

Death.” Recent contributions to the fields of cultural studies, for example, as well as memory and violence studies, have given us new ways of measuring how Americans “experienced, thought about and represented that war” (202). James claims that “our new and developing understanding of war and its pain” (202) will enable us to better understand the works and contributions of modernist writers. Popular genres such as the American post-World War One detective story, she concludes, and “the corpses they portray recall, in both inexact and gruesome ways, the unfinished business of New Death” (206).

*The New Death* is thus a beginning and not an end: a challenge to re-think how death, trauma and memory have been portrayed in relation to the events and losses of World War One. American detective writers like Charles Todd—in his two series about Ian Rutledge and Bess Crawford—have already taken up the challenge. It is to be hoped that there will be more like these!

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### **Clive Bush Presents the Best of Clive Bush**

Bush, Clive. *Holding the Line: Selected Essays in American Literature and Culture*. American Studies: Culture, Society and the Arts. Volume 1. Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2009. XXIV, 352 pages: ISBN 978-3-03911-571-6. soft-cover \$76.95

This collection of selected essays by Clive Bush was published in 2009 by Peter Lang. *Holding the Line* officially opened the publisher’s series on American Studies: Culture, Society and the Arts, although judging by the dates of publication of the other titles in the series, as specified by the publisher on the website, it is actually the 4<sup>th</sup> book in the series. Moreover, the essays included in this volume are much older than the date of publication would suggest: some of them were written as early as in the beginning of the 1970s and most of them in the 1990s. Only one essay and the introduction to the book were written in 2000s. All the texts collected in this volume have been published before in places such as Aarhus, Cambridge, London, Budapest and New York, both in scientific journals and books. They form a large part of the total scholarly output of the author, which we learn from the bibliography included in the volume. Therefore, *Holding the Line* constitutes a selection of Clive Bush’s best essays.

The volume revolves around classic American literature, commodity cul-

ture, poetry, movies, politics and linguistics. Professor Bush occasionally ventures into gender, national interpretations of history, poetics, and sexuality and its influence on authors. While discussing the poet Muriel Rukeyser as the biographer of a scientist, he even becomes a scientific biographer himself. He manages to insert some mathematic formulas in the text and elaborate on them, and that for a very brief moment makes his essay look almost like a natural science paper. Although the variety of subjects may seem abundant, in truth the themes of the essays are limited to just three: discourse and practices of power, the pervasive sense of history, and the importance of European perspectives on American culture. This last theme is consistent with professor Bush's belief in the importance "for any culture to have commentators outside its own traditions of analysis." To become such a commentator of the American culture was his unconscious goal as a young man, and he seems content that this is exactly what he arrived at. However, looking at the English and European roots of American culture and the influence of American culture on the contemporary culture of Europe, I feel the urge to wonder whether being an outside commentator of American culture is possible at all for a European scholar, especially an English-speaking European scholar?

The essays published in *Holding the Line* are the "personal voice" of the author and they try to give, as Clive Bush himself wrote, "a sense of the then historical moment." The author decided to provide all the elements specific to the time when the essays were written, such as remarks regarding current events, particularly in Chapter 10, "To Their Own True Purposes: American Poets and Cultural Studies," and that fact makes them even more interesting, as they have become historical documents now, valuable for those who wish to study that era—post-1968 and post-Cold War—in cultural studies. The previous sentence does not in any way imply that the value of professor Bush's essays is largely historical. On the contrary, they are an example of a careful analysis of culture and society (or of an analysis of society from the cultural perspective) which attempts to set the analyzed writers and their works in their intellectual and historical context. What is more, it seems to have been professor Bush's aim to discover the reality and universality of human existence and experience that is hidden in the literary work.

*Holding the Line* really is the author's "personal voice" that needs to be analyzed by a commentator outside its own tradition of analysis. The essays in the book are rooted in the traditions of European and American radical thinkers as well as in critical theory. Therefore, to the contemporary reader they may seem a little too preoccupied with a Marxist/Marxian read-

ing of the society, particularly the American society, with social and power relations as well as with politics, but that is not surprising given the time when they were written. In a very interesting autobiographical introduction professor Bush explains that as “a very young man [he was] extremely interested in sex,” and one can feel that in the essays, as sexuality is very frequently discussed. Two other elements stand out in these essays. The first is a distance to academia, its preoccupations and the prevalent subjects that the academics of his generation tended to discuss. The second is the gift of creating particularly nice expressions, *bon mots* even, that encapsulate a problem. Lewis Mumford is beautifully described as an “Anglophile” who at the same time “was more European than British because he was American,” and in that sentence both the closeness of American and European cultures and the distance between the American and British ones were captured, even though the language of UK and USA is (almost) the same.

There are two issues that came up when reading of the book. First, in the essay co-written with Marzia Balzani, Albert Camus is sometimes quoted in the French original—although the notes to the text at the end of the book include translations of those fragments—and sometimes in translation. This inconsistency is a bit annoying. Second, while discussing Lewis Mumford’s correspondence with Frederic J. Osborne, professor Bush writes that Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* is a conservative dystopia, particularly when it comes to the questions of human sexuality. This is just his opinion, but I can imagine nothing less accurate than describing Aldous Huxley and his perception of *Brave New World* as a conservative critique of the developments in society. Aldous Huxley’s views—and actions, if one is to trust his biographers: Sybille Bedford, David King Dunaway, and lately Nicholas Murray—on sexuality were extremely liberal. Only in relation to the question whether the turn of popular culture towards soft porno is a good thing demonstrates a sign of conservatism could *Brave New World* be considered conservative.

Clive Bush’s attitude seems to be best summarized by the concluding remarks from the essay opening the volume, “The Circle and the Labyrinth: Vision and Speech in the ‘hardly accomplished revolution’ of Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*”: “Liberty is of value only when it is spoken and acted upon in the public space,” and in that sense, expressing his critical opinion, Clive Bush is a free man.