

Reviews

Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe. By Ruth Ellen Gruber. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. Pp. 304, introduction, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations.)

Ruth Gruber, in her ambitious book *Virtually Jewish*, takes as her subject the recent European phenomenon of non-Jewish interest and participation in Jewish culture. This topic is ripe for research, given the press attention to some of its various elements: new Jewish festivals, new Jewish museums, even new Jews. *Virtually Jewish* has four main sections, all of which address what Gruber calls the "Jewish phenomenon"—a constellation of Jewish cafés, foods, monuments, celebrations, music, clothing, and identity, constructed by those who "perform . . . Jewish culture from an outsider perspective" (11)—in short, the apparent existence of Jewish culture in the apparent absence of Jews.

Part I: "Afterlife" discusses the phenomenon in general, analyzing its existence, participants, and diverse motives. The other three parts of the book deal with what Gruber sees as its main manifestations, namely Jewish monuments, Jewish museums, and Klezmer music. Part II: "Jewish Archaeology" addresses the massive efforts dedicated to the restoration of Jewish sites, following not only Nazi destruction but, also, in eastern Europe, a half-century of often Communist-motivated neglect, ironic transformations of use, and local scavenging. Part III: "Museum Judaism" addresses the wide range of local European Judaica collections, displays, and presentations

and their diverse aims. Part IV: "Klezmer in the Wilderness" considers this traditional yet flexible musical form, which is perhaps the most widespread manifestation of Jewishness in Europe.

Virtually Jewish lucidly captures some of the quirky, ironic, and moving passions of non-Jews who have discovered a powerful and inexplicable pull towards Jewishness in their own lives. Gruber frames her discussion with observations of interesting and important tensions—those between sincerity and self-congratulation, appreciation and appropriation, guilt and stereotyping (and whether it is all "good for the Jews" anyway)—that echo those experienced by many Jewish visitors to formerly "Jewish spaces" in Europe.

Gruber, a freelance journalist living in Italy and Hungary and for many years a foreign correspondent for United Press International and the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, is well-positioned to write this book. Her two previous books, *Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to Eastern Central Europe* and *Upon the Doorposts of Thy House: Jewish Life in East-Central Europe Yesterday and Today*, as well as her involvement in the early Jewish community revival in Poland, reveal her own longstanding interest and intimate participation in the very reinvention of Jewish culture she portrays in her present work. Indeed, it is precisely Gruber's intensive engagements with Jewishness in Europe that suggest, to me, the value of a somewhat different perspective on "the Jewish phenomenon" than that offered by Gruber. In my view, the easy separation of "virtual" from "authentic" Jewishness can obscure as much as it

reveals, indicating Jewish nostalgia for Europe as much as European yearnings for Jews. While Gruber is clearly aware of the slipperiness of her chosen terms (see especially the section "Is It Jewish? Is It Culture?"), the structure of her argument, and most obviously, the book's title, reinforce the illusion that "virtual" and "authentic," "cultural products" and "living culture," as well as "cultural outsiders" and "insiders," are natural taxonomies.

The jacket of Gruber's book shows the flat cardboard cutouts of traditionally-garbed pre-war Polish Jews that inhabit the beautifully restored Izaak synagogue in Kazimierz, the historical Jewish quarter of Krakow, Poland. Chosen, no doubt, as icons of the phenomenon of "virtual" Jewishness, the photograph alludes to other questions—of the context, audience, and cultural dialogues involved in the Jewish phenomenon—that Gruber did not pursue. For one, the picture suggests a static solitude that is not the permanent, or even primary, atmosphere of such Jewish icons. Living in Kazimierz for some months, I saw these very same puppet Jews often, draped with the gangly arms of Israeli teenagers posing for their friends' cameras, or piously ignored by American Chasidim on pilgrimage, who stood praying, unruffled, next to their cardboard doppelgängers.

While Gruber notes the roles of local Jews as well as foreign Jews in "the Jewish phenomenon," and suggests that "virtual" Jewry "may be enriched by input from contemporary Jewish communal, intellectual, institutional, or religious sources" (21), she de-emphasizes these sources, both as a choice of focus in her

book and as a social reality. She sees Jewish and non-Jewish efforts and interests as "parallel processes," leaving "virtual Jewishness" as "a form of Jewish culture, or at least Judaica, minus the Jews" (8).

Yet her balanced and well-researched book is replete with examples of how these "virtual" and "authentic" Jewish processes are inextricably intertwined. If we explore how various individuals and groups of Jews relate to both more normative Jewish and "new Jewish" cultural forms and how these contemporaneous forms shape each other, in short order we must also ask whether the distinction between "virtual" and "authentic" Jewishness is useful, or even possible. While Gruber maintains the apparent distinction between "virtual" and "authentic, communal, traditional, etc." Jewishness throughout the book, the real distinction between them is shaky.

