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KLARA STEPHANIE SZLEZÁK 'Capturing' Immigrant Children: The Issue of Americanization in Photographs by Augustus F. Sherman and Lewis W. Hine

ABSTRACT: At the beginning of the twentieth century, the emergence of mass immigration to the United States turned the question of how to integrate newcomers to American society into a major national concern. Different societal groups suggested various models of integration, such as assimilation, the 'melting-pot,' or pluralism. Particular significance was ascribed to immigrant children, who were assumed to play the crucial role of linguistic and cultural mediators between their Old-World homes and the supposedly distinct 'American way of life.' As various groups in American society struggled to promote their response to mass immigration as well as their views on immigrant children, the diverse positions were also reflected in the photography of the period. Indeed, the contrary ways in which photographers as different as Augustus F. Sherman and Lewis W. Hine 'captured' immigrant children is not only an expression of their respective political stances but also of their notions of photography as a medium and as an art form. The motif of immigrant children on the Ellis Island roof playground as pictured by Sherman and Hine shall serve as a case study to support this claim.

J. JESSE RAMÍREZ

Marcuse Among the Technocrats: America, Automation, and Postcapitalist Utopias, 1900-1941

ABSTRACT: The dominant narrative about the Frankfurt School during the 1930s and 1940s portrays the group as "permanent exiles," their cultural, conceptual, and linguistic differences from their American hosts perhaps equally as vast as their geographical distance from Germany. This essay seeks to revise this narrative through a historically contextualized reading of Herbert Marcuse's critical theory. Building on new histories of critical theory's American period, as well as on Howard Brick's recent work on the transatlantic postcapitalist vision, I show that early critical theory, Second International European Marxism, and American progressive thinkers such as Thorstein Veblen and the Technocrats shared a discourse on the utopian potential of systemic shifts in early twentieth-century capitalism. While Marcuse's colleagues saw their postcapitalist vision of rational economic planning perversely realized in the state capitalisms of Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, and Roosevelt's America, Marcuse instead took inspiration from Technocracy's left wing, especially Lewis Mumford's vision of automatism in *Technics and Civilization*. By helping him imagine the possibility of full automation, of the abolition of (alienated) labor, and of a post-scarcity world, Left Technocracy contributed to making Marcuse one of the most remarkable utopian thinkers in modern America.

ALAN J. BILTON

Nobody Loves a Fat man: Fatty Arbuckle and Conspicuous Consumption in Nineteen Twenties America

ABSTRACT: The article examines the career of silent film comedian Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle in the light of early twentieth century concerns with weight, appetite and conspicuous consumption in American culture. It examines the appeal of Arbuckle's films in terms of their 'willed regression' and indulgence in infantile play, and then examines the backlash against Arbuckle (including, most obviously, the infamous court case of 1921) as an exploration of wider cultural anxieties regarding feminization, infantilization and the masculine body. The essay thus explores the dieting craze of the early 1920's, youth-culture's disdain for the corpulent, and fears regarding unchecked consumption and over-abundance as contributing factors in Arbuckle's spectacular fall from grace, arguing that Roscoe's real misfortune was to embody a comic persona who made the key components of consumerism (regression, materialism, uninhibited carvings) simply too conspicuous for a popular audience to accept.

NASSIM BALESTRINI

Transnational and Transethnic Textures; or, 'Intricate Interdependencies' in Sandra Cisneros's *Caramelo*

ABSTRACT: The debate about transnational American Studies has been closely linked to the evolving relationship between American and Ethnic Studies. Promoters acclaim the transnational approach as offering new ways of researching identity formation in hemispheric and transcontinental contexts. Critics fear that transnational American Studies might discount the ongoing influence of national categories, and that it might obliterate the academic study of specific ethnicities and geographical regions by incorporating hitherto independent fields into an all-encompassing American Studies. In this essay, I intend to illustrate how my reading of Sandra Cisneros's novel *Caramelo* benefits from negotiating insights provided by Chicano/a and transnational American Studies. Through my analysis of food and fabric as two major tropes for identity formation, I propose that Cisneros both posits mestizo/a identity as a way of transcending dualisms and antagonisms (thus following Gloria Anzaldúa's Chicana feminist thinking), and that she expands this outlook through a transnational, transgender, and transgenerational perspective on her narrator-protagonist's identity formation and process of becoming a writer.

