



François Vergniolle de Chantal. L'impossible Présidence impériale Paris : CNRS éditions, 2016. 450 pages

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**Claire Parfait,
Hélène Le Dantec-Lowry
and Claire Bourhis Mariotti (eds.).**

*Writing History from the Margins:
African Americans and the Quest
for Freedom.*

New York and London: Routledge, 2017.

For a long time, the history of the United States seemed written solely by educated white men. Unsurprisingly, the narrative they constructed was about how elite white men made the nation. Even as this narrative was evolving as the main national narrative, African Americans participated in silently reintegrating their peers into this narrative. As astonishing as it might appear, this movement started in the early 19th century. *Writing History from the Margins* focuses on these early interpreters of the African American participation in nation-building.

Although, as the introduction very clearly states, this historiographical revision of the traditional narrative has been ongoing for some time, *Writing History from the Margins* presents many original aspects. First of all, it gathers contributions by French and American scholars, specialists of American history, American material and visual culture, art history, sciences of information and communication, book history, art / design history and theory, as well as specialists of digital archives. This long list already suggests the multifaceted perspective adopted.

The second main merit of the book is to consider history writing in a large sense and to draw on a large number of very different sources. If some of the chapters deal with history books and thus consider history writing in a relatively traditional way, others focus on material and visual culture, thus adopting a more contemporaneous perspective on history writing.

The first part, entitled "New Perspectives on African American History," contains

four chapters. Claire Parfait focuses on two post-Civil War works written by non-professional African American historians bearing on Black soldiers in the Civil War, published in 1888 in the mainstream book trade. The chapter, by including the books' publication history, brings a novel perspective on the topic. Cheryl Knott focuses on the works of Merl R. Eppse, an African American teacher of history who wrote three books that reintegrated Blacks in the main American historical narrative. His books, first published in the 1930s and several times reprinted, were aimed at compensating for the silence on Black actors in the accounts of American History. As Knott notes, however, her study also presents the advantage of bringing new attention to "schoolbooks as a genre of print culture; the influence of the interracial movement of the 1930s and 1940s on book production; and the efforts of historians outside the northern centers of publishing to produce and distribute books" (27). The first two chapters thus deal with what is traditionally considered as history books, adding print history to the main parameters of the study. The next two chapters, by Nicole Topich and Michael Benjamin, shift the perspective by bringing to the fore different types of sources, which are nowadays considered as apt sources by historians but correspond to less expected types of writing and provide a genetic history of history books. Topich focuses on petitions sent to the Massachusetts legislature by individuals and communities of color before 1870, while Benjamin examines the project of the first encyclopedia on persons of African American descent, a project born in 1893 in the minds of two self-taught historians, John Edward Bruce, and his associate, C. A. Johnson. Both chapters focus on the restoration of the agency of African Americans that can be discovered in these early ventures.

The second part of the book, "Material and Visual Culture and the Writing of History," composed of 5 chapters, shifts the focus to rather unusual historical materials. While Hélène Le Dantec-Lowry studies a manual for domestic servants written and published by an African American

in 1827, Katie Knowles examines varied sources to show how slaves used clothing to resist the anonymization of enslavement. From surviving material evidence, slave narratives, and iconographic sources, she shows how the enslaved managed to reconquer their individuality in a dehumanizing regime. Géraldine Chouard examines African American quilts, which she calls “a major cultural and rhetorical art form” that “scholars can use as a material source for writing history” (108). James Small dwells on the accomplishments of freeman Henry Morris Murray, a civil rights activist, who is acknowledged as the first African American art historian and critic, credited for publishing the first book written on the history of African American sculpture, and whose whole life was dedicated to re-inscribing “African Americans from the margins to the center of American cultural and political history” (132). The last chapter of the book is Amy Kirschke’s study of the early cartoons of one of the greatest American artists of the 20th century, Romare Bearden, who used political cartooning to highlight the contradictions and problems of American society in connection with race relations. All the visual and material sources studied in this second part help highlight the resistance of the slaves to the system of slavery and to the subsequent racism of American society by giving proof of their agency in all aspects of their public lives. They also offer a new perspective on how varied the sources used by African Americans in rewriting the history of their peers were.