Who, in the living Izaak synagogue space unseen in the book-jacket photo, is being "authentically" Jewish? The Israelis? The Chasidim, who after prayer might watch the synagogue's educational video on Polish Jews, have a smoke, and then videotape graves in the nearby Remu cemetery with their camcorders? Or Dominick Dybbek, organizer of the synagogue restoration project, son-in-law of the head of Krakow's Jewish community, and Hebrew-speaking citizen of the State of Israel? Visitors animate the new Jewish spaces in Kazimierz, regardless of who created them. Here Polish and Jewish salvage projects meet and intertwine, and identities and memories are actively negotiated and redefined.

Gruber, by her choice of topic and the wide angle of her lens, gestures towards the "new Jewish Studies" that breaks with its traditional counterpart by exploring how history and identity inform each other, raising questions about difference and solidarity, and recognizing that Jewish culture exists in a field of interactions with other cultures. And in so doing she offers us something important and unique that puts her in the company of other new thinkers on Jewishness who have grappled with elements of the European Jewish phenomenon. Diana Pinto has written encouragingly regarding the potential of "the Jewish Space" in Europe; James Young discusses the politics surrounding Holocaust monuments and memorials; and of course there are well-worn paths through the particular problems of Jewish memory, history, and commemoration in Germany. Yet *Virtually Jewish* is the first book to look comprehensively at the question of post-Holocaust Jewishness in Europe in a conceptually expansive way (notwithstanding Jonathan Webber's important edited volume, *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*. London/Washington: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994). In contrast, for example, to Bernard Wasserstein's pessimistic *Vanishing Diaspora*, Gruber's work opens the lens on "Jewishness" wide enough to consider new or unacknowledged forms of Jewish vitality in Europe.

But Gruber stops short of what might be the most significant contribution of ethnographic and cultural studies to Jewish topics; namely, questioning, rather than presuming, the content and boundaries of "Jewishness," and

acknowledging Jewishness as always a social construction that is performed and attributed rather than a stable essence. Indeed, it appears as if the trade-off for Gruber's willingness to consider Jewishness within a larger field is her adherence to a clear "virtual/authentic" dichotomy that suggests that *real* Jewishness is a clearly identifiable and discrete entity, and the realm of *real* Jews. Such categorization, in turn, structures how she interprets her own evidence, forcing her to treat the Jewish and non-Jewish projects as separate rather than jointly rooted and deeply intertwined. She thus neglects the interesting cross-fertilizations, dialogues, and blurrings among the more and less traditional Jewish projects, and how they are negotiated, understood, and supported by the variously-defined Jews and non-Jews who share this field of interest. Indeed, what is fascinating about the Jewish "revival," at least in Poland, is the *collaborative* nature of its development, and the shifting boundaries of "Jewishness" itself.

Looking at some of the specific paths along which Jewish identity in Europe has ebbed and flowed—and the sometimes unexpected engines that have driven its re-emergence as a vital, habitable category—helps to illuminate its fluid character. As noted above, much of Gruber's authority is based on her own participation as an "outside" catalyst of European Jewish revival. She discusses her involvement in the early 1980s in Warsaw's "Jewish Flying University," a "semiclandestine group of young Polish Jews and non-Jews who were trying to teach themselves about Judaism and

Jewish history, culture, and traditions" (21) which, like much new Jewish communal life in Poland, owes a debt both to dissident Catholic intellectuals and the foreign Jewish visitors who supported and encouraged it. Indeed, the Jewish Flying University is an excellent illustration of the ties between Polish interest in Jewishness and Poland's early democratic movement, as well as of its character as a joint endeavor between Polish Jews and non-Jews. Konstanty Gebert, one of the Polish-Jewish founders of the Jewish Flying University and now a leader of Poland's new Jewish community, lists the "Jewish Culture Weeks organized by dissident Catholic intellectuals as one of the major sources of energy and information that helped young 'Poles of Jewish origin' . . . to make sense of their heritage" (p. 162 in Gebert's article, *Jewish Identities in Poland: New, Old, Imaginary*, in Jonathan Webber's edited volume, *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*. London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994). Iwona Irwin-Zarecka adds that "[i]t would often be from these Catholic friends that a Jew brought up in silence learned some basics of Judaism and Jewish history" (pp. 90-91 in her book, *Neutralizing Memory: The Jew in Contemporary Poland*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1989). Thus, beyond mere support and company for Jews and their search, we see that non-Jewish Poles made an active contribution to thinking through what Jewishness might *mean* in today's Poland. Included in Gebert's description of the ethnically and religiously mixed Jewish Flying University is its character as "a hot-bed of debate on individual Jewish identities

in contemporary Poland" (p. 164 in Gebert's 1994 article, cited above).

Without detracting from Gruber's fine and significant work, it is necessary, I think, to ask what the implications might be of focusing precisely on what she downplays. Primary among these might be a profoundly different understanding of identity formation and maintenance, and the relationship of these to popular culture.

There is a complexity that remains to be captured in how people live their group identities, both within and between the categories that society proclaims to be authentic. "Virtual" identities, Gruber suggests, can be taken on as complements or alternatives to "real world" identities, allowing people to "act *as if* they are, whoever they want" (21). But is this different from any other kind of identity? Or, more broadly, how could any "virtual" culture or ethnicity be distinguished from any other more or less "chosen" ethnicity in the post-Enlightenment era?

