

## Reviews

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### Transnational American Studies

- HELMBRECHT BREINIG Wilfried Raussert, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies* (2017)
- KARIN IKAS Udo Hebel, *Transnational American Studies* (2012)
- ULFRIED REICHARDT Alfred Hornung, ed., *Obama and Transnational American Studies* (2016)
- INGRID GESSNER Brooke L. Blower and Mark Philip Bradley, eds., *The Familiar Made Strange: American Icons and Artifacts After the Transnational Turn* (2015)

### Transnational Perspectives in American History and Culture

- XIUMING HE Caroline Frank, *Objectifying China, Imagining America: Chinese Commodities in Early America* (2011)
- HERMANN WELLENREUTHER Peter Nicolaisen and Hannah Spahn, eds., *Cosmopolitanism and Nationhood in the Age of Jefferson* (2013)
- KLAUS SCHMIDT Mark G. Spencer, ed., *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of the American Enlightenment* (2015)
- PATRICK ERBEN Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, *Transatlantic Crossings and Transformations: German-American Cultural Transfer from the 18th to the 19th Century* (2015)
- ULF SCHULENBERG Kendahl Radcliffe, Jennifer Scott, and Anja Werner, eds., *Anywhere But Here: Black Intellectuals in the Atlantic World and Beyond* (2015)
- KATHARINA FACKLER Elisabeth Bronfen, *Eine Amerikanerin in Hitlers Badewanne. Drei Frauen berichten über den Krieg: Martha Gellhorn, Lee Miller und Margaret Bourke White* (2015)
- STEFANIE SCHÄFER Katja Kurz, *Narrating Contested Lives: The Aesthetics of Life Writing in Human Rights Campaigns* (2015)
- PAULA VON GLEICH Markus Nehl, *Transnational Black Dialogues: Re-Imagining Slavery in the Twenty-First Century* (2016)



WILFRIED RAUSSERT, *The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), xv, 444 pp.

Inter-American or Hemispheric (American) Studies is one of the fields in the wider context of Cultural Studies, Area Studies, or Transnational (American) Studies that has rapidly evolved in recent decades to encompass and combine a wide variety of (sub-)disciplines like history, literary history, cultural history, social science, political studies, economy, religion studies, history of art, film- and media studies, and so forth, as long as they are focused on the Americas. Given the geological and biological past of the two continents, Inter-American Studies (henceforth: IAS) as the study of relations and interaction between some or many of the nations, cultures, regions and societies in the Western hemisphere should even have its foundation in geology, geography and biology. IAS is a vast field that shares the fuzziness of its borders with the disciplines and macro-disciplines mentioned above. Since the first major outline of its scope and disciplinary history in Ralph Bauer's seminal "Hemispheric Studies,"<sup>1</sup> it has expanded even further, witness the foundation of the International Association of Inter-American Studies (IAS) and the establishment of study and research centers like the Centers for Inter-American Studies at the Universities of Bielefeld and Graz and similar ventures in Europe, the United States and Latin America. In this situation, the time has certainly come for overviews and handbooks that define the field and its disciplinary history and problems more comprehensively than even such admirable collections of essays like Levander and Levine's *Hemispheric American Studies* can do.<sup>2</sup> Raussert's *Routledge Companion* is therefore a most welcome publication, all the more since Routledge's stated policy that their "Handbooks and Companions address new developments in the Social Sciences and Humanities, while at the same time providing an authoritative guide to theory and method, the key sub-disciplines and the primary debates of today"<sup>3</sup> makes one expect a foundational publication. What the volume is intended to

achieve and does achieve, then, is a laudable and, indeed, formidable contribution to the field. At the same time, it shows the utopian side of such a project.

A review of limited length cannot do justice to the scope of this book. The volume is divided into three parts: "Key ideas, methods, and developments," "Theory put into practice: Comparative, relational, and processual case studies," and "Power, politics, and asymmetries." The vagueness of these titles indicates the editor's difficulties in grouping the enormous number of 37 papers contributed to the volume, especially since there are numerous categorical overlaps. I will put my emphasis on the first part because it is here that the groundwork is laid. As to the other two sections, I will not proceed sequentially but name or discuss selected papers according to my own grouping.

The first paper of the volume, Earl E. Fitz's "Then and now: The current state of inter-American literary studies," opens part I with a spirited argument against U.S. American hegemony in the field of IAS. After a short and somewhat incomplete sketch of the historical development of the discipline, Fitz takes up the question formerly asked by Djelal Kadir in the context of the foundation of the International American Studies Association: can we dissociate ourselves from the tradition of seeing the United States at the center of inter-American research, can we even pursue the field without dealing with the U.S.? The answer is "yes," but in what Fitz describes as the American Studies approach to Hemispheric Studies, U.S. scholars and U.S. topics still dominate, both because of the academic tradition in the United States and the widespread lack of linguistic and cultural competency concerning the other parts of the Americas. Therefore, he favors the approach by Latin Americanists for the reason that, as he claims perhaps a little too sweepingly, they, just like Canadianists and Caribbeanists, "[b]ecause of their diverse linguistic and cultural training, [...] are, arguably, proto-comparatists" (21). Thus, for Fitz a revised, hemispherically oriented Comparative Literature approach is what IAS requires. It promises the best results, especially if it also transcends the binary model of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking America and also includes Brazil as the source of a literary and cultural wealth comparable to that of the United States.

The chances and problems Fitz describes do not refer to literary studies alone but to all

<sup>1</sup> *PMLA* 124 (2009): 234-50.

<sup>2</sup> Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine, eds. *Hemispheric American Studies*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.routledge.com/handbooks>

fields converging in the Hemispheric Studies enterprise. In this sense, he establishes a program for the book which, as it turns out, the volume fulfils to a certain extent but also and inevitably cannot fulfil in others. Take the example of language. The volume is in English, which, without further comment, seems to have been accepted by the editor and publisher as an inevitable choice, English having become the lingua franca even in the humanities. Yet in tune with the demands made by Fitz, the very representativeness of this book would have required the use of at least Spanish, Portuguese, and French besides English, which would have averted the charge of hegemonic epistemics but would also have created problems of understanding for parts of the readership. Abstracts in several languages might have helped, but given the fact that many of the contributions are summaries of previous publications by the respective author, this would have been a difficult task. In addition, the volume's great length of 444 small print and large format pages would have forbidden any further additions. Apart from the problem of linguistic hegemonialism, there is that of competency. Although most authors write decent scholarly English, in some cases linguistic problems are in the way of comprehension, for instance in Gerardo Gutiérrez Cham's "The other side of the iron: Parrhesia of slaves in the Indias [sic]." (On the other hand, the fact that the author cites the titles of Foucault's books in Spanish may be taken as a sign of resistance against the dominant Anglophonism.)

Naturally, in his useful introduction (obviously written before Trump's policy began to threaten the hemispheric order), the editor focuses not on the problems but on the achievements to be reached in this volume: "The proposed Companion not only intends to chart the field but, by doing so, also to implement a theoretical matrix to think the Americas as complex and interconnected. [...] Inter-American Studies [...] explores the ways in which places, regions, communities, and nations in the Americas are embedded in a larger picture of global [...] processes of trade, exchange, and politics through an inter-American lens that highlights itineraries, flows, practices, productions, and hierarchies as they emerge within the Americas" (4). In view of the global perspective, the "theoretical matrix" can only mean the aim to cast the net as widely as possible while realizing that all factors, elements, and agents in this web are in constant change.

Therefore, "flow" and "entanglement" are keywords used in this text.

The papers collected in this volume are called "chapters," thus suggesting an argumentative systematics and coherence that must remain utopian, since the emphasis has been put on variety, diversity, breadth. Breadth and variety are indeed astonishing and begin with the institutional background. The 38 contributors come from universities in 10 countries, with the 15 papers from the U.S. and the 10 from Germany forming the bulk, but four other European countries are also represented. There are two papers from Canada and Mexico each, one from Chile, and one from St. Augustine—a transnational assembly, but with great imbalances, even when one takes into account that a number of Latin American scholars represented in this book now work in the United States or Europe. One should like to know why many of the Latin American and Canadian scholars mentioned by Fitz are not among the contributors. The picture gets more complex in a positive sense when we look at the disciplines represented by the contributors. Here, Latin American and US-American Literatures and Cultures are about evenly represented and form the two major blocks, but there are also contributors from Comparative, Caribbean, and Canadian Literatures, IAS proper, Media Studies, History, Social Science, Linguistics, Anthropology, Art, and Music. What makes this picture even more appealing is the fact that many of the authors have long transcended disciplinary borders and are at home in several areas of Cultural Studies in the most comprehensive sense.

Part I is devoted to exploring concepts of IAS and to situating it in the context of related terms. After Fitz's paper mentioned above, Winfried Siemerling's "Transnational perspectives on the Americas: Canada, the United States, and the case of Mary Ann Shadd" convincingly demonstrates the validity of a transnational, "contrapuntal approach that keeps national paradigms in full view while also reading across and beyond borders" (33) by discussing the case of black writer and educator Mary Ann Shadd. Shadd is a historic figure whose role has to be seen not only in a Canadian, but also a North American context, which involves the inclusion of aspects of post-colonialism and black diaspora culture. Thus, this essay establishes a pattern, since many of the papers in this book are not only inter-

American but also intersectional, with race and ethnicity figuring far more prominently than gender. In his paper on “The empire of liberty” Djelal Kadir, whose role for the establishment of IAS is pointed out by Fitz, enters the discussion not so much by defining the field but by excoriating the continuing power of imperialism. Walter D. Mignolo, another heavyweight in inter-American and Latin American studies, in his “Decolonial reflections on hemispheric partitions: From the ‘Western Hemisphere’ to the ‘Eastern Hemisphere’” reminds us that just like nations hemispheres are also social constructions associated with power interests. They are liable to massive changes in this decolonial period when, for instance, Latin American countries may form political and economic ties with East Asia and therefore belong to the Eastern Hemisphere while simultaneously being part of the Global South. “No doubt that the implications of the shift are enormous [...]: now the East is both in the West and in the South. And the South is both in the East and the North. [...] The cycle that started with the invention of America, and later on the Western Hemisphere, is closing. Theorizing Hemispheric Studies of the Americas means to start from this closing while, at the same time, knowing well the conditions under which America and the Western Hemisphere were created and under which the illusion is maintained” (62, 66). While one may wonder to what extent this shift applies also to culture in the widest sense, or when cultural production will be massively affected by it, this is a timely warning that the new discipline of IAS may be less long-lived than we may currently assume. Other critics add further aspects not to any definitive demarcation of IAS but to an encircling of the field, a highlighting of relevant facets. Robert McKee Irwin gives a critical survey of the progress the new American studies has made towards internationalization; Luz Angélica Kirschner discusses the meanings of the term *latinidad* in the United States and Latin America in a plurality of contexts, notably those of the relationship to other ethnicities; Stephen M. Park points out the need to know and reflect upon the place from which concepts of pan-America are formulated, for instance in the case of anti-imperialist José Martí who developed his ideas in a U.S. context; Claudia Sadowski-Smith compares the policies regarding the Canada-U.S. and Mexico-U.S. borders from their creation to the present day, with par-

ticular emphasis on the needs of indigenous peoples on either side; George A. Yúdice describes the changes in his own concept of IAS under the impact of digitalization and globalization, that is, he, too, like Mignolo points out the limits of the concept in view of what he calls “global commons”; and, finally, John Carlos Rowe muses on Melville’s and Ishmael’s implication in Western imperialism and focuses on Queequeg who “is thus the central character in *Moby-Dick* to represent the consequences of 19<sup>th</sup>-century globalization, for better and for worse” (135), thus demonstrating that IAS in its historical dimension is tied up with US-American and European imperialism. On the whole, this section of the book is the most valuable one because its contributions demarcate central aspects of what pursuing IAS might imply. At the same time, this is not an attempt at a systematic and coherent definition or even delineation of the field. Interestingly, the majority of the contributors to part I are not scholars from academic American Studies, which seems to confirm Fitz’s point that Latin Americanists, Caribbeanists and Canadianists have more to offer in developing a non-hegemonic concept of the field.

The papers by Siemerling and Rowe are also case studies and thus might have found their place in part II (whose title “Theory put into practice” is somewhat misleading, there being not overmuch theory in the strict sense), or else in part III on power and politics. At the same time, quite a few of the papers in these sections also contain pertinent comments on what IAS as a discipline is or should be. Such is the case with Josef Raab’s “Hemispheric Intersections in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*,” which provides a good introduction into IAS and then proceeds to put Morrison’s novel into an inter-American context. Raab’s comments on what he calls “Interconnections” are particularly relevant, for instance his observation that *A Mercy* might be studied in the context of other settings and practices of slavery or other inter-ethnic relations in the colonial Americas. It is here that the new vistas opened by IAS can be truly enriching for the disciplines converging at a specific point of investigation. Isabel Caldera, on the other hand, in her “Toni Morrison and Edwidge Danticat” sees the two writers as exponents of literature as an instrument of liberation and de-colonization. While her observations on Morrison’s *A Mercy* and Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory* are pertinent, she simply sets the two writers and

their works side by side without thematizing IAS. Is the fact that the writers come from the U.S. and Haiti sufficient to merit the inclusion of this essay in a *Companion to Inter-American Studies*? A similar question can be asked with respect to Alberto Moreiras' "Hispanism and the border," one of the intellectually most profound essays in the book. Hispanism is defined as "the history and practice of reflection on territories, people, languages, and worlds marked by the Castilian language, all too often through gestures of war, of domination, conquest, and oppression" (197). The concept of Hispanism is currently in a border situation that requires self-reflection, notably with regard to the role of violence and ethics. These questions are here discussed taking Cormack McCarthy's border novel *Blood Meridian* and Javier Marías's *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* as examples, texts by a US-American and a Spanish writer, only the first of which could be called inter-American. Moreiras's paper raises questions of universal relevance and might perhaps have found a better venue elsewhere. The same applies to Aníbal Quijano's reflections on "Good Living" as "an alternative social existence, as a De/Coloniality of Power" (363). The question of relevancy for a companion on IAS has to be asked more often in this book, for instance in the case of Claire F. Fox's paper on Peruvian artist Fernando de Szyszlo, that by Gutiérrez Cham mentioned above, Deborah Dorotinsky's on the México Indígena archive of ethnographic photographs, and others, no matter how significant their findings may be in their respective disciplinary context.

On the other hand, there are papers that exemplify Kadir's and Fitz's claim that there might be IAS without thematically involving the United States. Alejandra Bottinelli Wolleter's discussion of the role played by intellectuals in the debates about national identity in Mexico and Peru would be sufficient in itself without her brief glance at Octavio Paz's negative view of the Pachucos in Los Angeles. Paula Prescod's study of the fate of the indigenous Garinagu of St. Vincent is a more radical case. Does the colonial relocation of the "Black Caribs" by the British to what is now Honduras make the case sufficiently inter-American? I think it does. Also, I find Prescod's observation that that part of the Caribs who were allowed to stay on the island retained fewer elements of their tribal culture than the others who were forced into a diaspora existence

might present a model worth debating in diaspora studies. Thus, the question of what to include in a volume of this kind might be answered in different ways.

Not a small part of the work hitherto done in Hemispheric Studies from its beginning is comparative or comparatist in nature. However, only when such comparisons render new insights into the texts or subject matters under discussion are they useful. This is the case more often in social science and anthropology than in literary studies. Thus, Karla Slocum's study of black towns in St. Lucia and Oklahoma provides interesting material of forms of migration, diaspora, and community formation by post-slavery blacks. Raab's promoting comparison as a suitable approach to literary analysis in Hemispheric Studies strikes me as less convincing, for instance when he suggests that Morrison's "A Mercy [...]" lends itself to a comparison to *Cien años de soledad [...]* because both novels function as a "historically founded fictional construction of dynamics that shaped parts of the Americas" (223)—thousands of other novels would serve just as well. The question of comparison as a central method of IAS deserves further attention.

Given the length of the book, this reviewer would have favored a reduction of the number of contributions, all the more so since in some cases it would have offered the opportunity of expanding the argument somewhat further and adding some further interdisciplinary touches. Hence, not all the papers in this volume can be mentioned here. Not all of them are of equal quality, nor are they equally daring in transcending the boundaries of the disciplines they come from. This reader has benefitted particularly from some of the essays that provide solid information on the subject they cover, for instance Birgit Däwes's survey of "transnational indigenous performance in the U.S. and Canada," the editor's own paper on the Chicano pop singer El Vez and his use of culture-transcending citations, Sérgio Costa's refutation of French scholars Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant's claim that US-American academic and political dominance shaped the discussion of race relations in Brazil (here, John Updike's novel *Brazil* could have served as an example for the persistence of stereotypes), Stefan Rinke and Karina Kriegesmann's historiographic essay on the way World War I affected the attitudes and policies of the United States and a variety of Latin American countries (a study in which

I missed a discussion of a prequel, the Venezuela Crises around the turn of the century), and Deborah Cohn's discussion of the efforts by U.S. academics and officials during the Cold War to bring Latin American literature and literati to the United States, partially in the hope to shape their opinion on the superiority of the West.

