



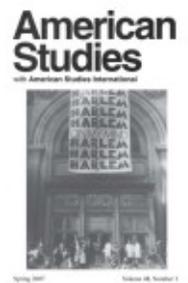
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*Front-Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880-1930* (review)

Gwyneth Mellinger

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Finally, Ms. Kropp takes up Olvera Street, a foul alley adjacent to Los Angeles' mission-style Union Station which became a Mexican market and a major tourist magnet in the 1930s, under the guidance of Christine Sterling, would-be actress and historic-preservation activist. (Women get their due throughout!)

The book is a goldmine of new information. Its argument, however, is somewhat elderly: namely, that Anglos took parts of the Spanish-Indian-Mexican past while mistreating and despising actual members of these groups. That they compensated for the perils of modernity by retreating into an imagined region of history. That memory's mystic chords were played out of tune throughout. *California Vieja* could have benefitted from a less formulaic approach. Is escapism always a bad thing? Was California's particular brand of historicism influenced by the movies? By the existing "fantasy" architecture of the region? How does the California Mission/Rancho fantasy stand up to all the others so vividly described in the fiction of James M. Cain and Nathanael West? Or the proto-theme park proposed by Frank Baum, author of the Oz books, for Catalina Island? Less theory, perhaps—and more imagination!

University of Minnesota

Karal Ann Marling

FRONT-PAGE GIRLS: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880–1930. By Jean-Marie Lutes. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2006.

The most striking images from Jean-Marie Lutes's analysis of gendered publicity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are of the bodily violations that female journalists endure—or nearly escape—in the interests of getting a story. By invoking such reported incidents as Nellie Bly's brush with a doctor bent on performing an unnecessary tonsilectomy and Djuna Barnes's submission to a grisly force-feeding procedure, Lutes underscores her central concern, namely that the body of the female journalist of this period was inseparable from her reportage. Through the spectacle of her journalism, the female journalist became newsworthy herself.

But this is just one of the thematic threads of *Front-Page Girls*. Lutes, an assistant professor of English at Villanova University, also is interested in the "channels of influence between journalism and literature" (5), the discursive kinship between women's reportage during this period and fiction by and about women journalists. Lutes offers a series of fascinating analyses—in which she reads women's bodies, as both subject and object, against a variety of news and literary texts—and demonstrates the logical interdependence of the two genres in this context.

Even so, the narrative lacks unity. Wedged between chapters on the writing of "girl stunt reporters" and the "sob sisters" is a chapter on Ida B. Wells and other African-American newswomen of the period. The analysis of black women's journalism foregrounds the whiteness of the other writers under discussion as well as the differences in the common sense that attached to white and non-white bodies. At the same time, Lutes' discussion of the black women journalists' role in the black counterpublic is not woven into the narrative and feels like a tangent.

Similarly, the narrative fails to lay sufficient groundwork for the analysis, in Chapter 4, of Henry James' two versions of *The Portrait of a Lady* or the discussion in Chapter 5 of the interplay of the journalism and fiction of Edna Ferber, Willa Cather, and Djuna Barnes. Located in the book's final chapters, these discussions are another departure from the narrative's initial focus. This lack of cohesion is emphasized by the presence of a short epilogue that opens a new discussion of the portrayal of the woman journalist in film.

Each chapter in *Front-Page Girls* is an important essay on one aspect of Lutes's analysis of the female embodiment of journalism; however, the book is less than the sum of its parts. The project is simply too ambitious for 165 pages of text. While Lutes opens doors to the ways in which women writers were both empowered and constrained by their bodies in different contexts during the same period, synthesis is lacking at key moments.

Within each chapter, however, the scholarship is richly detailed and thorough, and the analysis is insightful. Chapter 3, a reading of the "sob sisters'" coverage of the 1907 murder trial of Harry Kendall Thaw, brilliantly demonstrates the spectacle of both the women journalists and Thaw's wife, the star witness, all of whom are at various moments both subjects and objects within the sphere of publicity, where power manifests in bodily control.

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Gwyneth Mellinger

IN A SHADE OF BLUE: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black America. By Eddie S. Glaude Jr. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press. 2007.

"Our democratic way of life is in jeopardy," says Eddie S. Glaude Jr. He sees plutocratic and garrison state tendencies to be prime manifestations of American democracy on the wane. Although acknowledging major gains made by many African Americans, he holds that a large segment of the black community feels the full brunt of dedemocratization—abject poverty, high incarceration rates, poor health, and other crises. Glaude teaches in the Religion Department at Princeton, and authored previously *Exodus! Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America*. He explains that the new book "came to life" during his participation in Tavis Smiley's Covenant Tour, which publicizes the social and political issues outlined in the media personality's *The Covenant with Black America*. Like Smiley, he contends that African American politics needs new leaders with wider political vision. But Glaude does not frame a "political blueprint." Rather he draws heavily on John Dewey's social thought to problematize the ways African Americans "think about" the problems of their communities and nation and to inspire them to create a new political vocabulary and "deliberative space" for Black America.

Glaude acknowledges Dewey's political activism and belief in racial justice, but rightly criticizes the philosopher's failure to engage seriously the extremely oppressive pre-World War II, American racial regime. However, Glaude argues that Dewey's social theory provides tools to illuminate today's restructured system of white supremacy and to rethink African American politics accordingly. He draws widely from Dewey's writings, intelligently summarizes his "pragmatic historicism," and applies it to contemporary African American thought and politics. Dewey's concept of "public" is integral to Glaude's critique of Black America's political vision. Theorizing civil society's role in modern democratic states, Dewey held that societal subgroups, or even entire nations, transform themselves into publics when they engage, in a politically active way, the problematic conditions (often negative ripple effects of interorganizational activities) that they suffer. Dewey held that publics struggle to secure their values and interests by raising awareness of the problems, proposing changes, and fashioning political means to institute them. He contended that socio-political practices must be reinvented to cope effectively with changing environments. Dewey believed that genuine democracies, which extend means of participation and of public formation as widely as possible, favor fast, just, effective, reconstructive responses to problems of differently located subgroups and, thus,