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Book Reviews

Heritage Film: Nation, Genre and Representation. Belén Vidal. London and New York: Wallflower, 2012. P/bk 150 pp. ISBN 978-0-231-16203-6. Price £14.00.

As global media has spent a week commemorating with mixed feelings the legacy of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher after her passing aged 87, we are reminded of how the heritage film continues to be an essential asset for the British filmmaking industry in its attempt of producing quality films with a broad appeal that are capable of competing with Hollywood blockbusters. Little more than a year ago British multiplexes were playing *The Iron Lady*, a dramatization of Thatcher's life that aimed to replicate the Academy Award successes achieved by *The King's Speech* the year before, and one that anticipated the current reassessment of Thatcher's controversial role in British politics and history. Recent events also remind us of how, in their negotiation between the representation of private and public lives of historical figures, heritage films are often preoccupied with investigating the role of the media in contemporary society through allegorical lenses pointed at either the recent or remote past, this being one of the many insightful points made in the object of this review. Belén Vidal's latest study of the heritage film addresses extensively the three major strands of British films of this type, the monarchy film, the literary adaptation of classics of Western literature and the artist's biopic, the latter being a subject matter she had already engaged with in her *Figuring the Past: Period Film and the Mannerist Aesthetic*. Just like the best works in Wallflower's Shortcuts series, Vidal's *Heritage Film: Nation, Genre and Representation* proves to be an excellent survey of the existing academic literature on the subject, with particular emphasis on Andrew Higson's seminal writings in the field, and is therefore highly recommended to those looking either for a starting point in the familiarization with this niche of film studies or a 'roadmap' to be used to discern which readings to embark on to engage further with the topic. In

fact, Vidal concludes her Introduction by specifying that her work "does not purport to be a comprehensive mapping of the genre. Instead, it seeks to put forward a methodological reflection about the heritage film as a film studies term" (5-6) to the point that the book could be easily titled "the heritage film debate" also. As Vidal points out "the heritage film […] needs to be considered a critically or theoretically constructed genre rather than an industrial one" (2); it is therefore appropriate to focus on its positioning within the film studies arena and to give an account of the current shift in its critical reception, from the widespread opinion in the 1990s that heritage films represented little more than "reductive images of 'Englishness' [that] focused on the traditional values and lifestyles of the upper-middleclass and the aristocratic elite" (10) to the current reconsideration that different films of this type often utilize such a "wide range of styles that [they] are not amenable to a unique ideological reading." (33) This choice of privileging the discussion of the positioning of the heritage film label in an attempt to define the genre itself, however, proves to be somewhat problematic when Vidal "interrogate[s] the existence of the heritage film as a European genre" (3-4). By doing so she implies that a number of European films made in the last two decades participate in delineating the notion of a European identity in a similar way that British heritage films did and continue doing with British national identity. An historical account of this group of European films and the analysis of some of the most notable ones is aptly conducted in Chapter Two: however, the lack of a structural definition of what defines a heritage film beyond the fact that it is a quality, middlebrow product set in the past made from the 1990s onwards is something of a missed opportunity. Vidal contends that the European heritage film genre emerged "as a type of film strongly favoured by investors and funding bodies alike" (64) that is "likely to export well across national borders" (64) as a result of a de-nationalizing effect set in motion by geo-political phenomena such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and by more specifically cinematic ones like the end of the 'new waves'. This argument could be easily agreed with if one assumed that films of this type radically differ on either a structural, ideological or stylistic level from European films made in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s, but this is not the case. Could European, often co-produced historical films such as Luigi Magni's *Nell'Anno del Signore* (1969), Sergei Bondarchuk's *Waterloo* (1970) or Victor Erice's *El Espiritu de la Colmena* (1973) be labeled as 'heritage films'? Vidal's compelling discussion of the heritage film prompts us to believe that this

argument in favor of a European heritage genre may generate more from the debate itself than from the tropes of the films involved. In other words, this notion of European heritage film could be first and foremost the result of the fact that film critics and scholars are less preoccupied with the ideas of film authorship and national cinema today than they were in the past.

Another minor criticism of an otherwise excellent work relates to the choice of the selected case studies: the author offers a comprehensive account of the role that older heritage films such as *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (1988) played in informing the critical reception of the British and European genres; however the extensive analysis of the variety of representational strategies that can be found within them is carried out by discussing in detail *The Queen* (2006), *Joyeux Noël* (2005) and *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2003), three films that were released in the space of three years. Since the work does an excellent job of mapping a debate that has raged in film studies for the last twenty years and the narrative journey it proposes, perhaps Vidal might have been better advised to select films more distant in time from one another.

Nonetheless the merits of the book are far superior than its shortcomings; the author's discussion of the funding and corporate dynamics that exist between film and television production companies is particularly detailed, and supported by insightful analyses of how such dynamics are reflected in the representational strategies seen on screen. The author's interrogation of the dual objectives at the center of heritage film production (the desire for national particularity and cultural diversity, coupled with the need for broad appeal and commercial recognizability), works particularly well in the articulation of the heritage films' contentious positioning in film criticism today.

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Laura Wagner, *Let Me Tell You How I Really Feel … The Uncensored Book Reviews of Classic Images 2001-2010*. Albany, GA: Bear Manor Media, 2010. P/bk 248 pp. ISBN 978-1-59393-503-X. Price $17.96.

Criticism, according to the theorist Anis Shivani, has an important role to play in contemporary literary cultures, as a means to "advance good writing and create new readers." It provides a means for tyro writers to realize their "most individualized dreams and ambitions" through "speculative, generalized" work, "a mere tip of the iceberg for the knowledge contained within it [i.e. the text being criticized]. It must set itself up as an equal and opposing force against the work of the imagination" (Shivari). Criticism should pronounce judgment in a way that encourages rather than dissuades, so as not to destroy any writer's self-confidence.

As a work of film criticism, *Let Me Tell You …* fails on both counts. Laura Wagner obviously cares passionately about classic films: in the introductory chapter she recalls how at the age of five she would spend hours poring over film reference books. She has obviously reviewed texts of varying quality – good as well as bad. However her principal shortcoming as a critic lies in her mistaken assumption of a privileged position, a self-proclaimed "expert" on classic films who judges books harshly if they do not meet her exacting standards. This is no bad thing in itself, but Wagner uses (or should it be abuses) her position to write the kind of pseudo-witty rhetoric that is designed to show off. Rather than trying to broaden our understanding of writing and its potential, she always goes for the cheap laugh.

Here are a few choice examples; in one review she describes the author's style as "peculiar" as she "went blurry-eyed keeping up with the over 7,387 exclamation points that are used throughout. Give it a rest already" (44-5). On another occasion she advises an author to "stop caterwauling and stop shooting the dead horse, already" (I've no idea what the word "already" is doing in that sentence) (47). Another writer is berated for their "specious writing" and "lofty claim[s]" that give the text "a malicious tone" (76). Wagner's voice becomes more strident as the book progresses; another text described as "stale and trite" evidently contains "warped fantasies, about long-dead stars" that apparently reveal "nothing more than the sickness of today's publishing industry […] it's sad to remember that some people [which people?] believe all this crap" (77).

Wagner's writing is stuffed full of redundant words and phrases. While claiming that one text has been "marred by almost nonexistent

editing" (111), she denounces another as "a shame and a waste. Give me an aspirin, please. Make it two" (119). On another occasion she claims that a text has "a strange aura of bitterness" (129) – a comment which we might make about Wagner herself. Confronted with what she claims are poorly written texts, she allows her bitterness to run away with her, writing the kind of rhetoric that students (especially students of criticism) are dissuaded from producing very early on in their academic lives. One review ends with the mock-reflective "Ah youth. It's wasted on the young"; another has her claiming that she needs "more than a few aspirins" to cope with a particularly convoluted writing-style (158), Reading a book about Ronald Reagan is an experience "I hope that none of my readers ever suffer through in their lifetimes" (190).

The effect of reading so much negative comment is truly dispiriting; if the reviewing process is so painful for her, why does she continue to do it? The answer is self-evident; like an old-style schoolmarm she delights in scolding her unfortunate charges (the authors) and making them stand in the corner for their miserable efforts. Wagner admits that she has received a torrent of abusive mail from disgruntled writers and their friends. However it's clear she believes that her "innocent little reviews" should not necessarily cause such a stir. Her principal task as she sees it is to protect her readers from "those [authors] who prey on them [classic Hollywood films] in the guise of writing about them" (27). It is a shame that she assumes such an elevated view of her job. In truth she's a lazy writer with at best a limited understanding of how criticism should work, or what its purpose might be. Far from being speculative or generalized in terms of purpose, *Let Me Tell You …* is nothing more than hack-work, the kind of material educators might give to students as an example of how *not* to write criticism.

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American Smart Cinema. Claire Perkins. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press., 2012. h/bk 192pp. ISBN. 978-0-7486-4074-4. Price £65.00.