Three of the thematic papers are real eye-openers—at least for those who missed the publication of their previous versions (in the case of Pratt and Buchenau). In her “Language and the afterlives of empire,” Mary Louise Pratt describes the function of imperial languages to control and communicate as well as the way they interact with the languages of conquered empires. This interaction is exemplified by the inter-imperial entanglement of Spanish and Quechua or Nahuatl, the latter two remaining elements of “a sustained practice of resistance” (310) to hegemonial Spanish to the present day, and by the similar entanglement of English and Spanish in what is now the United States. Rüdiger Kunow’s “The biology of geography: Disease and disease ecologies in the Americas” studies the precariousness of human life in the Americas, using the epidemics of yellow fever that hit countries from Brazil to the U.S. as examples, Philadelphia being the most famous US-American case (I would have loved to see Charles Brockden Brown’s *Arthur Mervyn* discussed in this context). The disease contributed to the formation of a “bio-cultural imaginary” (304), especially after disease

control had become an element of national identity definition and an instrument of U.S. hegemonialism. In “Cain’s land, or troping indigenous agriculture,” Barbara Buchenau discusses “the striking hermeneutics that have helped to incorporate—and thus swallow—indigenous farming in colonial descriptions of unfamiliar lands” (283) and compares the diverging views and tropes used by the early French explorers Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain. Each of these essays demonstrates the chances offered by transcending the borders of accustomed disciplinary topics, of extending the time spans covered and the territorial reach. They also confirm the validity of the editor’s decision to include previously published material if it helps to demonstrate the range and potential of the field this volume is intended to represent.

*The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies* is a big and costly book. Given its price and the diversity of its content, it is a book for university libraries rather than for traditional American Studies collections—but shouldn’t these take the step toward transnational and, indeed, hemispheric approaches? It isn’t a companion in the sense of a guide, but a “compilation” (2f.) of a great variety of approaches and disciplines to a vast topic, and it makes a great effort to expand this vastness even further. In other words, it does not so much define IAS as stimulate its further development.

Helmbrecht Breinig (Erlangen)



UDO J. HEBEL, ed., *Transnational American Studies* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2012), *American Studies Monograph Series*, no. 222. 644 pp.

In his often-cited essay “Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism” Steven Vertovec broadly defined transnationalism in 1999 as the “multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of the nation-states” (447).<sup>1</sup> Since then, international and interdisciplinary scholarship has provided further insights on transnationalism as theory, concept, and experience. In the field of American Studies, Shelley Fisher Fishkin’s famous and influential call for “a transnational turn” in 2004 contributed to the end of the so-called “American Century,” with researchers challenging long-established and multifaceted boundaries and national foci over the past years and institutionalizing that very idea of a transnational turn in the first decade of the third Millennium.

In June 2011, significant academic representatives in the ongoing debates about the “present state and future transnational agenda of the discipline of American Studies” (3) gathered at the University of Regensburg for the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the German Association for American Studies. There they discussed and critically assessed from an international and interdisciplinary angle how “transnational approaches and comparative perspectives support and emphasize the exploration of multidirectional processes of cultural and political interaction and transfer” (4).

*Transnational American Studies*, the conference topic, became also the title for the collection of thirty papers chosen and developed out of that conference and published a year later by the Universitätsverlag Winter in Heidelberg.

Edited by Udo Hebel, a leading German Americanist and current president of the University of Regensburg, *Transnational American Studies* with its overall 644 pages makes a substantial and insightful contribution to the debate as it documents numerous changes and challenges inherent in a transnational conception of American Studies at that time.

In his nine-page-introduction, Hebel first quickly sketches “the multifaceted history of the theoretical paradigm of transnational

American studies” (3) in a national and global context and then briefly touches on the three-day conference in Regensburg, the design of which corresponds to the setup of the book. The publication of the conference proceedings is divided into three sections, with the five keynote lectures in section one, twenty-four revised workshop papers in section two entitled “Voices, Perspectives, and Projects in Transnational American Studies” (145), and finally the six opening statements from the panel discussions at the end of the conference. That later are compiled under the heading “Visions for Transnational American Studies” (613) and are grouped together with Klaus Benesch’s summary assessment.

Overall, the contributors to *Transnational American Studies* come from four different countries and three continents, whereby keynote speaker Ian Tyrrell’s plenary paper adds a welcoming and refreshing historical perspective from ‘Down Under’ to his colleagues’ transnational agenda in American Studies situated in North America (five in the U.S. and one in Canada) and in Europe, above all here in Germany. In fact, more than three quarters of the contributors (~ 76 %) are German Americanists, nine of them leading and well-established academics and doctoral young and aspiring doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. In this manner, the volume is perhaps a little more intergenerational and a little less international than one might expect based on the introductory words in the preface.

Yet, regardless of the academic contributors’ geographical and disciplinary locations, overall the collection takes stock of influential and by now almost classic transnational approaches and outlooks,<sup>2</sup> while also venturing out to new vistas and new research agendas that go beyond familiar approaches and contemporary trends.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> As offered, for instance, in section one by Shelly Fisher Fishkin’s “Mapping Transnational American Studies” or Mita Banerjee’s “A Whiter Shade of Transnationalism: Diaspora and Undocumented in *The Game*.”

<sup>3</sup> For instance, in section one Alfred Hornung’s “ChinAmerica: Intercultural Relations for a Transnational World” or, in section two Susanne Leikam’s “Transnational Tales of Risk and Coping: Disaster Narratives in Late-Nineteenth-and-Early-Twentieth-Century San Francisco” or Shane Denson’s “Comics in Plurimedial and Transnational Perspectives.”

<sup>1</sup> Steven Vertovec, “Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22.2 (1999): 447-61.



In many instances, the transnational is unthinkable without a critical reassessment of the local, regional, and national, which makes many contributors move between these realms. In “Transnationalizing the Heartland Myth,” Kristin Hoganson, for instance, offers a transnational reassessment of “the hidden history of animal mobility” that lets us perceive the U.S. Midwest in the nineteenth century less as an isolated heartland than as a place of encounter and circulation within an integrated North American history where the problematic of “border-crossing animals” (139) further helps to explain why “the United States came to regard its borders with Canada and Mexico so differently” (126). In “Towards a National Drama,” Stefanie Schäfer examines James K. Paulding’s play *The Lion of the West* to revisit the nationalism of the Jacksonian Age and to call for a “reassessment of cultures of performance and travelling concepts like the clown and the stock figure in a yet to be defined transnational field of American drama and theater studies” (183; 202-03).

Whereas Timo Müller assesses the transnational aesthetic in Derek Walcott and Rita Dove’s poetry, claiming that the “transnational paradigm offers a way [...] to redefine the relations between Caribbean and European ‘discourse’ in terms other than antithetical” (251), Barbara Buchenau moves back in time to the nineteenth century and some selected white man’s representations of North American Indians in New England and New France (165). According to Buchenau, these representations illustrate “major rifts and conflicts in the imaginary construct of America” (165), which, if read “within subcontinental rather than transatlantic contexts [...]” speak to hemispheric and North American struggle, such as the conflict over “CanAmerica” (167). Buchenau introduces this new and promising term for the “body of land that comprises Canada and the part of America that is today coterminous with the U.S.A.” (167). One would have wished for a theoretical foundation of the term “CanAmerica,” though, to make it more accessible for further transnational approaches in a hemispheric and inter-American context. Josef Raab, like Buchenau, is a specialist of the latter. In “Mythologizing the Exotic: Brazil in Twentieth-Century U.S. American Literature and Film,” the founding President of the International Association of Inter-American Studies provides a very knowledgeable study of four types of “U.S.

mythologies of an exotic Brazil [...] from the 1940s through the 1990s” (403-04)—two as expressed in U.S. literature and two as expressed in U.S. film. Illustrating that mythmaking on either side (US-American and Brazilian) does not stop, Raab claims that creations of Brazil in multiple media “need to be scrutinized for their motivations” (420). Inter-American Studies, Raab concludes, needs to put such myth-making in the context of the empire writing back, or rather in the context of Brazilian myth-making as well as Brazilian myth-making about Brazil itself” (420). One would have hoped for a comprehensive consideration of the very concept of the transnational in the inter-American context in this well-written paper as well. Raab, however, confines himself here to keep the reader alert with his closing reminder that “[i]n practicing transnational American Studies, we need to be aware of mechanisms of othering and of the reasons behind them” (420), which is, by the way, the only time the term ‘transnational’ is ever mentioned in this study.

Some other contributors, too, open up interesting vistas without focusing closely on the very concept of the transnational, whereby twelve entries don’t even mention it in their titles. The latter may not necessarily be required for contributing to this collection at hand. Difficulties arise, however, in those few cases in which the authors (esp. René Dietrich and Andrew S. Gross) refrain from providing a brief conceptual clarification of the term or specify at least their particular approach to and engagement with the transnational in the opening paragraphs of their otherwise quite interesting readings of Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Storyteller* (Dietrich) and W.H. Auden’s *The Age of Anxiety* (Gross).

At least in this connection *Transnational American Studies* could be more clearly focused on its central concept and theme. On the other hand, the collection also further benefits significantly from the illuminative debates on the conceptual and methodic entanglements of the transnational in general and the transnational turn in particular as well as the future chances and challenges involved with it in numerous entries and specifically provided by Helmbrecht Breinig, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Kristin Hoganson, Alfred Hornung, Barry Shank, and Ian Tyrrell in the concluding section. The German Americanist Klaus Benesch, who chaired this final panel discussion, offers a summary assessment of this debate.

His succinct entry entitled “Transnational American Studies—Looking Backward to the Future” ends with a call to continuously reassess the role of transnationalism in a relentlessly globalizing world” (619).

In sum, the book under review provides the reader with a very valuable overview and comprehensive discussion of the transnational turn and raises awareness of the ongoing chances and challenges of transnationalism in American Studies in Germany, Europe, and worldwide. It offers a great variety of interdisciplinary debates about what was going on in Transnational American Studies in

Germany, Europe, and internationally in (Inter-)national American Studies in the first decade of the third Millennium. It is regrettable, though, that the editor refrains from providing an index and a thematic subdivision of the main part to make this highly recommendable 644-page-volume more user-friendly and thus more easily accessible, especially for students. Overall, this is a publication that will definitely serve as a valuable springboard for future studies in the demanding field of Transnational American Studies.

Karin Ikas (Frankfurt a.M.)

ALFRED HORNUNG, ed. *Obama and Transnational American Studies* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2016), 528 pp.

American Studies have come a long way, as have American politics. In a geopolitical sense, the new millennium began on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, a date that has been regarded as marking the end of the American Century, and reached a decisive new stage with the election of Barack Obama in November 2008. At the convention of the American Studies Association in 2004, Shelley Fisher Fishkin in her Presidential Speech declared the necessity of Transnational American Studies. The historical moment had come to shift gears and negotiate the post-1989 geopolitical constellation after the official end of the East-West confrontation. While the West and liberal capitalism seemed to have won, and some authors such as Francis Fukuyama even fantasized about the end of history, this optimistic decade ended with 9/11. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the economic success of China, and more generally shifting global power relations led leading members of important U.S. think tanks to speak of a multipolar world in which the U.S. is still the strongest nation, yet no longer in an unchallenged position.

Transnational American Studies can be understood as a shift of focus within US-American Studies, and also as an opening up towards American Studies abroad. As the editor of *Obama and Transnational American Studies* writes: “The conception and proliferation of TAS by the American Studies Association and partner associations on a global scale were part of an intellectual and academic procedure to provide an egalitarian basis of scholarly cooperation in discussing the role of U.S. culture and politics in the world (Fishkin; Hornung 2004)” (ix). The notion of transnationalism began its ascent after the debates about multiculturalism had reached their peak in the 1980s, yet can already be found in Randolph Bourne’s 1916 claim for a “Transnational America.” While the concept is linked to the call for the equality of different cultures, the focus on plurality within one nation is no longer able to capture the increasing divided and multiplied identities of people who continue to have allegiances with several countries at once. In a globalizing world, being characterized by increasing time-space compression and a high level of interconnectedness, digitalization and high-frequency

trading, national boundaries no longer seem to be of the first priority. Moreover, American culture and literature have not only been made up of traces of many cultures from its beginning, but there have always been people who had allegiances to several nations, moving back and forth between them.

The election of Barack Obama as 44<sup>th</sup> President of the U.S. can be understood as the realization of these developments and the beginning of a new era in American politics (even while seen from the present perspective maybe only be a temporary one). His biography and multinational family make him a perfect persona for transcending barriers and boundaries, encapsulating “the principal features of a Transnational American Studies approach,” (ix) as Alfred Hornung states in his preface: “His successful political campaigns [...] were run on an all-inclusive and innovative agenda in line with the transnational turn in many academic, cultural, and political areas [...]” (x). His life triangulates three continents—America, Africa, and Asia—and thus exemplifies a life beyond the narrow limits of national borders. As has been stressed by himself and others, however, this transnationalism does not keep him from acting and speaking from within the tradition of the United States.

The essays collected in the present collection “are revised and extended versions of papers given at a conference in October 2014 in preparation of the founding of the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies at Johannes Gutenberg University” in Mainz, Germany. They “address the assumption of a correlation between the extended Obama family, the Obama presidency and Transnational American Studies” (xi). The volume is subdivided in four sections entitled “Transnational Family and Life Writing,” “Transnational Literatures and Laws,” “Transnational Media,” and “Transnational Affinities.” Short paragraphs introducing the respective subsections would have been helpful for positioning the essays within a wider context. The ‘and’ in the title has to be emphasized, as many essays are taking the person and presidency of Obama as the starting point for reflections about Transnational American Studies.

The first section begins with an essay by Barack Obama’s sister Auma Obama who was the honorary speaker of the conference and presents her foundation Sauti Kuu for helping young people in Kenya. She discusses the potentialities of development and emphasizes her

focus on “what local resources the people can use to get what they need” (11). As she studied in Germany for several years, her life and autobiography are excellent bridges between Transnational American Studies in Germany and the transnational Obama family. Alfred Hornung investigates her autobiography and relates it to Barack Obama’s autobiography, stressing the movement between the three continents Africa, Europe, and America. In Birgit Bauridl’s reading of Auma Obama’s text, these multiple connections call for a triangulation and what she calls, with Udo Hebel, “transangular American Studies” (42). Carmen Birkle interrogates Auma Obama’s experience in conjunction with Oprah Winfrey’s performance-oriented life and discusses possible ways of success in the context of “the glass ceiling” still keeping women from access to top positions and with regard to racial difference. She considers Michelle Obama as a representative African American woman and discusses her successful projects as First Lady. The section ends with an essay by Greg Robinson who takes his start from a 1998 essay by Toni Morrison on Bill Clinton in *The New Yorker* in which she argues that “white skin notwithstanding, this is our first black President. Blacker than any actual black person who could ever be elected in our children’s lifetime” (82). In contrast to Clinton, “Barack Obama should more properly be considered our first Asian American president. [...] his portrait resonates in fundamental ways with [...] [what] we might call ‘tropes of asianness’” (83). This is an interesting point, as Obama is mostly discussed with regard to his African ancestry.

In the second section, “Transnational Literatures and Laws,” the focus is shifted to the field of American Studies. The first essay by Kristina Bross and Laura M. Stevens interrogates the notion of transnationalism and its relevance for Early American Studies that are mainly concerned with the times before the emergence of the nation. By using four spatial paradigms, “the Atlantic, the contact zone or middle ground, the Western hemisphere, and the globe” (99), the authors criticize the emphasis on the global as “it neglects local influences.” Rather, they prefer a suggestion by Lynn Hunt to focus on “a series of transnational processes in which the histories of diverse places can become connected and interdependent” (109). Taking into account the pre-national might help us to move

towards the transnational. Elizabeth J. West quotes several definitions of transnationalism, yet writes that “race” introduces a challenge to the concept. She considers three “literate, Muslim, world travelled men” who were recognized by whites only because of their high their social standing (122). Diagnosing an analogy, West argues that “President Obama’s ‘acceptable’ blackness rests on his ability to transform that blackness into the nation’s mythical exceptionalism that is framed in whiteness” (131). Birgit Däwes is interested in a “trans-Indigenous oceanic imagination” (137). “Transmotion” and the ocean are the central terms in her investigation of three works of art, and the sea is understood as “a space of semiotic resonance in which other layers of meaning are embedded” (143). Charles Reagan Wilson takes, among others, a cookbook that combines Asian and Southern cuisines as a symptom of an increasing “transnational creolization” of the U.S. South (176).

