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Reviews

CONSCIOUSNESS IN NEW ENGLAND: From Puritanism and Ideas to Psychoanalysis and Semiotic. By James Hoopes. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1989.

Teachers of literature have recently observed, sometimes happily, sometimes not, the construction of a theoretical paradigm whose logic should eventually put them out of business. Such teachers customarily interpret texts and show others how to interpret them. The same might be said of historians, lawyers and theologians. But current theory, working from de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1915) and powerfully shaped by dissident French intellectuals who gained prominence in the tumult of 1968, concludes that, owing to the nature of language, we can never *know* the meaning of texts. Hence we cannot interpret them, if "to interpret" means "to discover meaning." (Some writers, dismissing discussions of "meaning" as wasted time, have announced a moratorium on the term.) Starting from de Saussure's insight that language is a system of signs, theory has followed the avenues of structuralism, poststructuralism and deconstruction to the sign reading, *cul-de-sac*.

Yet the need to discover meaning, to interpret, dies hard. In the semiotic system of Saussure's American contemporary Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), some thinkers have found a detour around the structuralist dead-end, a path leading to meaning and to the possibility of interpretation. *Consciousness in New England* not only explicates Peirce's complexities, it also deftly locates him in a long tradition of sophisticated New England Protestant theology debating theories of the "self" and "self-conflict." Beginning with seventeenth-century conversions and marching smartly through analyses of Edwards, Hopkins, Finney, Bushnell, Holmes, Hall, Gay, Brownson, James, Dewey, Prince and Royce, Hoopes arrives at Peirce, whose thought sternly challenges contemporary assumptions privileging linguistics and reducing signifiers to words. Guided by Peirce, the literary critic need not genuflect to linguistics as the "semiotic master science" (p. 281) nor need the historian discard causality and narrative. For Hoopes, Peirce's semiotic is so rich that through it one can discover meaning after all. This important book, particularly if read along with John K. Sheriff's *The Fate of Meaning: Charles Peirce, Structuralism, and*

Literature (Princeton, 1989), should spark interest in Peirce and provoke historians and literary critics alike.

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Edward M. Griffin

SEABROTHERS: The Tradition of American Sea Fiction from *Moby-Dick* to the Present. By Bert Bender. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1988.

Clear and gracefully-written, this is the only significant study to-date of an American sea-fiction tradition that many wrongly assume culminated and virtually ended with Melville. Bender's primary, related theses are that the tradition has vigorously continued into the 1970s, that its modern authors (London, Hemingway, Mattheissen, among others) have followed their nineteenth-century predecessors (mainly Cooper, Dana and Melville) in basing their authority on their having been seamen, and that Darwinian thought is at the heart of this sea fiction—as are democratic values, fundamental to “the brotherhood of working seamen.” Explicitly and by implication, he demonstrates that the effects of the sea on American literature have been both deeper and longer-lasting than has been generally admitted. Persuasively explicating the literature's scientific, philosophical-political thought, as well as rediscovering some significant works in the tradition, Bender's book is out of the ordinary. It is an important contribution to American studies.

University of Kansas

Haskell Springer

LITERATURE IN AMERICA: An Illustrated History. By Peter Conn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989.

Despite its title, this is not a “coffee-table” book, but instead a knowledgeable and clearly-written history of American literature that concentrates on major periods and figures. In its inclusion of women and minority authors, the text shows the influence of recent scholarship in both literature and cultural history. The nearly 200 illustrations—ranging from photographs of authors to works of art representing various periods—add an important visual component to the historical sweep of the book. This would be a good companion piece to standard anthologies of American literature.

Vanderbilt University

Nancy Walker

A MIRROR FOR AMERICANISTS: Reflections on the Idea of American Literature. By William C. Spengemann. Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England. 1989.

Shortly after publishing *The Adventurous Muse: The Poetics of American Fiction, 1789-1900* in 1977, William Spengemann had a conversion experience and decided that there was no such thing as American Literature. For the last decade he has been provoking the establishment with well-argued and beautifully-written polemics that attack the idea of an essential Americanness in American literature by exposing the illogicalities of canon inclusion and exclusion, and emphasizing the weaknesses of the historical accounts that justify the canon. Many scholars now share his views but few have his rhetorical gifts. This volume collects his significant essays and will be read (or reread) with delight or despair, depending on one's own degree of attachment to critical orthodoxy. In any event it is good to have these scattered pieces brought together. Spengemann's conclusion that literature in English written by American citizens is really English literature undermines not only the American field but all fields of national literature and the study of literature more generally,

because studying the literature of nations is the only way that literature has ever been “studied,” and because nationalism is the reason that the study of literature was invented in the first place. The purpose of American literary study has always been rhetorical—it has never reflected, but always constructed, the nation that it purported to describe.
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Nina Baym

RETHINKING THE SOUTH: Essays in Intellectual History. By Michael O’Brien. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1988.