American independent cinema has, for some time, been considered to be in a transitional or contested space. Whether it is seen in the context of Indiewood, mini-majors or major-minis, the field of study has struggled to define the contemporary formation of a cinema both within and outside the major studios. Claire Perkins's *American Smart Cinema* explores a non-dominant trend in American cinema that emerges in the late 1990s, a cycle of films created by a number of auteurist figures such as Todd Solondz, Wes Anderson, Noah Baumbach, P. T. Anderson, Tamara Jenkins, as well as "adjunct" (29) figures Hal Hartley and Whit Stillman. A tendency "'broadly categorizesed in terms of a predilection for irony, black humour, fatalism and relativism" (3), the smart film, Perkins argues, is "a site of transformation, plurality and potential in contemporary American filmmaking" (165). The task is "not to define but to demonstrate the sensibility" in the ways that the smart film is "principally understood not as a semantic end in itself but as evidence of the conflicted stance these films take toward cinema history" (16).

Taking her cue from Jeffrey Sconce's 2002 *Screen* article "Irony, Nihilism and the New American 'Smart Film'", Perkins examines a set of American films that have fallen roughly into what she terms the 'commercial/independent cinema' (2). While she acknowledges previous discourses of independence or Indiewood-isation, Perkins acknowledges understands the "porosity" of such definitions or dialogues between commercial and independent cinemas on the level of economics, theme or history. Consequently, Perkins describes the smart film variously as distinguished by "tone" as a "sensibility", a "tendency", an "aesthetic" (16), a "thematic fixation" (77), but acknowledges that the designation of smartness is qualified, "partial and open" (29) or that the "smart delineation" is elastic (40) and "never […] exact" (16). The book points not to an industrial designation of American cinemas, as recent studies, such as Alisa Perren's *Indie, Inc. Miramax and the Transformation of Hollywood in the* 1990s, or Yannis Tzioumakis's *Hollywood's Indies: Classics Divisions, Specialty Labels and the American Film Market* (both 2012), have done, but

a textual approach in which the smart film loosely takes on attributes of a genre. Split into five overarching themes or lines of continuity, the book's chapters cover issues of authorship, narrative, melodrama, music and suburban utopianism (or lack thereof).

Each of the chapters understands the smart cycle as a series of continuities, disjunctions or ironic engagements with previous waves in American or world cinema. The smart tendencies of authorship are determined by "serialisation, synchronicity and self-reflexivity" (45) in Hal Hartley's *Flirt* (1995), and Whit Stillman's "Yuppie" trilogy (*Metropolitan* (1990), *Barcelona* (1994), and *The Last Days of Disco* (1998). Noting the international art cinema's tendency to situate authorial self-reflexivity in the figure of the disconnected trilogy or triptych film, Perkins identifies a similar tendency in the smart film's approach, where the trio is used as a means of experimentation, double-voiced address and a transformation of filmic time and space, where the attempt is made not to undermine the authorial voice as a means of distance, but "'to pluralise and intensify what is said in a positive narrativisation of auteurism itself" (46). Subsequent chapters extend the discourse surrounding sequelizing and serialization, the second looking at the extended crisis of American cinema. Turning to Gilles Deleuze and the action-image, the smart film extends the crisis of the classical Hollywood action-image that began in the Renaissance period of New Hollywood. As that period expressed its disaffection against the backdrop of Vietnam, the smart film's antipathy is largely the dysfunctional suburban families of *The Squid and the Whale* (Noah Baumbach, 2007) and *Palindromes* (Todd Solondz, 2004) where the intensified and restless schema of the action-image's milieux are always and already transformed prior to action. What is useful in Perkins's situation of the smart phenomenon in this form is her positioning of the smart film as a response to high-concept blockbuster style that comes between it and New Hollywood. "American cinema's second significant cycle of experimentation", is not a dominant form, but an adjunct to blockbuster style, sharing the concerns for intensified style at a level of form that "disables the sensory-motor connections of classic continuity" (74). Hence, it remains a commercial cinema, something that potentially distances the cycle from the more marginal independent cinemas of later movements like Mumblecore.

The contemporary counterpoint to the smart film, Perkins contends, was the new-brutality films of Quentin Tarantino and David Fincher.

These films ironize their address through the combination of bubblegum pop-culture with ultra-realist violence, while the smart film's own blank, ironic address resembles the already iconic melodramas of the 1950s where the distance and use of what Perkins terms the "music-image" operate in a doubled "register where affect is qualified but fully felt" (124) like those melodramas that prefigure "aristocratic" smart films like Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001). This extends into the "satire, hyperbole, ambiguity or emptiness" (148) of the suburban utopia of films like *Happiness* (Solondz, 1998) and *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001) where the doubling of the utopian possibility of deterritorialization is met by the annihiliation of suburban anti-utopianism in a configuration that sequelizes science fiction films such as *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982).

The smart film is defined by its blank, doubled ironic address and, for Perkins, the extension and intensification of previous cycles, genres and tendencies in American and world cinema. This is perhaps the book's most useful contribution to the discourses surrounding modes of independent cinema post-1994, a fairly crowded field, identifying these films not in binary fashion to dominant tendencies or tastes but as adjacent, even sometimes shared, concerns. Although the smart tendency feels too loose to be classified anywhere close to generic (although Perkins doesn't class it as such), *American Smart Cinema* argues potently that a set of formal and thematic concerns emerge in the contested space of commercial independent cinema at a particular moment to form a cycle, however limited or qualified that cycle might be.

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Mass Market Medieval: Essays on the Middle Ages in Popular Culture. Ed. David W. Marshall (ed). Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007. Pp/bk 205 pp. ISBN 978-0-7864-2922-6. Price $35.00.

Perhaps the most striking thing about David Marshall's collection of essays on medievalism in popular culture is not necessarily the persuasiveness of its attempts to validate the once nascent sub-discipline of medievalism, but how quickly such studies have taken root over the years since the book's initial release. In his introduction, the editor rightly identifies an often overlooked but potent dismissal of medievalism according to a perceived high/low cultural divide, according to which "the Middle Ages stands in for high culture, while pop cultural uses of it are positioned as low, and hence unworthy of serious examination on an academic level."(5) While such opinions may not always be conscious in the minds of many who, having been trained to work with one kind of sources will unwittingly replicate these attitudes in their future efforts, the various essays of the book bring home forcefully the important point that popular culture's re-use of the medieval period has important lessons to teach us. As Marshall concludes, "the study of pop-cultural medievalism thus becomes a means of locating the ways in which the Middle Ages continue to be used to justify or naturalize socio-political agendas, or at least to desensitize us to them." (7)

What has not changed so much, however, is Marshall's claim that "the use of medieval images and tropes in popular culture has seen an explosion in recent years" (6) which has not been matched by scholarship across the board. "Outside of film," he argues, "other popular forms have largely gone unstudied" (5); indeed, a brief glance at recent scholarship on medievalism shows a disproportionate focus on medieval film with works by Finke and Shichtman, Bildhauer, Bernau and Haydock, as well as my own contribution all emerging in the intervening years, while other areas remain either partly or wholly neglected in print. Nevertheless, the proliferation of such works overwhelmingly indicates a general — however reluctant — acceptance of the importance of such popular-cultural artifacts, which suggests that the offhand dismissal of medievalism is by now more of a marginal position than a dominant one

In the light of such changes, *Mass Market Medieval* consequently stands as an important foundational text which extends the study of

medievalism from a genealogical base to one that happily takes into account what he calls the "cultural studies approach" (4), which — far from "dumbing down" — carries over the rigorous scholarly approach from medieval studies to medievalism, not least because many of the contributors are themselves medievalists with proven credentials. The excellence of its scholarship (and its scholars) thus allows the book to serve as much as a manifesto for the expansion of critical study of the subject as an important text in its own right.

What is equally striking about the collection of 13 essays covered by the book is the impressive range of topics covered, with essays on television and film (Häxan, the BBC's *Canterbury Tales*, *Blackadder* and *Groundhog Day*) and music (Paul Hardwick's study of Arthurianism in British Progressive Rock and Trafford and Pluskowski's excellent chapter on Viking Heavy Metal) alongside studies of less obvious candidates, including Yandell's essay on medieval prophecy, Earl's cultural reading of Arthurian tourist sites and Grindley's provocative but thoughtful chapter on pedagogy. Even studies of medievalist literature, which far more closely reflect traditional textual analysis, adopt noticeably different methodologies: here Walker reads Ellis Peters/Edith Pargeter's medieval-themed novels as ways of dealing with images of Wales in both past and present; Johnson uses the idea of oppositional ethnography to understand the impact of local memory in *The Templar Revelation*, suggesting that it creates an alternative history which "turns the ethnographic eye of the West back on itself." (136) The field of medievalism is further expanded by including two essays on games with medieval themes: the first, by Marshall himself, covers the important role which board games like *Dungeons & Dragons* play in the interweaving of fantasy with medieval worlds, and Daniel T. Kline's essay conducts an expert study of the real time strategy game *Age of Empires II: The Age of Kings*, demonstrating that videogames "are teaching tools, and rather than decry them as inconsequential "kid stuff" or sniff at their profligate anachronisms, academics should rather understand video games and account for them in their teaching." (155) Kline's conclusions, then, might well speak for the volume as a whole when he suggests that "Rather than demonstrating to me how terribly popular culture gets history "wrong", these games remind me that even the most extensively researched, closely argued, and academically nuances rendering of the expanse of time we call "the Middle Ages" is, in its own way, simply a different kind of

discursive account prone to its own ideological investments and material deficiencies." (169)

Overall, then, as a work with a high scholarly pedigree, but one which is equally open to new approaches, methodologies and subjects for study, *Mass Market Medieval* remains an essential text for anyone interested not only in the study of the medieval past but, no less importantly, in what we do with that past.