Glenn T. Eskew discusses Obama’s relationship to the Civil Rights Movement which was essential to his development. Yet he identifies with the Joshua Generation and the hope for a “post-racial meritocracy that would secure the American Dream for everyone” (184-85). Eskew argues that Obama led a “raceless” campaign, even while he was always identified as black by the media. Declaring his candidacy for the presidency from the same spot where President Lincoln had given his famous “House Divided” speech, Obama later pointed to “the complexities of race in this country that we’ve never really worked through [...]” (190) Eskew sums up that “Obama’s calls for unity embraced inclusiveness as a trait of American exceptionalism, finding in it a model for the world” (202). Rüdiger Kunow reads the health care reform “as a case of American exceptionalism” (205), as the U.S. system is not only “the most expensive and least efficient health care system in the world” (204), but also curiously different from almost all others. As it has been attacked from the right and anti-government forces, Kunow argues that “Health care in the U.S. [...] has become a symbolic battleground on which conflicting notions about American identity and purpose, about citizenship and the social compact are being fought out” (207). Linking the law to recent developments in the bioeconomy, Kunow associates it with the struggle about neoliberalism. His claim that Obama Care may be

decisive for the future condition of the U.S. population underlines that biopolitics is a crucial determinant.

The third section is entitled “Transnational Media.” Mita Banerjee reads the Bollywood film *My Name is Khan*, set in the Swiss Alps and featuring Presidents George W. Bush as well as Barack Obama, with regard to a non-Western view of the “war on terror” as well as in the context of whiteness studies. Paul Giles introduces the category of the “cross-temporal” as an analogue to the transnational and claims “that the dilemma of the Obama administration [...] has involved uneasy attempts to reconcile these structural conditions of transnational and crosstemporal disjunction with a more traditional American rhetoric of pragmatism and optimism, and in this sense I will argue that Tarantino’s cinema speaks aptly to the historical situation of the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (248). The ambiguity of a severe critique of American racism on the one hand and a contemporary aesthetics and recognition of racism’s status within a complex global world crisscrossed by a multitude of other injustices on the other, connects Obama and Tarantino on a certain level. Or, as political scientist Renford Reese is quoted, “At some point after watching this film, I realized that politically speaking Obama *is* Django” (257).

While SunHee Kim Geertz interprets Obama’s “A More Perfect Union” speech by comparing it to Sönke Wortmann’s film *Das Wunder von Bern*, Carola Betzen analyzes Obama with reference to the rapper Kendrick Lamar. With a look at *Black Lives Matter* and young black people’s problems she argues that “the once ground-breaking uniqueness of Obama’s biography now appears to render him too far removed to alleviate their despair” (303). While Obama stressed personal responsibility in today’s globalized market, black youths’ experience of ongoing racism might even be aggravated by the fact that a black president seems to prove that African Americans can make it in a supposedly “post-racial” society. Betzen, therefore, argues that Hip Hop artists gave a voice to the feelings after the police killings of young black men. Nevertheless, she detects some hope for “post-racialism” in Lamar’s album *To Pimp a Butterfly*, as he also calls for self-respect as the main means of empowerment. Udo Hebel locates the Obama presidency within the history of iconic representations of Ameri-

can presidents and discusses their forms and functions within inter pictorial readings. He concludes that the “inter pictorial iconography of President Barack Obama holds the power and potential to contribute [...] to the perception of Barack Obama as a global American president.” The pictures that are discussed include a specifically American political iconography as well as transnational associations (349). Gesa Mackenthun reads Obama’s “audacity of hope,” for her a sign of his idealism, and Edward Snowden’s political act against the surveillance of individuals as related and traces “the origins of their thinking to a fundamental American right to rebel against conditions that they regard as unconstitutional” (354-55).

The last subsection is entitled “Transnational Affinities.” Lothar von Falkenhausen reports on his work as a member of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee, the mission of which it is to build cultural capital. Juxtaposing Mandela, Obama, and Derrida seems rather bold at first sight. Yet Nina Morgan, in her essay, investigates if a political autobiography such as Obama’s or Mandela’s allows past cruelties to be forgiven and forgotten at a time of “the Googlization of globalization of geopolitics” (392). With Derrida, Morgan claims that “one can only forgive that which is unforgivable” (409). Gerd Hurm focuses on Obama and the photographer Edward Steichen as two important figures who “took on the challenge of creating an all-inclusive transnational American political vision within the national discursive constraints of the New Deal master narrative” (423). He points out that Obama tends to stress the dimension of hard work, “the work ethic that can enable anyone, regardless of race, class, gender, or creed, to participate in the American success story” (427). But he also associates him with the 1930s “dust-bowl folk populism” (428) and emphasizes that for Obama the family unit is the “model for an inclusive American community” (429). Nicole Waller reads Obama’s autobiographical life writing as a symptom of a transnational America, yet at the same time detects “a discursive ambiguity which reflect[s] exactly the potential oscillation of transnational American studies between the critique of American national paradigms and the complicity with a new version of American exceptionalism and global control” (457). This argument is pursued by looking at Sonia Sotomayor’s autobiography and the situation

of Puerto Ricans with regard to “American-ness.” Translation, in a linguistic as well as cultural sense is the focus of Jutta Ernst’s contribution in which she approaches Obama by way of the autobiography of Eugene Jolas, a German-French-American author whom she regards “as a precursor of the globally embedded American in the twenty-first century” (487). Obama, in her view, is thinking in a similar vein when he speaks of “Building the American Mosaic” (488). The last essay by Christa Buschendorf draws on Nobert Elias’s figurational sociology and uses his concept of a we-identity to reflect on ethnic identity within larger contexts. Buschendorf investigates transnationalism in the work of Shirley Graham Du Bois, W.E.B. Du Bois’s wife, and emphasizes her conviction that “white supremacy was a transnational phenomenon” (516).

The collection covers a lot of ground and shows that Obama’s life and presidency are linked with a wide spectrum of cultural and intellectual issues. The essays open up many new directions of thinking about contemporary America, yet an analysis of Obama’s actual politics can only be found in a few of them, and there is no comment on the often radical resistance to his politics. Concerning the perspective of transnationalism, many essays either remain within the United States or compare an American phenomenon or life story with one located outside of the U.S. borders. A stronger global perspective might also have analyzed the geopolitical changes to

which Obama responded and which he initiated, for example the move to the Pacific Rim, and the decreasing American involvement in international affairs and its cultural consequences.

The book is an important contribution to American Studies in Germany. The founding of the Obama Institute at Johannes Gutenberg-University in Mainz marks a significant step within the relationship between American Studies in the U.S. and abroad. As the view from outside has not been much acknowledged in the U.S., the establishment of an Institute for Transnational American Studies in Europe is timely. It has often been noticed that President Obama has been more admired in countries other than the U.S., particularly in Germany, which might be a sign that he was in fact the first American president with a truly global view. The book as a whole has an explicit political function in international relations within American Studies. It is worth noting that the conference where the papers were read (2014) and the publication of the collection (2016) predate the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president. This temporal location of the essays’ perspectives is crucial, as the criticism leveled against Obama in some essays might have been different in view of the present situation of US-American politics. It will be interesting to see which of the achievements of the Obama presidency will continue to shape the future of the United States.

Ulfried Reichardt (Mannheim)



BROOKE L. BLOWER and MARK PHILIP BRADLEY, eds., *The Familiar Made Strange: American Icons and Artifacts after the Transnational Turn* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2015), 224 pp.

Over the past two decades the term, concept, and theoretical approach of transnationalism has been increasingly in vogue. “American studies has,” as Rüdiger Kunow aptly phrases it, “been entranced by the trans.”<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the transnational turn in American Studies and American History is in dire need of disentangling itself from an exceptionalist grasp without giving up its critical potential. Bryce Traister observes rather cynically that “transnationalist American Studies amounts to another version of the exceptionalist critical practice it would decry.”<sup>2</sup> However, the *The Familiar Made Strange: American Icons and Artifacts after the Transnational Turn* heeds Winfried Fluck’s call, who defines the transnational turn’s goal as “the redefinition of the field of American studies as transnational, transatlantic, transpacific, hemispheric, or even global studies” and cautions Americanists not to run away “from the task and interpretive challenge for which it was created,” namely “the analysis of the cultural sources of American power.”<sup>3</sup> To this end, the editors Brooke L. Blower and Mark Philip Bradley assembled a diverse set of essays on a variety of iconic cultural productions. The American icons discussed range from paintings, photographs, artifacts, documents, songs and speeches to books and films. According to Webster’s dictionary definition, icons are “object[s] of uncritical veneration” and frequently emotional. This definition draws attention to the connection between icons and a culture of affect. In other words—and applied to a US-American context—icons condense, translate and emotionalize common beliefs or

represent aspects or virtues that are perceived as national American characteristics. They offer themselves for emotional appropriation and ideological identification by emphasizing consensus over conflict.<sup>4</sup> Yet, what happens if the same icons are made subjects of “transnational methods, processes and contexts” (5) of investigation? Let me say as much at this point: Blower and Bradley rightfully call the result of their endeavor “surprising, unsettling, even subversive” (6).

In good neo-historicist fashion the editors introduce the subject and agenda of their volume with a paradigmatic example. They refuse to read Grant Wood’s 1930 painting *American Gothic*, which has been described as “unmistakably, quintessentially American,” (1) through an “exceptionalist lens” (5) and instead subject the painting to a thoroughly transnational examination. They argue that Wood, inspired by journeys across the Atlantic, domesticated European architectural elements and experimented with sexual identity and desires in this particular painting.

While the iconic status of *American Gothic* is hardly an issue to be debated, not all items studied in the collection of essays would immediately be added to a list of American icons by the mundane twenty-first century reader of this collection. The 1778 painting *Watson and the Shark* by John Singleton Copley is such an example. Yet Copley’s painting became extremely popular through inexpensive reproductions in the nineteenth century and is fairly called “a landmark of early American cultural production” (9) by the essay’s author Brian Delay. Copley’s painting is conventionally read as an example of American determination in the context of the Revolution as it depicts young Brook Watson who loses his leg in a shark attack in Havana harbor. In his essay, Delay focuses on the transnational implications of Watson’s probably illicit location in the Spanish-administered harbor. Thus, the painting testifies to “an economic practice that [...] was scarcely documented elsewhere” (18), but constituted the basis for exchange with the New World. A transnational rereading thus not only draws critical attention to a de-facto economic practice but also emphasizes the multinational nature of an engagement

<sup>1</sup> Rüdiger Kunow, “In Sickness and in Health: Transnationalism Reconsidered,” *Virtually American? Denationalizing American Studies*, ed. Mita Banerjee (Heidelberg: Winter, 2009) 23-36; 23.

<sup>2</sup> Bryce Traister, “The Object of Study; Or, Are We Being Transnational Yet?” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 2.1 (2010): n. pag., web, 8 Feb. 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Winfried Fluck, “Inside and Outside: What Kind of Knowledge Do We Need? A Response to the Presidential Address,” *American Quarterly* 59.1 (2007): 23-32; 23, 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Walter W. Hölbling, Susanne Rieser-Wohlfarter, and Klaus Rieser, eds., *US Icons and Iconicity* (Wien: LIT Verlag, 2006).



in the Americas, which again sheds light on the American experience.

An iconic work about Vietnam which has enjoyed remarkable popularity in the United States since its publication in 1955 is discussed by Frederik Logevall. Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* is indeed "a marvelous example of the transnational novel" (115). Multiple factors substantiate Logevall's assessment: an English author and an Indochina setting during the French colonial era peopled by characters of U.S. origin. Greene's novel engages in questions of "democracy" and "human motivation" (115), which—according to Logevall—became key issues in post-colonial Vietnam. In its intriguing historical prognosis of future developments in Vietnam Greene's fictional creation was indeed closer to reality than any news report at the time.

The next few contributions "focus on well-known icons such as Stephen Foster's song 'Oh! Susanna'" (5) and other items from the pop cultural realm, such as the photograph of a sailor kissing a woman on Times Square, or Josephine Baker's banana skirt. "Oh Susanna," a successful blackface minstrelsy song, was "persistently presented as both a prelude to the American Civil War and a domestic cultural codification of black inferiority" (30) according to Brian Rouleau, the essay's author. He traces the American song's proliferation across the U.S. border to show how the shared experience of displacement and the longing for a better future in times of economic transformation spoke to audiences around the world. Rouleau's essay proves especially valuable when he points to the limits of a transnationalist rereading of songs since an international adaptation "usually appears to reify some sense of national distinctiveness" (31-32).

Not surprisingly, the editors' own essays are excellent examples for the proposed exploration of national American icons in transnational contexts. Brooke L. Blower submits Alfred Eisenstaedt's much-reproduced V-J Day picture to a critical feminist and transnational analysis. Arguing that kisses like the one photographed were understood as rewards for soldiers after battle, Blower dismantles the myth of a consensual encounter. Rather, the scene is emblematic for cases of sexual assault committed by soldiers across the country, with Times Square functioning as an especially prominent, "sexually charged milieu" (87). The photo rectifies, Blower argues, the common World War II narrative in which "sexual

aggression has been extraterritorialized" (86) when, in fact, American women equally suffered "war's brutalities" (86).

In his essay on Josephine Baker's banana skirt Matthew Pratt Guterl works his way through the many readings of this African American icon to problematize the intersectionality of empire, race, and gender on both national and transnational levels. Guterl successfully contrasts the African American success story that rests on the exploitation of the black body by white spectators with the skirt "as a symbol of feminine success" and a "rejection of patriarchy in all forms" (64). In a critical transnational approach Guterl traces the route of the tropical banana fruit, plucked by the hands of "black and brown bodies" (67), and transported to the world's economic centers. He shows how both the banana and the black body are not only contextualized with commodities, but they become a commodity.

Both Mark Philip Bradley and Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof look at political icons. Hoffnung-Garskof examines the implications of the so-called Immigration Reform Act of 1965 by employing transnationalism as a method. He analyzes the "ten largest immigration flows into the United States in the period" to arrive at an "alternative, transnational framing of late-century immigration" (128). According to Hoffnung-Garskof, the Reform Act was not so much a watershed event, but immigration patterns can be explained much better by studying the engagement of the United States with the world in the Cold War-context of the early 1960s. In his excellent essay the author shares an entirely transnational reading and moves away from the original document just enough to highlight important connections, whereas Bradley in his essay on President Jimmy Carter's inaugural address seems to lose sight of the object under discussion from time to time. In his essay, Bradley connects individual testimonials of dissidents and victims of human rights abuse to the emergence of a human rights discourse in the United States which becomes evident in Jimmy Carter's inaugural address. From a wider transnational angle, however, it becomes clear that the United States were not pioneers of the global human rights discourse in the 1970s, and Carter's human rights concern was primarily focused on the world beyond American shores.

Among the "sources that did not seem so very important before" (5) but should indeed

be noted as American icons with transnational implications, the editors list Mary Lyon dolls, William Howard Taft sending underwear to Manila, as well as the 1962 comedy *That Touch of Mink* with Doris Day and Cary Grant. The rough, gnarly dolls that bore the name of the founder of Mount Holyoke College, Mary Lyon, were popular in the nineteenth century but fell into obscurity. The dolls at the time fit into a national narrative of “hardy white pioneers” (35), westward movement, and both physical and intellectual work that secured progress. In her essay, Mary A. Renda unfortunately misses the opportunity to reread the popular doll from a transnational angle. Instead she focuses on Mary Lyon herself, whom she considers a transnational intermediary working to align the United States intellectually with other Western cultures (37-38).

At the height of U.S. engagement with non-European nations, William Howard Taft sent drawers to Manila, where he was commissioned to reorganize local life as Philippine Governor-General. In his essay, Andrew J. Rotter argues that “imperial interactions” (49) are multi-sense experiences, which rely on “three critical sites of haptic contact” (51): land, air, and bodily contact. The latter was intricately connected to a fear of disease, which Taft meant to curtail by introducing “‘short and stout’ drawers” (57) that would serve as a barrier between his body and his surroundings, especially the people. The garments came from Europe through the U.S., were white, and “unavailable to Filipinos,” and also served as a way to “assert Western power” (58). Rotter’s essay is an excellent contribution to the collection as it not only successfully applies a transnational framework to the reading of an artifact but does so for a formative time in transnational American history.

Unusual for the genre of comedy, *That Touch of Mink* critically engages with the beginnings of neoliberal economic development in the 1960s. A jet-setting economist played by Cary Grant is brought down just enough in his superior demeanor by a working-class career woman played by Doris Day to take off his high hat in respect to underdeveloped countries. Nick Cullather points to the comedic and flirty way in which this is done: “‘How do you feel about the untapped resources of the underdeveloped nations?’” asks Cary Grant, and Doris Day answers that “‘they ought to be tapped’” (116). Nick Cullather’s essay stands

out for its transnational topic but not necessarily for a transnational rereading of the nationally and internationally very popular comedy.