In this lively and provocative collection of essays, Michael O’Brien challenges many assumptions of Southern historians and literary critics. An Englishman who has taught in Arkansas and Ohio, O’Brien relished the role of outsider yet insists on the importance of studying the intellectual life of the South. Taking his cue from Hegel, he views southern culture as a dialectic between ideas and a changing social structure. Thus antebellum southern Romanticism is seen as a “modern” sensibility arising out of the social strain of southern economic growth, social and spatial mobility, and political conflict. Antebellum southern thinkers, in his view, were not the pre-bourgeois *seigneurs* described by Eugene Genovese but men on the make who felt compelled to invent a tradition for the region that often scorned them.

O’Brien probes the mind of the New South in a deftly ironic piece on Edwin Mims, the Victorian literary critic at Vanderbilt who preached an optimistic doctrine of social improvement and felt the parricidal wrath of his students, the Fugitives. In an essay on the Southern Renaissance, the author offers criticism of the work of Louis Rubin, Lewis Simpson, Walter Sullivan, Daniel Singal and Richard King. After essays on W.J. Cash and C. Vann Woodward, O’Brien concludes the book with an analysis of the longstanding debate on Southern identity, which, he argues, should be viewed as “the social discourse of intellectuals in the South.”
North Carolina State University Walter A. Jackson

A NEW FACE ON THE COUNTRYSIDE: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800. By Timothy Silver. Cambridge, England, and New York: Cambridge University Press. 1990.

Readers familiar with William Cronon’s *Changes In The Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* [New York, 1983] will, at first glance, find Timothy Silver’s *A New Face on the Countryside* rather familiar in approach; some may even find it so closely modelled on Cronon’s book that it can offer little in the way of original insights into the environmental history of early America. To take such a stance would be, however, a mistake. While Silver’s debt to Cronon is obvious, and noted by the author himself (p. xi), this well written study contains a number of pointed insights related directly to the peculiar environment and demographic composition of the early American South, a territory that ranged from the Atlantic across the Appalachians to Texas and extending as far north as the southern border of Pennsylvania. Silver’s ability to explain the various peoples, animals and pathogens that inhabited this vast region is, in itself, a triumph. While much of the interaction between peoples and the land reflected developments to the north, much was also distinctly southern: the presence of diseases (such as malaria and yellow fever) that prevented colonists from living as long or as healthily as their counterparts in New England, and that encouraged them to acquire African slaves who seemed more resilient to these maladies; the importance of the deerskin trade, a far different form of the

fur trade than the northern obsession with beaver pelts; the availability of ginseng roots, and the subsequent participation of Cherokees in a pursuit of this plant for its eventual shipment, via English traders, to China; the importance of a climate that proved often uncomfortable, and potentially lethal, for those accustomed to the temperate climes of northwest Europe. The mere description of such phenomena, combined with an excellent array of illustrations, demonstrates that the physical world of the early American South was in many ways more varied than other parts of eastern North America. Most significant, Silver goes beyond merely describing the unique features of the South; he uses richly textured documents of the period to explain how these developments fit into the ways that these peoples, especially colonists and Indians, perceived the world they inhabited and how their perceptions of the environment shaped their daily lives. This is one of the goals of environmental history, and Silver is so successful that this book, part of the excellent series of Studies in Environment and History from Cambridge University Press, should find a wide audience.

University of Kansas

Peter C. Mancall

AMERICA'S THEOLOGIAN: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards. By Robert W. Jenson. Oxford University Press. 1988.

This is a book about Jonathan Edward's potential contributions to American religion, not in his own day, but in the late twentieth century. Jenson's chief effort is a revisioning of religion and the American Enlightenment as it has affected religious and civil settlements in the roughly two hundred years since Edward's influence was first added to it. Jenson provides what are essentially homiletic assessments of Edward's influence, emphasizing his catholicity, his attention to Christ's personality (psychology), and, perhaps most interesting, his attention to the contribution that Edward's theology might make to America's sense of community. His treatment of Edward's most interesting work, *The Nature of True Virtue*, is especially focused on community and how Edward's vision might contribute to redefining the sense of community in the nation. As Jenson writes, "Edwards has shown what must be done: we must understand the transformation of time and space not as a separate event from the last perfecting of love, but as one aspect of it." As a work of theology it complements recent work done on Edwards, especially the critical book by R. C. De Prospe, *Theism in the Discourse of Jonathan Edwards*, and the general return to original theories of pragmatism that we see in some work by Giles Gunn. Those who prefer greater disinterest in their history and philosophy, will perhaps find Jenson's premise overwrought. Those who prefer "active" scholarship will find this an interesting interdisciplinary work.

