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*In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black
America* (review)

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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.

Baker University

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,

nurture cooperative interdependence and political legitimacy. However, he argued (in the 1920s and 1930s) that the deeply rooted, American culture of “rugged individualism,” refracted in dominant free-market and Social Darwinist policies, was inadequate to grasp and regulate corporately organized society and to cope with its exceptionally complex, often harsh, “indirect consequences.” Thus, Dewey held that the American public was bewildered, inchoate, and quiescent and that its prophetic values of equal opportunity, uncoerced communication, and free association were at risk in the new climate of steep inequalities, mass communications, and reactionary populism. Glaude employs Dewey’s concept of public and other facets of his social theory to stir reflection and debate about the problematic condition of Black America today, absence of a black national public and overall genuine, national democratic public, and consequent cleft in the soul and body of the nation.

Glaude asserts that the last and greatest “national black public” flourished at the peak of the civil rights and black power era (late 1960s–early 1970s), but was curtailed by state repression, ideological fragmentation, and social transformation. He holds that the “post-soul” generation, of which he is a part, matured in a new world that provided dramatically increased opportunities for a vibrant black middle-class, but left the black urban underclass economically and socially devastated. He adds that a new immigration wave and other socio-cultural changes have reconstituted Black America in other ways. Trapped in now moribund civil rights and black power symbolics, Glaude argues, African American leaders lack the political imagination with which to grasp prudently the barriers to black solidarity and forge new discursive and political means to overcome them. He sharply criticizes romanticized Black Nationalist and Afrocentrist “History,” which claims to rediscover a “true black identity” in which racial unity inheres. Although appreciating the importance of collective memory for community building, Glaude charges that “reification of blackness” is “bad racial reasoning,” which obscures the divisions, complexities, and possibilities of Black America and of the broader society. He does not reject black identity and collective agency per se, but, in Deweyan fashion, envisions them as necessary, yet contingent elements with which to build consensus and to forge a public. In the short epilogue, Glaude praises Tavis Smiley’s attempt to initiate a “post-soul” politics and create an inclusive black public through his State of the Black Union and Covenant Tour gatherings, leadership foundation, active media role, and overall effort to propose changes, convene experts, leaders, and policymakers to debate them, and reach broader African American and multiracial audiences. Putting aside the substantive shape of the new black politics, Glaude focuses, albeit modestly, on the profoundly difficult, but arguably preliminary task of challenging policy-oriented, black intelligentsia and their multiracial fellow travelers to shift the metatheoretical and discursive grounds of their practices and to expand their political imagination.

Glaude offers a succinct, accurate, and accessible portrayal of Dewey’s social theory. Stressing the tragic sensibility inhering in Dewey’s argument about the uncertainty of human action, Glaude counters critics who charge that the philosopher is unduly optimistic. At many junctures, he quotes passages from Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison to demonstrate how they converged with Dewey and how African American experience can enrich pragmatism. Glaude’s treatment of pragmatism would have been stronger had he addressed in more detail the Deweyan method of “inquiry” and drew on George Herbert Mead’s social psychology, which Dewey considered to be the “hub” of his pragmatism and which anchors his central argument about communication and democracy. However, *In a Shade of Blue* is fully in tune with the spirit of Dewey’s thought and is an exemplary application of it to a topic of utmost cultural significance. The Deweyan

themes are interwoven with Glaude's critical engagements with the literatures on African American identity, agency, religion, and politics. He traverses these multidisciplinary debates comfortably and lucidly, deploying theory with a light heuristic touch and averting all-too-common tendencies to use it as mere decoration or as an appeal to authority. Glaude's provocative assessment of African American politics will be contested, but it is thoughtful and earnest. His call for wider political vision is morally compelling in light of the continued serious erosion of the life conditions of the black underclass and recent (June 2007) Supreme Court decision that affirmed the trend toward resegregation. His book is worthwhile reading for anyone interested in the condition of Black America and of American democracy. I will assign it to my graduate pragmatism seminar.

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Robert J. Antonio

THE LANDSCAPE OF REFORM: Civic Pragmatism and Environmental Thought in America. By Ben A. Minteer. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 2006.

Traditional scholarship portrays the American conservation movement as split into two warring camps: technocratic elites such as Gifford Pinchot, first chief of the U.S. Forest Service, and romantic aesthetes such as John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club. Not only is this one-dimensional picture a poor, even misleading, reading of Pinchot and Muir, but it is also, as Ben Minteer argues, an oversimplification of "what is in fact a complex and rich moral tradition" (2) of environmental thought and policy reform.

Minteer recovers some of that rich moral tradition by examining a "third way" within the conservation movement: the "politically grounded and civic-spirited" (4) pragmatic conservation of Liberty Hyde Bailey, Lewis Mumford, Benton MacKaye, and Aldo Leopold. Minteer lauds this tradition for its "pluralistic model of environmental thought and action that accommodates both the prudent use *and* the preservation of nature" (4) as well as for its value in fostering "civic regeneration and social improvement" (5). In doing so Minteer aims to encourage environmental thought that is not only concerned with the natural world, but also the "revitalization of democratic citizenship, the conservation of regional culture and identity, and the constitution of the public interest" (189). Minteer succeeds admirably in this goal, having produced a compelling book that should interest scholars in a wide variety of fields.

Minteer begins with an examination of the Cornell University horticulturalist and nature study advocate Liberty Hyde Bailey. Bailey not only developed a philosophical rationale for ethical treatment of nonhuman nature—particularly in his book *The Holy Earth*—but he also was a staunch advocate for the cultural enrichment of rural communities. Bailey put these commitments into practice as Chair of Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission and as the most important theorist of rural nature study. Even Bailey's advocacy of school gardens as a means to teach nature study "entailed a strong civic dimension" (39) because they emphasized a kind of stewardship that benefited both the child and society. Minteer demonstrates the close connections between nature study and the pragmatic, progressive education reforms advocated by John Dewey.

Liberty Hyde Bailey was not the only pragmatist Minteer examines. The regional planners Lewis Mumford and Benton MacKaye were deeply influenced by John Dewey (despite the heated Dewey/Mumford debate in the pages of the *New Republic*) and Josiah Royce, respectively. Mumford, perhaps today best remembered for his scathing critique of power and technology, *The Pentagon of Power*, was also a bioregional thinker active in the Regional Planning Association of America. Like his fellow regional planner MacKaye,