However, improvisations on social practice are unlikely to address the most significant question raised in this book, viz., will American cities succeed in "actualizing place-ness" such that the nation can begin to address its enormous social and environmental problems?

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Bill Bryson, *One Summer. America 1927*. London: Doubleday, 2013. 557 pp. ISBN 978-0-385-60828-2.

One Summer. America 1927 celebrates the emerging dominance of America in the fields of popular culture, finance and banking, military power, invention and technology. By 1927, America was producing 80% of the world's films, Henry Ford was beginning to develop the Model A, and the television was invented. With the invention of the 'talkies', claims Bryson, 'American thoughts, American attitudes, American humor and sensibilities' were popularized. 'Peacefully, by accident, and almost unnoticed, America had just taken over the world.' Charles Lindbergh's solo non-stop flight from New York to Paris embodied America's new and growing power and dominance in 1927.

Bryson's study incorporates all the above milestones in America's development, and many more, as it takes the reader on detours to the origins of prohibition, the presidency of Warren G. Harding, baseball, boxing, radio and television, to name but a few. Bryson's study is entertaining not only because of its rich variety of events but also its eccentric and flamboyant characters. The reader learns, for example, that a close associate of President Herbert Hoover observed that in thirty years of employment, he never heard the President laugh; Lindbergh's parents never embraced but shook hands before they went to bed; and Jacob Ruppert, the owner of the New York Yankees, kept a shrine for his mother that contained everything she would need should she return to life.

One Summer. America 1927 also describes a darker side of life, including the forcible sterilization of 60,000 people due to eugenicist theories, growing racial violence, and the fact that two thirds of murders remained unsolved. Bryson describes 1927 as 'The Age of Loathing': 'There may never have been another time in the nation's history when more people disliked more other people from more directions and for less reason.'

Bryson's style is effervescent, matching the time itself. He describes Lindbergh's plane, The Spirit of St. Louis, as little more 'than a flying gas tank'; piloting it, he claims, 'would have been rather like crossing the ocean in a tent'. Bryson is also irreverent, claiming, for example, 'that there was almost nothing Henry Ford did that didn't have some bad in it somewhere'. And Warren Hardy, he states, fell 'considerably short of mediocre'.

While the reader is introduced to a fascinating and highly entertaining array of events and characters, it should be noted that a few errors have also crept in. The *Smart Set* magazine, for example, was founded in 1900 and not 1924. The Ku Klux Klan was not at the height of its power in the 'antebellum years', i.e. the period before the American Civil War but in the 'postbellum' period. It is also questionable that Zane Grey and Edgar Rice Burroughs were 'the two most popular authors on the planet in the 20th century'. This is to ignore Margaret Mitchell and J.K. Rowling. It is also incorrect to state that F. Scott Fitzgerald was not famous in 1927: he had been a celebrity since 1920.

While there are errors in *One Summer. America 1927*, it should also be noted that Bryson has also been unfairly criticized for, among other things, mis-representing history. Professor Brinkley at Rice University and a CBS News historian, for example, have accused Bryson of writing 'remedial pseudo-history', omitting footnotes and providing sketchy references. Bryson responded with force and characteristic irreverence: In making these ludicrous assertions, Brinkley has managed to overlook that readers of my book are directed to a 119-page appendix available online that contains some 1,200 annotated source notes, enough to satisfy an academic far more scrupulous and attentive than he. The book's bibliography contains some 300 entries and is accompanied by a section headed 'Notes on Sources and Further Reading,' which discusses at some length (and with obvious familiarity) the principal books, journals, legal documents and other sources I consulted. These are regularly cited within the 500-odd pages of text of 'One Summer' itself.

Each chapter of *One Summer. America 1927* is supplemented by 'Notes on Sources and Further Reading', and the bibliography is extensive, containing a range of important older and more modern works on subjects as diverse as Henry Ford, America's rebellion against Victorianism, polo, railroads, the history of Hollywood, eugenics, the Great Depression, and women who made modern America.

One Summer. America 1927 fills a need for accessible, easy-to-read history. It should be read critically but also with pleasure. It brings to life one of

the most critical eras in America's history and culture. The final paragraph before the epilogue confirms the value of Bryson's achievement: little survives even as memory; it is the many major events of 1927, both admirable and tragic, that make the summer of 1927 'one hell of a summer'. Europe was no longer the center of action – why, and with what consequences for America are Bryson's major concerns. Readers on both sides of the Atlantic will appreciate his knowledge, humor and wit.

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Lilijana Burcar, *American Literature and its Social Political Context*. Ljubljana: Ljubljana University Press, 2014. 132 pp. ISBN: 978-961-237-640-6.

American Literature and its Socio-Political Context is based on the premise that all literature is intimately connected with everyday reality, and more specifically, with its social and historical context, to which it owes both its content and form. Literary works, Burcar argues, not only shed light on American reality but also on the constructs of race, gender and class that continue to shape American society. Because works of fiction are embedded in very specific social relations as well as social, historical and political contexts, they constitute a way of communicating with the reality to which they owe their very existence. Indeed, works of fiction "do not just reflect but actively shape and produce our perception and understanding of the world" (13). Reality sheds light on the literary work; the literary work sheds light on reality.

The double process of illumination is based on a particular ideology, Burcar argues. Drawing on Terry Eagleton's definition of ideology as a system of manipulation and deceit that is based on distortion and misrepresentation, Burcar points to the tendency in literature to conceal injustice and validate inequalities based on artificial ideas of difference and inequality. Race, sexism and social inequality are examples of this tendency, the consequences of which are discrimination, exploitation and the implementation of what Burcar terms "false consciousness".

At the same time, instead of upholding existing relations of social injustice, literature also has the potential and power to expose and even challenge the reproduction of social inequalities, promoting critical awareness and providing a new vision of the world that carries with it the ability to