“Icons are objects with power” (155), Daniel T. Rodgers writes in his conclusion to *The Familiar Made Strange*; and this particular power embedded in “icons of cultural nationalism” (162) almost precludes any attempt at a Brechtian estrangement. Yet, the authors of the essays in Blower and Bradley’s collection achieve just that. They successfully assess the transnational relevance of the cultural productions under scrutiny; the particular transnational approach does not aim to “reduce symbols [...] to mere inert matter” but achieves to disturb some of nationalism’s most “powerful symbolic conventions” (156). In sum, it is a stimulating, eye-opening experience to view familiar cultural productions from a transnational perspective; it is also one “of vital importance” (165).

Something that has seemingly become an old fashioned addendum in today’s digital publishing culture, deserves special mention: *The Familiar Made Strange* features an index from “abolitionists” to “zoot suits” which allows for an easy access to the diverse articles that span four centuries, several countries and all continents in their transnational approach: Argentina, Austria, Australia, Cuba, Chile, China, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Guatemala, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Pakistan, Panama, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, South Africa, USSR/Russia, Vietnam, and the United States. While the spatial scope of the collection deserves praise, the collection’s greatest achievement lies in its exemplary transnational readings of American icons and artifacts. Yet, at this point a small grievance might also be voiced, namely that in light of the materiality of the examined icons and artifacts, it is surprising that the authors and editors did not more firmly ground their collection in the vibrant field of material culture and thing studies.

In conclusion, the collection is warmly recommended to both skeptics and avid practitioners of transnational American Studies who will inevitably catch themselves pondering which other American icons and artifacts might lend themselves for a rereading in a transnational framework.

Ingrid Gessner (Regensburg)

CAROLINE FRANK, *Objectifying China, Imagining America: Chinese Commodities in Early America* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011), 257 pp.

According to data released by China and the U.S., by the end of 2015, the U.S. had become China's second largest trading partner, its largest export market, and the fourth largest source of imports to China, and China has exceeded Canada to become the largest trading partner of the U.S. for the first time. Maintaining a good China-U.S. economic relationship is vital for the well-development and prosperity of economies in both countries. Leaders in both countries are well aware of that. That's why U.S. President Barack Obama travelled to China for the first time on November 16, 2009, not long after assuming office. In the Museum of Science and Technology, Shanghai, President Obama held a town hall meeting with Chinese youth. In his remarks, Obama traced America's early relationship with China to 1784 when the commissioned ship *Empress of China* sailed to Canton, China.

In 1784, our founding father, George Washington<sup>1</sup>, commissioned the *Empress of China*, a ship that set sail for these shores so that it could pursue trade with the Qing Dynasty. Washington wanted to see the ship carry the flag around the globe, and to forge new ties with nations like China. This is a common American impulse—the desire to reach for new horizons, and to forge new partnerships that are mutually beneficial.<sup>2</sup>

By tracing America's economic relationship with China to the eighteenth century, Obama

<sup>1</sup> It may be assumed that Obama knew that George Washington became the first U.S. President five years later, in 1789. But what Obama probably wanted to convey by evoking the name of the founding father was that although the *Empress of China* was funded privately, e.g. by the rich Philadelphia financier Robert Morris, the enterprise was at the same time considered of significant national importance; see, for example, Eric Jay Dolin, *When America First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York: Norton, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> "Remarks by President Barack Obama at Town Hall Meeting with Future Chinese Leaders." 16 Nov. 2009. *WhiteHouse.gov*. Web. 29 Aug. 2014.

wants to display to the Chinese people how the U.S. and China have been closely related in an economic sense since the very early period of America's foundation. However, he could have done an even better job in appealing to his Chinese audience had he known Caroline Frank's book *Objectifying China, Imagining America* published two years after his speech, which shows with much material evidence that America's commercial engagement with China could be dated back to a much earlier time—the 1690s.

When America won political independence from Britain in 1783, the economic situation was desperate as the young nation was cut off from the profitable trade with the West Indies by Britain. Therefore, American merchants began to look elsewhere for new trade—the Asian market—and began trade with China. The *Empress of China*, for example, achieved great commercial success. This is the conventional historical discourse. Frank, however, dates the story almost a century earlier to the late seventeenth century, proving with material evidence and occasionally with personal anecdotes and individual life stories that colonial Americans went to China, where a massive market was believed to exist, seeking material wealth. As Frank stresses throughout this book, the initiative and adventurous spirit of the colonial Americans should be acknowledged while studying U.S.-China relations.

Frank very explicitly informs her readers about the relationship between China and colonial America by examining the overwhelming presence of Chinese commodities, mainly chinaware and tea, in the American colonies. She points out that America established a relationship with China through economic trade before, not after, their independence from Britain. The large consumption of Chinese commodities such as porcelain, tea, and silk manifest colonial America's intense interest in China. However, it seems to be trivial, inaccurate, and somewhat subjective to merely use objects or the pictures and inventories of objects as the major avenue to re-explore colonial Americans' participation in the buying, selling, and owning of Chinese commodities.

During this early period, there was very little real cultural exchange despite much material contact between China and North America; Americans still perceived China as an imaginary landscape no different from other countries such as India and Japan. The first Americans who went to China were most-

ly merchants and missionaries whose interest in China centered mainly on commodities and religious conversion. The commodities were exchanged through the economic trades, while the original cultural meanings of these commodities were ignored and re-/misinterpreted through oriental imagination for commercial and/or social purpose. Frank solidifies this idea, for example, through her analysis of Gibbs's murals which "indicate that Americans [who were not only deeply influenced but also] fully participated in a Western perception of the East, built on centuries of remote contacts" (78).

A highlight of this book is the use of various illustrations collected from university libraries, arts centers, and personal courtesies from several European countries (namely Britain, France, Italy, and Germany) and America. These illustrations help readers to visualize the Chinese commodities in North America in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. The Chinese commodities examined by Frank can be considered as an objectified form of cultural capital, not for China but for America, and Frank points out the cultural and even political meanings behind them. During the trading process of these commodities (particularly the artistic pieces), various cultural meanings were accumulated; the independent economic engagement with China (particularly the tea trade) drove, to a certain extent, Anglo-America's desire for her political independence. In a word, the geopolitical relations among Britain, China, and America were closely tied to the trading of Chinese commodities even before America's independence.

The major goal of this book, according to Frank, is to explore how East Indies trades affected American commerce and the formation of the American state by revealing the overwhelming presence of Chinese commodities in early North America. These objects are examined from transnational and trans-cultural perspectives. For example, in chapter four, while acknowledging the Chinese-ness represented by the Chinese porcelains, Frank also draws our attention to the Orientalism prevailing among colonial Americans who projected new cultural and social meanings onto these commodities while consuming them. In this sense, the original cultural and social meanings of Chinese porcelain were both transplanted and transformed in this New World. It is difficult to generalize these meanings as the consumers were from dif-

ferent classes (including common people, social elites, and aristocrats) and used these commodities for different purposes. What's more, by examining tea trade and consumption in American colonies in chapter five, Frank points out the political significance of the trade and consumption of Chinese tea in pushing colonial Americans to resist the Britain imperial oppression and in driving their desire to win independence.

The title, *Objectifying China, Imagining America*, is perhaps too ambitious. I would rather say it is more about imagining China through buying, selling, and owning Chinese commodities in American colonies, as Frank's discourse throughout the book centers on how colonial Americans imagined China, and the East in general, through the Chinese objects they consumed. However, studying these objects does not necessarily mean that one can objectify the place where they are produced. What's more, in most of the cases, early Americans' imagination of China was dominated by Orientalism and preconceived notions based on stereotypes. Asians, the so called Orientals, exist as a unity in European American historical consciousness for a very long time. According to Edward Saïd, the early European conception of Asia and Asians as European's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other" and "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West)" as its opposition<sup>3</sup>. Culturally and ideologically speaking, early Americans still carried the baggage of the Old World, Europe, while arriving in the New World, America<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, their perception of China was not formed after they built direct relationship with China; it was formed centuries ago through the various discourses and imaginations of different generations of Europeans. Therefore, as Frank also occasionally points out, the Chinese porcelains and artistic commodities were colored with an Orientalist aesthetic while consumed by the colonial Americans.

While Frank focuses on the material aspects of Chinese commodities in colonial America, she also offers a cultural study of colonial Americans through exploring the

<sup>3</sup> Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) 1.

<sup>4</sup> Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle & London: U of Washington P, 1994) 20.

meanings behind these material objects. Revealing early America's commercial ties with China and colonial Americans' cultural perception of China and Chinese people, Frank's book presents an excellent supplementary

source for the history of U.S.-China economic relations and transnational and transcultural American studies in general.

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PETER NICOLAISEN AND HANNAH SPAHN, eds., *Cosmopolitanism and Nationhood in the Age of Jefferson* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013), viii + 256 pp.

Die Aufsätze, die hier zusammengetragen sind, basieren auf einer Konferenz, die zusammen mit dem Robert J. Smith International Centre for Jefferson Studies in Charlottesville, VA, vom John F. Kennedy Institut an der Freien Universität in Berlin organisiert wurde. Die Thematik ist durch den Titel vorgegeben. Neben einer Einleitung der Herausgeberin Hannah Spahn enthält der Band acht Beiträge, die eingerahmt sind durch einen allgemeineren Vortrag des US-amerikanischen Historikers Gordon S. Wood über „The Invention of the United States“ (23-41) und einem Epilog des gleichfalls in den USA beheimateten Historikers Peter S. Onuf zum Konferenzthema (S. 239-54). Wood<sup>1</sup> und Onuf<sup>2</sup> gehören zu den bekanntesten Historikern der US-amerikanischen Revolutionsgeschichte. Bedauerlicherweise beschränken sich beide auf Altbekanntes; und selbst da greift Wood gelegentlich daneben—etwa mit seiner Behauptung, dass die Benennung „Americans“ von den Briten 1775/76 erfunden worden sei; er nimmt dies auch als Beleg dafür, dass im Jahr der Unabhängigkeitserklärung die Kolonisten noch nicht zu einer eigenständigen Identität gefunden hätten (S. 25). Offensichtlich kennt er nicht die vielfältigen Ergebnisse und Thesen der Studie von Richard Merritt, der nachweist, dass die Kolonisten sich schon seit den 1740er Jahren in ihren Zeitungen „Americans“ nannten und Historiker der Kolonialzeit daraus richtig schlossen, die

US-amerikanische Identität mit Nordamerika habe sich deutlich vor dem Siebenjährigen Krieg ausgebildet.<sup>3</sup> Überdies streift Wood die für die Konferenzthematik zentrale Problematik der regionalen, kolonialen und postrevolutionären Identitäten (S. 26) nur am Rande und thematisiert deshalb auch nicht die Problematik der Bewohner in den späteren Vereinigten Staaten als „Americans“ und Bürger ihrer Staaten. Meine eigenen Studien deuten darauf hin, dass sich der Amerikaner zuerst als Bewohner seines Staates, in zweiter Linie als Bewohner einer Region wie Neuengland oder den Süden und erst in dritter Linie als Bürger der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika verstand. Die mangelnde Tiefenschärfe bei der Erörterung der Problematik nationaler, einzelstaatlicher, regionaler und lokaler Identitäten weist auf ein Grundproblem dieser Aufsatzsammlung hin: Aus der Sicht des Historikers fehlt ihr zu oft die historische Präzision und Tiefendimension. Dass die Beiträge darüber hinaus die konfessionelle Bindung der Bürger ausblenden, die im achtzehnten wie im neunzehnten Jahrhundert einen wichtigen Aspekt ihrer eigenen Identitätsbildung ausmacht, überrascht nicht.

Möglicherweise ist dieses Defizit der Thematik des Bandes geschuldet: Die Begriffe „Cosmopolitanism and Nationhood“ stehen für zwei Konzepte, die sich in der Historikerkunft, soweit sie sich auf geistesgeschichtliche Themen konzentriert, großer Beliebtheit erfreuen. Allein der Göttinger Universitätskatalog wirft zu dem Thema „national identity“ für die Zeit von 2000 bis 2015 mehr als 950 Titel (Monographien und einzelne Artikel) aus.<sup>4</sup> Geschärft wird die von diesen Begriffen ausgehende Faszination durch die von J. G. A. Pocock gepflegte Methode der assoziativen Argumentation, in der sich geisteswissenschaftliche Konzepte unversehens zu Konstrukten vermeintlicher Abbilder der Gedankengänge ihrer Untersuchungsgegenstände ausformen. Dies führt dazu, dass „Cosmopolitanism“ als Ideal des Weltbürgers jenseits der historischen Wirklichkeit sein Eigenleben annimmt, ohne dass danach gefragt wird, wie weit sich in der konkreten Welt diese Idee bei

<sup>1</sup> Vor allem aufgrund von Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-87*, (Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1988) und derselbe, *Empire and Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Peter S. Onuf, *The Origins of the Federal Republic: Jurisdictional Controversies in the United States, 1775-87* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1983); derselbe, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1987); derselbe, *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (Charlottesville, VA: U of Virginia P, 2007); derselbe, *Thomas Jefferson, the Classical World and Early America* (Charlottesville, VA: U of Virginia P, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Richard L. Merritt, *Symbols of American Community 1735-75* (= Yale Studies in Political Science, Bd. 16; New Haven, CT 1966).

<sup>4</sup> Für den Begriff „cosmopolitan“ zeigt der Katalog 215 Titel an.



den Zeitgenossen ausbreitete und Wirkung entfaltete.

Zweifellos spielte in der kleinen Schar der radikalen Republikaner, die den atlantischen Dialog zwischen 1775 und 1795 bestimmten, das Konzept des „Cosmopolitanism“ eine wichtige Rolle—aber darüber hinaus? Die Datenbank „America’s Historical Newspapers“ produziert für die Zeit von 1775 bis—1800 zu dem Begriff „Cosmopolitan“ ganze 13 Belege, von denen sich überdies drei auf das Schiff „Cosmopolitan“ beziehen. Dieser Befund deutet wahrlich nicht auf eine besondere Bedeutung, Beliebtheit oder Verbreitung des Gedankens des Weltbürgertums in Nordamerika hin.

Mit diesen kritischen Anmerkungen soll jedoch nicht der zum Teil vorzügliche intellektuelle Gehalt einzelner Beiträge geschmälert werden. Deren Ziel war es nicht, die konkrete historische Verankerung und Verbreitung der beiden Grundbegriffe zu skizzieren, weil dies zur Aufgabe von Woods einführendem Vortrag gehört haben mochte. Gewinnbringend und vorzüglich argumentiert ist die Diskussion von Armin Matthes über „‘Une et indivisible’? Thomas Jefferson and Destut de Tracy on the Idea of the Nation“ (41-73), in der der Autor die Bedeutung der „Föderation“ für Jeffersons Nationenbegriff herausarbeitet; differenzierend skizziert Thomas W. Clark das Verhältnis von Benjamin Rush zum „American Cosmopolitanism“ (75-91). Nach der Lektüre fragt sich der Leser allerdings, ob man hier überhaupt noch von „Cosmopolitanismus“ sprechen kann; anzumerken ist auch, dass zumindest in den Zitaten von Rush die Bedeutung von Religion für dessen Verständnis von „Cosmopolitanismus“ durchschimmert (S. 80).

