

In his book, Brian Boyd builds a convincing case; his account offers a pedagogical and repeated exposition of chapters and subchapters; repetition is unavoidable but mostly oh, so welcome in keeping up with the reading. His text is also heavily footnoted with references to scholars in various fields of evolutionary and biocultural sciences: Richard Dawkins, Frans de Waal, and Steven Pinker are renowned examples and the principal contributors to a bibliography that covers fifty pages.

Besides the didactic clarity another ingredient facilitates the reading and renews interest by foreshadowing what is to come as one goes along, namely the well-chosen epigraphs among others Charles Darwin (of course, 1859), Appiah (2006), Lewis Carroll (1893), Ian McEwan (1999), G.B. Shaw (the sceptic, 1921) and the one already mentioned by Northrop Frye (1957). But the most entertaining and telling one—I find—is Dr. Seuss, from *The Cat in the Hat* (1957).

I know it is wet
 And the sun is not sunny.
 But we can have
 Lots of good fun that is funny!

Brian Boyd takes his leave of the reader by pointing out yet again how the author—also he himself in this case—constantly competes for the attention of potential audiences—in this case us—that will find it cost-beneficial to listen to a particular author at a particular time.

The question is what artist or author is powerful enough to compete with the attraction of the spring sun that now finally floods my once so frosty route to work.

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Udo J. Hebel, ed. *Transnational American Memories*. Vol. 11 of the series “Media and Cultural Memory / Medien und kulturelle Erinnerung,” edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 460 pp. ISSN 1613-8961; ISBN 978-3-11-022420-7. Hardcover \$99.95.

Studies and interdisciplinary handbooks of collective memories and cultures of memory illustrate the conceptual richness and methodological di-

versity of a growing academic field. Moreover, such studies, not least those written by the editors of the important series “Media and Cultural Memory” in which the volume entitled *Transnational American Memories* appears, testify to a continuing extension of research focusing on different commemorative practices and various forms of memory. As Udo J. Hebel observes in his helpful introduction to the volume, memory and remembrance have proven to be particularly productive concepts in the field of American Studies. Inspired by the groundbreaking theoretical studies by Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, and aided by a variety of later contributions—including those presented in Hebel’s earlier collection, *Sites of Memory in American Literatures and Cultures* (2003)—the present volume features a series of essays dealing with significant, and remarkably different, aspects of memory as observable in American literatures and cultures.

One striking feature of the twenty essays is the extent to which the contributors’ international background reflects the transnational impact of the concepts, theories, issues, and materials engaged. Hailing from different countries, the contributors approach their chosen topics informed by dissimilar critical traditions and perspectives, while simultaneously also revealing influence from, and contributing to, the diverse field of American Studies. As Hebel puts it, “the recognition of the boundless and creative transnational flow of commemorative energy in and out of the cultures grounded in or associated with the space of what is today the United States of America makes for the wide geographical, historical, cultural, and political scope of the individual essays” (2–3).

It is indeed striking how many of the essays tend to read sites of memory in or in relation to the United States as transnational crossroads of remembrance and commemoration. Many of the authors consider his or her chosen texts as complex representations of formation, recovery, and transformation of collective and individual memories over a multi-faceted space and a long period of time—from the period of early colonial encounters through the immediate present. Interesting points are made in virtually all the essays, only a few of which can be singled out for particular mention here.

Part of the volume’s temporal, spatial, methodological, and thematic range can be illustrated by briefly comparing Astrid M. Fellner’s contribution to that of Mita Banerjee. One premise for Fellner’s essay is that the largely forgotten archives of the sixteenth-century Spanish presence in Virginia necessitate critical reconsideration of the Anglo-American archive from a hemispheric perspective. Focusing on “colonial texts that produce

‘America’ as hemispheric performance” (35), Fellner identifies the palimpsestic layering of the archive of colonial American literature by comparing scenarios of intercultural encounter in Jamestown as presented in John Smith’s *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624) to descriptions of European-Native American encounters in Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación* (1537–55) and Jacques Cartier’s *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* (1580). Banjeree is also concerned with the politics of transnational memories, including American memories, yet the orientation and thrust of her essay is comparative and international. After having analyzed Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), she discusses the convergence and significance of several particular historical and cultural moments and processes: the building of the Jewish Museum designed by Daniel Liebeskind in Berlin, the museum’s public relations activities, and the development of a heritage industry capitalizing on a prevailing sense of (lost) Jewishness. Banjeree concludes that in the spatialized aporia of Foer’s verbal narrative, as in the aporia architecturally inscribed onto the Jüdisches Museum, “memory becomes aporetic, becomes virtual, because of the fact that the heritage tour ends in a void” (162).

Another significant contribution is that of Orm Øverland, who considers immigrant letters as an invaluable storehouse of transnational memories. One particularly interesting aspect of Øverland’s discussion of letters by Norwegian immigrants to the upper Midwest concerns the emphasis he puts upon silence—on what is not written about and thus becomes conspicuous blanks in the narratives. As he suggests, the study of such unexplained silences and of the repression of memory in many letters may improve our understanding of immigrants’ attitudes towards the Native Americans they displaced.

A second group of contributions identifies various issues and implications of remembering war, exploring its manifestations in transnational contexts. For instance, while Volker Depkat discusses the memory cult linked to World War I in the United States, Ingrid Gessner inserts into the official US-American narrative of the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp in World War II the narrative of Japanese soldiers who contributed to that liberation but were themselves members of an ethnic group interned for alleged reasons of national security at home in the United States. Focusing on the nation’s war-like state after 9/11, Birgit Däwes discusses Oliver Stone’s *World Trade Center* (2006), Alain Brigand’s collection *11’09”11* (2002), and Wim Wenders’s *Land of Plenty* (2005), considering all three films as

memorial trajectories and thus widening the perspective beyond the two world wars of the twentieth century.

As should already be clear, this is a rich, thoughtful, and thought-provoking collection—very competently edited and handsomely produced. It will prove an important resource for students and scholars of American literature, history, and culture; and it is also of considerable interest to students and teachers of postcolonial literature and of narrative theory. A further asset is Edward T. Linenthal's reflections, in a Commentary Epilogue which nicely complements Hebel's Introduction, on the critical gains as well as the theoretical and analytical complications of using a concept such as "memory." "Transnational labors of remembrance," Linenthal helpfully reminds us, "by definition challenge boundaries" (449). Surprisingly, the volume contains no index. This is unfortunate, since an index would not only have made the book more user-friendly but would also have served to interlink the various essays' critical and thematic concerns.

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Nakamura, Lisa. *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. 248 pages. ISBN-10: 0816646139; ISBN-13: 978-0816646135. Paperback \$17.55.

In this study, Lisa Nakamura explores a range of intersections between individual and cultural depictions of race and embodiment in digital imagery and visual culture. These include the examination of a number of graphic artifacts and visual elements encountered or employed on the Internet, particularly in the decade following the introduction of image-capable web browsers. While more a series of fascinating case studies than an integrated theoretical critique, her overview of various transition phases from a text to a graphically-oriented Internet serves as a useful accounting of practices and interface elements still in use and in need of critical examination.

In accomplishing this, Nakamura extends the inquiry initially articulated in Cindy Selfe and Dickie Selfe's 1994 "The Politics of the Interface: Power and Its Exercise in Electronic Contact Zones." Nakamura examines individual desires for more visible and more personal online representations of race and gender—from customized "AIM buddies" to "beaner dreamer avatars." These concern ongoing, problematic issues, as evidenced