

Editors' Note

The latest issue of *JAS* showcases cutting-edge scholarship across a vast array of disciplinary fields that include but are by no means restricted to debates and approaches within US print cultures, intellectual history, African diasporic studies, Caribbean studies, political philosophy, film and television studies, US literary cultures and performance traditions, music history, photography, and US southern studies. The issue begins with Janice Radway's essay, based on her Plenary Address at the UK British Association for American Studies Annual Conference hosted by the University of Birmingham in 2013. A tour de force, Radway comes to grips with "Girl Zine Networks, Underground Itineraries, and Riot Grrrl History." Powerfully raising "questions about how to narrate the disparate activities that coalesced around certain female-fronted punk bands in the 1990s and continued in mutating form for some time after," she makes hard-hitting "sense of the struggle for new social forms in the 1990s and beyond."

Working with a multi- and interdisciplinary scholarly practice, Esther Lezra pioneers an alternative theoretical language in which to do justice to the otherwise invisibilized "knowledge produced by colonial and enslaved peoples" as writ large in Denis Diderot's *Les bijoux indiscrets*. Refocussing our theoretical lens, Nicholas Higgins turns to a philosophical investigation into human nature to provide a stimulating "comparison of Benjamin Franklin's and George Whitefield's teachings on human perfection." Shifting centuries, Alexander Olson provides a groundbreaking examination of Eadweard Muybridge, a pioneer of motion-picture technology, who undertook "several photographic studies of animal and human movement in the late nineteenth century." Laura Goldblatt sheds fresh light on the shifting relationships between aesthetic, social, political, and ideological contexts within F. Scott Fitzgerald's *oeuvre* by examining "*The Great Gatsby*'s Cold War rise to explain its subsequent canonization." Matt Sandler shifts our attention to "patent medicine shows" to make the groundbreaking claim that "the medicine show had a decisive impact on the blues by providing not simply training in performance, but also an impetus for the notorious suggestiveness of its lyric code."

Cutting to the heart of the slippery relationships between text and image, Caroline Blinder addresses the tensions inherent in works by photographer Paul Strand that are accompanied by texts by critic and writer Nancy Strand,

in their “attempts to record an essentially democratic vision of America through a specific cultural landscape both found and constructed.” Morgan Fritz provides readers with a fascinating investigation into “the television series *Breaking Bad* in light of Nicos Poulantzas’s concept of the new petty bourgeoisie and Bruno Latour’s notion of the production of ‘monsters’ in modern society as a result of the compartmentalization of science from society.” In his essay on 9/11 photography, finally, Joseph Darda offers a powerful examination of the way that, in the wake of the tragic attacks in September 2001, Thomas Franklin’s iconic photo of three firefighters raising the American flag above what remained of the World Trade Center became representative of a larger iconography that reinforced the “familiar myth” of American exceptionalism. The articles side of the journal concludes with a *JAS* first: we are delighted to publish Anna Hartnell’s interview with author Jesmyn Ward, in which she leads a fascinating conversation on “the role of her writing in the context of Hurricane Katrina, the US South, African American culture and identity.” The responses by Molly Travis and Richard Crownshaw not only powerfully cut to the heart of ongoing injustices surrounding “structural racism,” as well as the “fragility of the lives of young black men,” but they also testify to the liberating and imaginative possibilities presented by experimental literary practices that may not offer a way out of but a way into a myriad of social, political, and cultural realities.

The print reviews section leads with a lively roundtable discussion of Walter Johnson’s *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (2013). This field-defining book is debated with verve and insight by Joanna Cohen, Patrick J. Doyle, Lydia Plath and David Sim. Seventeen reviews then follow, led by a suite of six covering various aspects of early American history. The online reviews section is headed by a graceful and thought-provoking review essay authored by Anna Arabindan-Kesson, which discusses recent work on African American artists Romare Bearden and Archibald Motley. Three reviews then follow of books about or by contemporary American writers, before thirteen others cover a range of topics from visual representations of Haiti in US culture to the role of Mormonism in contemporary politics.

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