All the chapters taken individually have many merits. Beside their intrinsic qualities, they have the advantage of drawing the reader’s attention to the many sources that can be studied by historians in the aim of reaching a more nuanced, more complex narrative of American history and the participation of African Americans in it. Taken together, they provide a new narrative that changes the focus from the center to the margins and recovers hidden testimonies of African American achievement.

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François Vergniolle de Chantal

L'impossible Présidence impériale

Paris : CNRS éditions, 2016.

450 pages

Depuis ses premiers travaux sur le fédéralisme, François Vergniolle de Chantal s’est imposé comme l’un des meilleurs spécialistes français des institutions politiques américaines. En centrant son attention sur le Congrès, pouvoir souvent délaissé par des chercheurs focalisés avant tout sur la présidence, il a construit une grille de lecture extrêmement fine de la mécanique constitutionnelle.

Bien plus qu’une simple monographie sur le Congrès contemporain, *L'impossible Présidence impériale* propose une relecture parfois radicale du politique américain. En s’appuyant sur une bibliographie exhaustive, l’auteur réussit la gageure de synthétiser des siècles de débats sur les formes et la pratique du pouvoir des deux côtés de l’Atlantique pour remettre en question certaines idées reçues, tout particulièrement celle d’une présidence qui serait devenue impériale. Le titre même de l’ouvrage annonce son caractère polémique. En contrepoint aux discours entendus sur le rôle central du président des États-Unis, François Vergniolle de Chantal démontre l’étendue des pouvoirs considérables qui restent entre les mains du Congrès. Il insiste sur les origines et la logique interne du bicamérisme aux États-Unis, détaillant les spécificités de la Chambre et du Sénat pour en finir avec une vision monolithique et superficielle. Il montre ainsi comment la polarisation partisane a eu des effets diamétralement opposés dans l’une et l’autre : rationalisation partielle et intermittente la Chambre (222-223) tandis que les sénateurs à « l’individualisme proverbial » (284) usent de l’obstruction procédurale pour faire du Sénat le « bastion du contrôle législatif » (382). Remettre le Congrès au cœur du jeu politique permet également à François Vergniolle de Chantal de tordre le cou à un lieu commun plus récent sur les méfaits de cette polarisation

partisane. Il tente ainsi de « tempérer les discours alarmistes » (21) en arguant que l'exacerbation des clivages partisans entre Démocrates et Républicains a rendu possible le redéploiement des pouvoirs de contrôle du Congrès.

Sur la base d'une étude historique détaillée, l'auteur utilise le comparatisme pour éclairer les spécificités mais aussi les défis comparables auxquelles la France et les États-Unis ont dû faire face pour construire leurs systèmes politiques. Il parvient à reprendre le thème des « républiques sœurs » en évitant les écueils habituels de la comparaison impossible et la similitude superficielle pour faire ressortir une véritable conversation transatlantique et un « mouvement de balancier commun » (28) entre les pouvoirs législatif et exécutif.

Si le souci pédagogique de l'auteur peut parfois mener à certaines répétitions, il faut louer la clarté du propos et l'érudition dont il fait montre. Même si l'on ne partage pas nécessairement le flegme avec lequel il cherche à écarter les arguments « déclinistes », le portrait qu'il fait du gouvernement fédéral, avec le Sénat au cœur de tous les (dés)équilibres, semble assez juste. La présentation de la suppression des possibilités de *filibuster* contre des nominations présidentielles comme étant le signe d'un rééquilibrage presque naturel de la mécanique interne au Sénat est convaincante. Pour autant, on ne saurait trop sous-estimer la profonde détérioration des normes de comportement qui contenaient jusque-là son abus. Le délitement du Sénat en tant que corps social du fait de l'individualisme exacerbé de ses membres demeure donc problématique.