University of Florida

Eldon Turner

BECOMING BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: The *Autobiography* and the Life. By Ormond Seavey. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press. 1988.

"Franklin's greatest achievement was the creation of himself," Seavey says, and he defends this many-faceted thesis with a 96-page study of the *Autobiography* followed by a 143-page biographical essay. The two parts are a perfect means of attacking the long-veiled issues of Franklin as man and image, myth and myth maker, and they might also serve as a model for other studies of autobiographies and autobiographers.

In his *Autobiography*, Seavey argues, Franklin not only over-emphasized the roles of virtue and industry as the foundations of his success, he also promoted "himself as an

exemplar of a particular mode of consciousness"—the American tradesman, the practical man. This emphasis, however, was not deception. It grew from Franklin's parallel effort to possess "conscious and continual control over every aspect of life." Virtue and industry could be consciously learned, while having them imitated fulfilled Franklin's need for an ever-larger audience.

The second part of this book, however, shows the struggle such control required. Borrowing from Erik Erikson (who should be more thoroughly acknowledged), Seavey goes into Franklin's psycho-social development. As a precocious youngest son, Franklin earnestly sought approval, first from father, then from older, richer men and even from the British King. In Philadelphia he learned to subdue his more abrasive ego needs through humor and identification with other young men and also identification with public good. The eighteen-year ordeal in England then serves Seavey as an opportunity to reveal yet another side of him that is not in the *Autobiography*, his "capacity for anger." These later chapters on Franklin in Boston, Philadelphia and London are sensitive combinations of psycho-biography, social history and literary criticism.

Remarkably, this is the first book on the *Autobiography* in relation to Franklin's "life history." I hope all teachers of the *Autobiography* will read it.

The University of Iowa

Robert F. Sayre

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE POLITICS OF LIBERTY. By Robert H. Webking. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1988.

Robert H. Webking presents an analysis of the political thought of James Otis, Patrick Henry, John Dickinson, Samuel Adams, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. He considers their assumptions and principles, especially as to the powers of government and the rights of the people, as well as the implications of their thought, the methods they sought to employ, and the circumstances under which they believed revolution would be justified. Central is their concept of liberty and its relationship to virtue and political prudence. Among Webking's conclusions is that, as reflected in the Declaration of Independence, these intellectual leaders of the American Revolution believed their cause to be universal, and that, if they submitted the "facts" of their cause "to a candid world," all reasonable people would understand the justice of their actions.

Creighton University

Bryan F. Le Beau

DEMOCRACY AND ITS CRITICS: Anglo-American Democratic Thought in the Nineteenth Century. By Jon Roper. London: Unwin Hyman. 1989.

Surprisingly, comparative studies of political thought are relatively rare. Jon Roper's *Democracy and Its Critics*, a cross national comparison of nineteenth-century politicians and political philosophers in the United States and the United Kingdom who were engaged in a debate over the nature and future of representative democracy, is a salutary addition to this approach.

Especially illuminating in Roper's analysis is the emphasis on the disparity between American and English political thought despite the common heritage of the ideal of liberty and constitutionalism. The American debate focused upon the incorporation of party competition into democratic theory, the rejection (nearly always implicitly) of an agrarian Jeffersonian republicanism for an "experimental and optimistic" culture and, of course, the monumental nineteenth-century American question of slavery. In England, the democratic debate centered around the extent to which the constitution could absorb democratic

demands and neutralize the prospect of a working class majority. According to Roper, "In Britain democracy was always a concern, never a panacea." Thus there is no British counterpart to Whitman and no American counterpart to Macaulay. Indeed, even among democratic critics patterns are asymmetrical. Morris despised Bellamy's socialism, and Calhoun, placed in England, would have been a "committed nineteenth-century British liberal". Moreover, while there was some Anglo-American debate in the nineteenth century (Whitman replied to Carlyle, and Carnegie and Arnold conversed), the very terms employed carried different connotations. In England, culture came to be regarded as a defense against, not an approximation of democracy, and liberty still contained strong aristocratic resonances rather than individualistic ones.

One might disagree with certain emphases in Roper's presentation. For example, the American Whig vision of a national, hierarchical order is ignored and the redefinition of democracy by social Darwinism underestimated. But over-all, *Democracy and Its Critics* illustrates both the power of comparative analysis and the political intricacies within the Atlantic community.

Wayne State University

Philip Abbott

ADRIFT IN THE OLD WORLD: The Psychological Pilgrimage of Washington Irving. By Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 1988.

Paralleling recent efforts by some scholars to alter an earlier consensus about who the Puritans were and what they have meant to American culture, Rubin-Dorsky attempts to reevaluate and reestablish Irving's literary reputation. The parallel with the recent work of scholars on the Puritan period naturally comes to mind because *Adrift* is a work of intellectual history in the tradition of Perry Miller.

