

the theoretical framework would seem to imply. Are the paradoxes diagnosed specific to American literary history, and if not, what is the relation between this particular discipline and that wider system that is made up of literary history in general?

Such questions are left unanswered in Boyden's study, which may seem problematic also in that his open declaration of a non-interventionist stand would seem to place him in a position beyond the debates on American literary history he seeks to understand—a rather peculiar position for a critic who has decided that this history must be understood as a system from which there is no escape. To be fair, however, Boyden's position should perhaps be seen less as an attempt to stand outside the system described and more as the willing decision of the critic to refrain from either promoting or resisting the machinery that he recognizes will be in place either way.

The "constitutive problem of American literary history," Boyden sums up his argument, is "that an expert perspective on American literature can only develop when it anticipates the possibility of revision or negation" (158-59). Even readers who question whether there really is such a thing as *the* constitutive problem of American literature, are likely to find Boyden's construction of such a problem within the bounds of his investigation fruitful.

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McNamara, Kevin R., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Los Angeles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 248 pages. ISBN: 978-0-521-73554-4. \$67.95.

Echoing Shelley's comments on London, Bertolt Brecht wrote in a poem about his time in exile in Los Angeles during the Second World War that "on thinking about hell [...] it must be still more like Los Angeles." This is one of the more drastic literary representations of the city mentioned by Russell A. Berman in his contribution to this companion collection, entitled "British Expatriates and German Exiles in 1930s-1940s Los Angeles." As consumers of American popular culture, we are perhaps more accustomed to thinking of L.A. as a paradisiacal place full of palm trees and beautiful people. This contrast between heaven and hell seems nevertheless to sum up the contradictory nature of this West coast Californian city, encapsulating on the one hand the American dream of Hollywood as well as the prom-

ise of eternal sunshine and oranges and, on the other, the darker reality of ethnic conflict, inner-city riots, police brutality and an urban environment sprawling out of control and failing to deliver for so many of its inhabitants. All of the contributions in this collection examine in different ways this defining contradiction between the advertisement image of the city beckoning the new and its darker history of dispossession, political corruption, racial internment and anti-immigration policies.

However, the collection does not simplistically present two versions of L.A., but many more complex and competing ones. As editor Kevin McNamara announces in the introduction, this companion does not propose to try to uncover the truth about L.A., but to look instead at the ways the city has been mythologized/invented in literature both in earlier historical periods and from the point of view of different communities. The collection is, therefore, organized first with articles surveying the literature produced in and about L.A. chronologically, focusing on the initial Spanish domination, the Anglo period from 1850-1918, the early 20th century and the post WWII period. The articles that follow focus instead either on the literature produced by different ethnic communities (African American, and Asian American and Latino/a combined) or on specific genres that L.A. has inspired, such as detective fiction—with iconic figures such as Hammett's Sam Spade, Chandler's Marlowe or Mosley's Easy Rawlins—the literature of urban rebellion, science fiction or the very topical Hollywood novel. It would not be a complete companion to L.A. literature if it did not also address one of its biggest industries, namely film.

The first article by Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, entitled "The Literature of the Californios" provides the reader with a very useful and clarifying historical background to the pre-Anglo period, thus establishing a solid foundation for the rest of the collection. The complex ethnic divisions were already evident from the very beginning within the colonial and missionary Spanish enterprise, pitting Native Americans against Spaniards, and later the Mexicans against the Anglos. The literature examined in this article is comprised of mostly letters, reports, diaries, sermons, testimonies and newspaper articles, all showing how Mexican settlers, isolated from the central power in New Spain, nevertheless were able to develop a sense of identity as Californios. In their trajectory from a dominant to that of a marginalized group, Californios developed, according to Sánchez and Pita, a "critical literature of resistance," which they see as continuing, not least in the Chicano writing of the 1970s.

