autobio-

graphical fiction written by ethnographers), minority fiction containing figures of anthropologists and conceived as a critique of ethnography, auto-ethnography (minority writings responding to the mainstream readership demand for authentic cultural representation), counter-ethnography (minority fiction turning the ethnographic gaze at mainstream America), mock-ethnography, and anti-ethnography (proposing ways of cultural perception alternative to the ethnographic) (26). In subsequent chapters the author analyzes these generic types and their combinations on the basis of carefully selected examples of both "white" and ethnic/minority writers, beginning with texts written in the 1960s and ending with those published as late as 2003.

As the title itself announces, the object of study will be, on the one hand, epistemology (ways of knowing), and here of greatest interest to the author is the traditional ethnographic perception of cultural difference, as well as its recently developed variations and alternatives, often with the help of literary methods. On the other hand, the book's central concern is the ethnographic depiction and literary representation of "small places," specifically islands, which constituted favorite locations for classic ethnographic fieldwork. It typically concentrated on cultures isolated and exotic for the western reader, enabling him to recreate the "timeless" patterns of "primitive" life, and compare them to more complex western modes of existence in order to capture the process of transformation from the primeval to more complicated social structures. In the course of ethnographic cognition, "small places" were usually taken out of history and represented as unchanging idyllic societies which offered tempting, if unreal, alternatives to western civilization. The texts analyzed by Ferens expose and debunk these mythical underpinnings of classic ethnography, in the process of reversal which often relies on placing the insular locations back in their historical, colonial, postcolonial, or neocolonial contexts.

Mythologization apart, the very scientific venture to observe and describe the exotic was as a rule based on the positivist assumption of the neutrality and objectivity of the ethnographic gaze that rendered the ethnographer's presence and activities amidst his native "informants" invisible. What was even less likely to be noticed was a network of power relations and cultural hierarchies that decided about the superior position of the anthropologist vis-a-vis the people he came to analyze. Moreover, the traditional explorer of cultural difference was even further removed from an awareness that there might have been something improper about his prying into the most intimate aspects of the natives' lives: what he did was after all made legitimate by the authority of science itself. And even as late as the 1990s, as consummate an ethnographer as Clifford Geertz justified the ways of ethnographic perception by referring to anthropologists as modern purveyors of magic, "merchants of astonishment," pursuing their exotic dragons for the benefit and instruction of their audience at home.

The breakthrough decade of the 1960s brought early documented instances of returning the impassive ethnographic gaze by islanders of diverse ethnic origin, and fixing it on the oppressive dominant culture that once observed them and their ancestors as "natives." Ethnographers themselves, inspired by anti-positivist tendencies in science, began to question and problematize their methods, the narrative voice and perspective in their accounts, as well as the degree to which their own writing was suffused with literary techniques, and as such could be easily called to doubt as objective and epistemologically neutral scientific evidence. Dominika Ferens first proceeds to explore the resulting interconnections between ethnography and fiction writing on the basis of two groups of American authors: these who are mainstream ethnographers themselves and self-consciously use fictional methods to make their cultural analysis if not more penetrating then more attractive to the reader (Rhoda Halperin, Margery Wolf, Edith Turner), and those minority writers who use the character of an ethnographer in their plots to expose the pretence of misconceived superiority assumed in contact with the object of ethnographic study (Paule Marshall, Gloria Naylor, Russell Leong), Ferens devotes her first two chapters to these two groups of authors, reversing, however, the order one might expect: the first chapter concerns the minority writers poking fun at classic ethnographic performance as it were, while in the second she focuses on white female ethnographers employing fictional methods in their accounts of cultural otherness, and by this disturbing the usual ethnographic perspective. This maneuver proves a little confusing: one might assume that the innovative scientists of the mainstream should be looked at in the first place, to give way to an analysis of further instances of departure from the classic ethnographic position. However, it might be also granted that the author of the study wanted in this way to avoid too prompt and easy generalizations that might emerge at the crossing points between these two types of writing.