Rubin-Dorsky assumes that to understand the United States' first professional writer allows critics insight into United States history and culture as he believes Irving's anxieties, reflected in his fiction, become paradigmatic for his time. Since Rubin-Dorsky believes that Irving's anxieties during the first several decades of the nineteenth century represent his country's as well, he ties Irving's nineteenth-century popularity to Irving's artistic representation of his personal anxieties over his lack of a home, a father's role, and a "practical" occupation. "Irving's most compelling subject as a writer—the displaced self adrift in a mutable world—which was, of course, autobiographical in substance, coincided with the uneasiness and uncertainty of the American people as they contemplated [the fact] . . . that the home the Founding Fathers had established was lost forever" (xv, 3).

In his early chapters Rubin-Dorsky's clear and graceful style tends to persuade readers of his argument, however, in the later chapters he engages in the disconcerting practice of identifying Irving with his narrators (e.g. Knickerbockers and Crayon) and his characters from Ichabod Crane and Rip Van Winkle to Slingsby and Dolph Heyliger. Although "Rip" and "The Legend" are allotted an entire chapter, the interpretation of these and other stories focuses on the stories as reflections of Irving's psychological displacement and does not seem to break new critical ground.

Adrift presents a psychological study of Irving and his fiction between 1815 and 1832 and the fiction's reflection during this period of deep-seated cultural anxieties in the United States. If the reader accepts Rubin-Dorsky's identifications of Irving with his narrators and characters, his well-written book makes excellent good sense. If the reader does not accept that premise, the book's interpretations falter.

Edgewood College

Winifred Morgan

WHITE LIES: Melville's Narratives of Facts. By John Samson. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1989.

"Melville's narratives of facts" include, for Samson, the novels published before *Moby-Dick* (except *Mardi*) and *Israel Potter*, although he touches on other works, especially *Billy Budd*, *Sailor*. His principal interest is the relationship between the narrators of these tales and the world of "facts" with which they are confronted. The inchoate complex of beliefs, fears, opinions and prejudices with which each narrator sets forth on his adventures is profoundly challenged by his experiences, but each ironically persists in structuring his narrative in spite of the "facts" that reveal the inadequacy of his framework for understanding the world. Melville's narrators are, that is, very much like the authors of the many "narratives of facts"—tales of exploration and adventure constructed in accordance with racist, imperialistic or sexist models of the world—to which Melville frequently refers in these novels. This genre, with which Melville's early works are generally grouped, is actually parodied and otherwise deconstructed (Samson's word) in these novels, creating an ironic level of meaning within the text from which the failures of the narrators can be viewed.

Samson's study combined sound scholarship, theoretical sophistication, and a refreshingly lucid prose style. It is a valuable addition to our understanding of Melville's relation to his culture, and offers significant readings of several novels that have received a great deal of mention but surprisingly little serious critical attention.

University of Arkansas

Charles Adams

RADICAL SPIRITS: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America. By Ann Braude. Boston: Beacon Press. 1989.

In this interesting, well-researched and well-written book, Ann Braude examines the connections between Spiritualism and social reform in the nineteenth century. Originating in the "burned-over district" of upstate New York in the 1840s, Spiritualism quickly spread among middle-class Protestants who experimented with seances, read Spiritualist periodicals, and attended lectures given by trance speakers, all in an effort to find a spiritual solace they missed in orthodox sects. During its heyday, from the 1850s to the 1880s, Spiritualism attracted millions of practitioners, and was intertwined with numerous radical social causes.

Braude demonstrates with skill and subtlety the particular attractiveness of Spiritualist ideas and practices to women, whose role as mediums enabled them to speak and teach on religious subjects. Moreover, Spiritualism championed women's rights, including the right to "self-sovereignty" in marriage and family life, and so had a strong appeal to women's rights activists. Although Braude's amorphous definition of a Spiritualist as "anyone participating in a Spiritualist activity or idea" obscures distinctions between those who embraced it as a religion and those who grafted it onto an existing religious affiliation, her book provides fascinating insights into an important nineteenth-century phenomenon.

University of Delaware

Anne M. Boylan

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND THE ORIGINS OF MODERN WARFARE. By Edward Hagerman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1988.

Organization, transport, logistics, communications and command in modern warfare form the sub-text of Edward Hagerman's "The American Civil War and the Origins of

Modern Warfare.” Attention is also given to the theory of Napoleonic warfare as interpreted by Jomini and Dennis Hart Mahan and glossed by Civil War weaponry and modern, democratized, mass man. In particular, the increasingly frequent usage of entrenchments of some sort, in offensive as well as defensive engagements, fascinates Hagerman and forms a most interesting core for his thinking.