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Unhitched: the Trial of Christopher Hitchens. Richard Seymour. London and New York: Verso, 2012. P/bk 134 pp. ISBN 978-1-84467-990-4. Price $16.95/£9.99.

In *Unhitched: the Trial of Christopher Hitchens*, Richard Seymour puts Hitchens in the dock, where he is accused of having his "noble mind overthrown" (x). Any reader will immediately feel a palpable sense of betrayal in the pages of this short appraisal of what is a huge writing life. In it Seymour casts himself as being of the "true" left, while accusing Hitchens of being some sort of gadfly, thereby chiming with someone else from the "true" left, the British politician George Galloway. Shortly before his death from cancer in 2011, Hitchens was asked how he felt about being called a "self-serving, fat-assed, cynical, chain-smoking, drunken, opportunistic, cynical, contrarian" by former friend Alexander Cockburn. "Well, I don't see what's wrong with that", replied The Hitch, "although he should see my ass now". In his life he was quite prepared to take the hits, but since he died a host of friends and acquaintances have been quick to protect his legacy. *Unhitched* then has come in for a lot of criticism.

However the central questions still remain: did Hitchens move to the right in his later years, and become an apologist for the "neo-con" architects of the US-led War on Terror? Did his support for "regime change" in Iraq make him an imperialist? Or, did the war offer him a glimpse of what he had always wanted? For Hitchens, allowing women control of their bodies and their reproductive cycle would go a long way in ending poverty in the Third World; it's there in his attack on Mother Teresa (*The Missionary Position*, 1995). As the Iraq and Iranian dictatorships were bad news for women, couldn't Hitchens' "at any cost" support for the war be viewed as expedient, even necessary?

Hitchens had always been in love with the US – he lived in Washington DC for many years, and was married to an American. As he was dying, he would state that one of his regrets was not to see the World Trade Center rebuilt in New York. The difference between right and left in American politics has always been blurred, where even a democrat President can oversee drone attacks and a global spying and intimation complex. Hitchens's hero, George Orwell, was also someone who was able to describe himself as a socialist, while denouncing "fellow travelers." So,

can we really criticize Hitchens for doing the same? Well, according to Seymour, yes we can!

Seymour claims that his book is a critical essay, but he has been very selective in his reading. Also, it is fair to say that Hitchens made his name – in the US at least – in the glare of late-night talk shows and public debates, now found scattered throughout YouTube. Surely more people have "seen" Hitchens's slaying evangelical Christians such as William Lane Craig than have read *God Is Not Great* (2007)? His typical brand of put-down – such as suggesting on the death of Jerry Falwell that his corpse be given an enema, so it could be buried in match-box – was perfectly crafted for the social media age.

Seymour criticizes Hitchens for not taking one of the two "well-trodden routes" out of the left, but surely that's a good thing? To say that his move to the right concluded with is assaults on certain Islamic theocracies is too simplistic. Nor does attacking the anti-war left for being too conservative make him one. The Hitchens which emerges from this book then is a singularly unpleasant one: he sympathizes with the working classes, but had little time for the poor; he was a plagiarist and a racist; he was "poor atheist" (54) and a narcissist.

Contradictions do start to emerge in Seymour's account however: he describes Hitchens's sustained attack on Bill Clinton as "highly personalised" (17) – but *Unhitched* seems similarly afflicted. Hitchens is criticized for being unsentimental about the War on Terror ("You're gonna lose a building") but also for being far too sentimental regarding Desert Storm. Seymour also castigates him for having "no particular dependency on anyone of the left" (xi) and this, in his eyes at least, is the biggest crime of all. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but this book seems mean-spirited at times, which often drowns out some sharp textual analysis. It is right and proper of course to question the political motives of a writer, but to attack him for his position on the Balkan wars in the early 1990s as if he we a policy-maker, rather than a journalist myopic. Hitchens's friend Martin Amis once bemoaned the reading public's interest in a writer rather than the writing. While no biography, *Unhitched* at least does keep to the prodigious output, but its mistake is to view it through the lens of Christopher Hitchens's last few years.

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How To Be Gay. David M. Halperin. Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012. H/bk 549 pp. ISBN 978-0-674-06679-3. Price $35.00.

It was my first year in Michigan as a graduate student when I heard about David Halperin's class, "How To Be Gay" that had triggered much dispute among some people, particularly conservatives and right-wing media, who accused Halperin of promoting homosexuality, and recruiting and initiating young straight students. Although I did not have the opportunity to take that class, I am fortunate to see the outcome of it, Halperin's rigorous book, *How To Be Gay*, which will no doubt generate much discussion in and out of queer studies, contributing the fields of cultural studies, literature, film, media, and history, among others.

In his beautifully written book, Halperin traces American white male gay culture by making a striking distinction between gay as sexual identity and gay as cultural practice. Homosexuality as a psycho-sexual orientation and gayness are two separate categories. In Halperin's argument, gay is a social practice, a mode of perception, an attitude, or a certain way of (not) doing something rather than a sexual identity which is solely based on same-sex erotic desire. And as a practice, gayness is something one can do well or badly regardless of one's sexual orientation. For that reason, gayness necessitates being shown how to do it through examples, and how to practice it. Halperin does not describe how to be gay, but what it means to be gay, and induces a conceptual model for analyzing the ways and processes gay culture, as a counter-culture to heteronormative mainstream culture, is formed.

Tracing American gay culture from the 1970s onwards, Halperin notes gay men orientate themselves towards gayness by developing dissident strategies of relating to straight cultural objects (movies, songs, clothes, books, works of art) and cultural forms in general (art and architecture, opera and musical theater, pop and disco, style and fashion, emotion and language). In this process, gay men, he argues, are more inclined to appropriate, challenge, reinterpret, and reuse these cultural objects and forms in creating a cultural difference. Queering straight culture is, therefore, a gay practice that shapes gay culture more than cultural artifacts with explicit gayness do. In order to evince how gay men

appropriate straight culture, Halperin focuses on actress Joan Crawford and one of her scenes in Michael Curtiz's 1945 movie, *Mildred Pierce*; and generates his meticulous 500 page close-reading of a line from the movie: "get out before I kill you," Mildred's (Crawford's) ultimate reply to her spoiled daughter Veda (Ann Blyth) who has slappeds her mother seconds agopreviously. Halperin zooms in on the scene, and queries, to uncover gay sensibility and subjectivity: why are gay men so much attached to this moment in the movie? He further posits, the great value of traditional gay male culture, perhaps even more challengingly "resides in some of its most despised and repudiated features: gay male femininity, diva worship, aestheticism, snobbery, drama, adoration of glamour, caricature of women and obsession with the figure of the mother" (38). Many gay men, he argues, embrace heteronormative ways of life nowadays so as to integrate themselves into the larger society, and to prove their essential normality, about which he penetratingly announces "Sometimes I think homosexuality is wasted on gay people" (448). Yet, the meaning of gay culture first and foremost signifies awareness about and resistance to a world in which heterosexuality is the norm, he asserts. Heterosexual culture remains as the dominant culture; and in order to survive and flourish in its midst as the different, he candidly propounds, gay men must engage in an appropriation, reinterpretation, perversion of it, which is indeed a strong resistance against it.

One who is familiar with Halperin's earlier work on history of (homo)sexuality may ask if Halperin is doing a history of gay culture. The answer would surely be positive. While he does not provide a clear guide about how to do history of gayness, his book conspicuously performs a micro-history of American gay culture from 1970s to today. Choosing a specific period to concentrate on is apparently a historical strategy, which synchronically demonstrates the peculiarities of a specific context in the formation of gay culture. Yet, can this gay culture be found in previous centuries, one may interrogate? Halperin lubricates his mode of analysis initiates new venues to historically trace and theorizes gay-as-practice in a productive way that might initiate new venues to historically trace the categories examined in all six chapters of the book - male femininity, diva worship, aestheticism, snobbery, drama, adoration of glamour, caricature of women and obsession with the figure of the mother. Halperin's way of doing things in this book, therefore, invites scholars to trace a genealogy of

these categories and many others that are yet to be pursued, and bare the unique queer perceptions in previous eras.