Ainsi, malgré quelques différences d'appréciations minimales (le célèbre humoriste Al Franken, star de l'émission culte *Saturday Night Live* relégué au rôle de simple animateur de radio 246), il est difficile de ne pas se laisser convaincre par les arguments de François Vergniolle de Chantal. Avec *Limpossible présidence impériale*, l'observateur averti de la politique américaine dispose désormais d'une cartographie complète des mécanismes du Congrès contemporain qui devrait lui permettre de ne plus céder à l'illusion de la mainmise de la Maison-Blanche.

Alix MEYER
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Jean-Jacques Malo (ed.)

The Last Time I Dreamed About the War:

Essays on the Life and Writing

of W. D. Ehrhart

Jefferson, NC : McFarland, 2014.

Enfin un ouvrage sur W. D. Ehrhart, figure marquante de la « génération Vietnam » – génération perdante ? – aujourd'hui presque oubliée, prise dans les rets d'une guerre dont les États-Unis auraient pu faire l'économie, et d'une politique qui, à de nombreux égards, contrariait les principes fondateurs de la république américaine.

On connaît encore mal en France l'œuvre de William D. Ehrhart, autobiographe, essayiste et poète, ancien marine gravement blessé au siège de Hué en 1968, puis vétéran contestataire, qui a trouvé dans l'écriture (déjà bien avant l'expérience du Vietnam) le moyen d'exprimer sa contestation tout autant que sa soif de liberté, et qui a fini par surmonter la tragédie de la guerre pour la transformer en un magnifique discours d'amour et de vie.

C'est l'une des caractéristiques de cette génération, celle des Herr (*Dispatches*, 1977), Caputo (*A Rumor of War*, 1977), Kovick (*Born on the Fourth of July*, 1976), O'Brien (*If I Die in a Combat Zone*, 1973, *Going After Cacciato*, 1978), et bien d'autres, que de mettre en forme l'expérience de cette guerre au travers de journaux, d'autobiographies, ou parfois de romans. Avec sa trilogie autobiographique, (*Vietnam-Perkasie : A Combat Marine Memoir*, 1983, *Passing Time : Memoir of a Vietnam Veteran Against the War*, 1989, et *Busted : A Vietnam Veteran in Nixon's America*, 1995), W. D. Ehrhart se situe dans le courant de la littérature de témoignage, mais avec quelque dix années de décalage par rapport aux premiers écrits du genre (notamment par rapport à *If I die in a Combat Zone* de Tim O'Brien), ce qui peut en partie expliquer que la critique l'ait pour l'instant passablement négligé.

Cela dit, Ehrhart a depuis longtemps dépassé les limites de la littérature thérapeutique ou militante. Après avoir longtemps déversé sa douleur et sa colère, il façonne aujourd'hui une vision du monde extrêmement riche et de plus en plus maîtrisée, au travers d'une œuvre poétique conséquente, et d'autant plus puissante qu'elle vise à l'économie.

L'ouvrage dirigé et publié par Jean-Jacques Malo constitue un portrait de l'artiste évoqué selon diverses perspectives : l'autobiographe, le poète, l'humaniste, le professeur. La vingtaine d'essais qui lui sont consacrés font apparaître une personnalité attachante et généreuse, et un écrivain rigoureux qui a depuis longtemps dépassé la seule indignation pour exprimer aussi son émotion au mystère de la beauté du monde :

*If you need a reason to care,
consider this feather I've found,
consider the sweetness of bare
young arms in the sunlight, or the round
perfection of a ripe pear.*¹⁰⁰

Les contributions, majoritairement américaines, proviennent aussi d'Europe, d'Inde et du Japon. Et l'on est frappé par le nombre de vétérans (sept sur les vingt essais) qui s'investissent dans le littéraire, ces « Vietnam veteran(s) turned academic(s) » selon l'expression de l'un d'entre eux, qui, comme Ehrhart, se sont tournés vers l'autobiographie et la poésie, sans doute avec moins de bonheur.