Ähnliche Gedanken könnten dem Leser auch bei der Lektüre von Maurizio Valsania, „Beyond Particularism: Thomas Jefferson’s Republican Community“ (S. 93-111) kommen, vor allem, wenn man am Schluss Sätze wie den folgenden liest: „Just like the other real communities, the generation was for Jefferson the focus where individuals perceived the public good as *their own*, rising above their solitary individuality“ (S. 109). Dessen Aussagekraft wird dann einige Sätze weiter aufgefangen mit dem Zusatz: „Identifying with the generation and consequently with the ward, the state, the nation, or the world community definitively confutes every particularism“ (S. 110). Spätestens hier gesellt sich beim

Rezensenten zu dem Verdacht, dass Jefferson möglicherweise doch kein Weltbürger war, die antike Erkenntnis, dass alles ineinander fließe. Verstärkt wird dieser Eindruck durch die Darlegungen von Hannah Spahn in „Cosmopolitan Imperfections: Jefferson, Nationhood and the Republic of Letters“ (S. 113-35). Spahns Diskussion von Jeffersons Entwurf der Unabhängigkeitserklärung als „collective speaking subject by their ability to act as good citizens of the Republic of Letters“ (S. 131) demonstriert, welche überraschenden Befunde die Trennung von Textinterpretation und konkretem historischen Kontext zeitigen kann: Der erste Schritt zur Unabhängigkeit sei nur deshalb von den „Americans“ gewagt worden, so Spahn, weil sie „anticipated the outside viewpoint of a ‚candid world‘ on the conflict“ (ibid.). Diese Vorahnung habe ihnen zweitens erlaubt, sich die Perspektive ihrer „British brethren“ zu eigen zu machen. Die Liebe zu ihren britischen Brüdern habe es den Amerikanern ermöglicht, zu leiden, so lange Leiden möglich gewesen sei. Dass dies Leiden Grenzen habe, hätten sie immer wieder ihren Brüdern jenseits des Atlantiks erklärt. Aber so Spahn über die Unabhängigkeitserklärung Jeffersons: „the British had committed the greatest sin of the Republic of Letters“ (ibid.): Sie hörten die Klagen der Amerikaner nicht! Deshalb hätten sie sich selbst aus der Gemeinschaft von „communication of grandeur & of freedom“ mit den Amerikanern ausgeschlossen (S. 131-32). Für Jefferson sei Georg III. „the ultimate antic cosmopolitan“ gewesen. Erst in dem Augenblick, als die Kolonisten diesem antikosmopolitischen „monster“ ihren Untertaneneid aufkündigten, wären sie in der Lage gewesen, sich selbst als „a collection of world citizens *and* as members of a new nation“ zu begreifen. (S. 132).

Der Rezensent erkennt in dieser Interpretation *Versatzstücke* der Unabhängigkeitserklärung, die in der Interpretation Spahns immer wieder die Rolle von Kronzeugen einnehmen. Er fragt sich aber doch, ob es ausreicht, mit derartigen Versatzstücken ein solches Schlüsseldokument der Amerikanischen Revolution zu erklären. Wird hier nicht ein Dokument aus seinem konkreten historischen Zusammenhang herausgelöst und für eine weitläufige internationale geisteswissenschaftliche Diskussion reklamiert, die kaum etwas mit der Geschichte der Amerikanischen Revolution zu tun hat? Wohlbekannt ist, dass Georg III. in der Unabhängigkeitserklärung zum Erz-



feind der amerikanischen Kolonisten hochstilisiert wurde. Aber verstanden sich deshalb Jefferson, die anderen Unterzeichner der Unabhängigkeitserklärung und ihre Wähler als „world citizens“? Ergab sich das wirklich aus dem Appell an die atlantische Gemeinschaft? In der Unabhängigkeitserklärung gibt es zwei Stellen, die auf die Welt jenseits des Britischen Reiches verweisen: Im ersten Satz die Absichtserklärung, „to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station“, zu der Naturrecht und „Nature's God“ sie berechtige. Und im letzten Abschnitt der Appell „to the Supreme Judge of the World for the rectitude of our intentions“. Weder in der Unabhängigkeitserklärung insgesamt noch in diesen beiden Formulierungen kann ich einen Appell an die Weltbürger oder die Welt erkennen.

Damit aber stellt sich eine letzte Frage: Haben die Organisatoren der Konferenz eigentlich die richtige Frage gestellt: Hätten sie nicht den Konferenztitel und damit auch den Titel dieser Veröffentlichung „Cosmopolitanism and Nationhood in the Age of Jefferson“ zumindest mit einem Fragezeichen versehen müssen? Einigen der Autoren kamen offensichtlich Zweifel an der im Titel implizierten These, dass die Idee einer amerikanischen Zugehörigkeit zum Weltbürgertum zum Kernbestand amerikanischen revolutionären Denkens gehörte oder in den USA viele Anhänger hatte. Unterschrieben amerikanische Revolutionäre wirklich als Weltbürger „the ideal of a united and harmonious political domain“ so, wie es die französischen Revolutionäre taten, wie Philipp Ziesche glaubt (S. 233)? Er selbst legt dies in seinem *ma-*

*gnum opus* nur für eine sehr kleine Gruppe von radikal-republikanischen Amerikanern nahe.<sup>5</sup> Und lässt sich der Satz im ersten Abschnitt der Unabhängigkeitserklärung, „that all men are created equal“ wirklich als Beweis dafür auslegen, dass die Unabhängigkeitserklärung eine „cosmopolitan dimension“ habe, wie Catrin Gersdorf (S. 219) und andere Autoren dieser Aufsatzsammlung glauben? Was wäre denn, wenn man diese Formel als Ausdruck christlicher Überzeugung, dass alle Menschen von Gott geschaffen worden seien, interpretierte, um dann mit biblischen Argumenten den Nachkommen von Ham die gleichen Rechte verweigern zu können—denn genau das taten nicht nur die Gründungsväter. Oder ist die Streichung der Argumente gegen die Sklaverei im ersten Entwurf Jeffersons nur eine „lässliche Sünde“ der Unterzeichner der Unabhängigkeitserklärung und Jeffersons Billigung der Sklaverei wenig später und für den Rest seines Lebens nur ein winziger Flecken auf seiner ansonsten blütenweißen Weste? Und wenn schon diese Bedenken nicht nachdenklich stimmen, dann fragt man sich, wieso Jefferson als *Secretary of State* in seinem berühmten Bericht zum atlantischen Handel ebenso wie John Adams vor ihm nicht kosmopolitische, sondern merkantilistische Positionen bezogen.<sup>6</sup> Eine präzisere Verankerung der Diskussionen in den Beiträgen dieses Sammelbandes in der historischen Wirklichkeit hätte sicherlich solche und weiterführende Fragen aufgeworfen. Immerhin aber kamen sie dem Rezensenten und hoffentlich auch vielen Lesern.

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<sup>5</sup> Philip Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots: Americans in Paris in the Age of Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA: U of Virginia P, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Vgl. dazu meine Darlegungen in *Von der Konföderation zur Amerikanischen Revolution: Der Amerikanischen Revolution 2. Teil, 1783-96* (= Geschichte Nordamerikas in atlantischer Perspektive von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart Bd. 4; Berlin: LIT, 2016, Kap. 5-6).

MARK G. SPENCER, ed., *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of the American Enlightenment* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 2 vols., xxxvi + 1215 pp.

As to its scope, substance, and usability, this new reference work deserves nothing but praise. Interdisciplinary in perspective and over ten years in the making, *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia* offers no fewer than 519 entries by 370 authors from sixteen countries on four continents<sup>1</sup>—an awe-inspiring achievement by Mark Spencer, a historian at Brock University in Canada, who edited and coordinated this megaproject. Of the 519 entries in the encyclopedia's two hardcover volumes, 360 (almost 70 percent) are biographical, with considerable space being devoted to such leading figures as John Adams, Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Thomas Paine, David Ramsay, David Rittenhouse, Benjamin Rush, George Washington, and John Witherspoon, but fortunately also including articles on "lesser lights of the American Enlightenment" (xxxii), such as the botanist Jane Colden. The remaining 159 entries (about 30 percent) are thematic, covering a broad spectrum of topics in fields as diverse as politics, religion, philosophy, education, literature, music, painting, architecture, philanthropy, geography, medicine, agriculture, science, or technology (cf. xxxiii-xxxiv). Taken together, these entries form a comprehensive source of reference and a welcome addition to the monographs, anthologies, journals, and electronic databases that have traditionally been used to study or teach the period between roughly 1720 and 1820.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The authors, mainly historians, hail from "Australia, Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States" (x). For the contributions of the encyclopedia's four German authors (Martin Brückner, University of Delaware; Patrick M. Erben, University of West Georgia; Fritz Fleischmann, Babson College; and Frank Kelleter, University of Göttingen), see entries on "Calvinism" (Kelleter); "Evans, Lewis (c. 1700-56)" (Brückner); "Germany and the American Enlightenment" (Erben); and "Neal, John (1793-1876)" (Fleischmann).

<sup>2</sup> For monographs, see, inter alia, Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (1966/69);

As to thematic inclusiveness, conceptual depth, and theoretical topicality, there are some caveats however. Although one might argue that a project of such magnitude, by necessity, must be incomplete, which is true enough, some of the absences in *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia* clearly have deeper structural causes. That one looks in vain for biographical entries on Richard Allen, Quobna Ottobah Cugoana, James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Briton Hammon, Lemuel Haynes, John Marrant, Ignatius Sancho, Venture Smith, or David Walker, for instance—African American and Afro-British writers<sup>3</sup> presented and discussed in seminal collections such as *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Cen-*

May, *The Enlightenment in America* (1976); Commager, *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment* (1977); Kindermann, *Man Unknown to Himself: Kritische Reflexion der amerikanischen Aufklärung: Crèvecoeur—Benjamin Rush—Charles Brockden Brown* (1993); Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (1994); Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750-1820* (1997); Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (1997); Kelleter, *Amerikanische Aufklärung: Sprachen der Rationalität im Zeitalter der Revolution* (2002); and Himmelstorf, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (2004). For anthologies, see Kramnick, ed., *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* (1995). For journals, see, e.g., *Early American Literature*; *Early American Studies*; *The Eighteenth Century*; *Eighteenth-Century Life*; *Eighteenth-Century Studies*; *Journal of American History*; *Journal of Early American History*; *Journal of the Early Republic*; *Journal of the History of Ideas*; *Literature in the Early American Republic*; as well as *William and Mary Quarterly*. For online databases, see *America: History and Life*; *American Antiquarian Society Historical Periodicals Collection / Series I*; *Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800*; *Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw / Shoemaker, 1801-19*; *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*; and *Eighteenth Century Journals / ECJ I & II*.

<sup>3</sup> A seminal Native American voice for whom the editor, for inconceivable reasons, has not assigned a separate entry is the Mohegan preacher Samson Occom (1723-92).

ture ([ed. Potkay and Burr] 1995), *Unchained Voices* ([ed. Carretta] 1996), or *Genius in Bondage* ([ed. Carretta and Gould] 2001), some of them mentioned in John Saillant's article on "African Americans" (22-30)—can be traced directly to the lack of a thematic and conceptual entry on the "black Atlantic," a key paradigm of cultural analysis in American studies, introduced by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). Analogously, the neglect of the "red Atlantic"—explored in *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-50* (1987) by Marcus Rediker and *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000) by Linebaugh and Rediker—helps to explain the absence of a single entry on a topic as relevant as "piracy."<sup>4</sup>

Of the many concepts alluded to by individual contributors but not deemed worthy of separate entries in the encyclopedia's text and index, although they would have enabled the reader to better see the structural correlations between individual articles, as for example "cosmopolitanism" or "public sphere," the most serious absence may well be that of "performance," a concept that, as Joseph Roach has demonstrated in *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), connects the Atlanticist paradigm with what Shelley Fisher Fishkin has famously called "the transnational turn."<sup>5</sup> The decision to ignore a category that plays such a prominent role in current American Studies<sup>6</sup> is all the

more regrettable because, by illuminating the cultural hybridity and inherent transnationalism of the age of Enlightenment, the concept of performance, or performativity, has had a major share in rekindling our interest in the investigation of the long eighteenth century.

Other absences seem to be due to the preponderance of historians in the making of this long-awaited project. From a literary point of view, for example, it is hard to understand why diaries, captivities, criminal narratives, novels, or the Gothic—genres and traditions so important in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—have not been portrayed in separate articles. The same applies to belles lettres and manuscript culture—forms of literary engagement that were constitutive of the era's republic of letters. In view of the fact that controversies about the effects of novel reading all but dominated the latter part of the period under examination, novels at least, instead of being treated cursorily in Seavey's survey essay on "Literature," would have deserved an entry as comprehensive as Neuman's article on "Sermons." Compared to such omissions, mitigated by generally informative essays on "Almanacs," "Autobiography," "Correspondence," "Journalism," "Journals and Magazines," "Newspapers," "Poetry," "Print Culture," "Publishing," "Reading," "Theater" and "Travel Writing," missing biographical entries on early American novelists as significant as Hannah Webster Foster, Gilbert Imlay, Rebecca Rush, or Tabitha Tenney appear almost secondary.

The most striking discovery, however, on perusing this new encyclopedia may well be the invisibility of sexual matters. There is no survey article on "sexuality," nor are there entries on, or references in the index to, subjects such as "cross-dressing," "erotica," "homosexualism," "midwifery," "pornography," "prostitution," or "sexual violence." In lieu of entries informed by approaches developed in feminist criticism, gender studies, men and masculinities, queer theory, or the history

Pia Wiegink, "Toward an Integrative Model of Performance in Transnational American Studies," *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 60.1 (2015): 157-68. For a monograph decisive in triggering "the performative turn" in the study of early American culture, see Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (1993).

<sup>4</sup> For a survey of the rise of Atlantic Studies and the academic debates about different "Atlantics," see Klaus H. Schmidt, Rev. of *The Creation of the British Atlantic World*, edited by Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005), *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 51 (2006): 621-26.

<sup>5</sup> See Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies—Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004," *American Quarterly* 57 (2005): 17-57.

<sup>6</sup> For the enormous significance of performance as a heuristic category in today's Early American Studies, see "Special Section: Performance Studies in the Early Americas," *Early American Literature* 51.1 (2016): 179-205. For a recent call for an integration of performance theory into the field of transnational American Studies, see Birgit M. Bauridl and

of sexuality—entries on, say, “femininity,” “masculinity,” or “gender”—there is a survey essay on “Women.” For an encyclopedia on a period in which luminaries, like William Byrd or Benjamin Franklin, wrote freely about things sexual; European and oriental erotica, like John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (better known as *Fanny Hill*, 1749), French libertine novels, or the *Arabian Nights*, were imported, circulated, and reprinted on a regular basis; and medical books, like *Aristotle’s Masterpiece*, “served as a kind of ‘ersatz’ for hard-core pornography,”<sup>7</sup> this omission is astonishing indeed. The absence of a subject as central as sexuality turns out to be a real weakness in light of the vast amount of new scholarship published since Merril D. Smith’s *Sex and Sexuality in Early America* (1998), with queer studies inspired histories of early American sexualities, such as Godbeer’s *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (2002), Lyons’s *Sex Among the Rabble* (2006), or Foster’s *Long Before Stonewall* (2007), and special issues of renowned journals<sup>8</sup> greatly

expanding our knowledge about the erotic diversity, sexual playfulness, and transgressive radicality of Enlightenment culture.

These caveats aside, Spencer’s *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia* is a much-needed tool for the unraveling of arguably the most complex period in American cultural history. Meticulously edited and available in both print and electronic formats, it provides us with a wealth of information on a vast array of topics and subjects, presented in categories ranging from biographies, documents, and events to institutions, fields of inquiry, and concepts. Among the many strengths of this immensely helpful new resource are its comprehensive treatment of religion and its truly transnational perspective.<sup>9</sup> Encouraging “further exploration into the causes, nature, and consequences of the American Enlightenment” (xxxvi), this impressive reference work is a compelling invitation to immerse ourselves in the highways and byways of a circumatlantic phenomenon eventually leading a world in flux into what we now call modernity.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Wagner, *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1988) 292-302; quote on 295; for a more extensive treatment, see Wagner, “Eros Goes West: European and ‘Homespun’ Erotica in Eighteenth-Century America,” *The Transit of Civilization from Europe to America: Essays in Honor of Hans Galinsky*, ed. Winfried Herget and Karl Ortseifen (Tübingen: Narr, 1986) 145-64. For Benjamin Franklin, see Wagner, *Eros Revived* 299-301. For William Byrd, see Richard Godbeer, “William Byrd’s ‘Flourish’: The Sexual Cosmos of a Southern Planter,” *Sex and Sexuality in Early America*, ed. Merril D. Smith (1998. New York: New York UP, 2003) 135-62, and Wagner, *Eros Revived* 297-99. For a detailed analysis of *Aristotle’s Masterpiece*, see Vern L. Bullough, “An Early American Sex Manual, or, Aristotle Who?,” *Early American Literature* 7.3 (1973): 236-46; see also Mary E. Fissell, “Hairy Women and Naked Truths: Gender and the Politics of Knowledge in *Aristotle’s Masterpiece*,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 60.1 (2003): 43-74. For pornography and the early American book market, see Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) 88-89.

<sup>8</sup> See Sharon Block and Kathleen M. Brown, guest eds., *Sexuality in Early Ameri-*

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*ca.*, spec. issue of *William and Mary Quarterly* 60.1 (2003). See also Renée Bergland, “Looking Back: Scholarship in Early American Sex,” *American Literary History* 17.1 (2005): 148-59. For more recent publications, see, inter alia, Mark E. Kann, *Taming Passion for the Public Good: Policing Sex in the Early Republic* (2012); Thomas Foster, “Reconsidering Libertines and Early Modern Heterosexuality: Sex and American Founder Gouverneur Morris,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22.1 (2013): 65-84; Doron S. Ben-Atar and Richard D. Brown, *Taming Lust: Crimes Against Nature in the Early Republic* (2014); as well as Jason Shaffer, “The Arts of War and Peace: Theatricality and Sexuality in the Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 35.2 (2015): 279-85.