Halperin's demarcation of only an American context as the object of inquiry may raise some eyebrows, considering that gay is a circulating identity category and practice among many other western and westernizing societies. However, his work with scrupulous attention to detail proves that while gay is a term circulating in many non-western societies today, it does not always have the same cultural signification as it does in the American context. While the circulating imageries and discourses within gay communities around the world form a shared gay culture in an age of global interactions and internet, investigating the historical formations of sexual identities and culture in a given society will doubtlessly reveal a different dimension of the gay culture within that space. The way Halperin is very careful not to make an assertion about non-American societies, therefore, functions to urge the readers to peruse different cultural contexts and highlight the formation and features of a queer culture, which appropriates and reinterprets the heteronormative forms and norms, in that context. In so doing, Halperin's *How To Be Gay*, I believe, insinuates further inquiries for those who desire to ponder over gay culture in transcultural contexts: *How to Be Gay* in Turkey? In France? In New Zealand? In India? In South Africa? Or elsewhere?

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My Culture, My Color, My Self: Heritage, Resilience, and Community in the Lives of Young Adults. Toby S. Jenkins. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2013. P/bk 191 pp. ISBN 978-1-4399-0830-3. Price $ 24.95.

In *My Culture, My Color, My Self,* Toby S. Jenkins grants a voice to students at schools, colleges, and universities that, so one of her theses, do not find sufficient representation within US mainstream culture, and thus within current school and college curricula. In this volume, she primarily addresses the cultural backgrounds of students of color, mostly of African American origins, since "[t]he question 'Who am I' for the African American is a hard one; in many ways, we are on the outskirts of both societies – African and American – that we claim in our name." (5) Her book is a highly elaborate scholarly and artistic call to rethink our understandings of culture in the United States that we teach our students. She requires action: from educators, student peers and administrators from all ethnic groups and identities within current society. In her promotion of student centeredness as a teaching and pedagogical philosophy "in which we make students central to everything that we do," (152) Jenkins requires educators and administrators to listen to what US students of all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, especially those often perceived as the "ethnic other," have to say about what culture and values mean to them.

Cultural studies today, Jenkins argues with reference to authors and scholars like Carter G. Woodson, Maulana Karenga, or bell hooks, must pursue the tasks in whose service she puts her own book: "in order for African Americans to truly develop agency for positive, loving, and progressive cultural development, the act of decolonizing one's mind must occur." (20) These "decolonization" efforts become evident through the book's structure. The book's content prominently features students' cultural self-portraits and interviews that the author conducts in one-on-one interactions, during in-class situations, and student group meetings. After a student's self-portrait and a "cultural snapshot" that Jenkins draws from students she has interacted with during meetings and conversations, she underlines their statements, poems as well as learned and self-drafted song lyrics with scholarly literature and research that address the impact of lived culture for the human being's benevolence. Moreover, Jenkins redefines the notion of cultural capital that is not only drawn from

museums, concert halls, and expensive theater settings but from daily interactions. In order to account for a more inclusive notion of culture that pays homage to the diverse population (not only) of today's America, Jenkins sees cultural capital as an agglomeration of "beliefs, values, rituals, norms, and experiences" (26) that mark the students' everyday lives. Culture, so Jenkins, reflects in the customs and traditions of their families and peer groups (chapter 1), through family bonds that go beyond the traditional idea of a core-family and include extended relatives and close friends (chapter 2). Thus, the role of culture is to provide self-value and confidence to students that have difficulties to make their voice heard.

Jenkins steps back and lets her participants speak for themselves. The reader learns how "Mimi" (all names mentioned are pseudonyms) escaped poverty and persecution in her home country Vietnam and found a new life in California (chapter 6), how "Francheska Marie Soto-Gonzales" travels back and forth between her native island Puerto Rico and her current residency Virginia (chapter 5) and keeps close contact with her grandmother's family, their customs and beliefs. And we learn how students whose families sacrificed a lot for the benefit of their children feel responsible to become cultural leaders, albeit not necessarily in the sense of economic power. In reference to the portraiture the NFL football player "Derrick" draws of himself, cultural leadership that Jenkins learns about and advocates implies immersion in "the usefulness and positivity of popular forms of local culture" (108) such as hip-hop culture, graffiti arts, spoken word performances, or sports, religious rituals, and family meals. Jenkins introduces students' narratives about family Thanksgiving convocations, citations of poems like Maya Angelou's "Phenomenal Woman" (chapter 2), or pieces of spoken word art (chapter 6). They all underline the scholar's appeal to rethink traditional approaches to college education (chapter 7): "When was the last time that you faced your professional faults head-on as did these brave students?" (158)

Despite her empathy and enthusiasm for her student participants, their friends and families, Jenkins is not immune to the shortcomings of several members of her research pool. Stories of drug abuse, parental neglect, and most of all the absence of a father-figure occur throughout the chapters. Jenkins's collected stories and cultural snapshots do not seek for excuses. Rather, negative experiences like these are encouraged to be seen as challenges to improve the situation for marginalized ethnic communities

– both by educators and students. Not only is it necessary to recognize students of color's cultural interests and biographies and include them into college and school environments. Jenkins also encourages educators and administrators to "invite family members to facilitate workshops, serve as panelists and lecture on campus – and not just the potential donors." (154) *My Culture, My Color, My Self* thus follows a new path towards a diverse scholarship that does not end with the class's session. An education that Jenkins envisions wants to replace the discussions about underrepresented populations not simply by talking about them. It wants more: it wants us to listen and learn from them and therewith from the cultural leaders of tomorrow.

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The Cambridge Introduction to Toni Morrison. Tessa Roynon. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013. P/bk 143 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-17722-1. Price £19.99.

Toni Morrison enjoys a rare popularity for an author whose works present obvious challenges to her readers. Her treatment of historically unspoken and unspeakable subjects and her ambiguous messages have nurtured a wide critical interest, which makes approaching her oeuvre an act of defiance. It is from this point, "to provide one way into and one path through that world," that Tessa Roynon says she has set out to write her *Introduction to Toni Morrison* (ix). There is, however, more to the book than this modest aim, for it covers a large territory. In the first two chapters, it offers a full portrait of Toni Morrison by providing a short but insightful glimpse into her life and by introducing each of her works, fiction and non-fiction (with the exception of her last book *Home*, which came out when the Introduction was being published) in analyzes that are interwoven with Morrison's material sources, influences, literary tropes, stylistic innovations and political arguments. In addition, the last two chapters, entitled, "Contexts" and "Reception" respectively, highlight the historical, social and cultural contexts for each work and provide an overview of Morrison's reputation both in the US and in Europe.

The biographical information on Morrison in the book not only helps envision the richness and variety of her experience but also, as Roynon notes in the chapter entitled "Contexts," to put her in perspective so that "we remember that 'Toni Morrison' was not always a house-hold name, and that black writing was not always in vogue" (100). Such a perspective reminds the contemporary reader that what can be the taken -for -granted topics and discussions especially in matters of race and gender today was at the time of Morrison's treatment of them were highly challenging and radical, which, in turn, does justice to and sheds light on the innovations in her fiction.

Roynon's Morrison has surprises for readers who know her only through her novels and critical writing. Morrison's less known engagements, such as books for children, lyrics and libretto writing, curatorship in the Louvre Museum and the Baryshnikov Arts Center are among some that the introduction describes. Along with Morrison's well-known fiction and non-fiction, Roynon discusses each of these works, albeit, as would be expected, in less detail.

In addition to the range of her creativity, Morrison in Roynon's book is presented with qualities that have hitherto been unnoticed. In the midst of the serious topics that Toni Morrison handles, Tessa Roynon detects a strong and deep note of humor and wit (15). Although Roynon does not particularly point at the humorous and witty moments in Morrison's writing, her use of irony and parody along with her subversive strategy of employing genres that mock epic, romance and pastoral could probably exemplify Morrison's humor (63).

In discussing Morrison's fiction, Roynon pays particular attention to the ways in which Toni Morrison's personal history coincides both with the particular moments she portrays and the present moment she speaks to. In her discussion of *Beloved*, for example, not only does she look into slavery, and the ensuing Civil War and the Reconstruction, but also Morrison's personal ethical interest in slave narratives and the ways she came across Margaret Garner's story, as well as the meanings the novel may hold for the 1980s in which it was published. Roynon thus achieves multilayered analyses uncommon in most introductions.

In her discussions of each of Morrison's oeuvre, Roynon's keen observations help highlight a wide array of sources, ur-texts, subtexts, and traditions, ranging from African folklore to African American cultural innovations such as jazz and blues, from the Bible to Ancient Greek and Roman literature, and from European literature, especially novel to American national myths. Roynon's book is particularly interesting and commendable as she manages to detect such intertextual ties among Morrison's autobiographical references, prefaces and critical writings, some of which are well-known, such as Margaret Garner's story for *Beloved*, but some are fresh and original such as the one between jazz and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

As such, Roynon reads Morrison's works both in continuity withas a continuation of the African American writers before her and as a response to a wide range of writing, white, black, American and European. This, she notes, is one of the many ways in which Morrison brings together the binary oppositions of white and black, past and present, and personal and political.

One of the most noteworthy arguments in the introduction is Toni Morrison's search for home. This topic is particularly poignant coming from a descendant of uprooted slaves, whose slave characters and their descendants

crowd her books. But Roynon extends the home metaphor to signify the language that Morrison carves for herself and for her characters. Morrison's dense and innovative usage of language then gains a whole new significance.