The following third chapter brings an exhaustive discussion of O. A. Bushnell's fictionalized treatment of the Hawaii leprosy commune Molokai of 1963, written by a native, but white and therefore a dominant, inhabitant of the island. As Ferens underscores, an interesting aspect of Bushnell's perspective was his submerged attention paid to non-normative sexuality and the status of disability as a sign of stigma, abjection, and pathology. The environment depicted in Bushnell's novel seems to subvert the normativity of the outside world: in the reality of Molokai, the sick and the abject displace and question the norm, or rather, they become the norm themselves. An additional asset of Ferens's discussion of Bushnell is her meticulous account of other, mostly earlier literary responses to the Molokai settlement, such as those by the San Francisco writer Charles Warren Stoddard, Robert Louis Stevenson and his wife, Jack London, and later Paul Theroux, in whose rendering the commune "served as a figure of the culturally and ra-

cially contaminated Hawaii, its innocence and primitive glory swept away by modernity and imported disease" (100-101).

The next portion of the book, chapter four entitled "Islands of Multiculturalism," concentrates on the extra-literary, market-oriented aspects of ethnic minority writing, where the author analyzes the ideology of multiculturalism and the mainstream readership demands of ethnographic accuracy in representations of the exotic from within, by minority writers as participant members of their respective ethnic communities. From this point of view, as Ferens propounds, minority fiction most resembles the genre she calls auto-ethnography, which poses extra problems to most minority authors, also exposed to the expectations of their own ethnic groups to have their life within the dominant culture represented with the utmost precision and verisimilitude, nevertheless always containing a latent political agenda. Most minority writers, as Ferens observes, do their best to avoid the pitfalls of the requirement of ethnographic accuracy, since this demand effectively drives the readers' attention away from formal innovation and the writers' achievement as artists. Yet, they always have to take this requirement into account as representation of the exotic invariably serves as the most saleable attribute of their work in the publishing market.

One of the most rewarding passages of this chapter is devoted to David Cowart's *Trailing Clouds: Immigrant Fiction in Contemporary America* (2006) in which the critic of a distinctly conservative political persuasion effortlessly, as it seems, co-opts the perspectives of minority writers to prove his point about their serving as go-betweens familiarizing the exotic for the majority which, like the critic in question, conceives of itself and its culture as "transparent and normal." As Ferens rightly observes, by making use of his own literary and cultural erudition, and "retreating to a world of religious metaphors and cross-cultural analogies worthy of James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Cowart manages to deflect attention from the fact that the 'torment and confusion' experienced by the protagonists take place in the purgatory of modern-day U.S. Yone's narrator [in *The Coffin Park*] fixes an unflinching gaze on American society; Cowart redirects it to ancient myths and legends" (132). By means of this ruse, the conservative critic seems to get involved in the impossible task of defusing the rage and accusation by deflecting the inexorable immigrant gaze away from its target and turning it backward, toward the once safe exotic islands as subject of ethnographic exploration, reducing the minority writer's role to that of ethnographer of his own culture.

The effort to disarm by reverting the ruthlessly unmasking gaze of the former "native informant," fixed now on the culture of those who once observed and generalized about her island, appears hopeless in the increasingly globalized world: proof of this can be found in the fiction of a woman writer from Antigua, Jamaica Kincaid, whose work is

analyzed in the fifth chapter of the study. Ferens focuses on four books of this author: the first is a formally ambitious collection of stories *At the Bottom of the River*, in which Kincaid "explored the limits of opacity, ellipsis, and fragmentation," and in which the form "seems deliberately unyielding, as if to suggest that the island cannot be taken in at a glance, simplified or generalized about" (145). The second of Kincaid's works is the novel *Annie John*, in which the narrator adopts the perspective of a child or an adolescent girl, and although understandably simple and naïve, its view on the island proves striking not because of the oddity of the islanders' customs it refers to (sexual and burial customs, obea spirituality) but because of its ordinariness. In an impressive move, Ferens juxtaposes Kincaid's representation of Antigua with that of Margaret Mead in her now classic depiction of idyllic islands in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928). The American woman ethnographer came there to a conclusion that communal "primitive" cultures managed to bring up contended and well-adjusted individuals due to their downplaying individualism, instead of breeding the "maladjustments of youth" that plagued the individualistic American society. Contrary to this view, in her depiction of Antiguan culture, Kincaid pinpointed the traditional ways of patriarchal society which, with its postcolonial and neocolonial burden, was particularly responsible for the maladjustment of young girls, forcing them to suppress individualism and to accept humiliation in their adult life.