As a handy compendium of ideas which, for the most part are not new, but are here well synthesized and organized, this is a most useful book.

Dissatisfied with Grant, and most other Civil War generals, Hagerman sees an ad hoc response to the new conditions of mass armies and massive geographical factors while he decries the general failure (pun intended) to create a new theoretical structure akin to the unknown (in America) thinking of Clausewitz.

In his criticism of Grant, in particular, Hagerman overlooks the title of his work, if not its thesis, suggesting a man who became immobile before Lee’s defenses, showed little will to implement change and seemed to act in modern ways (at least in the West) while still theoretically bound up in old ways. At the same time, Hagerman devotes little attention to political necessity—so much a part of mass, modern war—as a possible element in Grant’s thinking and planning; an element Grant clearly acknowledges in his memoirs.

This is an interesting and significant book, which might have been leaner and more rhetorically polished. While not for the beginner, it is still a useful and, perhaps, provocative work.

Siena College

Thomas O. Kelly II

WHITMAN THE POLITICAL POET. By Betsy Erkkila. New York: Oxford University Press. 1989.

Erkkila emphasizes the continuity between Whitman the political journalist of the 1840s and the poet who emerged in 1855. She interprets his “democratic poetics” not as deriving from Emersonian transcendentalism but as growing from American Revolutionary thought, and seeks to connect *Leaves of Grass* with such issues as abolition, the marginalization of labor, the threatened dissolution of the Union and related subjects. The book raises, but does not explicitly answer, the question of how the immediate concerns of politics are expressed in poetry, and while there are definite gains from focusing on the poetry’s political significance, there are also losses, in that other themes of a poet who claimed to be “large, I contain multitudes” are slighted.

College of William and Mary

Robert J. Scholnick

EMILY DICKINSON. By Bettina L. Knapp. New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation. 1989.

In one of the more uneven entries of Continuum’s “Literature and Life: American Writers” series, Bettina L. Knapp offers what is intended to be an introduction to the life and art of Emily Dickinson. Its first portion, a biographical sketch that covers very familiar ground, seems intended for high school students, who perhaps would appreciate Knapp’s revelation that pregnant women in the nineteenth century were unduly modest around physicians. The intended readership of the rest of the book is unclear as, indeed, is Knapp’s thesis. Explications of a few poems are offered in brief chapters devoted to such standard topics as nature, God and love/sex; and although some of her readings are interesting, Knapp’s analyses are marred by endless citations from the Bible, myriad comparisons of

Dickinson to mythical beings (Athena, Artemis and Ariadne, to name but three), strained comparisons between Dickinson and artists who work she could not possibly have known (e.g., Odilon Redon), and frankly bizarre asides, such as the fact that the Mayans formulated the mathematical concept of zero at least a thousand years before Europeans. The bibliography Knapp provides is more charitably described as esoteric: missing are such important Dickinson studies as Suzanne Juhasz's *The Undiscovered Continent* and William H. Shurr's *The Marriage of Emily Dickinson*, while included are F. Capra's *The Tao of Physics* and Thomas J. Hopkins' *The Hindu Religious Tradition*. In sum, though a few readers may wish to glance at Knapp's book for explications of individual poems, for the most part it is of scant value to students of Emily Dickinson.

Rhode Island School of Design

Alice Hall Petry

THE LITERARY VOCATION OF HENRY ADAMS. By William Merrill Decker. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press. 1990.

Henry Adams remains one of the most fascinating and enigmatic of American writers and thinkers. His work has resonated in special ways with American culture since the mid-twentieth century, making him one of the most studied of American intellectuals. Yet Adams' role in American culture remains peculiarly problematic. The many poses and paradoxes of his work continue to resist deciphering. After four decades of studies of Adams by a host of writers, skepticism concerning diminishing returns is understandable. Happily, such fears are not warranted here.

William Merrill Decker has written an important and enlightening study of Adams as a writer and thinker. His particular focus is to concentrate on the issue of Adams' intended "audience," his "dialogic" and rhetorical goals. He argues convincingly that beneath the poses of failure, detachment and pessimism that have created so many problems for students of Adams, the very persistence of Adams' authorship through a variety of prose forms, his unending quest for an audience, a dialogic community, reveals Adams' commitment to affecting broad social, cultural and political issues, to establishing a "moral presence in his country's public discourse" (p. 42).

This approach certainly does not resolve all of the paradoxes that Adams seemed to plant like mine fields through his writing. But it does provide a surprisingly useful way of approaching Adams. Decker adopts an ambitious program, covering virtually all of Adams' writing, and he manages to find new and interesting perspectives on much of it, from the oft-studied *Education* to the private correspondence to the enigmatic "Rule" and "Letter." There is an underpinning of literary theory, but the touch is light, making the book accessible to readers not familiar or perhaps not sympathetic with the twistings and turnings of post-deconstructionism or meditations on "dialogic discourses." That is fortunate, for this is a book that deserves a wide audience. With the almost inevitable exception of Ernest Samuels' superb biography, Decker's book is now one of the basic beginning points for anyone hoping to understand Henry Adams.

