Christine DeVine, ed., *Nineteenth-Century British Travelers in the New World* (UK: Ashgate, 2013), 334 pp., £60 hardcover.

The task which editor Christine DeVine sets out for *Nineteenth-Century British Travelers in the New World* is daunting: examining and analyzing the ways in which representations of America in British travel narratives inform and refract aspects of British imperial self-imagining across the nineteenth century. In the introduction to this volume, DeVine argues that there is a lack of scholarly attention to nineteenth-century British travel writing about post-independence America, because of an uncanny closeness which characterizes Anglo-American transatlantic relations, a sense of kinship across geographical and cultural divides. According to DeVine, this is the result of the shared cultural history and common language working to demystify and familiarize the American "Other" to British audiences. This collection of essays seeks to address the lacuna identified in its introduction by taking as its topic British self-imagining within the transatlantic world of the period, revealed by the reciprocal gaze implied in travel narratives.

In an attempt to streamline the discussion of such a sprawling subject, the thirteen essays which make up this collection are arranged into three thematic clusters, the first being "Imagining a New World," the second "Politics and its Discontents," and finally "Heading South: The Slave States." A fourth section, "America as the Modern World" is mentioned in the introduction, but has been absorbed by the one preceding it, as references to it are otherwise absent from the volume. Taken together, these three clusters cover a broad array of topics, prompting Devine to call *Nineteenth-Century British Travelers in the New World* "the first book to examine attitudes of British visitors to the New World throughout the nineteenth century" (19). Scholars such as Amanda Claybaugh (*The Novel of Purpose: Literature and Social Reform in the Anglo-American World*, 2007) and Paul Giles (*Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary*, 2002, and *Atlantic Republic: The American Tradition in English Literature*, 2006), however, have already discussed the nineteenth-century reciprocal transatlantic gaze extensively, drawing from fictional as well as non-fictional travel narratives and deploying largely the same thematic clusters used in *Nineteenth-Century British Travelers in the New World*.

The introduction undersells the collection, as it glosses over what truly sets this collection apart: its adherence to travel writing as a non-fiction genre. There is an important slippage in Devine's reading of the term "travel narrative," an *a priori* exclusion of fictional travel writing, left largely unspoken. At first glance, the collection seems strict in its exclusion of the fictional. All of the texts under consideration are—ostensibly—factual eyewitness accounts of the New World. To illustrate: while Dickens's 1842 travelogue *American Notes* is the subject of two separate essays, the fictionalized representation of the same journey, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, is only given the most cursory of mentions. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the nexus of fictional and factual in these supposed eyewitness accounts is crucial to their value and interest. The collection's mandate is mapping the modalities of the "non-fictional" travel writing genre onto the complex, liminal, transatlantic space.

When an essay takes up this mandate, the result is innovative and interesting scholarship. Lindsay Mayo Fincher's "'Lodestar to Isabella's Wanderings': Bird's West and her British Audience," for example, engages with Isabella Bird's constructed American West, and its domestic implications. By contrasting the highly constructed sororal "correspondence" of Bird's

narratives to the actual correspondence between the author and her sister, Fincher shows how the ostensible factuality of her account lends Bird authority over both her text and the American frontier. Fincher shows how the West Bird constructed in her "letters," constitutes a backdrop through which she could escape the British gendered censure which bound and defined her fictional implied sister-reader. It is the text's performance of a non-fictional account of the American West that enables Bird to settle new authorial territories as a female writer in nineteenth-century Britain.

Similarly, in "British Travelers and the 'Condition-of-America Question': Defining America in the 1830s," Elizabeth J. Deis and Lowel T. Frye explore the implications of the non-fictional nature of travel accounts, this time in the context of British party politics and their periodical outlets. Deis and Frye show how the "partisan construction of suitable Americas" was grounded in politicized non-fictional travel accounts—under the guise of nuanced, unbiased narratives—being reinterpreted and re-inscribed by reviewers and publications on various points along the political spectrum. These texts and their politicized authors became contested territories within the British political landscape, which perceived the United States almost exclusively as an experiment in democracy for Britain's edification, rather than a legitimate nation and society unto itself.

Susan P. Casteras's "'Too abhorrent to Englishmen to render a representation of it…acceptable': Slavery as seen by British Artists Traveling in America" stands out in its choice of medium: not travel narrative *per se*, but pictorial representations of American slavery. This marked deviation from the scope of the collection is easy to forgive: Casteras's use of the slave auction metaphor is powerful and thought-provoking, as she suggests that British "imaginative reworkings of 'real' occurrences," intended to convey British moral superiority in the matter of slavery, exploit the brutality of slavery by offering it up as a theme for the consumption of the British public (250).

Overall, the essays are well-written and the scholarship is thorough, but it is hard to shake the sense that, as a whole, this collection has misrepresented itself in the introduction. Rather than actually charting the ways in which the *genre* of non-fictional travel narratives informed British attitudes towards the transatlantic sphere, the focus of many of the essays is on different issues entirely. The analysis of issues of gender and race projected across the Anglo-American cultural divide in the shape of non-fictional travel accounts is sound and useful, but the engagement with genre implications tends to be limited. Taken all in all, however, *Nineteenth-Century British Travelers in the New World* is an elucidating read on the ways in which the representation of the transatlantic other functioned as a reciprocal gaze, revealing contemporary British self-imagining as well as the image of the American "Other," particularly with regard to race, gender and policy.

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