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Conformism, Non-Conformism and Anti-Conformism in the Culture of the United States (Vol. 1). Eds. Antonis Balasopoulos, Gesa Mackenthun, and Dora Tsimpouki. Heidelberg, Germany: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008. 330 pp.

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Conformism, Non-Conformism and Anti-Conformism in the Culture of the United States is the product of the European Association for American Studies (EAAS) Biennial Conference held at the University of Cyprus in Nicosia in 2006. This first volume of selected papers from the conference employs a transdisciplinary approach to illuminate cultural manifestations of conformity, non-conformity, and anti-conformity in the United States. Drawing on a wide range of epistemologies including history, sociology, film studies, cultural studies, visual culture and literary theory and criticism, the collection investigates the socio-political complexities that define conventional authority and the ways in which Americans have resisted, transgressed, subverted, and sabotaged hegemonic discourses. The volume itself is divided into five major sections: "Conceptual Contours and Analytic Prospects," "Regions of the Past," "Contemporary Textualities," "Stakes of the Visual," and "Investing in Non-Conformity." Collectively the sections cover a broad spectrum of themes and regional approaches. The first section, "Conceptual Contours and Analytic Prospects," focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of American Studies in Europe and the notion of American exceptionalism in the contemporary world. It also explores conformism and non-conformity as categories of analysis within literary criticism. "Regions of the Past," which begins the volume's foray into specific applications of the conference theme, consists of essays on antebellum Southern manufacturing, Transcendentalism, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Herman Melville's *Pierre: or the Ambiguities.* "Contemporary Textualities," "Stakes of the Visual," and "Investing in Non-Conformity" include works on violence in (post)modern American culture and literature, Annie Dillard's *Fraying at the Fringe,* Holocaust comedies, human-animal representations in poetry, globalization and technology, and essays on film, photography and 1950s Madison Avenue advertising.

The volume's strengths lie in its intriguing theme and its transdisciplinary approach, which is accentuated by the international scope of its contributors

(authors include Donald Pease, Heinz Ickstadt, Susana Delfino, Albena Bakratcheva, Marek Wilczynski, Johannes Voïz, Marc Amfreville, Andrew S. Gross, Yves-Charles Grandjeat, Thomas Pughe, Susanne Rohr, Peter Loizos, Dimitris Liokaftos, Hilaria Loyo, Alexandra Ganser, Karin Hoepker, Frank Mehring, Berndt Ostendorf, and Arthur Redding). One of the most appealing qualities of the volume is that it provides an excellent overview of the range of American Studies topics currently being examined by European scholars. It is clear that European academics are invested not only in rereading, reinterpreting, and to a certain extent deconstructing "classic" American writers and their texts, but also in making significant contributions to international intellectual trends such as the growing interest in post-modernism, ecoliterature and criticism, and metafiction. However, the volume's specificity is also one of its major weaknesses. Its "microstudies" of American culture and literature sometimes elide the theme of conformism, non-conformism, and anti-conformism. Moreover, almost all of the essays marginalize major categories of analysis such as gender, race and class. Given its focus, one would expect to encounter selections on the major American ethnic and racial minority groups (e.g., African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Native-Americans) or on groups that have traditionally been excluded from the American national project (e.g., women, immigrants and gays/lesbians). Such collectivities and the ways in which they have reinforced or challenged conformity are unfortunately only mentioned in passing. None of the works included in the collection specifically focuses on any of the aforementioned groups (one only hopes that they will be examined in Volume 2). Additionally, many of the selections are either embedded in, or somehow connected to, the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant male canon, which, to a certain extent, positions this collection as conformist in and of itself. Those essays that examine visual representations (i.e., film, advertising, and photography) and Jewish-American culture and literature come closest to meeting the collection's goals.

Despite its limitations, *Conformism, Non-Conformism and Anti-Conformism in the Culture of the United States* can be used within the classroom setting. The volume is suited to upper-division undergraduate or graduate courses in American culture as well as to courses specifically designed around the collection's theme. Specific essays can also be extracted and used in literature and literary theory courses, as well as courses on film or visual culture. Moreover, the volume and its detailed bibliographies (included at the end of each selection) can serve as important resources for further research, especially for those interested in the topics covered by the collection.