Wayne State College

Kent Blaser

LOOKING BACKWARD, 1888-1888: Essays on Edward Bellamy. Edited by Daphne Patai. Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press. 1988.

As the editor states in her excellent introduction to this collection of essays, including a bibliographic one, commemorating the centennial of *Looking Backward*, the contributors project a "double vision" of Edward Bellamy. (The contributors are Milton Cantor,

Lee Cullen Khanna, Jean Pfaelzer, Sylvia Strauss, Howard P. Segal, W. Warren Wagar, Kenneth M. Roemer, Franklin Rosemont and Nancy Snell Griffith.) Reconstructing Bellamy from a variety of theoretical perspectives—Marxist, feminist, reader-response, new historicist—the majority of the authors emphasize the extent to which Bellamy’s vision was limited by factors of race, class and gender. The Bellamy they present is, to varying degrees, an authoritarian, patriarchal, elitist, narrowly nationalistic, ideologically conservative writer. Other contributors, however, give us a Bellamy who, despite his flaws, offered a decidedly democratic, feminist, egalitarian, internationalist and radical critique of American culture, a critique that remains as compelling today as it was a hundred years ago. Though *Looking Backward* is the central focus of most of the essays, substantial attention is devoted to Bellamy’s earlier and later writings, nonfiction as well as fiction. Several of the contributors, moreover, thoroughly explore the historical-cultural context in which those texts were produced. Thus, though Bellamy usually occupies center stage, the essays engage a wide range of literary, social and political issues. There is something here for every student of American Studies, especially for those who believe that the current “dissensus” in critical theory has reinvigorated the field.

Texas A&M University

Lawrence J. Oliver

THY SOULS OF THE SKYSCRAPER: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930. By Lisa M. Fine. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1990.

Fine’s book adds to the debate over why the gender composition of the clerical labor force changed so quickly and completely. She presents women making a rational choice to enter a field with great potential for advancement. Further, she suggests that gender has been as important as market forces in shaping the development of American capitalism.

Fine focuses on Chicago and explores the debates among that city’s management experts, educators, executives and civic leaders over the meaning of women’s clerical employment. The author adds little that is new in this part of her study. More important is her analysis of popular culture and women’s lives outside the workplace. By demonstrating that women were rational economic actors, Fine emphasizes their contributions to the feminization of clerical work. She also notes the paradox of that contribution: as more women entered the field, its social and wage value declined. What had been promise and possibility became “dead-end” clerical jobs by the mid-twentieth century.

A problem with this innovative study is Fine’s failure to historicize gender itself. She claims that women’s entrance into office work represented an enormous change both in ideology and in experience. Yet she also argues that clerical work became a “pink-collar ghetto” because the gender system devalues women. Thus, while women’s actions may have been revolutionary, they had no impact on the gender system. Her historical actors are reduced, in the end, to gender victims.

University of Kansas

Angel Kwolek-Folland

PURE FOOD: Securing the Federal Food and Drug Act of 1906. By James Harvey Young. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1989.

In a fitting progression of a notable career, Harvey Young chronicles the players and circumstances involved in passage of the Federal Food and Drug Act of 1906. He meticulously begins his narrative in the early nineteenth century, cataloguing instances of concern about health and food and integrating medical theories when germane. Young

details European influences on the American psyche and pays particular attention to moments of great excitement and controversy. The butter-oleomargarine imbroglio gets a full hearing as do the trichinous pork and embalmed beef scandals and Harvey Wiley's Poison Squad.

Of special note to American Studies scholars is Young's enthusiastic treatment of several literary or journalistic figures. The autocrat at the breakfast table, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Frederick Accum are among early nineteenth-century authors receiving attention. Upton Sinclair's efforts on behalf of working people's health and the reception of the *Jungle* are scrutinized by the author as are the labors of Samuel Hopkins Adams and other muckrakers. This material together provides a compelling portrait of the complexity required in enacting national legislation.

Iowa State University

Alan I Marcus

THE RISE OF EXPERIMENTATION IN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY. Edited by Jill G. Morawski. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1988.

The psychology experiment is the focus of the nine essays that comprise *The Rise of Experimentation in American Psychology*. Together these essays yield a rich examination of the effect of experimentation on the profession and the development of the experiment as a respected method of psychological inquiry. The scholars all agree that the experiment was an important development in the history of psychology, for it helped to define this profession as distinct from the fields of philosophy and physiology. Nonetheless, they argue, this extremely useful tool can yield erroneous results if the experimental environment is not carefully monitored. The politics of the experiment, non-verbal and verbal communication, biases in the choice of subjects, prejudices on the part of psychologists, and methods of analysis can all skew the results of an experiment.