Tessa Roynon's reading of Morrison's oeuvre makes clear that in dealing with her writing, the readers haves to learn to live with multiplicities of meaning and complexities of moral choices. She underlines the author's presentation of characters without moral judgment, which often serves to problematize issues and does not allow the reader to rest easy in the comfort and triviality of binaries of good and evil. Such a reading does full justice to a complex writer like Toni Morrison, who considers it her moral obligation to demonstrate the motives behind the acts of her characters, thus precluding any final judgment. The chapter that discusses the contexts behind Morrison's life and career provides encapsulated information on the historical events and their cultural milieucontexts. They are particularly useful in directing the attention of the reader to vital points, which s/he could easily miss.

The final chapter introduces the critical reception of Morrison, which has been improved greatly with the publication of *Beloved* both inside the US and in Europe. This chapter is most interesting as it shows the effects of Morrison's reception of the Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes among the literary circles worldwide. Roynon's book as a whole fulfills its promise to provide a pathway for the reader to Morrison's life and work and their interplay with history. Especially students of American literature with intentions of publishing on Toni Morrison will find her introductions and suggestions highly useful and worth their time.

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Cormac McCarthy and the Writing of American Spaces. Andrew Keller Estes. Amsterdam: Rodopi: 2013. P/bk 239 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-3629-1. Price $68.00.

Writing within Rodopi's *Spatial Practices* series Estes convincingly argues that Cormac McCarthy's fiction can be seen in light of two primary modes of thinking about American wilderness: either as overwhelmingly positive or negative views by both religious and ethical perspectives. Charting the history of American wilderness writing from the Puritans to the postmodernists, Estes illustrates how McCarthy's novels change over time and how they "derive their structure from two competing views of the land, something as essentially good or essentially evil" (15). According to Estes, McCarthy fictionalizes and criticizes both of these views offering an alternative to such binaries as to "hint at a new way forward, an escape from traditional ways of conceiving space" while offering a "better approach to environment" (16).

Placing McCarthy in the context of environmental thinkers such as the Puritans, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Fennimore Cooper, Thomas Jefferson, Frederick Jackson Turner, Leo Marx, Laurence Buell and others, Estes provides a close reading of most of McCarthy's major fiction tracing the characters' relationship to and their ideas about American landscapes. McCarthy's characters usually illustrate some manifestation of the American viewpoint of the binary between the good and evil nature. Culminating with McCarthy's latest novel, *The Road* (2008) Estes shows how McCarthy's characters either fail to find such positivity, or wreak havoc on the land based on a negative view of nature. Estes also traces McCarthy's earlier fiction arguing that these novels illustrate McCarthy's critique of the Turner Thesis and how American writers have created their own ideas about wilderness in American spaces. Characters in *Blood Meridian*, *All the Pretty Horses*, and *The Crossing*, according to Estes, rely on faulty notions of created nature. Theses novels present people who (faultily) view the land as places to create themselves and project their viewpoints into wild nature. In McCarthy's later fictions, *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road* are places where McCarthy explores the negative side of the American wilderness dichotomy. For McCarthy, the negative slant is troubling because it leads to wanton destruction of nature, mostly

at the hands of corporations, since a blatant disregard of nature's rights can be overlooked given wild nature is viewed in negative ways, as a place to "civilize."

Estes's work is strongest in its close reading, and his close reading of *The Road* is the strongest amongst the novels analyzed. Here, Estes says, McCarthy provides a way out of the either/or thinking offering a better approach to American environment. In *The Road*, the two un-named main characters, a father and son, attempt to chart a post-apocalyptic United States by using an old oil company map. This map contains familiar landscapes such as roads, state lines and historical landmarks all of which have been rendered unfamiliar by the unnamed apocalypse. For Estes, this is tantamount to an anthropomorphic view of nature, thus obsolete in the wake of tragedy. This map is contrasted with what Estes calls the "biocentric" maps that can be seen in some of McCarthy's fiction, the most notable being a "map" inscribed upon a fish in *The Road*. According to Estes, these maps represent McCarthy's environmental position, neither entirely positive nor entirely negative. He writes that the "biocentric" map "does not represent nature as something only to be minded and exploited [like the anthropomorphic maps] but rather as something with its own rights" whereas the anthropomorphic maps show "failed writings of American spaces" (102). These "biocentric maps" are important in McCarthy's fiction because they "present a sort of resolution in that they emphasize nature's dynamism and the interconnectedness of all parts of the biosphere" which offers an alternative to the extreme positive / negative point-of-view characteristic of American nature writing.

Estes's argument is interesting to both McCarthy scholars and eco-critics since it offers a new appraisal of McCarthy's oeuvre while simultaneously offering a new way of thinking about American environmental spaces. Do note that be it the writer's preference, or the press itself, the book is laden with "set-up language" ("In this chapter I am going to argue"; "I will then argue"; "I have previously argued", etc.) Estes's argument and textual analysis is nevertheless convincing, clear and insightful; he succeeds in what he sets out to argue. Estes also reminds readers how arguments about space, place and environment are socially constructed. He argues, "*The Border Trilogy*, in putting forth opposing views on space and place, leads readers to a reconsideration of how landscapes are textually mediated" where "it is the role we as readers and writers have

in constructing space" (219). Estes's work challenges deeply help beliefs about American wilderness, challenging the binary outlook so long held in American studies.

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Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College. George Washburn. 1909. İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2012. P/bk xxiii + 273 pp. ISBN 978-60504238-68-2. Price TL 20.

It is impossible, at least for me, to read a volume such as George Washburn's largely autobiographical account of Robert College during the later nineteenth century, and escape the tug of the past. I have never visited the College — although I have sailed past it during excursions up and down the Bosphorus. Nevertheless, I long ago attended a somewhat similar school. Washburn's institution was founded in 1863 to educate undergraduate students in Turkey "without distinction of race or religion" (14). My own school — Wasatch Academy, in Mt. Pleasant, Utah — was founded in 1875 to educate children and younger adults; today it operates as a co-educational, four-year, college-preparatory high school. In spite of their many differences, the two schools are similar in several important ways. First, they both began as missionary endeavors. Although Christopher Robert, the school's eponymous founder, was a philanthropist, co-founder Cyrus Hamlin was a Presbyterian missionary. Wasatch too was founded by a Presbyterian named Duncan McMillan, and until the early 1970s it was supported by that denomination's National Board of Missions. Furthermore, both schools are venerable: Robert is the oldest American school still operating outside the boundaries of the United States, and Wasatch is the oldest boarding school of its kind in the Intermountain West.

Certain details of everyday, nineteenth-century life at Robert also recall my own 1960s schooldays. Courses at Wasatch were necessarily more restricted; we had no instruction in rhetoric or parliamentary law or the history of philosophy, as Robert students did as early as 1874-1875 (85). But we did have our own problems with students who spoke only a little English (one boy in my first-year dorm was a Paiute speaker), and we shared meals and went through commencement exercises similar to those experienced by early generations of Robert students. Nor was Wasatch a much smaller school. In 1965, my graduating class numbered 51 and the entire school enrolled about 175 boarders and a handful of day students. In 1874-1875, Robert enrolled 144 boarders and as many as 176 day students at the end of that academic year (80-81). By 1890-1892, however, Robert's

enrollment had shrunk to 194, "of whom 130 were boarders" (187).

Of course there were differences too, profound as well as trivial. We had no cricket matches at Wasatch, nor do they have them today. We had nothing to do with Bulgarian rebels and no Russo-Turkish War to contend with. Much of Washburn's narrative is filled with the political problems that Turkey and her neighbors experienced as a nation and an empire prior to 1907, when his story ends (133). Many of these problems were observed by him at first hand; in 1879, for example, the constitutional assembly that convened in Tirnova passed "a resolution of gratitude to Dr. Long [a.k.a. Professor Albert L. Long, preacher and sometime acting director of Robert] and myself for what we had done for the elevation and independence of Bulgaria" (128). For some readers these observations may be the only reason to consult Washburn's work. For others it may be the school's own history, described at some length in terms of classes, instructors, salaries, vacancies, vacations, and — perhaps most important — endowments. It was the arrival of "Mr. and Mrs. John S. Kennedy" in 1888, and especially the help they offered Robert, that sustained Washburn's own "faith in the College as really God's work and not ours" (169).

For me, as a sometime visitor to İstanbul (no one calls it "Constantinople" today) and an enthusiast when it comes to that city's cuisine, hospitality, and climate, it is the little things that make Washburn's account of fifty years at an American school in Turkey worth reading. The difficulties of daily life, described from by an active, lively, but irrevocably "foreign" resident of a fascinating nation. Turkey's war with Greece during 1896-1897 and the "Great Constantinople Massacre" (actually a series of massacres) during 1895-1896 are addressed at some length, but the 1880 murder of an Armenian steward — killed "by two hired assassins at midday" and "within a stone's throw of the College" (134) is more vigorously described. For Washburn, international and even national history takes a back seat to institutional and local history in a unusual, almost entirely expatriate sense.