SARAH WYMAN

Facing Problems of Representation in Robert Olen Butler's "Open Arms" and "Letters from My Father"

ABSTRACT: Robert Olen Butler carries out a postmodern critique of representation in the short stories "Open Arms" and "Letters from My Father" from his collection *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (1992). He depicts Vietnamese nationals and émigrés reacting against the limits of linguistic and graphic expression as they wrestle with instruments of communication. Signifying objects such as letters, photos, and film images participate in dramas of desire and loss, emphasizing rupture and distance rather than the meaningful contact they ostensibly promise. In turn, Butler's two narrators reflect the author's activity as they participate in acts of fictionalizing and interpreting other individuals. The characters analyze persons as objects, mediating their descriptions through

the effects of narrative focalization and reflexive modes of storytelling. Butler's Pulitzer Prize-winning collection demands careful attention as a work of American orientalist literature and demonstrates the way fiction writing has become politicized in the United States. These stories present an allegory of the late twentieth-century crisis of signification and open a space to explore the consequences of literary ethnographic colonization. Both the subaltern subject and Western imperialism haunt Butler's fictions and, by extension, destabilize monolithic conceptualizations of the U.S. literary canon.

CHRISTOF DECKER

Forum: American Studies as Media and Visual Culture Studies: Observations on a Revitalized Research Tradition

ABSTRACT: This essay explores the development of media and visual culture studies in the larger context of American Studies in Germany. Even though research on media related topics and on visibility has proliferated in the past two decades, I argue there is need for further discussion about its place and practice within American Studies. In the following remarks I touch upon questions of institutional networks, the relation between the concept of culture and media technologies, canon revisions, the pedagogy of media and visual culture topics, and the competing claims of empirical and interpretative approaches. I wish to suggest that further theoretical and methodological debate could strengthen and diversify the growing interest in visual and media studies.

Amst 57.2 (2012)

Conceptions of Collectivity in Contemporary American Literature

Clemens SpaHR and Philipp Löffler - Guest Editors

CLEMENS SPAHR AND
PHILIPP LÖFFLER

Introduction: Conceptions of Collectivity in Contemporary American Literature

LEEROM MEDOVOI

Love Is Not a Game: Waning American Power and the End of Neoliberalism in Peter Mountford's *A Young Man's Guide to Late Capitalism*

ABSTRACT: This essay considers Peter Mountford's novel *A Young Man's Guide to Late Capitalism* as a recent work of 'world-system literature' focused on the subjective implications of new hemispheric relations in the Americas. In particular, it argues that the limits of neoliberal rational-choice subjectivity explored in this novel are inextricable from its representation of declining U.S. hegemony in Latin America since September 11, 2001. The novel brings these themes together by pitting a maternal oedipal narrative against the demands of rational choice theory. Despite its appearance as a superficial rationalism, the protagonist's game theory logic reveals itself as a symptomatic effect of past trauma, a reference to the shock therapy that was applied to Chile in particular, and Latin America more generally, in the U.S. backed dictatorships of the seventies. Mountford's novel, read in this light, reveals itself as a global allegory about the rise and fall of U.S. power, and the squandering of opportunities for new kinds of political solidarity that are perhaps associated with this historical juncture.

DAVID SIMPSON

After 9/11: The Fate of Strangers

ABSTRACT: The commonplace self-image of the United States is one of openness and hospitality: “Give me your tired, your poor / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” But post-9/11 America seems to have radically curtailed its welcome to strangers. This essay argues that far from being a complete change of heart, this situation emphasizes one element of a tradition that had always been deeply ambivalent about immigrants and foreign visitors, who have often been welcomed precisely as objects of suspicion. It looks at a sampling of post-9/11 film and fiction that expresses and analyses the double-edged predicament of those arriving in America. Emma Lazarus’s famous poem itself invokes the “wretched refuse” of foreign shores in a voice that supposedly contrasts with that of the inhospitable nations of the earth but reflexively suggests a counternarrative in the homeland itself. Among the various films and novels discussed in this essay, Kamila Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows* and Thomas McCarthy’s *The Visitor* figure prominently.