It is important that each of these factors be considered by psychologists, and therefore, it is for the experimental psychologist that *The Rise of Experimentation in American Psychology* will be of greatest value. However, for the general historian, this book lacks a broader context, which limits its usefulness. The psychological experiment is presented without reference to time or space, and the general historian is left asking how the environment beyond the experiment affected the results.

Iowa State University

Joanne Abel Goldman

MECHANICAL MAN. John Broadus Watson and the Beginnings of Behaviorism. By Kerry W. Buckley. New York: Guilford Press. 1989.

Few academic psychologists have caught the public's attention for any length of time and become subjects of full-scale biographies. John B. Watson, the original "behaviorist," managed to achieve both, the first one not exactly against his will. But the second one—a biography—was made much harder when, shortly before his death, he burned all his papers. "When you are dead, you are all dead" was his comment, according to Kerry Buckley's account in this, the second book-length treatment of Watson's life and work. A more detailed, more accurate, and less journalistic hero worshipping than the earlier Watson book by David Cohen (1979), it reports on the results of extensive archival research and interviews that fill some of the large gaps left by Watson's action.

Buckley provides a good deal of information about Watson's background in South Carolina, adds some new material from the (recently opened) Adolph Meyer Papers, and presents many details of Watson's resignation, divorce and post-academic career. He also

attempts to set Watson's life into its cultural context, of urbanization, mechanization and modernism, although the book's title *Mechanical Man* does not strike me as particularly felicitous. It certainly does not fit Watson's volatile personality. Neither does his theorizing, though very reductionist, materialist and sometimes very simplistic, deserve the label of (mechanical) "muscle-twitch" psychology hung on it by his critics.

The book gives us a solid and readable descriptive account of Watson's life, work and times. Notwithstanding the dust jacket claim, though, it may not be the definitive biography. Unfortunately, it does not even provide the needed definitive bibliography of Watson's work. Beyond this technical detail, it does not quite succeed in painting an inspired portrait catching the essence of a historical figure. Nor does it fully come to grips with the analytic task of unraveling some of the historical-scientific knots left by this self-proclaimed revolutionary, whose new label ("behaviorism") and definition ("prediction and control of behavior") for an academic discipline provided the battle cry for the next fifty or more years. As the "Little Albert" tale and the claims about Watson's impact on the advertising industry exemplify, his status as patron saint of the new movement has blurred the distinction between his rhetoric and his actual accomplishments and made a judicious evaluation of his work difficult but imperative. Though Buckley's workmanlike account provides us with much of the source material, it does not quite manage this major task.

Kansas State University

Franz Samelson

WESTERN IMAGES, WESTERN LANDSCAPES: Travels Along U.S. 89. By Thomas R. Vale and Geraldine R. Vale. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press. 1989.

The title of this slender book suggests a traditional travel guide, but its contents reveal more philosophical ambitions. The Vales are geographers interested in the values people attribute to the West and how these values are reflected in the Western landscape. Their journey along Highway 89 is almost incidental, a device to provoke discussion on such varied and contradictory perceptions of the region as desert, playground, land of unbounded economic opportunity, protected wild nature, frontier and garden. The tone is conversational yet wise, and more than a hundred well-chosen photographs and drawings help to clarify issues. The authors have an eye for the significant in seemingly ordinary landscape scenes. In Arizona, for example, they expose the Tom Mix legend as false, yet argue how belief in it may promote a positive attitude toward the land. Ultimately, by revealing the possibilities and conflicts inherent in what the West is seen to be, they challenge us to develop a thoughtful vision for the region's future.

University of Kansas

James R. Shortridge

THE GREAT PRAIRIE FACT AND LITERARY IMAGINATION. By Robert Thacker. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1989.

Thacker traces the "seeing, describing, mapping, and finally, settling" of the plains and prairies in American and Canadian literature. He examines the use and re-use of the images that became the symbols that still underlie our concepts of the region. Thacker regards prairie fiction as "something of a closed system" (216), deriving its imaginative elements from the land, the great prairie fact, itself.

Thacker analyzes the earliest attempts to define the blank expanse that faced explorers, travellers and artists. He is at his best discussing Cooper's imaginative use of early explorer's reports in *The Prairie*. The latter half of the book traces the more familiar

use of prairie landscape in the novels of Cather and other Great Plains writers, but his primary focus on the text themselves and how they reveal the author's response to and use of the vast landscape adds an important dimension to the study of Great Plains literature.