Certains de ces essais relèvent du simple témoignage, d'autres s'inscrivent dans une approche critique qui rejoint la problématique bien connue de l'art « engagé ». C'est le cas notamment de Dale Ritterbusch qui, dans « Poetry and the Art of Resistance : The Literature of W. D. Ehrhart in Context », oppose volontiers la poésie qui « expose » (notamment celle d'Ehrhart) à celle qui se contente de séduire : « [Ehrhart's] constant reminder that poetry matters, that it exposes our hypocrisy, that war, Vietnam or otherwise, is always with us, rankles the sensibilities of those who believe that poetry

should be mere ornamentation. » (99) Mais Ritterbusch a le mérite de dépasser cette dichotomie et de montrer combien la poésie d'Ehrhart se nourrit d'abord de la violence et du réalisme qu'elle transcende.

Edward F. Palm (dans « The importance of Being Earnest : A Veteran's Eye View of W. D. Ehrhart's Vietnam War Poetry and Prose ») analyse la spécificité d'Ehrhart par rapport aux autres écrivains de la génération Vietnam, et la nature de son réalisme dans son parcours autobiographique, par rapport, par exemple, à Tim O'Brien : « While O'Brien soft-pedals, and even obscures, his polemical purpose in favor of literary value, Ehrhart is first and foremost committed to truth-telling – to telling it like it was. » (168) Une fois encore, on fait ressortir que, loin de s'opposer à la valeur littéraire, la recherche de la vérité dans le cas d'Ehrhart renforce l'écriture. Au fil des pages, Ehrhart apparaît alors comme le résistant suprême, non seulement celui qui survit à la guerre mais celui qui s'oppose, et qui refuse toute récupération.

Et dans une interview par Jean-Jacques Malo située au cœur de l'ouvrage, Ehrhart revendique la pleine liberté de son écriture, que la guerre du Vietnam n'a fait qu'intensifier et enrichir : « I no longer write with any expectation that it will change anything. I write because I have to. Because it is who and what I am » (147).

Une brève sélection de poèmes soigneusement choisis par les contributeurs, ainsi qu'une courte bibliographie des œuvres d'Ehrhart, complètent cet ouvrage au terme duquel apparaissent une personnalité puissante et une œuvre poétique intense. C'est la poésie qui depuis toujours, bien avant l'expérience du Vietnam, anime Ehrhart, qui ne se considère écrivain que par accident, mais poète par vocation profonde. Et c'est le mérite de cet ouvrage que de faire aussi nettement apparaître la valeur artistique et humaine de celui que l'on qualifierait volontiers, mais à son corps défendant car il dénie obstinément toute pertinence à ce genre de titre – de « Dean of American Vietnam Poetry ».

100. « Nothing Profound, » in *Beautiful Wreckage : New & Selected Poems*, 1999.

**Christian Kloeckner,
Simone Knewitz
and Sabine Sielke (eds.)**

Knowledge Landscapes:

North America.

Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter,

2016. 305 p.

Is knowledge a chronotope? What may appear at first sight as a peculiar, if not unorthodox question is a fitting introduction to the multifarious stakes raised by this ambitious collection of essays edited by C. Kloeckner, S. Knewitz and S. Sielke. Knowledge being mostly a philosophical, historical or sociological concept, it should not be assessed by means of a tool, Bakhtin's chronotope, belonging to the field of literary theory. And yet, if the essays collected here have one common denominator, it is the fact that knowledge is a volatile, but also versatile notion. Also, some of these essays use knowledge studies to explore new fields, or more precisely to explore new ways of leading transdisciplinary studies. Accordingly, this volume of the "American Studies – A Monograph Series" edited for the German Association of American Studies offers a positive answer to my initial question: yes, knowledge is most certainly a historical phenomenon linked to a particular context. Furthermore, it also indicates that one can import academically "foreign" concepts to gauge historical or cultural phenomena, for instance. As the American philosopher Joseph Margolis pointed out: "It's not the choice between modernism and postmodernism that counts. It's the recovery of historicity: the admission that thinking has an inherently historied structure, that thinking *is* history, that the norms of [...] knowledge, legitimation, rationality, and the rest cannot be captured abstractly."¹ This is

