

strategies of allegory (Siri Hustvedt's *The Sorrows of an American* and Jess Walter's *The Zero*) and metanarrative (Richard Power's *The Echo Maker*) as well as experiments with visual elements, unconventional layouts, and multilateral plot structures" (345). The experimental aspects are discussed in stimulating analyses of Juan Felipe Herrera's *Cinnamon Girl* and, of course, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*.

In just over 400 pages, Birgit Däwes manages to map out the previous ten years of literary criticism on 9/11, and, more importantly, to stake out her own turf on that map. Her inspiring and meticulous typology is an obvious starting point for students and teachers, not just of 9/11 literature but of American literature in the past decade.

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Jarvis, Robin. *Romantic Readers and Transatlantic Travel. Expeditions and Tours in North America, 1760-1840*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012. 205 pages, ISBN: 978-0-7546-6860-2. \$94.95 (£55)

Romantic Readers and Transatlantic Travel explores the question of why and how people in the Romantic era read travel literature by explorers, travelers, emigrants and tourists. The contemporary reception of such literature has been neglected by critics. Robin Jarvis, Professor of English Literature at the University of the West of England, references reviews in the periodical press, personal journals, letters, autobiographies, marginalia and biographical evidence relating to the production, distribution and reception of different kinds of travel writing.

Jarvis not only investigates how and why people read travel literature in the Romantic period but also the extent to which different classes or communities of readers read in different ways. Focusing on the factual accounts of real travels, his aims are threefold: to add to our knowledge of travel literature; contribute to the history of reading (most studies of literary reception have tended to focus on the major literary genres of poetry, fiction and drama), and provide new insights into the growth of transatlantic interests and perspectives.

Adopting a variety of approaches, including researching the assumptions underlying reading in the past, studying how reading was learned, reading autobiographical accounts of actual reading experiences, and applying liter-

ary theory (particularly reader response), Jarvis focuses on what “real readers” had to say about travel literature. Divided into four chapters, Jarvis’s study focuses on personal accounts of reading experiences of American travels from a variety of sources (chapter 1), American periodical reviews as evidence of contemporary reception (chapter 2), the reception of travels and explorations in British North America (chapter 3) and how Romantic poets and novelists read, interpreted, and re-cycled American travels (chapter 4). In all four chapters, he challenges the assumption that the historical reader of travel literature was a passive and unquestioning recipient of ideas and values. As he so eloquently states in his introduction:

I find the idea of Romantic readers poaching their way across the wilderness of North American travel texts, discovering their own pleasures, and placing their own emphases more appealing than the model of uncritical consumers seeing the world through the imperial eyes of the untouchable authors. (11)

Jarvis claims that despite the diversity, scarcity and contradictory nature of his sources, the literature studied tells a story “that rings true” (11) and provides glimpses of a vanished humanity.

Romantic Readers and Transatlantic Travel draws eight main conclusions about travel literature and its readers: the reading of North American travel literature during the Romantic era was curiosity-driven; the appetite for information about the indigenous people of North America was inexhaustible; there was little interest in the individual persona of the traveller; the periodical press played a vital role in disseminating travel information at a time when travel books were relatively expensive; the reading culture relating to letters, diaries and marginalia was not radically different to that embodied in periodical reviews; records of private reading experiences express an individuality that is obscured by the corporate voice of magazines and reviews; reading travel literature took place in, and was influenced by, cultural and political context; and finally, early travel literature frequently gives voice to views that today are regarded as politically or morally offensive.

Romantic Readers and Transatlantic Travel is an important contribution to studies of transatlantic Romanticism. It is richly illustrated with examples from the chosen texts, copiously annotated and features an excellent bibliography. Its focus on Britain, the United States and Canada, however, is perhaps both its strength and its weakness: Jarvis’s justification of his narrow definition of “transatlantic” is based on the need to reduce scholarly projects and corresponds to the preoccupations of the readers studied;

his study would, however, have benefitted from a brief contextualization of his results based on a wider definition of “transatlantic” incorporating the Americas and Africa. This said, *Romantic Readers and Transatlantic Travel* provides a new and largely unexplored window into how an important part of transatlantic literature was read and understood by a range of readers. It is to be hoped that Jarvis will widen his project and fill an important gap in scholarship.

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Miettinen, Mervi.: *Truth, Justice, and the American Way? The Popular Geopolitics of American Identity in Contemporary Superhero Comics*. (Acta Universitatis Tamperensis 1790; Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2012). 317 pages, ISBN: 978-951-44-8995-2. \$103.65

Mervi Miettinen’s study of the popular geopolitics of American superhero comics in the last few decades is the sixth doctoral thesis in Finland in what could be described as the multidisciplinary field of comics studies. In this case comics studies is interweaved with the field of American studies, but the interdisciplinarity of Miettinen’s research is also apparent in her theoretical eclecticism, whereby the analysis draws on various theoretical and conceptual traditions. Throughout the study theoretical perspectives and previous studies are continually engaged in a dialogue with the comics under scrutiny. This approach proves useful as Miettinen manages to highlight many aspects of the relationship between American superhero comics and American popular geopolitics, as well as offering insights into the discourses and tropes so relevant for superhero comics’ ideological or political constructions and connotations.

Popular geopolitics is a term hailing from Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby’s (1998) division of the representational practices of geopolitics into three categories: popular geopolitics, practical geopolitics and formal geopolitics. The first one of these categories refers to “the unique way popular cultural texts contribute to national identity construction and through it, to the geopolitics of a nation” (56). In her study of the scripts of national identity in superhero comics and the position of the U. S. global geopolitics, Miettinen divides the analysis into sections which focus on masculinity in superhero comics, violence as a part of the representation of masculine he-