SAMUEL COHEN

Fables of American Collectivity Circa 2005: Chris Bachelder’s *U.S.!*, Lydia Millet’s *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart*, and George Saunders’s *The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil*

ABSTRACT: This essay reads three novels from 2005 and 2006 as responses to a long history in the United States of collective social action and of resistance to it. In particular, it reads them as responses to their time’s hostility to Left politics. The essay argues that a common feature of these novels, the turn away from realism, narrowly conceived, and toward the use of the fantastic in constructing alternative or non-realist histories—what it calls the transhistorical fantastic—is a response to this hostility and to the fatalism of the Left in the face of it. Reading this turn from half a decade later, in the light of collective action in the Arab Spring’s Middle East, Wisconsin’s Middle West, and the U.S.-born Occupy Wall Street movement, the essay also sees, in the optimistic insistence in these novels on the possibility of positive social change, a turn toward the future that will emerge as characteristic of very contemporary U.S. fiction.

CARY NELSON

Teaching and Editing at Worlds’ End: Collective Trauma and Individual Witness in American Holocaust Poetry

ABSTRACT: American poetry movements have regularly sought to solidify their collective self-image and public face as aesthetic and political communities by producing movement anthologies. Later generations often seek to codify the past in the same way. Such anthologies are inherently topical, but one topic—the Holocaust—has not served well to instantiate a literary community. It was in the nature of the death camps to obliterate all human meaning and all vestiges of community. As a result, a collection of Holocaust poetry cannot embody contemporary community; if anything, it represents a kind of anti-community. Teaching Holocaust poetry consequently presents severe challenges to the humanistic expectations of students and faculty alike—and defines the humanities at their most fierce.

PAULA TREICHLER

Collectivity in Trouble: Writing on HIV/AIDS by Susan Sontag and Sarah Schulman

ABSTRACT: The HIV/AIDS epidemic has generated literary and artistic works on a scale not far short of that produced by the two world wars. Like war, the epidemic has created alliances, friendships, sexual connections, political and emotional bonding, communities of suffering and death, collaborative art and science, and collective action. In this essay, I explore notions of collectivity and related social formations in the AIDS writings of two American women: Susan Sontag and Sarah Schulman. I argue that their contrasting fictional representations of collectivity and different experiences of collectivity as writers illuminate several problematic aspects of collectivity as a concept and help explain why it remains elusive and often fragile in the realities of everyday life.

FRANK OBENLAND

“To Meet a Broader and Wiser Revolution”: Notions of Collectivity in Contemporary Mexican American Drama

ABSTRACT: This essay discusses the interventions of Cherríe Moraga’s dramatic and essayistic work in Chicano/a discourse on collectivity. In her dramatic and essayistic writings, Moraga moves beyond a feminist and queer critique of the patriarchal and heterosexual premises inherent in traditional Chicano cultural nationalism. In *Heroes and Saints* and *Watsonville*, Moraga questions a narrow, individualistic definition of cultural identity and emphasizes the importance of collective action for social change. Read from the viewpoint of a Lacanian notion of the tragic, *Heroes and Saints* argues in favor of both the need for violent resistance to economic exploitation and for a more inclusive definition of Chicano/a collectivity. Exploring the social and economic conflicts between a local Hispanic community and white factory owners, Moraga’s *Watsonville* employs Mexican folk religion and indigenous spirituality in order to introduce a revisionist mythology of communal belonging. Against the background of Jean-Luc Nancy’s philosophy of community, Moraga’s dramatic vision can be seen to articulate an idiosyncratic communitarian vision that questions and complicates existing accounts of Mexican American collectivity.