In *A Small Place*, an angry diatribe against colonialism and neocolonialism as evinced in her native Antigua, Kincaid unflinchingly performs an act of staring back at western tourists, proving that their assumed distance and impartial attitudes to alterity are mostly illusory, though at the same time herself adopting a posture of a patronizing ex-islander resorting to ethnographic stereotypes and infantilizing the islanders' point of view. Kincaid's novel of 1990, *Lucy*, brings, however, another instance of reverting the ethnographic gaze, this time performed by Kincaid's alter ego, an ex-islander girl employed as an au-pair in an American middle-class household which becomes the site of her ethnographic exploration. Although hardly sensitive to the personal plights of her employers, Lucy manages to liberate herself from stifling cultural stereotypes and hierarchies by using photography as a means of self-individuation. As Ferens aptly notices, Lucy acquires a new and different perspective in her ethnographic venture because of her relentless self-reflexivity, paying attention to the interconnectedness between the objects of her analysis and her own daily existence. She thus downplays the difference and valorizes, if not sameness, then proximity and similarity.

The last chapter of Ferens's book opens with a recourse to the 1990s debate concerning the contemporary value of ethnography, undermined and questioned by young scholars such as Nicholas Thomas in his essay "Against Ethnography" from 1991. Going against Clifford Geertz's anti-relativistic credo meant to legitimize the anthropologist as

a "merchant of astonishment" in constant pursuit of the exotic thrill all over the globe, Thomas contended that the ethnographic dragons could be merely produced for the benefit of the curious western public, and "fabricating difference" meant to maintain the distance between "others" and "ourselves," pandering to the traditional perspective on others as always being different. His conclusion was that "in a globalized world the pursuit of 'dragons' is anachronistic" (162). In the remaining sections of the chapter, Ferens discusses three novels by women writers of diverse ethnic descent, Lois-Ann Yamanaka of Hawaii, the Cuban Achy Obejas, and Japanese American Karen Tei Yamashita writing about a Japanese commune in Brazil. In the case of all three works, Ferens postulates a mixture of two genres mentioned in the introduction: auto- and anti-ethnography. Both genres problematize the value of "ethnic" authenticity and question knowledge, pointing to the inherent instability and precariousness of human cognitive perspective, including in this category the ethnographic gaze and suggesting that "the gaze is never neutral, that the native does look back, and that ethnographic interest can be mutual" (170).

As I hope to have shown, Dominika Ferens's book is a must for anyone interested in ethnic and minority cultures and literatures, irrespective of their own worldview, political opinions, or cultural positioning. It repeatedly makes us aware or reminds us of the necessary limitations of our own gaze, wherever it may be located, and of our own situation within this world's networks of power, however innocent and untainted we like to think of ourselves we are. As observed at the beginning, when reading this book one might object at times to incomplete, or fragmentary, or not detailed enough analytical insights in the book's treatment of particular texts, or to the material under analysis being too heterogeneous to enable the formulation of any general conclusions. Yet once the book is read and absorbed, it leaves us with a sense of impressive sweep and control at the same time, of abundance and complexity, expertise and competence, and finally, of formidable cultural relevance at the present moment of history.

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Aneta Dybska, *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s*. *American Studies and Media*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010. 194 pages.

Aneta Dybska's *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s* explores two distinct bodies of writing—sociological and ethnographic studies and autobiographical texts written by black men in the 1960s and 1970s.

The texts examined in the study represent different scientific approaches and methodologies, ranging from functionalism, the consensus paradigm, to the conflict paradigm, insider and outsider perspectives, detachment and participation, and different literary genres, from the conversion narrative, through the Bildungsroman, to essays and letters. Dybska shows how these diverse works produce different black masculinities, perpetuating or challenging the dominant ideologies of "hegemonic masculinity," patriarchal gender relations, "black matriarchy," emasculation of black men, and black hypermasculinity.

