American Technological Sublime (1994) The introduction should be of particular interest to readers, including those who think they have no truck with issues related to the writing of technological history. More generally, the wealth of material dealt with and the scholarly qualities of the book will make it useful as a teaching tool and to specialists in equal measure.

Inger H. Dalsgaard

King's College London


The American Dream seems to pop up whenever discussions of American culture or literature turn to topics of desire and identity. It is no surprise, then, that this mythic construct also permeates the genre and motivates the characters in texts classified as hard-boiled fiction. Although staged in the rather nightmarish decorations of the underworld of gangs, violence, political corruption, homophobia, and hard-core misogyny and heterosexism, the hard-boiled novels in fact communicate a romantic yearning for the American Dream, Jopi Nyman argues in his recent study of the genre. Men Alone links the American Dream with ideologies of white male liegemony and analyzes the cultural production of masculinity as an expression of and challenge to the American ideals of gendered individualism, power relations, and social order in the 1920s and 1930s. A thorough and very well researched, although rather unnecessarily over-drawn study, Nyman’s book examines the genre as a historical and cultural phenomenon. It interweaves close readings of primary texts with a plethora of literary critical, historical, sociological, and philosophical approaches. It should be of interest to scholars of American literature, gender and culture, as well as American and Cultural Studies.

The book opens with the description of the history and genesis of hard-boiled fiction in the historical and cultural context that produced both popular and more literary works at the time when America was being transformed from an agricultural into an urban society. Relying on the theories of textuality and narrative put forth by, among others, Michel Foucault, Georg Lukács, and Edward Said, Nyman shows that, like other novels, the hard-boiled one is an ideological document that expresses and mirrors social anxieties, class conflicts, and the modernist alienation of the individual. As a direct descendant of the western and the wilderness stories, it maps a process of a male individual's search for a self, while also portraying the life of the underclass very much in the vein of earlier realist and naturalist fiction. Placing his discussion in the larger context of American literary history, Nyman argues that the hard-boiled fiction's alienated masculine perspective on the world arises from this genre's celebration of the tough guy character, some of whose prototypes can be found in the novels of Cooper, Melville, Twain, and Norris. As he shows, the tough hero's yearning for power and control over hostile and corrupt society
around him results from and represents the cultural anxieties of the period, in which traditional gender roles and social structures were being challenged and realigned.

Nyman ably demonstrates this interesting point by reading closely four major novels – Dashiell Hammett’s *Red Harvest* (1929), James M. Cain’s *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934), Horace McCoy’s *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They* (1935), and Ernest Hemingway’s *To Have and Have Not* (1937). In these novels, the hero’s seemingly subversive desire to change the world aims actually at the restoration of a patriarchal order in which gender roles and power relations are clearly polarized, and where all the groups subsumed under the category of the other – e.g., women, ethnic minorities, homosexuals – are back in their marginalized position. This is an interesting reading because the hard-boiled hero has been rather tiresomely romanticized as a lonely warrior who is destroyed by the corrupt system, and who thus commands the reader’s sympathy. Nyman shows that this hero’s ideological agenda is very close to what today sinacks of a fundamentalist and white supremacist push for a return to ‘family values’ and the idealized ‘good old days’ of mythic male hegemony. In such a context, even the lawyers and policemen who are the hero’s adversaries are merely emasculated excuses for true manhood that belongs only to the likes of Hemingway’s Harry Morgan or Hammett’s Op. In the corrupt and feminized society, the tough guy can also be a criminal and outcast who reveals American culture’s loss of masculine values. In Nyman’s analysis the latter type is best exemplified by Frank Chambers from *The Postman*, who resorts to any means in his fight against all those who reject or undermine his superior white manhood. But such a portrayal is deeply problematic, as the true American masculinity has to be proven and thus is predicated upon dominance, racism, sexism, violence, chaos, death, and the hero’s own inevitable demise.

Having demonstrated the reliance of the hard-boiled type on the basic conflict between masculinity and femininity, Nyman illustrates the ways in which historically and socially contingent ideologies of American and western individualism can be used to define and interpret this type. By linking the texts he studies with the rhetoric of ‘Americanism,’ which he sees as specifically masculine and dating back to the writings of Emerson, Nyman reiterates that the crisis of American manhood is indicative of the larger liistorical and cultural crisis of gender and individualism in twentieth-century America. This point is persuasively supported by references to Darwin’s, Marx’s, and Hobbes’s theories of determinism, alienation, and social-warfare. Hence the American Dream that emerges from Nyman’s discussion is a male fantasy of erasing history and a romance of absolute and unattainable power – a nostalgic yearning for the idolized American past when men were men and women were women. But the idealistic world in which the tough guy could win and rule has been lost for ever. ‘Hard-boiled fiction is a fiction of the fall, not of Eden,’ Nyman concludes his study.

*Men Alone* is an impressive book but could have been easier to read had the author organized his discussion a little more carefully and devised a tighter theoretical narrative for his argument. There are many unnecessary repetitions and restatements that obscure the author’s more interesting points and close readings. Although very ambitious and truly eclectic theoretically, the analysis could have also benefited from a sharper focus on more recent, post-binary critiques of gender. Although Nyman explains that the genre obviously relies on and reproduces the traditional models, he also claims that it actually reveals that
something is wrong with them. This reader regrets that many such interesting points are left undeveloped — e.g., the masculine romance and fear of homosocial bonds — but still recommends *Men Alone* as a study that should make it to the reading list of all interested in men, power, and American individualism.

Magdalena J. Zaborowska

Aarhus University


America was late in industrializing. Industrialization only really began after the Government decided on an official policy of westward expansion. The 'conquest of the West' depended on an improvement and extension of the infrastructure, i.e., digging canals and putting down rails. In this period of territorial and industrial expansion, a new wave of Irish immigrants was to play a key role in supplying the necessary manpower.

When accounting for Irish immigration to the United States it is important to distinguish between different waves and groups who neither arrived at the same time nor followed the same patterns of settlement, adaptation and assimilation. Irish Protestants (mainly of Scottish descent), frustrated by the discrimination of Presbyterians in Ascendancy Ireland, started arriving even in the mid-18th century, peaking in the years after Wolfe Tone's failed republican rebellion in 1798. By contrast, Irish Catholic immigration did not get seriously under way until the beginning of the 19th century, culminating dramatically, however, in mid-century when the Great Famine forced a million and half to leave the island. Protestant immigrants had mostly been people leaving Ireland for want of land and political rights. As English speakers, they were quick to assimilate in the new world and were, moreover, capable of living isolated from compatriots wherever land and economic opportunity were offered. Hence many of them would end up as settlers immediately behind the receding western frontier. The majority of Catholics, however, had been driven out of Ireland by sheer economic and physical hunger. As Gaelic speakers they were socially dependent on each other in the new anglophone world which they often would regard with as much suspicion as they had reserved for English-speaking landlords and government officials at home. Consequently, most members of this wave of immigrants would settle in the ethnic ghettos in northeastern cities.

Their massive presence here was to cause some of the first serious confrontations in the history of the United States between 'natives' and ethnic immigrants, but it also helps to explain why the story of Irish immigration to the United States, though beginning in gloom, was to become a stoic of a successful integration into mainstream American society. This also appears from Thomas H. O'Connor's latest book, a political history of the Boston Irish. O'Connor himself identifies as such, and is a professor of history at one of the academic strongholds of Irish America, Boston College.

The thesis of the book is, in short, that it was the early social rejection of Irish