1. MARGOLIS, Joseph. *What, After All, is a Work of Art?* University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University, 1999, p. 7.

exactly what the authors of these essays set out to do: to show how, in various environments, knowledge is deeply "historied."

It is indeed "historied," and it also requires a transmission modality. This is echoed in Sielke *et al.*'s introduction: "Moreover, even as all knowledge is embodied, it always requires mediation—via images, language, and technologies of communication—for its distribution within and between knowledge landscapes [...]" (10). These various transmission modalities can be embodied in different ways, depending on the context, but they broadly hinge on institutions or education. For example, the first major shift studied in this collection is the obvious fact that American universities have over the last decades experienced a transition from knowledge society to knowledge economy and, as a matter of fact, have come to epitomize this transition. Christopher Newfield has been researching into this evolution and concludes that "American universities have in fact been shifting their core social mission for thirty years" (31), the outcome of this trend being that "our current knowledge *economy* entitles major actors to subordinate any knowledge defined as non-economic (or anti-economic) to economic goals" (30). You now *invest* in your future (earnings), and your knowledge must have commercial value. As a result, "STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)" (32) are thriving, whereas the humanities are struggling. Sverker Sörlin, drawing a parallel between American and Swedish universities (and especially one university, Umeå in northern Sweden), reaches similar conclusions as regards the fate of the humanities: "Politicians in Europe do not advance the same arguments as those in the U.S. but if you follow the general discussions the humanities are portrayed in much the same way" (56). However, Alexander Starre's fascinating article about "Carnegie Libraries as Epistemic Spaces" in the U.S. shows that, outside universities, the transmission of knowledge has always been linked to economic factors, be it the will of a famous philanthropist or of people working for him. It is amazing to learn that the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie paid "for almost 1,700 library buildings in the U.S. and about 800 in other countries" (69),

eventually playing a major role in the politics and economics of knowledge across the Atlantic (and in Scotland). But of course, “Carnegie’s library philanthropy took place in a murky territory of evolving ideas and ideologies surrounding the group-specific interests in a public institution of knowledge” (75). Franz Kelleter asserts that the media and the social media are now playing a predominant role in the diffusion of knowledge, probably much more than libraries, meaning that knowledge has changed in the process and has had to adapt to this new vehicle. Through the concept of news, he underscores that knowledge can be a “historical phenomenon *and* [...] a conceptual construct” (211), but in both cases, it is linked to economic interests, which remains highly problematic since “periodical news does not simply report and distribute what is new but [...] literally *makes* news (219). Universities, libraries or the media are arguably *major vehicles* for knowledge. But the essays in this collection also draw our attention to what could be dubbed *minor vehicles*, such as children’s literature (Emily Petermann), children’s toys and more precisely dissected maps (Mahshid Mayar), and demonstrate that these vehicles end up playing a considerable role in the transmission of knowledge as they either usher “child readers—or readers imagined as children—into national community” (96) or help to disseminate “certain versions of world geography” (115). On the other hand, books can not only transmit but also reflect knowledge or the state of knowledge at a particular time. Through the “fate” (that is to say the evolving reception over several decades) of two novels (Owen Johnson’s *Stover at Yale* and John William’s *Stoner*), Sophie Spieler and Heinz Ickstadt use fiction as the potential mirror of the shifting attitudes toward the humanities and more generally academia, and confirm that how we perceive knowledge and the institutions in charge of transmitting it fundamentally depends on culturally determined frames of reference. Christa Buschendorf seems to adopt a similar approach with her study of Edward P. Jones’s novel *The Known World*, but she actually focuses not on the reception of the work but on its thematic contours and content and on how “*The Known World*

offers acute observations and sharp insights into the power structures of antebellum Southern society” (246).