<sup>9</sup> In this context, see the well-written entries on “the American Enlightenment’s connections with Canada, the Dutch Republic, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Latin America, Russia, and Scotland” (xxxiv). For a new anthology that has the potential to serve as a useful companion piece, see Oliver Scheiding and Martin Seidl, eds., *Worlding America: A Transnational Anthology of Short Narratives before 1800* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2015).

KURT MUELLER-VOLLMER, *Transatlantic Crossings and Transformations: German-American Cultural Transfer from the 18th to the End of the 19th Century* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2015), 418 pp.

Usually, book reviews evaluate whether a study provides an original, innovative, or new contribution to scholarship. However, Kurt Mueller-Vollmer's book almost exclusively reprints chapters and essays previously published (since the 1990s; in both English and German). Thus, the question changes from originality to enduring significance. My review also assesses the volume's brief introduction as Mueller-Vollmer's attempt to unify these essays under a critical umbrella and arrange separate essays into a coherent whole.

In this case, however, the whole amounts to *less* than the sum of its parts, because Mueller-Vollmer's retrospective critical framing results in an overbearing, field-encompassing critique that sadly diminishes the scholarly merit of the essays collected here. Also, the compilation lacks either the authorial or editorial attention that could have fleshed out a coherent argumentative progression. Instead, readers encounter overlapping investigations of several spheres of German-American cultural transfer that repeat and loop back to earlier discussions of critical concepts, such as cultural transfer, literary discourse, literary field, and inscription. Explaining this pattern, Mueller-Vollmer uses the "notion of multiple reflexion or mirroring (*Wiederholte Spiegelungen*)," derived from Goethe, in order to "yield a different view of the same phenomenon, revealing a different aspect of it" (9). Granted, network theory must by definition eschew linear narratives in favor of multiple spaces of interaction, contact, and transfer—creating inevitable intersections and imbrications. This book, however, very basically repeats critical formulations and even entire sections almost *verbatim*. For example, in chapter two, "Anglo-American Literature and the Challenge of Germany: Transcendentalism as a Problem in Literary History," Mueller-Vollmer critiques Perry Miller deriving the nationalist origins of U.S. literary history and culture from the singular regional beginnings of New England Puritanism in his "monumental study" (68) *The New England Mind*:

The new emphasis on regional history did not change the basic assumptions characteristic of the traditional teleological view of Ameri-

can history. Consequently, Transcendentalism, and Emerson in particular, represent for Miller an end-phase in the evolution of Puritanism, a process that comprises the Puritan orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, the neo-Calvinist fundamentalist position of Jonathan Edwards in the eighteenth and the Unitarian movement of the early nineteenth century. (69)

Miller's characterization of Emerson's notion of original sin in his essay "From Edwards to Emerson," Mueller-Vollmer further asserts, seems to be "[a] curious way of putting things, since the ex-minister Emerson knew only too well, as would his German reader Friedrich Nietzsche later, what the concept of original sin meant and why he did no longer believe in it" (69). Miller's understanding of Emerson, Mueller-Vollmer avers, was "limited and antiquarian (at best)" (69). As Miller's work has already received a widespread re-evaluation in American studies scholarship, such a critique dates the book's critical positioning.

Moreover, in chapter eight ("Regionalismus, Internationalismus, Nationalität: Amerikanischer Transzendentalismus und Deutsche Romantik"), the reader is exposed not just to a "mirroring" of foundational critical concepts but a carbon copy of the earlier critique of Miller:

In seiner oft zitierten Abhandlung, *Von Edwards zu Emerson*, stellt Miller daher das Denken Emersons als quasi selbstverständliche Fortsetzung und Endprodukt der Evolution des Puritanismus dar, ein historischer Vorgang, der über den fundamentalistischen Neocalvinismus des Geistlichen Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) und den die eingesehene Orthodoxie zu Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts ablösenden Unitarismus schliesslich zu Emerson geführt habe. (208)

Mueller-Vollmer further returns to Miller's characterization of Emerson's thought on original sin, which the author deems "[e]ine befremdliche Aussage sicherlich, denn der Exgeistliche Emerson kannte, wie auch sein Leser Nietzsche nach ihm, den Begriff der Erbsünde nur allzu genau, konnte ihm gerade deswegen keinen Glauben mehr schenken" (208). Mueller-Vollmer declaims that Miller's work is only "historisch antiquarisches und schablonenhaftes Interesses" (208). Such *déjà-vus* sadly distract from the book's considerable achievement in illuminating multiple spheres of German-American literary and cultural exchange in the early nineteenth cen-



tury that have indeed received scant scholarly attention: from the mediation of German Romanticism via the American dissemination of Anne Germaine de Staël's *Germany* to Francis Lieber's compilation of the *Encyclopedia Americana* as a clearing-house of information about Germany, and from George Bancroft's advocacy of Herder's concept of cultural nationalism to George Ripley's ambitious program of literary translation.

Readers could see past such lapses in editorial attention if the book's critical and disciplinary framing did not resort to a rhetorical grandstanding that is ultimately not borne out by the book's scope or its claims to scholarly uniqueness. Written in 2014, the introduction to this volume sees the book operating in a "largely neglected no-man's land" and claims "to present for the first time a comprehensive view of the momentous process of German-American cultural transfer that took place during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries" (9). Mueller-Vollmer's book paints a dire picture of Germanist and Americanist scholars working largely in isolation from each other (9-10), while itself lacking any notion of the transatlantic and transnational work of the last 15 to 20 years: Mueller-Vollmer nowhere acknowledges the scholarship done (well before the publication of this volume) on transatlantic literary and religious (especially Pietist) cultural transfer throughout the colonial and early national period (e.g. Fluck, Fogleman, Nolt, Riordan, Roeber); he ignores the "multilingual turn" in American Studies initiated by Werner Sollors; and, unforgivably for a book that traces German cultural transfer among American Transcendentalists in the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mueller-Vollmer nowhere mentions Jan Stievermann's masterful German-language study on Emerson (published in 2007).<sup>1</sup> Though it has become an

overwrought cliché for book reviews to fault books for neglecting scholarship that the *reviewer* considers formative, the latter case reveals a deeper flaw in Mueller-Vollmer's positioning and rhetorical stance. Even a cursory comparison reveals why this absence is so stunning: like Mueller-Vollmer, Stievermann focuses on Emerson's idealistic philosophy of history, his construction of literary history, his aesthetics of imitation, and the development of a national literature. Yet Mueller-Vollmer stringently faults American scholars and studies, such as Philip Gura's *American Transcendentalism*, for their ignorance of research done across the Atlantic: "His book appeared in 2007 and there is no mention of any relevant European publication of the preceding years or decades" (17).<sup>2</sup>

Methodologically, Mueller-Vollmer's book traces German cultural influences in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American literature primarily by listing relevant authors and titles rather than analyzing closely how this transfer unfolded on a concrete, textual level. One of the chapters originally written for this compilation, "German Missionaries, Native Americans and the Multicultural Origin of American Linguistics and Ethnology" (ch. 1), rightfully locates the beginnings of American linguistics in the Native American language work of Moravian missionaries David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder; a page from an Onondaga-German vocabulary compiled by Zeisberger in manuscript (located at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia) also decorates the book's cover. The chapter surveys American linguists who either concurred with or rejected Zeisberger and Heckewelder's sanguine assessments of Native American language and culture, from Peter S. DuPonceau's appreciate

<sup>1</sup> Winfried Fluck and Werner Sollors, *German? American? Literature?: New Directions in German-American Studies* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002); Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-75* (Philadelphia: U Penn Press, 1996); Steven M. Nolt, *Foreigners in their Own Land: Pennsylvania Germans in the Early Republic* (University Park: Penn State UP, 2002); Liam Riordan, *Many Identities, One Nation: The Revolution and Its Legacy in the Mid-Atlantic* (Philadelphia:

UPenn Press, 2007); Gregg Roeber, "German and Dutch Books and Printing," *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, eds. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000), 298-313; Werner Sollors, *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature* (New York: NYU Press, 1998); Jan Stievermann, *Der Sündenfall der Nachahmung: zum Problem der Mittelbarkeit im Werk Ralph Waldo Emersons* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Philip F. Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

stance to Lewis Cass's harnessing of linguistic hierarchies to justify Andrew Jackson's virulent removal policies. Missing is any kind of direct attention to Zeisberger's voluminous linguistic works. Mueller-Vollmer announces in the introduction that he "was able to locate and obtain copies of the grammars of Native American languages produced by German Moravian missionaries, notably those by David Zeisberger written in German and translated subsequently into English" (15). Yet, the respective chapter, though mentioning Zeisberger, neither discusses explicitly nor quotes from his linguistic publications and manuscripts.

Far from reviving New-Critical close reading strategies, my point here is that an Anglo- and U.S.-centric readership desperately needs

to receive tangible evidence of the crucial contributions and interactions of German-language writing and culture in the construction of a US-American national literature. Since Zeisberger's work is still largely neglected in American scholarship, it is all the more important to do the work of introducing and interpreting it for an English-only American readership. A study like Mueller-Vollmer's *Transatlantic Crossings and Transformations* that touts the significance of German-American cultural and linguistic transfer without making it truly visible fails to accomplish something that is needed now more than ever—performing acts of familiarization and translation across borders and differences.

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KENDAHL RADCLIFFE, Jennifer Scott, and Anja Werner, eds., *Anywhere But Here: Black Intellectuals in the Atlantic World and Beyond* (Jackson, Miss.: UP of Mississippi, 2015), 270 pp.

Fields as diverse as postcolonial studies, diaspora studies, African American studies, American studies, intellectual history, sociology, and rock music studies have been influenced by the publication of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* in 1993. Introducing his conception of the Black Atlantic as a counterculture of modernity, Gilroy urged his readers to rethink their notions of race, ethnicity, nationality, hybridity, and diaspora. He drew attention to "the rhizomorphic, fractal structure of the transcultural, international formation"<sup>1</sup> he called the Black Atlantic. Moreover, throughout his text he not only underscored the multilayered complexity of "those mongrel cultural forms" (Gilroy 3) created in the Black Atlantic world; he also warned against the constant lure of ethnic particularism and nationalism that might degenerate into a version of African American exceptionalism. By doing so, Gilroy presented himself as part of a tradition of black cosmopolitan intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Richard Wright, and James Baldwin. Gilroy's idea of the Black Atlantic has not only been praised, but also vehemently attacked for its alleged shortcomings and insufficiencies. Some critics, for instance, have advanced the idea that by discussing authors such as Martin Delaney, Du Bois, and Wright in detail, Gilroy's conception of the Black Atlantic eventually only reinforces the powerful mechanisms of American cultural imperialism. The vulgarity of this critique can legitimately be termed refreshing. However, the claim that American cultural imperialism directs and shapes black diaspora studies has had a certain impact on attempts to conceptually grasp the cultural forms of the Black Atlantic.

Instead of offering a simplistic, moralizing critique of former conceptions of the Black Atlantic, the essays collected in *Anywhere But Here: Black Intellectuals in the Atlantic World and Beyond* seek to expand the idea of the Black Atlantic, and they moreover intend

to offer new perspectives on forms of self-creation and self-invention in the Black Atlantic and beyond. In other words, these essays try to achieve two things. First, they want to expand the categories that have hitherto been associated with the Black Atlantic, as well as broaden our understanding of the processes of cultural, intellectual, and social transformations in the Black Atlantic world. Second, they contribute to an urgently needed redefinition of black intellectualism and the black cosmopolitan intellectual. Regarding the question of geographical boundaries, the editors contend: "Expanding the idea of the Black Atlantic beyond its traditional geographical boundaries to grasp black experiences more thoroughly allows us, furthermore, to include the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and, by extension, other lesser-known regions of the Southern Hemisphere and to include them in a self-determined context" (7). Establishing connections across time and space, the essays in *Anywhere But Here* illuminate examples of black diasporic experience within and beyond the Atlantic, that is, they tell stories centering on people of African descent who moved back and forth between countries and continents, who developed a new understanding of black agency, and whose appreciation of the dialectics of particularity and universalism led to new forms of black self-creation. According to the editors, the essays show "that the Black Atlantic need not be forever described as an interaction in a simple black/white/European context; nor should it be simply observed from an East/West perspective" (9).

*Anywhere But Here* is divided into three sections. The first part, "Reordering Worldviews: Rebellious Thinkers, Writers, Poets, and Political Architects," concentrates on how people of African descent, as black intellectuals, have confronted the legacy of the Enlightenment and the hegemonic structures of (white) modernity. Douglass W. Leonard ("Writing Against the Grain: Anténor Firmin and the Refutation of Nineteenth-Century European Race Science"), Amy Caldwell de Farias ("Activist in Exile: José da Natividade Saldanha, Free Man of Color in the Tropical Atlantic"), and Ikaweba Bunting ("Developmentalism, Tanzania, and the Arusha Declaration: Perspectives of an Observing Participant") discuss issues as varied as scientific racism, imperialist rhetoric and the creation of a counter-hegemonic racial consciousness, and Africa-centered responses to

<sup>1</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 4.

Western models of developmentalism. The second section, "Crafting Connections: Strategic and Ideological Alliances," focuses on the question of black alliances, relationships, and cultural exchanges, particularly on their partly unlikely nature. What role has Garveyism played in the Pacific world? What exactly is the relationship between Pan-Asianism and Pan-Africanism? In other words, what happens when Japanese nationalists creatively use Garvey's rhetoric and ideas in order to argue against the position of racial inferiority to which they had been relegated by European racist discourses? Why is it interesting to ask about the forms of interaction between black activists and intellectuals such as Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Angela Davis and the Communist East German dictatorship? These are the questions that are discussed by John Maynard ("Garvey in Oz: The International Black Influence on Australian Aboriginal Political Activism"), Keiko Araki ("Africa for Africans and Asia for Asians: Japanese Pan-Asianism and Its Impact in the Post-World War I Era"), and Anja Werner ("Convenient Partnerships?: African American Civil Rights Leaders and the East German Dictatorship").

In the final section, "Cultural Mastery in Foreign Spaces: Evolving Visions of Home and Identity," four pieces seek to redefine the notions of home, subjectivity, and identity in a black diasporic context: Kimberly Cleveland, "Abdias Nascimento: Afro-Brazilian Painting Connections Across the Diaspora;" Edward L. Robinson Jr., "'Of Remarkable Omens in My Favour': Olaudah Equiano, Two Identities, and the Cultivation of a Literary Economic Exchange;" Kimberli Gant, "Rupture and Disrupters: The Photographic Landscapes of Ingrid Polland and Zarina Bhimji as Revisionist History of Great Britain;" and Danielle Legros Georges, "From Port-au-Prince to Kinshasa: A Haitian Journey from the Americas to Africa."

As one can see from this brief summary, the breadth of the issues discussed in this volume is indeed impressive. From Pan-Asianism and the Francophone African diaspora to Afro-Brazilian painting and various forms of self-creation of black cosmopolitan intellectuals, the essays succeed in broadening one's understanding of the cultural, intellectual, and political implications of the idea of the Black Atlantic. Furthermore, they elucidate hitherto unnoticed aspects of black intellectualism.

Most of these convincingly argued pieces urge one to renew one's attempt fully to appreciate the unpredictable cultural and political work of translocal, incredibly mobile mediators in nontraditional spaces.

As regards the volume's shortcomings, one has to note that the idea of black cosmopolitanism is central to most of the essays, but none of the authors offers an analysis of this concept. They discuss examples of black cosmopolitanism and tell stories that focus on the practice of black cosmopolitans. However, they refrain from taking the argument to a theoretical level. In general, the anti-theoretical gesture of these essays is blatant. In this context it is interesting to ask whether the authors consider this gesture to be de rigueur in the "new" Black Atlantic studies, or whether they would be inclined to put a stronger emphasis upon the necessity of theoretical work in the future. Should the notions of hybridity and diasporic (non-)identity still be analyzed by means of conceptual tools offered by poststructuralism, or can the practitioners of the new Black Atlantic studies leave this theoretical baggage behind? What about the genealogy of black cosmopolitan intellectuals that have been influenced by American pragmatism?<sup>2</sup> How could one use the stimulating impurity of positions that mediate between poststructuralism and versions of post-Marxism in order to accentuate the challenges of the new Black Atlantic studies? These are only three questions that demonstrate the potential fruitfulness of the attempt to discuss theoretical problems when one seeks to illuminate the contours of future Black Atlantic studies.

For Americanists it might seem somewhat problematic that authors such as James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, Richard Wright, and James Baldwin are not discussed, or even mentioned, in this volume. Wright is briefly mentioned (6), but a detailed discussion could probably only repeat many of the insights offered by Gilroy in his chapter on Wright in *The Black Atlantic*. Trying to expand the idea of the Black Atlantic, *Anywhere But Here* offers Americanists the possibility of learning about hitherto ignored forms of black agency in the African diaspora, as well as about intel-

<sup>2</sup> In this context, see Ross Posnock, *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998).