ROGER BELLIN

Pynchon’s Dustbin of History: Collecting, Collectivity, and Care for the Past

ABSTRACT: The almost endless profusion of historically specific detail is central to the historical consciousness enacted in Thomas Pynchon’s long novels. With particular attention to *Against the Day*, Pynchon’s longest novel, considered both in the context of his other works and against other American writing of the early 2000s, this paper argues that we should read collecting both as a topos within the novel and as a description of the novel itself—as Pynchon’s way of creating or imagining collectivity. Reading Pynchon’s collections as collectivities is a way of foregrounding the historical politics of the novelistic imagination—reading for the pluralism and the radical-democratic imagination at the core of Pynchon’s distinctive narrative form.

CHRISTA BUSCHENDORF
(ED.)

Review Symposium: Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. (2009)

Bibliography

DAMIEN SCHLARB

Publications in American Studies from German-Speaking Countries, 2011

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FRANÇOIS SPECQ

Unto the Wild: Rhetoric of the Ideal and Poetic Materialism in Thoreau's *Walden*

ABSTRACT: Far from being mere light-hearted playfulness or idiosyncratic musing over seasonal change, the latter part of Thoreau's *Walden* very clearly articulates the defining tensions within Western modernity, in which the desire for scientific knowledge, economic appropriation, and aesthetic enjoyment reached an unprecedented level of intensity. Thoreau here strives to comprehend and redefine man's relation to the world in the context of the triumph of scientific and economic 'modernity.' He meant both to induce his readers to reflect on the terms that characterize our relation to the material world, and to tip the scales toward a new equilibrium, one in which the human desire for dominion is kept in check by an equivalent desire for reverence and wonder. He posed exhaustive challenges to the standard ways we relate to the world, from a perspective that drew on and supported a definition of 'the wild' that is not merely topographical (a separate sphere elsewhere), but also intellectual—a mental frontier, central to our very existence, relocated as the necessary, nurturing questioning of what we assume is human and defines humanity. Orchestrating his narrative so as to emphasize his distance from two common ways of 'translating' the real (scientific knowledge and economic exploitation), Thoreau thus makes it clear that his environmental advocacy is grounded in a more encompassing regard for the untranslatability of the real, or respect for the autonomy and mystery of a world that emphatically eludes our full grasp.

KLAUS BENESCH

Cultural Immobility: Thoreau, Heidegger, and the Modern Politics of Place

ABSTRACT: Modernity and modernization have often been associated with an increase in mobility and, therefore, an emphasis on space rather than place. Yet there has also been a distinct tradition within modern intellectual history that wants to disengage the self from the maelstrom of constant movement and cultural change. Hence modernity cannot be fully comprehended without attention to this self-imposed lack of mobility that cuts across the realms of philosophy, cultural criticism, political and social thought, religion, and the fine arts. In this essay I focus on two core modern thinkers, Henry David Thoreau and Martin Heidegger, who represent different aspects of what may be called a modern

culture of *immobility*, rather than the staggering mobility and acceleration observed by critics such as Paul Virilio, Zygmunt Baumann, or Stephen Greenblatt. What is more, both Thoreau's and Heidegger's emphasis on rootedness and their close attention to particular places and regions reveal a far-reaching modern politics of place whose poststructuralist reverberations inform the 'topoanalysis' of Foucault, Deleuze, and Michel Serres.

ULRIKE WAGNER

Transcendentalism and the Power of Philology: Herder, Schleiermacher, and the Transformation of Biblical Scholarship in New England

ABSTRACT: A number of critical works have drawn attention to the fundamental impact of Johann Gottfried Herder's and Friedrich Schleiermacher's theological thinking on the formation of the transcendentalist movement. The notion of religious renewal channeled through German biblical scholarship broke new ground, so the argument always goes, by relocating the source for finding divine evidence from the letter into the interior realms to the individual's soul and consciousness. Drawing on rarely discussed and unexamined reviews, writings, and translations by transcendentalist critics such as George Ripley and James Marsh, among others, this article claims that such generalized assessments occlude essential characteristics and functions of the model of spiritual restoration that American critics work out with Herder and Schleiermacher. Through the lens of the German scholars' historical and philological techniques, critics like Ripley, Marsh, and George Bancroft articulate notions of modern revelation premised on educational efforts. The subject they introduce hones its religious integrity through continual critical labor centered on strategies of self-abandonment, empathy, and poetic-philology. Through a number of close readings, I demonstrate how this connection between spiritual revival and learning processes modifies our perspective on the impact of German biblical criticism on the formation of transcendentalism and on the thinking of its major spokesman Ralph Waldo Emerson in the movement's early years.