The decline of the humanities is a recurring topic in several essays and Antje Kley notes that one of the reasons for this so-called decline is the lingering doubt about the scientific validity of literary studies. We keep coming back to the same questions: “What does literature know? And, what does literary studies know?” (153). Kley answers that whatever literature knows, it knows different things from the natural sciences as the “view” that it offers is a view “from somewhere” (153). Indeed, Kley distinguishes between “socially situated knowledge” (155) or “the view from somewhere” (158) based on “conflicting claims, with plural regimes of observation, representation, and evaluation” (156), and scientific objectivity, “the view from nowhere” (157), thus claiming that there is such a thing as “literary knowledge” (172). However, Hubert Zapf demonstrates that the difference between the humanities and the natural sciences, for instance, is not clear-cut as there has recently been a “new ‘material turn’ in the humanities” (180). This “new materialism is a response to the demands of interdisciplinarity which have put enormous pressure on the humanities to open their scholarship to insights from the material natural sciences” (180). But Zapf underlines that this influence should run both ways: literary theory can benefit from a deeper scientific knowledge when it comes to ecocriticism for instance, but environmental studies would be well-advised to consider literature as a reliable critical tool. Eventually, Jeanne Cortel and Russel J. A. Kilbourn describe the complexity of interpreting knowledge, and more particularly specific forms of knowledge (feminism, affect theory) when it is embedded in a transmedial franchise (*Resident Evil*) or Inuit cinema (Isuma’s “Fast Runner” trilogy), making us aware at the same time of the difficulty of disentangling objective knowledge from knowledge used as narrative content, obeying fictional rules.

In conclusion, whether they study major (libraries, universities, newspapers) or minor (novels, video games) vehicles of knowledge, the articles collected in this volume all point in the same direction: as

paradoxical as it may sound, knowledge is much more than (pure epistemic) knowledge; it is economic, political, antagonistic, unstable. This non-congruent aspect of knowledge is perfectly illustrated by Paula Von Gleich's study of the concept of border and borderlands, of "blackness" (207) and slavery, and more generally by the "geopolitics of knowledge" (197). She asks a highly relevant question that is a fitting summary of all the stakes and paradoxes presented in this collection: "What are the implications of knowledge produced from the inside of civil society that both ignores or obliterates the outside and at the same time relies on it?" (206).

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Jules B. Farber

*James Baldwin: Escape from America,
Exile in Provence*

Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican, 2016.

320 p.

A compelling and highly readable work, Jules B. Farber's *James Baldwin: Escape from America, Exile in Provence* examines Baldwin's final 17 years (1970-1987) spent in the medieval village of Saint-Paul-de-Vence, in Southern France. Consisting of some seventy interviews with such artists and celebrities as Maya Angelou, Harry Belafonte, Angela Davis, Toni Morrison, Sidney Poitier, and Bill Wyman, who recount their personal reminiscences about James Baldwin to the author, Farber's work is both an assemblage of first-hand recollections and a homage to the legacy and life of Baldwin. Farber correctly notes that Baldwin, during his time in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, and especially in relation to his "earlier fiery, angry tone of the sixties" (25), was able "to take distance and become more complex and humane with a more lucid

vision of race relations, human tolerance, and understanding" (25).