Anyone interested in the diversity of American literature, or in the history and culture of the Great Plains, will find *The Great Prairie Fact* indispensable in the tradition of Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land*, Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* and Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration through Violence*.

Wichita State University

Diane D. Quantic

MY ANTONIA: The Road Home. By John J. Murphy. Boston: Twayne. 1989.

This book provides a fresh analysis and useful information on Willa Cather's best known novel, *My Antonia*. Scholars will appreciate the thorough survey of the critical reception of the novel, the extensive bibliography, and a previously unpublished letter by Annie Pavelka, the prototype for Antonia. Murphy's close reading of the novel contributes well to the study of the influences on Cather, from sources as diverse as Virgil's *Georgics* and Cather's own experiences in rural Nebraska. He also comments on the influence on impressionism and luminism from painting contemporaneous with *My Antonia*. Altogether the book is a valuable resource for both scholar and student.

University of Central Florida

Kathryn Lee Seidel

STRANGE FRUIT: A Gentle Utopia. By H. Roger Grant. De Kalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press. 1988.

The author has conducted a labor of love in exhaustively researching and affectionately writing this account of a successful but little known twentieth-century utopian community that existed first in Ohio, then in Illinois and finally in California. Saddled with the unfortunate choice of a name, "Strange Fruit" managed to attract a small number of responsible, kindly participants, imbued with a combination of Social Gospel Christianity, Theosophical ideals and a smattering of Edward Carpenter's views on sexual freedom. Reading almost like a novel and replete with photographs, the book sympathetically describes how decent people are capable of living humanely in a communal setting.

City College of the City University of New York

Lawrence Kaplan

CATHOLIC COUNTERCULTURE IN AMERICA, 1933-1962. By James Terence Fisher. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1989.

Constructing a cultural history of romantic American Catholic apostolic efforts over a thirty year period to create "a new society within the shell of the old" is no small challenge. Fisher presents solidly useful results in this elegant analysis of selected figures in modern American Catholicism: Dorothy Day, Tom Dooley, Jack Kerouac and Thomas Merton. Using psychohistory techniques and impressive archival sources, this book treats major figures familiar to most readers as well as intriguing lesser characters: the "fool for Christ" hobo philosopher Peter Maurin; novelists Myles Connolly and Harry Sylvester; and *Integrity* magazine editors Ed Willcock, Carol Jackson and Dorothy Dohen. The discussion of Marycrest, a New York Catholic back-to-the-earth commune in the 1950s, is also a genuine contribution to the reappraisal of radical Catholic social movements.

Aloof from the conservative, ethnic church by the 1930s, the small but influential Catholic Counterculture elite offered American Catholics and converts an important

personalist alternative to the mainstream institutional church. This, as Fisher notes, American Studies scholars have only begun to explore.

Pine Manor College

Peter C. Holloran

POLETOWN: Community Betrayed. By Jeanie Wylie. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 1989.

Wylie, a Poletown activist, has written a melodrama without a happy ending. Scholars will be disappointed by the lack of historical, sociological, economic and ethnographic analysis. Instead, the reader is inundated with conspiratorial interpretations, including the reporting of rumor as if it were fact and numerous undocumented implications of collusion, corruption and complicity in criminal behavior by government, religious and corporate officials. Yet, the book has value; it should be read by politicians, planners, students and scholars trying to understand the hubris of the powerful and the anguish of the powerless in the American democratic system.

Creighton University

Dennis N. Mihelich

PUERTO RICANS: Born in the U.S.A. By Clara E. Rodriguez. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Clara E. Rodriguez uses a "multiple method" approach to arrive at new ways of understanding the Puerto Rican experience in the United States. This study draws upon an impressively extensive collection of existing literature on Puerto Ricans, and is written in an easily accessible style to reach the public and the policy makers. The book explores the Puerto Ricans' understanding of a race and culture and the implication this has on public policies that rest on the traditionally bifurcated American notion of race. In two of the most detailed chapters (5 and 6), Rodriguez points to the way in which urban decay and urban renewal program have destroyed Puerto Rican communities; and the assimilating dialectic in the American educational system which, ignoring as it does Puerto Rican cultural realities, has been responsible for the high dropout rates in schools and colleges. An examination of the "Menudo" phenomenon, a popular form of expression in folk music, illustrates the general point that the "lived creature" of the Puerto Ricans in the United States remains unwritten about and unknown. Public policy makers really do need to be greatly more aware of it. While the author pleads for a "wide-angle lens" approach to study Puerto Ricans in all states, her book focuses largely upon those living in New York City, where in 1980, they made up more than a million of the city's inhabitants, that is 12.67 percent of the total population, 60.45 percent of all Latinos, and about 50 percent of all Puerto Ricans in the country.

University of Kansas

Surendra Bhana