Dybska opens her book with an analysis of the controversial study *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, commonly referred to known as the *Moynihan Report* (1965). Daniel P. Moynihan's central conclusion was that the source of pathology in the lower-class black family, which was considered as an accurate representative of the whole black community, stems from the presence of "black matriarchy," which deprives black men of their patriarchal power in the domestic space and precludes the assimilation of African Americans to the traditional American middle-class standards. Referring to the research findings of a renowned black sociologist, Franklin Frazier, Moynihan explains this gender reversal as a legacy of slavery and an outcome of migration and urbanization of the black rural community to northern cities. The report evoked a heated debate. Its critics' main argument was that it is structural racism of American society, rather than domineering black women, that is the source of the ghetto pathology. In particular, the thesis about the black matriarchy was undermined by black feminists, who highlighted patriarchal oppression rather than matriarchy in the black community. Historians countered the claims about the disintegration of the black family as the result of slavery, documenting that substantial numbers of black slaves managed to maintain familial bonds despite all the odds. In spite of the fervent critique of the report, it was one of the most influential sociological texts produced in the twentieth century on the black community, hence, all the following texts dialogically refer to his claims and either reinforce or challenge his notion of homogeneous weak black masculinity as an inevitable result of "black matriarchy."

The first text competing with the *Moynihan Report*, which is discussed by Dybska is Ulf Hannerz's *Soulside: Inquiries into the Ghetto Community* (1969). Identifying black community as the underclass, he discusses it in terms of "culture of poverty," as a subculture within a paradigm of cultural relativism. Hannerz problematizes the notion of the matriarchal or broken black family, analyzing different models of ghetto familial relations as adaptive alternatives to the normative nuclear family. Analogously, he does not approach the behavior of black men as violating the norm, but as a compensatory alternative, which Dybska analyzes with reference to Robert Connell's concept of "protest

masculinity," "a marginalized masculinity, which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large but reworks them in the context of poverty" (114). In Hannerz's study, black men perform "imaginary manhood" in public mostly though verbal creativity, boasting about their prowess and projecting an image of success. As Dybska claims, Hannerz's work illustrates the contemporary approach to (black) masculinity as heterogeneous, relational, and contextual. A corresponding plurality of masculine behaviors is represented by the next examined study, David A. Schulz *Coming Up Black: Patterns of Ghetto Socialization* (1969). In contrast to Hannerz, he focuses on the domestic sphere and shows how underclass black men enact their gender identity in different ways that Dybska interprets as diverse functional adaptations. Instead of black matriarchy or reverberations of slavery, Schulz identifies discriminatory practices in the labor market as the source of the anomie represented by black men. The first part of the study ends with a chapter on Kenneth B. Clark's *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (1965). Primarily in contrast to Moynihan's outsider perspective and consensus paradigm, he is an "insider" to the black community and represents the conflict paradigm. As a result, Clark focuses on the interracial conflict and colonial-like situation of African Americans.

In the second part of *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s*, the body of knowledge produced by sociologists and ethnographers is confronted with non-scientific texts contemporaneously written by black men. The first texts discussed as intervening in the hegemonic narratives of black masculinity are Dick Gregory's *Nigger: An Autobiography* (1964) and Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* (1965). Both combine the ethnographic account and the autobiographical self-made man narrative. Gregory's text intervenes in the dominant discourse of poverty by giving agency to the underclass, typically represented as objects determined by overpowering social forces. Brown, in contrast to sociological studies, normalizes homosexuality or even prostitution as alternative but acceptable behaviors, using the liberal discourse of sexuality. What follows is a comparative analysis of two autobiographical texts by Bobby Seale: *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party* (1970) and *A Lonely Rage: The Autobiography of Bobby Seale* (1978). The former text is read as a conversion narrative, in which the narrator gains radical political consciousness. The latter, on the other hand, is a more personal Bildungsroman, a novel of social development. By confronting two distinct modes of autobiographical writing, with different content yet written by the same author, Dybska convincingly illustrates the thesis she proposes at the beginning that "the process of self-representation is necessarily mediated by the generic conventions, ideological allegiances at a particular historical moment, the intended audience, as well as authorial self-interest" (103). Another set of