The following article by William Alexander McClung is in parallel with the previous one in that it partly covers the same historical ground, but from the opposite side, that of the Anglos. McClung looks at how the city was both appropriated and constructed in the literary imagination between 1850 and 1918, which became part of a cultural imperialist project to justify the Anglo presence and promote the city. McClung also discusses some of the literature that was critical of this same process. There was therefore a mixture of nostalgia for Hispanic culture and condemnation of dispossession of Native Americans and Mexicans (as in Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona* from 1884), while at the same time there existed a growing sense that the future belonged decisively to Anglos.

The literature of the first half of the 20th century, with such great writers as Upton Sinclair, John Steinbeck, F. Scott Fitzgerald, James M. Cain and Horace McCoy, provides the focus for David Wyatt's article in which he looks at L.A. through the lens of three main topoi: forces of nature, speed and surface—the latter in relation to the myth of self-creation and the self-promotion of the city and of the individual, not least evident in the character of Jay Gatsby. Wyatt emphasizes in this context the irony in that what makes the growth of the city possible also constitutes a threat to its future (unchecked demographic growth and environmental pollution).

Russell A. Berman's contribution on British and German exiles, already mentioned, casts another very revealing look at a selection of expat writers, in particular Huxley and Isherwood on the one hand and Adorno and Brecht on the other. As Berman shows, commonplace in the literature produced by Europeans is a contrast between the new and the old world, something they emphasize initially, but later reject as being too simplistic. Even Isherwood's denunciatory pronouncement about L.A. as a place where "bad taste, inauthenticity and economic insecurity" existed "amid fantastic opulence" (52), later gives way to a certain affection for the city. For their part, Adorno and Brecht saw L.A. as a useful example, both in their political theory and art, as a paragon of American capitalism.

Looking at postwar L.A. from the perspective of the white affluent suburbs, Patrick O'Donnell highlights once again the tremendous disparities between those for whom everything is available and others stuck in the ghettos of Watts and Compton. The American Dream is not only unachievable to most, but in fact based on the very exclusion and exploitation of some. This in its turn threatens even the most wealthy and makes L.A., according to some of the literature O'Donnell examines (such as in Bret

Easton Ellis and T.C. Boyle), a city where the search for either identity or safety seems doomed.

Eric Avila's contribution, "Essaying Los Angeles," focusing, as its title indicates, on non-fiction, provides the perfect conclusion to the collection, bringing together many of the themes developed in the previous articles, such as the significance of the climate, topography and architecture of the city, its history of corruption, its paranoia and shallowness, its ethnic diversity, as well as its deepening ethnic and class conflicts. Starting with a discussion of Carey Mc Williams' sympathetic 1946 historical study of L.A. and Adorno's and Horkheimer's more somber analysis of Hollywood as a manufacturer of consent (to use the now well-established metaphor), Avila also provides an insightful analysis of Joan Didion's nightmarish portrayal of the city and Mike Davis' understanding of it as a product of class war. Avila shows that more work still needs to be done in this context to avoid either the simplistic eulogizing or demonization of L.A., and to try to understand instead the city in all its specificity and complexity.

As one would expect of a Cambridge Companion, all of the contributors are seasoned experts on the subject. Although some articles tend to be more descriptive than one would like, the volume is, all in all, highly illuminating, providing both an excellent overview of and insight into the city as it is refracted through its literature. This comprehensive guide to one of the most iconic of American cities should appeal therefore to literary specialists and the general reader alike.

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Fisher, Andrew H. *Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010. 344 pages. ISBN: 978-0-295-99020-0. \$24.95.

In Native American scholarship, notions of Native, indigenous, or pan-Indian identity have become increasingly fraught under the pressure of critical demands for historical and cultural specificity. The satisfaction of such demands often takes the form of tribal specificity. Yet, as Andrew H. Fisher's work on the Columbia River Indians of the Pacific Northwest reminds us, "tribes" are socially constructed units shaped by complex forces. In the case of the peoples living along the Columbia River, tribal designations