One problem with the volume as it stands is the lack of a new introduction; the one printed between pages xv-xxvii is Washburn's own. Washburn is always informative, but one would like to know more of Robert College and gain perspectives on its history from a second expert's perspective. Another problem is the index, which is limited mostly to

the names of individuals and which — although it includes "cricket," "earthquakes," and "Gymnasium" among its scattered subject entries — omits the Massacre altogether. More telling is the absence of an entry for "America": a nation that, as a nation, is mentioned only in passing. This is a volume Americanists may wish mostly to read between its lines. Among other things it serves as an alternative to *The Turk and His Lost Provinces*, William Eleroy Curtis's more or less contemporaneous, anti-Turkish rant of 1903. And, of course, it provides information unavailable anywhere else — at least prior to 1909, when it appeared for the first time in print.

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American Turkish Encounters: Politics and Culture 1830-1989. Eds. Nur Bilge Criss, Selçuk Esenbel, Tony Greenwood and Louis Mazzari. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011. H/bk 412 pp. ISBN 978-1-4438-3205-7. Price £49.99.

American Turkish Encounters comprises a selection of 23 chapters subsumed under 4 headings: the Historical Stage, the Interwar Years, the Cold War, and Cultural and Intellectual Interaction. The book provides an engaging and timely overview of Turkish-American interactions starting with the 1830s and reaching the 1980s, and brings a collection of articles as comprehensive, judicious and up-to-the-minute as anyone could wish for. It promises to be an indispensable guide to historians, sociologists, and anybody in the field of cultural studies and American Literature.

Since scholarship is very limited on Turkish-American interactions, this book is thoroughly fruitful for those interested in the political, social, cultural and intellectual dimensions of these two countries. This book consists of papers that were solicited from young Turkish and American scholars who joined a conference in İstanbul in June 2006. The resulting studies are grouped chronologically in the 19th century, 1918-1939, 1939-1989 and the aftermath.

The book portrays a rich array of topics ranging from the politics of war to the culture of jazz and business, and introduces supporting evidence both from Turkish and American archives. The volume starts with the little-known elements of the late Ottoman period, bringing to light the religious and intellectual background of the early missionary movement, implying the long lasting impact of the missionaries forming the survival of the "trustworthy" image of Americans as educators and healers. The third chapter is concerned with Robert College and its history and establishment providing an insight into academia. While the fifth chapter and its author, Muammer Gül asserts that the 19th century encounters yield a wealth of fairy-like stories and poems, Ahmad's and Kuneralp's articles significantly contribute to the detailed research on the activities of early diplomats from the USA.

The second part, the Interwar Years, starts with the history of the American Embassy in Beyoğlu by Mazzari and tackles the American diplomacy and how it paid attention to the incorporation of Hatay into

the Turkish Republic showing the "American desire for international stability" in Shields's article (146). The third part, on the Cold War years is extremely engaging and illuminating to see how the Marshall Plan was actively implemented in Turkey and what the plan was behind it. Kozat's looks at what the US thought of Turkey during the 1950s and 1960s. Criss's chapter examines what the US thought of " the authoritarianism and national security policies of repression in Turkey", calling the years 1960s and 1970s as "the fall-out in relations" after the 1980 military coup as successful as the "new global situation brought the two nations together." (297)

The fourth part is stimulating for the cultural theorist as the articles highlight how American models have been transferred and applied in business and public administration, how the jazz impacted the society, how American life is depicted in Turkish plays, how American Aid is represented and published in humorous magazines and how the life of the comedian Howard Reed reflects Turkish-American history.

In short, this volume highlights the US impact on diplomacy, education, business, literature, medicine and political strategies in Turkey. *American Turkish Encounters* takes an intriguing and provocative stance, substantiates the arguments in each chapter with very striking examples to prove how deep an impact the US has had on Turkey, never failing to demonstrate that the encounters between the US and Turkey have always been remarkable and their relationship will go on flourishing.

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Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey. Eds. Ayşe Kadıoğlu and E. Fuat Keyman. Salt Lake City, Utah: U. of Utah Press, 2012. P/bk 376 pp. ISBN 978-1-60781-031-5. Price $40.00.

Understanding the phenomenon of nationalism has been a preoccupation of scholars for more than two centuries. This edited volume, focused on Turkey, is a welcome addition to this literature. Its two overarching themes are first that nationalism should be viewed as plural and heterogeneous in character, and second that nationalisms do not remain static but are subject to various kinds of dynamic encounters including osmosis, friction, cross-breeding, and playing one off one against the other. The book is divided into three parts beginning in Section One with tracing Turkish nationalism from its historical origins to contemporary nationalist discourses. Co-author Keyman (Chapter 2) explains that the persistence of nationalism in Turkey across all historical periods is embedded in the country's top-down, modernizing statist tradition which derived from a desire for security (secure the state's existence) and modernity (build modern Turkey by copying the Western model of civilization). How these twin motives of Turkish nationalism, preservation of the state and Westernism, which are at the core of national identity in Turkey figured in the discourse of two Young Turk intellectuals in the pre-republic years, and how present day Turkish nationalism has become increasingly security-oriented and militaristic in terms of in terms of government policies is addressed by co-author Kadıoğlu (Chapter 3). Bora (Chapter 4) develops a family tree of nationalist discourses in Turkey that branch out from one common source, the "root language" of official nationalism (also referred to as Atatürk's or Kemalist nationalism with its aim to build and preserve the Turkish nation-state) to various discursive dialects (left-wing Kemalist nationalism, liberal neo-nationalism, racist-ethnicist pan-Turkish nationalism, and Islamism in nationalism). A good companion to Bora's thought-provoking chapter is Özkırımlı's (Chapter 5) which attempts to build on Bora's schema and offers a topography of contemporary Turkish nationalisms that situates Turkish political parties vis-à-vis one another in terms of the competing discourses they articulate as they participate in an on-going Gramscian struggle for a hegemonic position.

Section Two and Three explore two critical variants of Turkish nationalism, conservative-religious nationalism and Kurdish nationalism

respectively. Uzer (Chapter 6) traces the evolution of the conservative variants of Turkish nationalism from territorial-civic to ethnic to the Turkish-Islamist synthesis. Koyuncu-Lorasdağı (Chapter 7) analyzes the relation between Islam and nationalism and skillfully makes the case that although Islam is indispensable to nationalism in Turkey, it has been incorporated instrumentally to stir national pride and forge group solidarity, rather than to assert religio-political aspirations. Coşar (Chapter 8) deepens this argument showing that Muslimhood (a domesticated Islamic political identity discernible in the Turkish-Islamist synthesis) has been a dominant strand in post-1980 nationalism and that three political parties on the right (the BBP, MHP, and AKP) have strategically employed this discourse to survive in national politics.

Section Three investigates Kurdish nationalism. In his genealogy of Kurdish nationalism Özoğulu (Chapter 9) argues that Kurdish nationalism was constructed following the First World War as opposed to being organically linked to the past. Yeğen (Chapter 10) delves into the discourse of extreme right-wing, left-wing, and mainstream Turkish nationalisms in terms of their perceptions of the Kurdish question. Somer (Chapter 11) offers an intriguing counterfactual argument that the Kurdish question could have been settled if secular and religious elites could have resolved their differences over the "clashing values of secularism." Lastly Eccarius-Kelly (Chapter 12) introduces the voices of Diaspora Kurds in Europe noting that despite the difficulties of organizing due to the involvement of radical, PKK-affiliated Kurdish activists, the lengthening span of generations of Kurds now living there is leading to a de-emphasis of aspirations for a Kurdish state (territorial nationalism) and a growing preference for preservation of Kurdish heritage and historical memory (cultural nationalism).

The editors have produced a work that will certainly fill a void in the literature, but it should be mentioned that it is not easily accessible to the non-academic reader. Some chapters are heavy on jargon and obtuse in explication. On a lesser note the title is confusing. In a symbiotic relationship the association between two organisms may be either advantageous to one or both, or harmful to one; however, there is no element of competition. Antagonisms imply hostility, not mutual need. Minor quibbling aside, this volume is rich in insights and intricate details about the discursive origin, evolution, and hybridizations of the multiple nationalisms at play in

Turkey, both historically and today. It is aimed at specialists in the politics and history of Turkey, and will also be of interest to serious students of nationalism.

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From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan: The Making of a National Homeland in Turkey. Behlül Özkan. New Haven: Yale UP., 2012. P/bk 272 pp. ISBN: 978-0300172010. Price $35.00.

Özkan traces the evolution of Turkish nationalism from the late Ottoman period to the present with particular reference to the notion of *vatan* (homeland). This revisionist project problematizes both the territorial concept of nations put forth by Weber, and what Özkan terms the "official account" of Turkish history, focusing on shifting political, educational, and journalistic discourses regarding *vatan* to reveal the social construction of the concept. Engaging literature from the fields of nationalism studies (Anderson and Gellner), Turkish history (e.g. Hanioğlü, Kafadar, Karpat, and Lewis), and geography (Gearóid Ó Tuathail, David Campbell, and Anssi Paasi), Özkan delves into a wealth of primary sources, including diplomatic correspondence, speeches, textbooks, maps, fiction, and poetry to explain how the broad Ottoman-era notion of an "abode of Islam" became a territorially delimited Turkish nationalism.

