
Philip Coleman and Stephen Matterson, eds.
'Forever Young'? The Changing Images of America.

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Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2012. Pp. 271. ISBN: 978-3-8253-5967-6

- 1 The volume editors have selected and published 19 essays from among those which were presented at Dublin, Ireland during the 2010 EAAS conference. The volume includes a brief introduction by the editors.

In the view of this reader, the 19 essays vary in quality. One group of essays deal with social issues; Guillaume Marché's asks the question whether LGBT youth sexuality is a source of victimization or it should be a source of empowerment; Eva--Sabine Zehelein wonders about senior citizen communities which exist in spite of and separate from the rest of the country and questions what happens to the social contract of civic responsibility. Russell Duncan offers a positive catalogue of Chinese achievements in the USA and summarizes the trajectory of naturalization of the New First Generation. The impact of digital media in electoral campaigns and the conclusions we can draw as a result is discussed by Matthias Oppermann and Pia Wiegmine. Tanfer Emin Tunc describes the Turkish public's adoration of the Kennedy administration. Castillo Street analyzes the connection between historical amnesia and the transhistorical reoccurrence of racial stereotypes that touched on Obama's presidency. J. M. Mancini focuses on the Library of Congress photographic archives and points out the despoliation and desacralization of the Filipino cityscape--

erasing of the Catholic presence and landscape by American soldiers during the war and the so-called reconstruction of the Philippines from 1899-1902. Eric J. Sandeen takes us to Nevada and unfurls, also through photography, the transformation and despoliation of the landscape which has become a site of bombtesting by the military. Greil Marcus follows the emergence of Bob Dylan's song "Masters of the War" as a # 1 protest song and explains its popularity.

Another group of essays discusses the representation of socio-political processes and phenomena through literature. Zoe Detsi-Diamanti connects the ideology of an early 19th century play with the history of Anglo-American relations during and after the 1812 war and explores the transformation and consolidation of USA society into a national entity. Marek Wilczyński reviews the development of the US discourse of literary separatism from England by the intellectual elite during the ante-bellum years. Alexandra Urakova argues for the interplay between youth and old age in Edgar Allan Poe's famous and less well known stories. The ironic and ambiguous depiction of this interplay comes at a time when American political ideas about youth, rejuvenation and progress were at their height. Furthermore, according to Urakova, they reflect Poe's complex responses to what he perceived as controversial discourses. Adam Kelly's analysis of Dana Spiotta's *Eat a Document* (2006) raises the question which elements of the 1960s social upheaval remain in the US culture. He asks how a generation of writers, born in the 1960s, evaluate and fictionalize the period given the narrow margins for discussion due to a strengthening of fundamentalist ideology worldwide. Imelda Martin Junquera opens another wound in her essay of the horrendous events that take place in Ciudad Juarez and El Paso and provide the material for the writing of *Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders* (2005), a novel by Alicia Gaspar de Alba. The irony of a forever young border that receives and exploits, frequently and extinguishes the life of young women from Central and South America, is the focus of both the novel and Junquera's essay.

Still a third group of essays concentrates on a close reading and analysis of contemporary novels in a more traditional format. Saskia Hertlein summarizes and analyzes Luis Alberto Urrea's novel *Into the Beautiful North* as a Chicano complex response to Mexico and the US through the journey of four young Mexicans across the two countries. Clare Hayes-Brady's discussion of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel *Virgin Suicides* (1993) as well as Sophia Coppola's movie version focuses on issues of representation of youth and adolescence; the analysis addresses the interplay of subject and object as well as memory and imagination. Helen Chupin discusses the theme of aging in Anne Tyler's novel *Ladder of Years* (1995) through Bakhtin's idea of a chronotope. Joanne Chassot's essay analyses the use of the gothic and construes such use as an attempt to write an alternative history of race proposed by novelists such as Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, and Michelle Cliff. Chassot claims that such a proposal does not dispute the epistemic status of historiography; rather, it offers a critique of objectivity,

authority and definitive representation that historiography claims. Philip McGowan turns to a lesser known writer William Maxwell, and analyzes his use of autobiographical details in the depiction of young and adolescent characters.

The collection of essays is introduced by the editors, who provide a classification of the unifying themes of the volume. However, the thematic homogenization they provide is not entirely successful. Several essays exhibit a discursive dynamic that is not served well by the mild words of the volume editors. But that is the fate of such ventures. In the view of this reader, some of the essays merit special attention. For example, the essays by Guillaume Marché, Eric J. Sandeen and J. M. Mancini offer complex and innovative arguments; Zoe Detsi-Diamanti's and Alexandra Urakova's studies present a new idea and enhance what is known about a well-known writer respectively, Adam Kelly has foregrounded the questions which a younger generation of US writers ask about the past; Imelda Martin Junquera has certainly contributed one of the most shocking essays in the volume which should be read carefully.

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