Centering on Baldwin's last residence—a three-hundred-year-old elegant country house located on a ten-acre property (39)—and the local and international community that Baldwin nurtured while living there, Farber explores and contextualizes Baldwin's relationships with the Saint-Paul-de-Vence locals and artists, the owner of the house, Jeanne Faure, Baldwin's family, and his international celebrity guests. In a chronological account of Baldwin's life, Farber divides his biography into 29 chapters with such quirky titles as "Open House: A Racist Lady," "Taking Distance from America: Love/Hate Relationship," "Black English: Own Language," "Sex: Tranquility," "Baldwin Anti-Christian? Disenchantment," and "Going Downhill: Ill Health" to complete his "Saint-Paul portrait" (23). In relation to Baldwin scholarship, *James Baldwin: Escape from America, Exile in Provence* is an example of the recent resurgence of Baldwin studies, with an ever-increasing number of articles, books, and monographs devoted to Baldwin's life and works. In providing his intimate portrait of this 17-year period of Baldwin's voluntary exile, Farber complements the transnational focus on Baldwin and contributes to the argument that Baldwin's experience of living abroad enabled him to develop a more complex view of the United States.

But for Baldwin scholars there might be some frustrations with Farber's method and limitations to his study. Unfortunately, while neglecting to clearly and consistently contextualize the interviews, Farber provides no comprehensive list of their dates and places. There are no endnotes or footnotes in his text, no bibliography, and no list of sources for given chapters, which could have largely served to document the interviews and his use of secondary material.

The text is also marred by some careless writing and editing, repetition and fragmentation. Farber's assertions can lack specific evidence or corroboration, which could be partly remedied by footnotes, as in his assertion about Baldwin's "cultural" impact: "Through his novels, essays and other lesser-known writings and inter-

views, he expounded new perspectives on bigotry, homosexuality, and exile" (25), a point unaided by his conclusion to the section: "[Baldwin's] work was food for thought among his intellectual peers on both sides of the Atlantic" (26).

Sometimes the chronology becomes fuzzy or lost because of unclear time indicators (e.g., "About two years later," 50; "Soon after," 50) in which the reader loses the historical thread because she is given no prior time references. Sometimes chapters end abruptly (67), inconclusively (221), or oddly, as with chapter 4, which concludes with a comment on Hemingway's depression and suicide (109). And sometimes the text is burdened by erratic repetitions of quotations or points: for example, Baldwin's pronouncement in the Studs Terkel interview—"I love America more than any other country in the world, and for that reason I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually"—strangely reappears four pages later when Farber references Quentin Miller's *Re-Viewing James Baldwin, Things Not Seen* (2000).

In a similar vein, Farber states for a second time that Baldwin's only published comments on his Saint-Paul-de-Vence house appeared in the August 1987 issue of *Architectural Digest* (139). In addition, at times the text can be fragmented and disjointed, as in Baldwin's discussion of his status as an "American black writer" (117) un-transitioned into Farber's observation on Baldwin's "author advances" (118), or

overly abrupt and inconclusive, as in the compressed (two-paragraph) Angela Davis interview (115). This fragmentation is especially evident in the spotty and patched-together chapter 16, which crunches truncated discussions of *The Price of the Ticket* and *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* into the Cinquini interview—all in the span of four pages (223-226). Farber's tendency to sometimes over-dramatize—e.g., "Though Baldwin was living in Saint-Paul from 1970, every time he returned to the States, red lights went off at FBI headquarters—and the hunt continued" (108) and to overstate—as in his assertion that Baldwin's "greatness" is "unheralded" (24)—poorly serve his argument. Both of these points are qualified and nuanced, for example, in Douglass Field's *All Those Strangers: The Art and Lives of James Baldwin* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015), the *Cambridge Companion to James Baldwin* (Ed., Michele Elam, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015), and in much of the recent criticism.

And yet for a reader not easily distracted by such lapses and some language and structural rawness, *James Baldwin: Escape from America, Exile in Provence* offers an engrossing, sensory, and highly personal account of Baldwin's final years in St. Paul-de-Vence. Its strengths come across as a biography of Baldwin's last period, as opposed to a literary and cultural analysis of his works.

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