Reviews ★ *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 62.4

lectual, cultural, and physical exchanges and alliances that force us to rethink our understanding of modernity. There is a fairly high probability that this volume will play a signifi-

cant role as far as the future of Black Atlantic studies is concerned.

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ELISABETH BRONFEN and DANIEL KAMPA, eds., *Eine Amerikanerin in Hitlers Badewanne: Drei Frauen berichten über den Krieg; Margaret Bourke-White, Lee Miller und Martha Gellhorn* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2015), 360 pp.

*Eine Amerikanerin in Hitlers Badewanne* [*An American Woman in Hitler's Bath-tub*] features an intriguing collection of photographs and German translations of writings by three US-American women World War II correspondents. The reports by Margaret Bourke-White, Lee Miller, and Martha Gellhorn are complemented by introductions to each woman's work and biography as well as an epilogue by Elisabeth Bronfen. As many of the compiled texts either had not been available in German at all or have only recently become accessible, one of the volume's important contributions lies in enabling a broad German-speaking public to take a special look at World War II through the lens of popular American reportage. In the process, readers can observe how formative narrative and visual patterns were created by pioneering women. These patterns would have been considered foreign propaganda in Nazi Germany. Today, their striking familiarity to a German audience reveals the extent to which they have shaped the German collective memory of World War II.

The volume makes a convincing case for the presence, persistence, and persuasive power of women correspondents who ventured into a traditionally male-centered and male-dominated space. While military action was still reserved for men, the present writings and photographs demonstrate how women lastingly influenced the international perception and understanding of the war, inverting what feminist scholars of visual culture have described as visual media's tendency to reduce women to objects for male viewers.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the many women who wrote and photographed in obscurity,<sup>2</sup> Bourke-White,

Miller, and Gellhorn were not only accomplished writers and photographers but celebrities. Their carefully crafted public personae came across as patriotic heroines who bravely supported the war effort with pens and cameras rather than bombs and guns.

The first part of the volume features photographs and writings by famous *Life* photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White. In the selected excerpts, which were either taken from German versions of Bourke-White's books<sup>3</sup> or specifically translated for this volume by Renate Orth-Guttman, she traces her journey from Moscow, where she was located when Germany first attacked the city in 1941, to North Africa, across Italy, and finally to Germany, where she visits Bremen, Kassel, Schweinfurt, Leipzig, and Dachau. Bourke-White's reports for *Life* magazine served simultaneously as documentation of the cruelties of the war, as war propaganda, as entertainment, and as blatant self-promotion.

Bourke-White describes how she strategically used her special status as an attractive, heterosexual woman in a male-dominated theater of war, creating a popular image of a female war hero that transgresses dominant gender norms without even attempting to fully subvert them. Despite having to go an extra mile to be allowed to work at the front, she still provocatively claims that she did not experience gender-discrimination, as the only question was what she should wear at the front. The problem can swiftly be solved: A special uniform and thus, metaphorically, a new social role, is custom-made for her (62-63). In her stories, her own stubbornness, determination, bravery, and sense of mission—helped by the occasional ruse—prevail against the odds (42). Some of her reports' many memorable images are painted with words, including the scene where she is given command of a Long Tom to have the best possible timing for the photographs and not only regular soldiers but a brigadier dutifully execute her orders (88-89). The scene's tongue-in-cheek humor marks this inversion of traditional gender roles as a one-time exception, making it palatable to a broad, potentially gender-conservative war-time audience.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2010) 57-65.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, "Kriegsfotografinnen: Editorial," *Fotogeschichte* 34.134 (2014): 3-6. Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers* (Paris: Abbeville, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Bourke-White, *Deutschland, April 1945 (Dear Fatherland, Rest Quietly)*, trans. Ulrike von Puttkamer (München: Schirmer/Mosel, 1979); dieselbe, *Licht und Schatten*, trans. Margaretha von Reischach-Scheffel (Munich: Droemer/Knaur, 1964).

Bourke-White's photographs, in the mode of the sublime, often use strikingly formalist aesthetics to tell atrocious stories of war. Her studies of the airstrikes on Moscow turn the bombs, which took a high toll among the population, into an awe-inspiring aesthetic spectacle. Her images and reports of the privileged Nazi officials and their families who committed suicide rather than surrender are haunted by a similar friction between the emphasis on the beauty of their bodies and the viciousness of Nazi war crimes and ideology.

The editors' careful selection of excerpts includes powerful representations of the concentration camps by all three writers. Bourke-White, Gellhorn, and Miller embed their accounts from the camps into the context of German denial and ingratiating with the allied forces. None of the three correspondents believes German claims to having been 'liberated' rather than conquered and to having been ignorant regarding the camps (182, 271). Rather, all three feel a special responsibility to witness, document, and make Nazi atrocities public. They highlight the systematic and professionalized character of the exploitation of forced labor, the brutal strategies to hasten the demise of the incarcerated, and the overwhelming numbers of victims. While Bourke-White articulates her own feelings, Lee Miller describes the consternation of Germans forced to witness the atrocities and renounce their denial. Gellhorn references the now familiar and still haunting images of piles of emaciated corpses. Whereas the suffering inflicted in the camps still exceeds representation, the present volume offers access to some of the earliest and most formative narrative and visual patterns that have shaped the German and international perception and remembrance of the Holocaust.

Part two introduces model-turned-photographer Lee Miller's reports from France and Germany, where she visited Aachen, Leipzig, Nuremberg, Dachau, Munich, and Salzburg.<sup>4</sup> Miller, who worked for *Vogue* for a total of 26 years, became British *Vogue*'s official war correspondent in 1942. Whereas Bourke-White mostly focused on the front, Miller at first turned toward the traditionally most 'femi-

nine' space of the war zone, i.e. the field hospital. Her descriptions and photographs of the injured empathetically portray both the toll the war takes on human bodies and lives and the commitment of the people working long hours under harsh conditions behind the front lines. Her reports are pervaded by a blend of admiration and sympathy for their protagonists—except for the Germans.

Of the three correspondents, Miller most persistently expresses hatred for Germans, despising herself for feeling pity for injured German soldiers (145). Yet the conviction of superior US-American standards of humanitarianism makes her accept the fact that they are treated just like the allied injured in the field hospitals (145). Regarding the residents of Aachen, the first bigger city to be administered by a military government, she reports that they lack taste and pride, albeit not self-interest and a penchant for deception. The moral decay manifests itself olfactorily in the foul stench of decaying bodies (185-86). It is beyond her to understand why Germans started the war and she hardly believes that they will ever learn from the experience (200). When she famously visits Hitler's Munich apartment, her colleague David E. Scherman photographs her in Hitler's bathtub, both providing a cover photo and inspiring the title for the present volume. Yet, her staged irreverence notwithstanding, she keeps struggling to comprehend the reasons for the atrocities committed during World War II. She describes Hitler's apartment as exceedingly mediocre (197), lacking elegance, charm, and inspiration. Whereas the piano is out of tune, the radio, symbolizing the uniformity enforced through Nazi control, is a masterpiece of technology (198).

Martha Gellhorn's reports, presented in the third part of the volume, are excerpts from a 2012 German edition.<sup>5</sup> While Gellhorn gained international fame as Ernest Hemingway's third wife, she was a successful writer in her own right who reported on overall nine wars and covered the Second World War from Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, and France for *Collier's* (215). Her essay on the daily routine of a Royal Air Force base impressively captures its human and emotional dimensions and makes palpable

<sup>4</sup> The excerpts are from: Lee Miller, *Krieg: Mit den Alliierten in Europa 1944-1945, Reportagen und Fotos* (Berlin: Klaus Bittermann, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Martha Gellhorn, *Das Gesicht des Krieges: Reportagen 1937-1987* (Zürich: Dörlemann, 2012).

the strain and concentration of bomber pilots waiting for their flights during the night. Gellhorn finds powerful words to lend meaning and experiential texture to otherwise lifeless military jargon. She brings the Eighth Army's secret advance from central Italy to the Adriatic coast within three days to life by describing roads pulverized by floods of trucks, tanks, jeeps, motorbikes, and ambulances, wrapping everything and everyone into dust (243). Out of the three featured writers, Gellhorn most convincingly addresses the challenges of representing war from the perspective of an observer. She demonstrates how it is impossible to see, remember, or understand the tumultuous and (often deliberately) confusing battles (246-47). Historians, she states, will create a narrative for the larger war, but participants and observers of the war see only the next steps (249).

Elisabeth Bronfen's epilogue places these photographs and writings in a productive conversation not only with each other but also with their historical contexts and the larger body of each woman's work. She highlights how Bourke-White, Miller, and Gellhorn's special role as pioneering women at the front allowed them to develop distinct perspectives and to portray contexts and people that were either not accessible to or overlooked by their male colleagues (305). Bronfen provides close readings and intriguing interpretations of selected photographs and texts, demonstrating, among other things, how the war transformed both Lee Miller's fashion photography and the public images of fashionable women. By exposing numerous intertextual and inter pictorial references to these women's work in popular culture, including Alfred Hitchcock's *Lifeboat* (1944) and Mitchell Leisen's *Arise My Love* (1940), she reveals the tremendous cultural impact of their war coverage and public personae.

The volume's outreach to a general, German-speaking audience rather than scholarly readers is particularly laudable as a sound and nuanced memorization of World War II remains crucial in the current political moment in Europe. En passant, the collection makes a case for key concerns of the field of American Studies. It not only reminds its readers of the inextricable trans-Atlantic entanglements between German and U.S. history, public memory, and identity. It also makes a persuasive—and entertaining—case for the cultural impact of female World War

II correspondents. These women's particular perspectives provide a valuable addition to recent publications in the wake of the seventieth anniversary of German capitulation. From an academic perspective, more information on the historical context, the publication formats, and the existing scholarly literature would have been welcome. For instance, these correspondents' special status was not only characterized by their often-praised heroism but also by their gender-based exemption from military service and by the fundamental, albeit mostly unacknowledged, privileges of Whiteness that lent them agency within the context of the segregated military forces.<sup>6</sup> As the picture magazines, *Life* in particular, have a history of downplaying the war-time sacrifices of minorities,<sup>7</sup> the repeated use of racializing and racist language (e. g. 74, 232, 236, 244) might have been problematized from a present-day perspective. Minor errors, such as the claim that Margaret Bourke-White founded *Life*,<sup>8</sup> do not diminish the volume's merit of providing insights into and animating questions of war, gender, and visual culture as well as the personal experiences of three exceptional women who have significantly shaped our collective memory of World War II.

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<sup>6</sup> On the "twofold dynamics of tension between memory and forgetting" in the commemoration of World War II, see: Birgit Däwes and Ingrid Gessner, ed., *Commemorating World War II at 70: Ethnic and Transnational Perspectives*, spec. issue of *American Studies Journal* 59 (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Sally Stein, "Mainstream-Differenzen: Das unverwechselbare Aussehen von *Life* und *Look* in der Medienkultur der USA," *Diskurse der Fotografie: Fotokritik am Ende des fotografischen Zeitalters*, ed. Herta Wolf (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007) 161.

<sup>8</sup> It was Henry Luce; see Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2003) 169.



KATJA KURZ, *Narrating Contested Lives: The Aesthetics of Life Writing in Human Rights Campaigns* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2015), 271 pp.

More than any other genre, life writing illustrates the interdependence of narrative strategies and cultural understandings of selfhood and recognition. Selves are performed narratively, through memories pieced together anew for an audience. To be believable, life narratives cater to cultural concepts of sincerity and authenticity; to evoke empathy, they employ culturally available plots from the literary realm. Treading this thin line between the literary and the sociocultural realms, a cast of interdisciplinary scholars from literary and cultural studies, rhetoric criticism, philosophy, and the social sciences have examined the narrative assemblage of cultured selves. Katja Kurz's doctoral thesis, *Narrating Contested Lives*, contributes a new angle in this field. It examines life writing designed to incite activism, empathy, and involvement in international human rights campaigns. As vehicle of political activism, this form of autobiography builds on subjecthood in Western human rights laws and speaks for victimized groups.

*Narrating Contested Lives* develops an interdisciplinary view that roots in life writing and forages into philosophy, psychology and anthropology. The author locates the project in American Studies in a double sense, regarding, first, the reception context (human rights campaigns are directed at an American-European public), and second the transnational turn that views U.S. national culture in a greater continuum of cultural flows and mobilities (1, 43).

*Narrating Contested Lives* thus demonstrates how literary studies lays bare the strategies of political activism. Kurz selects campaigns that deal with female genital mutilation (FGM), child soldiers, and sexual violence against women of ethnic minorities (6). She close-reads six cases of campaign-embedded collaborative life writing, including the books by Somali top model Waris Dirie and Somali-German activist Korn, the child soldiers Ishmael Beah and Emmanuel Jal (the latter UK gospel musician and hip hop artist), and the women activists Halima Bashir in the "Save Darfur"-campaign and Somaly Mam, who became a media icon in the U.S. These are selected for their "contemporary, US-based production and reception, [as] bestsell-

ing auto/biographies [...presenting] women and children as vulnerable groups in international law" (3-4). To show how life stories are made "legible to the public and how they attempt to gather support and empathy" (5-6), Kurz focuses on genre, narrative modes, and collaborations between activists and coauthors. She reads together the auto/biographies with the paratexts and the discourses of the campaigns at large to extrapolate the entanglement between lived experience, subjective truths, sincerity, trust, and authenticity (42). *Narrating Contested Lives* thus addresses how culturally remote and victimized identities are reassembled in conclusive narratives that present a sane, (partially) healed, activist-narrator-self speaking to her American-European audience.

Since Kurz devises her own method for reading her corpus, the study faces the challenge of mapping the state of interdisciplinary research in the opening chapters leading up to the campaign readings. Her strategy renders it difficult to identify the state of research and scholarly location of the study. In the introduction, the author name-checks "transnational American studies, life writing and human rights" (1); the theory chapter's first part postulates law and literature as "interdisciplinary spaces" and proceeds to an essayistic treatment of life writing, human rights, and empathy/affect. This part (13-40) wedges life writing in between other debates, without a road map for orientation. While the overall linkage between life writing and human rights becomes clear, the "interdisciplinary space" evoked here appears fragmented. Readers from life writing, literary studies, human rights jurisdiction, or American Studies, are tasked with mining for their disciplines. In particular, three interrelated questions come to mind: First, about the link between self-narration and embodiment, second, about the cultural value attributed to authenticity and sincerity, and third, about the cultural specifics impacted by *Transnational American Studies*.

The brief section dedicated to "human rights, enabling fictions and the question of form" (24-27) cites the novel as origin of human rights discourses, pleading for a study of genre instead of theme. However, it neglects the issue of corporeality (included in the cloud of terms on the book cover), both with regard to law discourses and self-narration. Kurz also discusses the breach of Philippe Lejeune's au-



tobiographical pact when coauthors and ghost writers mold autobiographies into pieces of activist literature. However, she links self-narration not to the autobiographical tradition but to the affective turn in the social sciences (30). Kurz argues with psychologist Paul Slovic that a single individual's story has a bigger impact than group narratives, and compellingly critiques Slovic's neglect of cultural perspective. She points out that (lacking) prosocial behavior is influenced by the fact that "we do not value all lives in the same way" (32). This assertion gestures at cognitive narratology, rhetoric criticism and the philosophy of narrative identity that might have anchored this book more firmly in Literary and Transnational American Studies. Conversely, Kurz links this idea to marketability and the commodity status of life writing, transitioning towards the impact of the human rights campaigns. The impression that literary studies and narratology should have weighed in more gains further traction when reading the final part of chapter 1, which summarizes the methodology and approach (40-43). Kurz's aims, as she states here, include uncovering the "narratological strategies used in the text" with a "special emphasis [...] on the collaboration with coauthors" to demonstrate how human rights campaigns have created their "own forms of recognition in terms of language and genre" (41). This clarifies the potential of Kurz's study: to establish human rights discourses (including life writing and paratexts for advertising and critical reception) as a distinct genre of cultural (self-) production.