Özkan begins with the issue of Ottoman military defeats, noting that the Treaties of Karlowitz (1699) and Küçük Kaynarca (1774) signaled an end to the expansion of the abode of Islam and called into question traditional Ottoman cosmology. The work of geographers such as Katip Çelebi, which was influenced by Western sources and methods, provided a partial answer to the question of what kinds of knowledge the Ottomans would need to compete in the shifting world. Elites often looked to Europe when trying to decide how to reform the Empire, and the French Revolution was a particularly important influence. For Özkan, the latter can be seen in the Tanzimat reforms (1839), as the adoption of heraldry, an anthem, and medals were all an attempt to formulate a popular notion of Ottoman *patrie* or *vatan*. The Young Ottoman Namık Kemal was among the most important thinkers on the latter concept, transforming "the meaning of vatan from a feeling of belonging to a birthplace into a feeling of loyalty toward a sacred territory" (39).

Özkan notes that the Young Turks, the next generation of reformers, were faced with three competing, expansionist ideologies which might be employed to unite the faltering Empire: Ottomanism, Islamism, and pan-Turkism. Many of the original members of the Committee of Union and

Progress (CUP), the organizing body of the Young Turks, were not Turkish themselves, and there was thus little impetus behind the pan-Turkish ideology. But the Balkan wars marked a turning point. Key thinkers such as Yusuf Akçura and Ziya Gökalp began to support pan-Turkism and the CUP adopted nationalism with its shift from association to political party in the wake of the 1913 coup. With the onset of World War I, both Islamist and pan-Turkic rhetoric were employed to appeal to denizens of the Empire, but the Hashemite Revolt spelled a temporary end to the Islamist rhetoric. Post-war, Mustafa Kemal's National Pact focused on the "geographical unity" of the emerging nation, and during the early Turkish War of Independence, Islamist rhetoric was used to unite various Muslims of Anatolia against the Greeks. It was only after the Second İnönü battle of 1921 that Turkishness became a focus. Ultimately, none of the three original ideologies were adopted; it was, rather, a very territorially contained Turkish nationalism that emerged from the War of Independence.

Alongside the rhetoric of military and state, Özkan notes that geography and particularly geographical education play a powerful role in the process of imagining a national identity. Educational materials and maps in the Empire prior to 1908 were devoid of patriotic appeals and tended to elide the Empire's losses. With the rise of the Young Turks, however, this shifted radically, as geography education became a focal point for instilling loyalty. After 1912, the motif of revenge for lost territory became pronounced as well. The presence of minorities in educational materials underwent a number of shifts: up until 1919 it was noted objectively; after the Republic was founded it was noted, but sometimes with derogatory terms or sometimes with a clarification that all Muslim minorities had been "Turkified"; after 1930, non-Turkish groups were not even mentioned. Maps had a powerful role in awakening a nationalist consciousness and after the Independence War the comparison of the Sèvres and Lauussane maps became important in establishing the narrative of Mustafa Kemal as savior of the nation. Özkan notes that geography education between 1950 and 1980 emphasized Turkey's ties with the West, particularly its role in NATO. After the 1980 military coup, geography education focused almost exclusively on a militarist perspective, emphasizing threats along the borders, "internal enemies," and the presence of Turkic peoples throughout the world. There has been some shift away from the latter perspective since the millennium, with a tendency to emphasize Turkey's role in the global system.

Özkan identifies foreign policy discourse as particularly hegemonic in the creation of national identity, both because it feeds on convincing arguments of geographical determinism and because it plays on the notion of existential danger to the country and the people. He examines three distinct discourse trends that have emerged since the founding of the Turkish Republic. The first period encompassed the rule of Atatürk, from 1923-1939, and was characterized by anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist rhetoric. Fears of fascist Italy, which occupied the Dodecanese Islands, were high at this time, and relations with the Soviet Union were pragmatically cordial, though Turkey avoided any kind of ideological alignment. After Atatürk's death, İnönü took power, ushering in a period of anti-communist rhetoric that Özkan compares to the McCarthy era of the US. Turkey's non-alignment during World War II put İnönü in a somewhat weak position, and he used the largely exaggerated Soviet "threat" to Kars and Ardahan in 1945 to begin an anti-communist campaign against critics. Though this worked temporarily, members of the Democrat Party quickly learned to use the same rhetoric, even trumping İnönü in a sense when they joined the Korean War as a means of gaining NATO entry. This anti-communist period lasted until the end of the Cold War, and has been followed by moves toward EU integration. For Özkan, the best example of this shift is seen in the approach to Cyprus. Though the island has been a source of strong nationalist sentiment epitomized by the term "baby *vatan*" since the 1950s, a coalition of businesspeople, liberal politicians, civil society organizations and, eventually, the Justice and Development Party (AK-Party), favored EU integration, and were willing to back the 2004 Annan Plan, which involved concessions over Cyprus, in order to secure Turkey's EU accession bid.

Özkan concludes by reiterating that the notion of *vatan* emerging since the late Ottoman period has been continually de- and re-territorialized. While Turkey's current understanding of *vatan* is in a state of flux since the end of the Cold War, he notes that one thing is clear: "neither the Turkish nor any other state have a monopoly over its territory in the Weberian sense" (214).

Özkan's account is a compelling read, as it is both well-written and presents interesting and thoughtful arguments for a counter-understanding of some of the key developments in Turkish nationalism. The text contains meticulous endnotes offering thorough documentation of sources

and useful expansions on his primary text. Unfortunately, there is no bibliography, and this is lamentable given the wealth of sources that Özkan draws upon. This is primarily a study of discourse, and a selective one at that. From a historical perspective, there are some obvious omissions, the most glaring of which is any mention of the mass-killing of Armenians in 1915, a situation which clearly was and remains deeply imbricated with conceptions of Turkish nationalism. Though Özkan mentions Laclau and Foucault, he does not articulate a particular theory of discourse, nor does he problematize his use of sources. This leads to a presentation of a particular counter-history that, while refreshing in its straightforward approach, might also be considered under-theorized. For those interested in the history of the Turkish Republic, this is a key text that invites us to re-think much of what we've learned about its nationalist trends.

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Prisoners of Ourselves: Totalitarianism in Everyday Life. Gündüz Vassaf. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011. P/bk 275 pp. ISBN 978-975-05-0962-9. Price TL 21.50.

Prisoners of Ourselves: Totalitarianism in Everyday Life is based on Gündüz Vassaf's opinions about the everyday life in terms of what we individuals internalize as norms and how this shapes our daily acts. Through an alternative reading of the established understanding of freedom, Vassaf articulates his views on the everyday forms of totalitarianism by pointing to our agency in the creation and continuation of such an order. The title of the book refers to Vassaf's main argument about freedom. Accordingly, we take for granted whatever is presented to us in the form of norms without questioning, and this quick internalization deprives us of freedom. The absence of critical thinking, the fear of freedom and total subservience to what is established by others lead to our imprisonment in our daily lives (13). Therefore, throughout the book, Vassaf intends to urge readers into critical thinking by asking questions. However, Vassaf's concern is not to give any answers to the questions he raises. On the contrary, he deliberately refrains from reaching clear-cut solutions because solutions can only lead to other forms of totalitarianism. (14)

In each chapter, Vassaf discusses totalitarianism through a series of binary oppositions such as day/night, heaven/hell, life/death, young/old, sanity/madness, speech/silence, agreement/disagreement, heroes/traitors. By interpreting words and referring to their fixed meanings, Vassaf draws attention to how societies or cultures attribute a meaning to each word than it might actually contain and how the first part of the binary pairs is deemed more significant at the expense of the second part and thus freedom. Vassaf's points are intended to disclose that these meanings are not inherent but artificially imposed by the order that we do not question. In all of his discussions, Vassaf subverts conventional perceptions by taking the opposite approach and praising the second part of the binaries which are avoided and overlooked. As the authority-figures such as doctors, parents, teachers, leaders, heroes all take part in our socialization and adaptation process through hospitals, family, school and political parties, respectively. Therefore, all such institutions are totalitarian by nature and serve to the purpose of standardization of the individual and

homogenization of society. For example, they condition us to associate darkness with the forces of evil and avoid the night. (19) We are inclined to dream of going to the heaven or creating thean image of heaven on earth. (30) Staying young and forgetting death are glorified, whereas people and places evoking death and disease are ignored and placed out of sight. Thus, heaven or life itself becomes a totalitarian concept because it is abstracted from its opposite opposite idea. (31) In a similar vein, according to Vassaf, we are accustomed to fearing from silence and taking for granted that speech is necessarily equivalent to freedom. However, we do not consider that words bring an order, a standardization to the world of objects and feelings by reducing a multi-dimensional, multi-sensual experiences to one spoken word. (43) "Freedom of choice" as a phrase obscures the fact that choosing only from a selected number of options is not essentially liberating but restraining. In parallel, we are taught to agree rather than disagree to guarantee "false security" in the family, at school, in religion or government. (171) We are expected to adopt what is deemed to be acceptable in order to be happy and free. Within this framework, Vassaf argues that such delusion of freedom results in possession, power and control, which in return reinforces the totalitarian order bereft of freedom itself. In other words, any attempt to define, categorize or standardize a concept is a violation of the concept according to the author. Once defined, intelligence becomes dull, beauty uninspiring, love is consumed, justice needs justification and freedom simply ceases to exist outside of its defined form. (122)