DANIELA DOUTCH

Artifizielle Lichträume in Edgar Allan Poes "The Man of the Crowd"

ABSTRACT: This essay explores an aspect of Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Man of the Crowd" (1840) which has been largely neglected in literary studies until now: the motif of the gas lamp and the (cultural) consequences of artificial lighting. The bustling crowds in the streets of London at night would be unimaginable without gas lighting. The architecture of these new 'lightrooms' creates landmarks in the dark city which cause a reassessment of visual and cultural experiences. This gives rise to a new type of observer for whom the city, full of illusions, becomes the stage for an illegible crime story. By tracing the history of artificial lighting from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the following analysis of Poe's short story explores the significance of the mobilization and mechanization of the new gaze through gas lighting and can therefore also be read against the background of the interdisciplinary field of material culture studies.

ANDREAS FALKE

Forum: Der Fall Mathiopoulos

HERWIG FRIEDL

Review Essay: Recent Political and Cultural Interpretations of Transcendentalism: A Pragmatist Critique

ABSTRACT: Four major and sophisticated analyses of Emerson's and Thoreau's political thinking – Neal Dolan, *Emerson's Liberalism* (2009), Alex Zakaras, *Individuality and Mass Democracy: Mill, Emerson, and the Burdens of Citizenship* (2009), Shannon L. Mariotti, *Thoreau's Democratic Withdrawal: Alienation, Participation, and Modernity* (2010), and Jack Turner, ed., *A Political Companion to Henry David Thoreau* (2009) – are critically analyzed from the point of view of pragmatism as a political belief system and a philosophical method. A reading of Emerson and Thoreau in terms of the pragmatist consequences and continuities of their thinking reveals the necessary limitations of, on the one hand, historicist interpretations and, on the other, of merely modernist actualizations of transcendentalist political thought which predominate in these publications of the recent past. This review essay argues that a pragmatist hermeneutics would add to and considerably deepen and enrich our appreciation of Emerson's and Thoreau's open-ended and effectively continuing political and philosophical experimentalism.

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Tocqueville's Legacy: Towards a Cultural History of Recognition in American Studies

Winfried Fluck - Guest Editor

WINFRIED FLUCK

Introduction

HANNAH SPAHN

Lost in a Boudoir of Mirrors: The Pursuit of Recognition in the Biographical War of the Early Republic

ABSTRACT: "All revolutions," Alexis de Tocqueville claims in *Democracy in America*, "enlarge the ambition of men." This article takes a look at the complex relationship between two major American discourses of recognition in the revolutionary and early republican periods, one focusing on ambition as a force potentially undermining the foundations of the commonwealth, the other on the pursuit of esteem as an anthropological universal that contributed to the progress of civilization. In a language partly reminiscent of David Hume's and Adam Smith's social mirrors, John Adams's architectural metaphor of a mirrored 'boudoir' captured the ambivalence of recognition in the late American Enlightenment, an ambivalence negotiated primarily in the period's highly aestheticized approaches to *history* as a literary genre. The revolutionary generation eventually competed for a sublimated recognition on the battlegrounds of the 'biographical war' of the early nineteenth century, in a genre including commissioned biographies, unsent letters, and clandestine memoirs. Trying to achieve the impossible aim of representing their hopes for recognition as self-sacrificing republicans in writing, the aging revolutionaries reached a moral and

aesthetic impasse, thus ending up lost, or so this article claims, in their own historical boudoir of mirrors.