From a literary studies perspective, *Narrating Contested Lives* falls a little short of these aims, due to the usage and application of terminology. Throughout the book, the components of literary genre and narratological analysis paraded in the beginning are marginalized. Kurz frequently uses genre labels (celebrity memoir, travel adventure, survivor's story, conversion narrative, confessional, auto/ethnography) without delving into their histories and conventions, thus blurring rather than illuminating the confluence between literary and cultural components in human rights campaigns. In this regard, a more detailed distinction of *Narrating Contested Lives* from the method and approach of Joseph R. Slaughter's *Human Rights, Inc. The World Novel, Narrative Form and International Law* (2007) is recommended. Americanist readers might trip over the mentioning

of the American slave narrative when talking about the function and reception context (22, 30, 37). This is explored further in the chapter in human trafficking, albeit in a truncated way. Kurz merely reiterates to critics' readings of Mam's story as slave narrative (170-72); a little further down, she maintains that Mam "never [thought] it possible to leave" (178), which distinguishes Mam's from the American slave narrative. The study here misses this opportunity to foster a more distinct cultural link between human rights campaigns and abolitionism, to flesh out the linkage with the slave narrative, and to ask about the aesthetic and philosophical foundations of both.

In contrast to these theoretical weaknesses, the analysis part of the study yields a host of intriguing insights. Kurz treats the three issues of human rights campaigns in three chapters, focusing on FGM, child soldiers and human trafficking. While the chapters are structured differently, each features a part on "Authorship, collaboration and truth claims" in the texts Kurz analyzes (35-56, 84-85, 116-19, 137-40, 167-70 and 203-07). These parts of varying length and detail might easily be overlooked (given they have no chapter numbers), but when read together, they function as a scaffolding for the individual argument Kurz makes about the campaigns and their protagonists. These chapters outline the debates around the campaigns and the bone of contention at the heart of life writing in human rights campaigns: articulating a survivor's voice in a story that appeals to an audience invested in Western literature and justice concepts.

Kurz's analysis yields a layered and multifaceted perspective on life writing in human rights campaigns. In each of her chapters, Kurz addresses the cultural gaps and shortcuts inherent in this process in each of the chapters: talking about FGM, she pits the aggressive feminist activism of supermodel Dirie against Korn's more conciliatory stance, contextualizing Dirie's cosmopolitanism and beauty narrative (even though only one page is dedicated to Dirie's biopic, which capitalizes on this angle). The comparison also shows the wide range between moral condemnation of FGM practitioners and a cultural relativist grassroots approach that addresses individual members of the practicing communities. In the chapter on child soldiers and warfare, Kurz demonstrates how the two narratives of Beah and Jal oscillate between autobiography and fiction, literature and music, ethnic identity and religious

conversion, and last but not least, the palatable story, as the sales of Beah's *A Long Way Gone* in Starbucks coffee shops reveals. Sustaining the company's charitable image, for their customers, Beah's memoir linked consumerism to a general good feeling of humanitarian cause. The chapter on child soldiers is also remarkable for its discussion of narrative reliability, genre convention, authorship and childhood: the reception of the Beah's and Jal's books hinges on the reviewers's disappointment with the lack of metanarrative reflection of the adult author on his childhood killing rampages (145). This expectation reiterates the challenge of child soldier campaigns to reconcile the images of victim of military abuse and predator. Children with guns are hard enough to stomach, but the narrative convention of the war memoir requires that the adult narrator intervene in the childhood narrative to acknowledge the atrocities committed. Finally, the chapter on Somaly Mam's and Halima Bashir's anti-sex-trafficking activism canvasses the question of corporeality and the impact of an attractive face on the life story and campaign: Mam's close ties to the fashion and film industries, as well as her partnership with the Body Shop for merchandise, clash with Bashir's burka-veiled

identity and "reluctant" activism. Bashir, a doctor, had her story ultimately taken over by the larger "Save Darfur" campaign.

Kurz's study unfolds its potential in her three analyses of FGM, child soldiers, and human trafficking of women of color. The complexity of these issues, the richness (in quality and quantity) of the corpus selected, and the intersection of marketability, cultural narrative convention, and individual suffering represent a task Kurz manages most conclusively in her analyses. Her study is commendable for its treatment of a complex field, even if (or because?) it also reveals the typical complications of a complex interdisciplinary approach. Scholars will find this a starting promising point to define the literary and life writing dimension of human rights campaign narratives, and to claim this genre as a field of critical inquiry in and through (transnational) American Studies. In this sense, the title *Narrating Contested Lives: The Aesthetics of Life Writing in Human Rights Campaigns* reads as double reference to both the life stories and the method of analysis for reading human rights campaigns: both remain contested.

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MARKUS NEHL, *Transnational Black Dialogues: Re-Imagining Slavery in the Twenty-First Century* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), 212 pp.

‘Postslavery Studies’ might be a more appropriate denominator for this relevant study that appeared in *Transcript’s* Postcolonial Studies series and focusses on the ways in which “second generation neo-slave narratives” (32) address the histories of the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery in seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century North America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa from distinctly “twenty-first-century perspectives” (19).<sup>1</sup> As the title suggests, in five of its six chapters Markus Nehl’s compelling monograph—originally submitted as a dissertation to Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany, in 2015—analyzes five well-chosen anglophone neo-slave narratives published during the first decade of the new century, discussing the novels’ contributions to ongoing transnational dialogues about the African diaspora, the history of slavery, and the role of (anti-Black) violence afflicted on and resisted by enslaved women. Published in close succession between 2006 and 2009, Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*, Saidiya Hartman’s *Lose Your Mother*, Yvette Christiansë’s *Unconfessed*, Lawrence Hill’s *The Book of Negroes*, and Marlon James’s *The Book of Night Women* not only deal with the historically “white-authored [...] archive of slavery” through fictional writing (16). All of the narratives also speak to what Saidiya Hartman has called “the afterlife of slavery” in the United States (and beyond) today (quoted in Nehl 12).

Consequently, Nehl begins his well-structured study by briefly embedding its literary corpus into the current social, cultural, and political climate of the United States at the beginning of the new century when the election of the first Black U.S. president in 2008 was followed by the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM)—under the leadership of the queer Black women Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi

and as a reaction to numerous cases of fatal police violence against young unarmed African Americans, such as Trayvon Martin in 2012 and Michael Brown in 2014 (13-14). Nehl clearly understands the novels he analyzes as important critical interventions into the pressing debate about racism and anti-Blackness in the United States today, a debate that his monograph also inevitably partakes in.

Before delving into the five case studies, the introduction of *Transnational Dialogues* also gives a comprehensive overview over the study of the genre of neo-slave narratives (23-30) and proposes the notion of “a second generation of neo-slave narratives” (23) as a useful concept to describe the corpus at hand and distinguish it from earlier contributions to the genre from the 1960s to the 1990s (30-32). Discussing this new generation of neo-slave narratives that exceeds national boundaries and boundaries between genres, fiction, and non-fiction as well as disciplines, *Transnational Dialogues* contributes to the transnationalization of the study of “contemporary literary negotiations of slavery and the African diaspora” (14). The first chapter establishes the theoretical and methodological framework of *Transnational Dialogues* by following such influential scholars as Stuart Hall, Avtar Brah, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Tina M. Campt. It discusses their diaspora theories in order to develop a “concept of the African diaspora as a conceptual framework and analytical tool” (54) that congenially links the five case studies through a focus on slavery, the African diaspora, and what Campt fittingly calls “the dynamics of difference” (quoted in Nehl 51).

In order to adequately account for “the productive tensions between local specifics and global structures” and “the diversity and complexity of the African diaspora” (17), the case studies are introduced by undergirding contextualizations of the specific historical background that each narrative draws from, be it chattel slavery in the Cape colony in nineteenth-century South Africa for a close reading of *Unconfessed* (113-18) or the “historical developments in North America in the second half of the eighteenth century relevant for Hill’s *The Book of Negroes*” (140-44). The case studies then center on close readings, examining the ways in which the narratives recast discourses about the African diaspora and slavery thematically and stylistically. Nehl identifies various intertextual discussions “with African diaspora theory, slave narra-

<sup>1</sup> Here, I understand Postcolonial Studies as critical work on the history of colonialism and its legacies and analogize it with critical work on chattel slavery and its legacies. For a more nuanced conceptualization of the term ‘postslavery,’ see Christina Sharpe, *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010).

tives, earlier neo-slave narratives and African American literature more generally” (27-28) that contribute to the novels’ eponymous transnational dialogue. In Hartman’s *Lose Your Mother*, for instance, Nehl observes a “powerful re-negotiation of Paul Gilroy’s concept of the black Atlantic and the discourse of roots tourism in Ghana” (81) and discusses Black America’s debates about its varied relations to post-independence Ghana by contrasting Hartman’s narrative with Alex Haley’s *The Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976) and Maya Angelou’s *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes* (1986) (82-84).

The transnational dialogue that Nehl discerns in his corpus, thus, concentrates “on the meaning of home, on the complex interplay between ‘routes’ and ‘roots,’ on (power) differences and hierarchies within and between black diasporic groups as well as on the enduring legacy of slavery” (54). Most importantly, however, this dialogue very quickly conveys a fault line based on which Nehl builds a bold argument about the “aesthetic and ethical challenge of how to re-imagine slavery from twenty-first-century perspectives” that involves “the (ultimate) impossibility of recovering the (female) slave’s voice and filling the gaps in the historical records” through writing (19). Based on differences in the writers’ approaches to the difficult task of narrating chattel slavery and the experiences of enslaved women, Nehl identifies a divide between the work of Black feminist writers Morrison, Hartman, and Christiansë on the one hand, and the works of the Black Canadian author Hill and the Jamaican writer James on the other. Nehl does not pretend to disinterestedly observe this divide from a neutral perspective. By drawing on Hartman’s research in *Scenes of Subjection* (1997) and “Venus in Two Acts” (2008), he clearly subscribes to what he calls “the ethics of narration” (16)—ethics which, Nehl contends, the narratives *A Mercy*, *Lose Your Mother*, and *Unconfessed* have aesthetically addressed with great success, not least through their intertextual involvement with the influential first-generation neo-slave narrative *Beloved* (1987).

Based on Sabine Broeck’s pointed re-reading of the critical reception of Morrison’s *Beloved* as “‘kitsch’” readings, *Transnational Dialogues* convincingly proposes to read Morrison’s later novel *A Mercy* as well as Hartman’s and Christiansë’s narratives as writing against “interpretations of *Beloved* that are

based on notions of overcoming, healing and redemption” (20-21). Nehl argues that, “[i]nstead of naively and uncritically celebrating the reconciliatory power of twenty-first-century fiction, they shed light on the devastating nature of slavery to reflect on ‘what lived on from this history,’ to use Hartman’s words” (21). As the first three case studies successfully show, Hartman, Morrison, and Christiansë “warn against an easy appropriation of black history and draw attention to the impossibility of working through the past in order to heal the wounds of slavery” (21). They do so by adopting narrative strategies such as non-linearity, multi-perspectivity, and narrative fragmentation as well as by resisting “the temptation to fill in the gaps and silences of the archive” (36). Like *Beloved* before them, these more recent female-authored neo-slave narratives fundamentally question the ‘narratability’ of the traumas of slavery and the possibility of its overcoming as well as the recuperation of lost voices.

Hill and James, however, Nehl openly criticizes for “writ[ing] themselves into the commercially successful tradition of female-authored neo-slave narratives” while neglecting “the aesthetic and ethical challenge” involved in writing a literary archive of enslaved women’s suffering and resistance as well as “the theoretical intricacies involved in ‘the practice of speaking for others’ (Linda Alcoff)” (23). In his attempt to recover voices and complex experiences of enslaved women in North America and to highlight “the liberating power of the act of writing,” Hill, for example, not only employs a linear, “melodramatic” and “‘fairy-tale’” like plot (23) with a strong autodiegetic narrator who works towards narrative coherence and closure where, as Morrison, Hartman, and Christiansë would have it, there is none. Hill also, Nehl contends, “offers an unconvincing teleological conception of history and a reductive reconciliatory interpretation of eighteenth-century black life” (22) while rightfully questioning the possibility of returning to an ancestral home and the notion of Canada as a safe haven for fugitives (136, 144). James’s narrative exhibits yet another problem, Nehl maintains with Hartman and Hortense Spillers, by explicitly “representing scenes of subjection and torture [afflicted on the enslaved woman’s body] in a pornographic way” that “subjects the enslaved to a second act of victimization and abuse, reducing his (female) characters to objects of

voyeuristic desire” (22-23). Nehl identifies, for instance, the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) as well as Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) as central intertexts for James’s neo-slave narrative and its take on different forms of violence during slavery (175-76; 185-87).

By foregrounding “black experiences of loss, dispossession and grief without losing sight of forms of black agency and resistance” (21), Nehl further makes the case that *Lose Your Mother, A Mercy*, and *Unconfessed* not only write from “black feminist perspective[s]” (68, 110) that James and Hill fail to regard. Morrison, Hartman, and Christiansë also “engage in a dynamic dialogue” with Afro-Pessimism about the “thingification (Aimé Césaire)” of Black being (21). This argument that Nehl incidentally also extends to his close reading of *The Book of Night Women* is an important and comprehensible one to make since Hartman’s aforementioned research in *Scenes of Subjection* and “Venus in Two Acts”—that Nehl also references—have been very influential for the development of Afro-Pessimism.<sup>2</sup> While the discussion of diaspora studies and the concept of neo-slave narratives is comprehensively elaborated and then successfully harnessed for its close readings, however, *Transnational Dialogues*’s involvement with this radical trajectory of contemporary Black Studies remains too limited to give further direction to its otherwise theoretically well-underpinned and convincing interpretations.

Especially in its discussion of violence in *A Mercy*, *Unconfessed*, and *The Book of Night Women*, a more detailed engagement with Afro-Pessimism’s concept of anti-Blackness would have enabled a deeper understanding of the ways in which anti-Black violence is addressed in the novels under scrutiny. It would also have reduced the risk of blurring the line between anti-Blackness and other forms of violence. Afro-Pessimists such as Frank Wilderson argue that the anti-Black violence of enslavement and criminalization has been unleashed gratuitously against Black bodies,

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Patrice Douglass and Frank B. Wilderson, III, “The Violence of Presence: Metaphysics in a Blackened World.” *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies* 43.4 (2015): 117-23, esp. 119; Frank B. Wilderson, III, *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010).

i.e. without the necessity of prior acts of transgression of legal or moral rules, and produced and continues to reproduce Black being as socially dead.<sup>3</sup> Anti-Black violence is therefore fundamentally different from other forms of violence, such as resistance against, flight from, and refusal of anti-Black violence that Nehl calls “counter-violence” in chapter six as well as the violent consequences anti-Blackness has had within Black communities during slavery and its afterlives that Nehl describes with the controversial term “intra-black violence” in chapters two, three, and five.<sup>4</sup> Yet, with its totalizing claims, an Afro-Pessimist perspective also leads to rigorous interrogations of many more fundamental concepts that hold the study under review together, such as the concepts of Africa and of diaspora.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Afro-Pessimism proves unsuitable as a supplementary approach as it puts forward in Wilderson’s words “a different conceptual framework, predicated not on the subject-effect of cultural performance but on the structure of political ontology” that helps to theorize “the unbridgeable gap between Black being and Human life.”<sup>6</sup>

In its current form, Afro-Pessimism emerged at the same historical moment of Barack Obama’s presidency, BLM, and the publication of the second-generation of neo-slave narratives under scrutiny in this study.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For an Afro-Pessimist take on anti-Black violence, see, e.g., Douglass and Wilderson 117, 119, 122; and Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black* 11, 75.

<sup>4</sup> On the concept of the “intramural” as an alternative to “intra-black,” see, e.g., Frank B. Wilderson, III and Jaye Austin Williams, “Staging (Within) Violence: A Conversation with Frank Wilderson and Jaye Austin Williams.” *Rhizomes* 29 (2016): n. pag, par. 59, endnote 14. On Black diasporic resistance as fugitivity and refusal, see, e.g., Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2012) 80, 112; and Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2017) 10, 32.

<sup>5</sup> See Frank B. Wilderson, III. “Grammar and Ghosts: The Performative Limits of African Freedom.” *Theatre Survey* 50.1 (2009): 119-25, esp. 119-20, 124.

<sup>6</sup> Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black* 57.

<sup>7</sup> The most influential work of Afro-Pessimism so far, Wilderson’s *Red, White and Black*, was published in 2010.

In 2016, when Obama left the White House and Donald Trump, who heavily relies on support from openly racist and white supremacist groups, was elected as 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. president, the genre of neo-slave narratives has registered further growth with innovative novels such as Colson Whitehead's *Underground Railroad* and Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. Clearly, *Transnational Dialogues* is an important contribution to the study of this new generation of neo-slave narratives that continues to develop with no end in sight as it engages the history and afterlife of chattel slavery on a transnational

level, recasting the African Atlantic at the beginning of a still young century from nuanced 'postslavery' perspectives. *Transnational Dialogues* successfully shows both with its thorough contextualizations and its in-depth analyses how these narratives speak of and to this world in which we live today by writing about the transatlantic world in the time of slavery—work that seems more pressing than ever, or rather, as Hartman, Morrison, and Christiansë would have it, as urgent as ever.

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