self-narratives analyzed in the study represents prison literature, which is regarded as a particularly significant genre of contemporaneous African American literature. Dybska reads the two texts as examples of "studying up," an oppositional strategy to the ethnographic gaze pathologizing and objectifying the black community. Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968) repositions the black inmate from the criminal to the victim of the self-fulfilling prophecies of American racial myths, notably of the black rapist, and simultaneously he manages to resist objectification by the very act of self-writing. Analogously, George Jackson's *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (1970) reveals the racialization of black men's criminalization, and thus challenges the image of the black man as the individual perpetrator personally accountable for his actions. Yet, as Dybska argues, in their challenge to the pathologizing and criminalizing gaze, both authors embrace the patriarchal ideology of hegemonic masculinity and reproduce dominant gender hierarchies and homophobia.

The final chapter comparatively examines the central themes in the two bodies of texts analyzed in the main body. Dybska claims that the autobiographical writings successfully undermine the notion of the black man as a passive and powerless victim perpetuated in most of the social science texts; however, by representing black men as violent and domineering they are complicit with hegemonic masculinity. All the texts respond to Moynihan's thesis about "black matriarchy." Interestingly, the line of division does not follow the ethnography v. autobiography or black v. white divide. White ethnographer Hannerz together with the black autobiographers—Seale, Gregory, and Brown challenge the notion of the emasculation of black men; whereas black scholar Clark together with Jackson (black) and Schulz (white) perpetuate Moynihan's conclusion. Another theme that interpolates the study and is summed up in Conclusion is non-normative sexuality, which is diversely represented in the analyzed texts. Social scientists seem to be influenced by the popular contemporaneous assumptions that homosexuality is a white and middle-class pathology, or that it is an issue belonging to the interests of psychology rather than sociology, and hence they ignore the subject in their studies. Correspondingly, the prison autobiographies strategically erase the theme of prison homosexuality, which helps them project black men within the hegemonic masculinity. Brown's autobiography is the only text that represents non-normative sexuality in a non-pathologizing way as a visible and accepted individual choice in the black community.

Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s is a clearly written, structurally coherent, and thematically consistent project. Dybska accurately introduces her methodology, which draws on various contemporary approaches within cultural and literary studies, ranging from gender and sexuality stu-

dies, poverty studies, to autobiography and prison literature studies. She also competently uses traditional tools of literary analysis such as the conversion narrative or Bildungsroman; her literary examination, however, could benefit from closer text analysis in both parts. Dybska fluently and effectively applies current scholarly paradigms and concepts, most notably gender perfomativity or autobiography as textual performance of subjectivity as well as many notions originating from the recently flourishing masculinity studies, such as "hegemonic masculinity" or "protest masculinity." Although she focuses on the performance of heterosexual black masculinity, she examines it as a relational process; consequently, her study does not ignore the significance of constructions of black femininity and non-normative sexuality. Thus, Dybska's study aptly illustrates the intersectional character of identity construction. Such rigorous scientific discipline, accompanied with a thorough attention to the historical and cultural context, makes *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s* a study which can be recommended for graduate students and academics researching American culture, especially for scholars interested in the 1960s and 1970s, masculinity, and autobiography.

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Christopher Garbowski, *Pursuits of Happiness: The American Dream, Civil Society, Religion, and Popular Culture*. Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 2008. 246 pages.

Christopher Garbowski analyzes different aspects of pursuing happiness by Americans: starting with various forms of realizations of the American Dream, through demands and responsibilities imposed by civil society, obligations and rewards offered by religion, to pleasures and role models that popular culture brings. The case in point is Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, which through its complexity, as Garbowski claims, offers various perspectives on American culture. And all the pursuits take place within culture—here understood in its broad sense, as the reality that creates meanings and shapes our lives.