JOHANNES VOELZ

Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Dual Economy of Recognition

ABSTRACT: Combining a historical with a theoretical perspective, this essay begins by reconstructing Ralph Waldo Emerson's evolving theory of recognition and the central role it played for his concept of 'self-reliance.' Initially having adopted the theorizations of recognition developed by Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, Emerson came to articulate the idea of self-reliance by way of developing an alternative approach to recognition, in which the source allocating recognition is neither society nor an inborn moral sense, but rather the transcendently conceptualized self. Emerson's shift towards self-recognition poses questions seldom asked in the contemporary debate on recognition. Moving beyond a reconstructive aim, one such question is considered in the article's second part: What role does recognition come to play in the act of reading? Taking Emerson's own essays as a case in point, the author argues that the aesthetic experience afforded by non-fictional texts can be understood as a facilitator of self-recognition—as a continuous process of imaginarily experiencing the enlargement of the self. This process intersects with dynamics of social recognition, producing a 'dual economy of recognition.' The article concludes by challenging the assumption found in currently dominant paradigms of recognition which assumes that recognition can come to successful completion. Conceived as a dual economy, the article argues, recognition is to the contrary constitutively open-ended.

JULIAN HANICH

Cinematic Shocks: Recognition, Aesthetic Experience, and Phenomenology

ABSTRACT: In this article I suggest that we, as human beings, gain personal recognition not only through intersubjective encounters with others, but also through aesthetic experience. To support my claims about what I call 'aesthetic recognition,' I focus on a pervasive but rarely explored phenomenon: the cinematic shock. Not only a staple ingredient of thrillers, horror films, and disaster movies, it is also found in art-films. The cinematic shock will serve as the case in point of my argument because in its lived intensity, density and conspicuousness we can describe it more easily with appropriate words than other aesthetic experiences that are equally able to foster aesthetic recognition but are less readily accessible via language. When experienced in the social environment of the movie theater, cinematic shocks enable two widespread types of aesthetic recognition: aesthetic experience as individual *self-recognition*, and aesthetic experience as a collective *recognition of accord*. Due to the strongly affective lived-body experience brought about by an encounter with the aesthetic object, the recipient not only feels self-aware of and self-affirmed in his or her own embodied existence, he or she also experiences confirmation as part of a group responding equally—in accordance—to an aesthetic object. This double recognition gained from the cinematic experience of shock derives from the individual film experience and the collective theatrical experience. An additional outcome of my methodological reliance on dense phenomenological descriptions may be an argument for the value of phenomenology in both the study of film and of aesthetics more generally.

STEFANIE SCHÄFER

“Recognition is a Form of Agreement”: The Workings of Self-Narration in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Invisible Man*

ABSTRACT: Theories of recognition provide an understanding of selfhood as based on narrative identity. In striking up and maintaining a relationship with the Other through telling my story, I am acknowledged as a conversation partner and as a self, endowed with a personal history and biographical experience. The driving force of this process is the hope or struggle for recognition, for being seen and acknowledged by the Other. This essay uses Paul Ricœur’s concept of recognition to read fictional first-person narration as a scenario of encounter between narrator and addressee. It draws from narrative psychology, autobiography theory, and narratological concepts of reader positioning to consider how readers encounter a fictional narrator. The relevance of such a reception-based model is illustrated by revisiting two classics of twentieth-century American literature featuring narrators who raise their voices from the margins: J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. By reading these novels as narratives of recognition, I argue that the rise to iconic status of the narrators, Holden Caulfield and the Invisible Man, can be related to the intense scenario of address that calls readers to recognize these fictional tellers.

KATJA SARKOWSKY

Transcultural Autobiography and the Staging of (Mis)Recognition: Edward Said’s *Out of Place* and Gerald Vizenor’s *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors*

ABSTRACT: While the importance of ‘recognition’ for individual self-constitution is uncontested in theoretical debates, discussions—particularly in the 1990s—have increasingly sought to apply the concept also to social groups. This contribution looks at autobiographies by two cultural theorists, Edward Said and Gerald Vizenor, that draw on a variety of cultural contexts and codes and address experiences of marginalization and dislocation. Asking how ‘recognition’ and ‘misrecognition’ are negotiated in the texts, I argue that both autobiographies connect—although in very different ways—the narration of individual self-constitution to claims of collective recognition.