Even though Vassaf's observations belong to a period before the fall of the Berlin Wall falls and the dissolution of the Soviet Union dissolves, the book retains its significance. Particularly the chapters "'Informania'" and "'Zap! You're Dead'" address the the reflections of the transformation societies have gone through under the influence of globalizsation, neoliberalism and technological developments. We live in an information-abundant society, which makes us feel empowered. According to Vassaf, this sense of control condemns us to a thoughtless/emotionless routine: fast food, fast sex, fast news, fast cultures. At the same time, we live in a society where we can prepare food, play music, do our laundry and make war merely by pressing a button. (200) According to Vassaf, these are the distinctive characteristics of a refined totalitarian society. In crude totalitarian societies an informed population is a danger to the viability of

the government. However, in refined totalitarian societies, a population that thinks that it is informed is a must for the continu is essential for the survival of the power structure. (92) Therefore, a refined totalitarian onesociety appears to be a multi-choice and democratic, whereas in truth it is a society that is confined to restricted choices, as in the Soviet Union during the Cold War period.

While sharing his observations from a subjective perspective on universal themes from love to creativity, from reproduction to the totalitarian use of space in modern lives, Vassaf does neither dictate one particular way of thinking, nor does he subordinate any idea, ideology, group or person to another. By using the first person plural in his essays, Vassaf counts himself in the group of people who are imprisoned themselves inby a totalitarian order. Occasionally, the language of which Vassaf warns against its authoritative potential may adopt an assertive tone to reinforce his arguments. Nonetheless, the book is a groundbreaking and thought-provoking work in the sense that it provides an alternative reading of generally accepted truths and thus fosters critical thinking.

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The Sounds of Silence, Turkey's Armenians Speak. Ferda Balancar. İstanbul: Uluslararası Hrant Dink Vakfı Yayınları, 2012. 175 pp. ISBN 978-605-62862-0-9 (paperback). Price 15 TL.

The Sounds of Silence is a significant text insofar as it uses oral history to give voice to those groups of people who have hitherto been marginalized. The book offers an alternative interpretation of early twentieth century history, with particular reference to the Armenian community in Turkey.

The project was inspired by the academic Ferda Balacar who got in touch with Armenians living in İstanbul as well as those living in other areas of Anatolia. She managed to collect fifteen different stories from respondents whose ages range from 19 to 70 years old. The stories they tell are often harrowing: many of them talk about their ancestors who were brutally murdered by the Ottoman forces; others recall how their livelihoods were threatened by the punitive Wealth and Revenue Tax imposed by the Turkish government in 1945.

The book itself is dedicated to the memory of writer/journalist Hrant Dink, who spent much of his life writing about Armenian identity and Turkish Armenian relations. He was gunned down in cold blood on 19 January 2007; afterwards, the Hrant Dink Foundation Foundation undertook the responsibility of continuing his work. They not only wanted to find out more about Turkey's Armenian population, but tried to show how the experience of the Armenians differed from that of many marginalized groups in other contexts - for example, African Americans in the United States.

Viewed from this perspective, *The Sounds of Silence* takes on a renewed significance. It is not only a record of individual people's hopes, expectations, disappointments, and traumas; but it brings to the surface experiences with a universal as well as a culture-specific significance. We understand how the past has a significant influence over the present; how the experiences of a century ago continue to shape the way we live now.

The Sounds of Silence offers a series of recollections concerning the ways in which individuals negotiate their identity as Armenian Turks, as well as living with the so-called "dead hand" of the past. They have not been as fortunate as those who left Armenia for a new life in the United

States. Whereas Armenian Americans have been able to negotiate their dual identities, many Armenian Turks have been born Armenian, converted to Islam and thereby turned their backs on their Armenian identity. This kind of "silence" has often proved traumatic for them, even though they have sustained a façade of respectability. The book gives them the chance to speak up for the first time.

Bearing this in mind, we should not look for historical accuracy in *The Sounds of Silence*, but rather approach the text as a celebration of plural identities. It is an important work that tells us a lot about Turkish histories, as well as helping us understand how the experiences of the Armenian community both parallels yet differs from those of other marginalized communities in America and elsewhere.

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The Istanbul Review: A Literary Journal. İstanbul: Boyut Yayınları, and İstanbul Literatür ve Yayın Evi, 2012- ISSN 2346-9547. Price 20 TL.

The *İstanbul Review*, a semi-annual literary journal founded by Miriam Johnson, the managing editor, and Hande Zapsu Watt, the editor-in-chief, published two issues in its first year. A literary journal that publishes creative works as well as interviews with writers and critics and book reviews, the *İstanbul Review* caters for the tastes of a variety of readers, academics and critics. As it says on its website, the journal aims "to bring together writers, critics and those influential people from other walks of life whose lives have been changed by literature and who in turn change the world. The journal exists to bridge gaps, to cross borders and to be a platform for world literature." In addition, the editorial board highlights the journal's mission in building literary bridges among writers from all over the world just as the city of İstanbul connects the East and the West. Following this philosophy, the first issue of the journal (Summer 2012) brought together interviews with politicians such as Tayyip Erdoğan and Gerhard Schroeder as well as with popular writers such as Elif Shafak and Paolo Coelho. The first issue, themed "The State of Literature," published short stories, poems, book reviews and essays and included creative works from canonical writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Sir Terry Pratchett and interviews from less canonical writers such as Banana Yoshimoto.

In its second issue (Winter 2012), The *Istanbul Review* turned to "The Screen of Literature", joining the literary world with the visual world. The second issue not only included artistic works by Sena, Oğuz Demir and Geoff Gossett but also focused on the themes of cinematic adaptation and translation. The motif of cinema and the cinematic adaptation of literary works drew together six people from different walks of life in interviews. The interviewees were an Academy Award Winner Australian illustrator Shaun Tan, who combines words with his drawings; Turkish director Osman Sinav, who talks about classical works of literature adapted for television and cinema; Korean writer Kyung-Sook Shin, who discusses transforming "sad experiences into beautiful lines"; Turkish screenwriter Nilgün Öneş, who writes scripts for popular TV series; Hollywood producer Gianni Nunnari; and Chinese designer Shan Jiang, who narrates his stories through illustrations. By bringing together these six people to

discuss literature and its aesthetic adaptations into television, film, and art, the *İstanbul Review* proves that it has built bridges among a variety of writers, artists and directors through the common thread of literature.

A similar sense of cosmopolitanism and transnationalism is apparent in the short stories published in the second issue. The short stories take readers on a journey around the world and bring to light contemporary issues such as multinationalism, immigration, and alienation in modern life. Singaporean writer Jeremy Tiang's "Sophia's Honeymoon" narrates the story of a Singaporean lower-class woman, who marries an elitist upper-class English man, Nick. As Sophia, the protagonist, feels alienated by the luxurious dinner party and the opera house in Zurich during her honeymoon, the modern-day reader finds similarities between him or herself and Sophia in their alienation. In Robert Rigney's "Traffic Noise and Balkan Sounds", however, this cosmopolitan world is fused into a harmonized colorful mosaic. Set in Neukölln, a neighborhood of Berlin populated by immigrants, Rigney's short story provides a quick peek into the lives of immigrants living in Germany. As immigrants from Turkey, Africa, Europe and the Balkans dance together with the melodies of Gypsy musician Christian, they create a community of brotherhood until a police car arrives. Along with its theme of cinematic adaptation and the relationship between literature, cinema and other visual arts, the last pages of the journal are devoted to six book reviews (*The Piano Teacher* by Elfriede Jelinek, *In the Winter Dark* by Tim Winton, *Close Range: Wyoming Stories* by Annie Proulx, *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee, *Q & A* by Vikus Swarup, *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende), all of which are novels that have been adapted into film. As the reviewers discuss each novel, they conclude with an analogy between the novel and its cinematic adaptation and so pay tribute to the journal's recurring theme in the second issue.

The *İstanbul Review* ventures into a market that has already been saturated and takes on a challenging goal with its mission to bring together writers, critics and people from all walks of life. The first two issues are proof positive of the journal's genuine engagement with world literature thanks to its inclusion of works of writers from Korea, China, Singapore and Australia. Moreover, through its use of themes, it analyzes and develops a common thread through its broad range of writers, genres, interviewees and artistic designs. The attempt to embrace people from different backgrounds as well as to include writers from outside the canon

and popular literature is revealed in the next issue (Vol.3, forthcoming in Winter 2013), which centers upon "Red" and has already a variety of contributors including Turkish-American businessman Muhtar Kent, CEO of The Coca-Cola Company and Ugandan poet Nalugwa Kiguli.

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