Yet, *Pursuits of Happiness* transgresses the American cultural terrain. The fact that the author was residing in Poland during the time of political and social changes the country underwent enabled him to come up with a comparative perspective on Poland and the United States. What can be inferred from the book is that Poland still lacks solidly founded and well-functioning civil society whose blueprint it could emulate from the society across the Atlantic.

As the author postulates, in the USA the foundations of various forms of pursuits of happiness stem mainly from two different concepts: the Puritan ethos of individual self-restraint vs. Jefferson's and the Transcendentalists' idea of individualism. The former, through demanding morality and work ethic, proposed moderation and procrastination of pleasures in order to work for the well-being of the community, whereas the latter advocated individuals' rights to decide about themselves and their fate. Two additional traditions—agrarianism and urbanism—also played a significant role in shaping Americans' attitudes to attaining happiness. They helped form two diverse paradigms in American life: that of the nurturer and that of the exploiter, respectively. The former intended to work as well as possible, thus serving the land and community; the latter aimed to be maximally efficient through minimum work and maximum gain. Thus, the exploiter always preferred institutionalized forms of subsistence.

The ethnic, racial, and youth groups also contributed to their particular realizations of the pursuit of happiness. The 1960s constitute the point of reference against which the author presents different aspects of American society. In the case of immigrant groups, the idea of the melting pot has been questioned since the 1960s: in its stead, Americans started favoring the concept of cultural pluralism. The same mechanism concerns American Blacks; more and more of them want to depart from the preferential treatment ushered in by the affirmative action of the 1960s. As the author claims, the majority of them give priority to qualifications than to preferences. In the case of major feminist gains of the 1960s, such as the awareness of gender inequalities, liberal approaches toward the family, marriage and motherhood, which proved socially divisive, there has been a shift in attitudes. As Garbowski maintains, more and more women nowadays treat the real concerns of the day and peaceful coexistence with men as issues of paramount importance in their lives. The American youth, in turn, seem to depart from the "do your own thing" attitude of the 1960s and look for guidelines within religion and tradition.

Much space in the book is devoted to the human, social and moral foundations on which civil society is built. The author analyses such pertinent issues as the contemporary family, local community and the religiosity of Americans. The accumulation of data and evidence from an extensive variety of sources allows Garbowski to come to the following conclusion: "It seems that however much they may be shaken, the family, the neighborhood, and religious communities are still the bedrock of civil society and the moral order in American society. They often do not receive much support from the media, and the cultural elites value them only to a limited degree… but a good many Americans, to a large extent at least, seem to intuit on a deeper level that it is within them where the greatest moral and spiritual resources for themselves and for their society reside." (141)

Garbowski also goes a step further in order to paint a possibly full picture of different Americans' realizations of the pursuit of happiness. He searches the domain of popular culture, because this is where manifestations of cultural memory of American civil society and meaningful narratives of its members reside. Films, according to the author, are a terrain worth examining in particular, since they not only record everyday experiences but also constitute a living testimony to the ways Americans view their pursuits of happiness. In the light of analyzed movies, two aspects seem to dominate: the question of love in all its different emotional shades, and the religious perception of the world, which offers hope and a vital repertoire of motivational factors, which in turn help Americans carry on their pursuits.

Despite minor editorial shortcomings, most noticeable in endnotes and bibliographical entries, *Pursuits of Happiness* reveals an insightful and appealing analysis. The book offers a well-evidenced counter-narrative to the liberal or leftist outlook on American society. Instead, it is a reminder of such conservative values as the traditional family, local community and religion-inspired morality, though the author relatively rarely exposes his personal opinions—if one looks for them, they have to be inferred from the line of argumentation or the selection of citations. An undoubted strength of the book is that Garbowski does not hesitate to touch upon matters which lay at the core of American civil society in the past but whose validity seems to be questioned nowadays—when religion has been relegated to the private sphere, the institution of marriage and family is buffeted against numerous interpretations and different configurations, and communitarian values have been confronted with self-oriented imperatives imposed by the highly competitive lifestyle. However, Christopher Garbowski's *Pursuits of Happiness* leaves the reader with a sparkle of optimism transpiring from the contemporary reservoir of myths which is popular culture, in particular through transitory though sought-after consolation as the one offered by Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*.

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