ANTJE KLEY

Narratives of Recognition in Contemporary American Fiction: Edward P. Jones’s *The Known World* and Richard Powers’s *The Echo Maker*

ABSTRACT: This essay is a contribution towards a more systematic consideration of the relation between recognition and autonomy in literary and cultural studies. The readings presented here rest on two premises: First, I assume that literary texts negotiate recognition in ways different from and not completely accessible to philosophy and the social sciences; and second, that the individualistic language of liberalism, which is preoccupied with autonomy and dependence, changes depending on how recognition is negotiated. Both Edward P. Jones’s neo-slave narrative *The Known World* and Richard Powers’s novel of ideas *The Echo Maker* stage historically and socially specific convergences of autonomy and dependence in their depictions of precarious subjectivity. *The Known World*, situated in the mid-nineteenth-century slave South, shows how the liberal ideal of self-mastery is implicitly linked to the mastery of others as chattel slaves. *The Echo Maker*, set in the early twenty-first-century Midwest, stages another form of precariousness that in some ways answers the questions of submission and self-mastery raised in the other novel. It suggests an at once

more democratic and more literary model of individuality that does not depend on ownership so much as on the logic of storytelling. The novels project distinct diegetic worlds and rely on divergent generic patterns; in exploring the logics of possessive individualism and a more democratic model of storytelling respectively, they offer contingent concepts of agency that are dependent for their private and public stabilizations on very different forms of recognition of the other.

LAURA BIEGER

“Freedom, Equality, Beauty for Everyone”: Notes on Fantasizing the Modern Body

ABSTRACT: “Freedom, Equality, Beauty for Everyone”—these were the words of a recent advertising slogan of one of the world’s leading producers of purely natural cosmetics. Drawing on the emphatic creed of the French Revolution and capitalizing upon its iconic formulation of democratic values, the slogan captures a powerful double bind of modern culture that plays out with special force in its dominant mode of bodily production. For implied in this call for a radical democratization of physical beauty is the idea that one has to work for it; that universal beauty is, indeed, not given but the product of achievement; and that it takes commitment, for example by buying the right cosmetic products and using them with dedication and care. As something that one ‘has’ and cultivates rather than ‘is,’ the modern body is, indeed, a primary resource to gain recognition in a society of equals. In turning to material as diverse as Leonardo da Vinci’s ‘Vitruvian Figure,’ Theodor Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*, the godfather of body-building Eugene Sandow, the video-clip for Pink’s song “Stupid Girls,” the Madonna of the album *Hard Candy*, and the work of contemporary artists such as Vanessa Beecroft, Cindy Sherman, and Orlan, I argue in this article that the history of the modern body as a primary site in the struggle for recognition evolved from an immensely productive (and equally problematic) conjunction of the actual and the imagined body. But the call for universal beauty not only captures this basic constitution of modern bodily production. In promoting ‘natural’ rather than surgical enhancement, it also speaks to its latest installment: a mode of production that, in blurring the different ontologies of the material body and its virtual image, creates substantial problems for living in the bodies thus produced.

WINFRIED FLUCK

Fiction and the Struggle for Recognition

ABSTRACT: In the past decades the concept of recognition has moved to the center of social theory. Can this concept be of use for American Studies, and, more specifically, American literary and cultural studies? My essay tries to answer this question in five parts: first, a discussion of two opposite views of the social and cultural role of recognition, exemplified by Charles Taylor and Alexis de Tocqueville; second, a reconsideration of the concept of identity, since recognition is inextricably linked with questions of identity formation in current debates; third, a description of the ways in which the struggle for recognition stands at the center of fictional texts and forms an imaginary core that has often been forgotten in the professionalization of literary studies; fourth, an analysis of how recognition can be understood and described as an effect of the reading experience (and of aesthetic experience more generally); and fifth, a return to the starting question of this essay, namely what the concept of recognition can contribute to American Studies and how it can be assessed in comparison with other, currently dominant approaches in the field.

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