Gruber notes that "Some [of those newly interested in Jewishness] go so far as to wear Stars of David around their necks, assume Jewish-sounding names, attend synagogue, send their children to Jewish schools, and follow kosher dietary laws, in addition to championing Jewish causes" (11). One is compelled to ask, then, what—short of a racial or orthodox religious definition of a Jew, neither of which Gruber claims to hold—makes these people not Jewish? Are young halakhic Jews whose identities may be based mostly on a vague sense of collective ancestral victimhood less "constructed" or "appropriating" of

identity than a European goy who feels similarly drawn to identify with Jewishness?

Clearly, there are more and less committed participants in "the Jewish phenomenon," just as there are more and less committed Jews. So when Gruber expresses suspicion of those who enjoy the pleasures of "virtual Jewishness" but display "little apparent interest in the local, living Jewish present" (10) she begs the question of *which* living Jewish present she has in mind. In places where orthodoxy (if anything) is the only "official" religious choice, Jewish cabarets, cafes, museums, and tourists offer alternatives, spaces in which one can experience oneself as communally Jewish regardless of one's specific ancestry.

New forms of Jewish culture are being created in Europe's long-empty "Jewish spaces." Pilgrimages to Poland are *becoming* Jewish culture for many foreign Jews (every 11th grade Israeli class makes such a trip), and visiting Kazimierz's Jewish cafes is *becoming* Jewish culture for long-closeted Polish Jews. And it is in such "virtual" venues that foreigners and locals often meet or reunite, mingle, tell stories, create new Jewish networks, and recollect shards of Jewishness they feel they have lost.

Everyone is *inauthentic* to someone else; one person's "virtual" is another's deepest sense of self. Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, told Konstanty Gebert, a leader of Poland's hard won "new Jewish" community, "You guys are a fraud, a literary fiction. The Jewish people is dead, and you simply thought yourselves up, looking for originality and

exoticism. You are not for real" (p. 165 in Gebert's 1994 article, cited above). And the American Jewish Lauder Foundation's rabbi in Krakow, Sascha Pecaric, is not accepted by the old guard of pre-war, Yiddish-speaking Krakovian Jews ("Rabbi?" they ask, telling me, "We haven't had a rabbi here in years. . ."). Neither is he accepted by many of the new, young Jews—who crave an intensity of Jewish purity and distinction—because it is rumored that he was born a Muslim. Finally, how many assimilated Jews look to the long robes and fur hats of the Chasidim—a costume borrowed from the 18th century Catholic Polish nobility—as a mark of ur-Jewish authenticity and cultural continuity?

Each of us knows for ourselves what is authentic Jewishness, and many of us belong to groups that maintain these distinctions and reinforce their boundaries. But we must investigate local understandings of Jewishness, rather than impose our own, and attend to the influences of Jewishness and surrounding cultures on each other, if we are to understand and describe the "phenomenon" at hand as it is lived, and gain some insight as to how it got that way. Still, the idea that these cultural dialogues might lead to blurrings, to mixings, indeed to "corruptions" of what is "really Jewish" is a source of profound consternation for many. As Gruber expresses her own discomfort, "Visiting outsiders and probably even many Poles . . . often confound the vitality of the virtual Jewish world with the real thing, mistaking external Jewish style for internal, communal, Jewish substance" (69).

I do not suggest that ethnic particularism is, or should be, a thing of the past. Judaism—and these days, Jewishness—has never been a universalist tradition, and that fact may contain its own wisdom. But I suspect that some of the discomfort is based in many visitors' own waning sense of Jewishness. Indeed, Gruber addresses the longstanding Jewish nostalgia for the exterminated shtetl culture, and alludes, through mention of Alain Finkielkraut's *Imaginary Jew*, to the problem of disconnection from Jewishness among post-Holocaust generation Jews. I would suggest that this is part of the reason why many American Jews visit former Jewish spaces in Europe in the first place, and that our longings play into the Jewish phenomenon as well. If our own Jewishness feels troublingly virtual, perhaps the Jewish interests and competencies of others are just the catalyst we need for our own Jewish renewal, not to mention the ways that the Jewish phenomenon might represent synergy or creativity or reconciliation between estranged Jews and non-Jews and their respective yearnings.

Nor am I overly sanguine. Jewish-Christian dialogue isn't the norm, in any format or venue; nor, as Gruber points out, does any new European interest in Jewishness preclude overt anti-semitism or Holocaust denial, stemming in part from ignorance and miseducation, in the selfsame societies. But in Poland, at least, the purveyors of what Gruber calls "virtual Jewishness" include the individuals most active in, sympathetic to, and educated about Jewishness in Europe today.

As Bernard Harrison affably states, "The identity of any man or woman is,

after all, or often is, a palimpsest composed of fragmentary memories, imprints, of those he or she has loved" (p. 4 in his 1996 article, Talking like a Jew: reflections on identity and the Holocaust, in *Judaism* 45 (Winter):3–28). This may not be the whole story of identity, but if Europe's opening up *to* Jewishness means the opening up *of* Jewishness a bit, if "philo-semitism" is in some way a critical project that might resist more oppressive structures and silences and samenesses that leave no room for Jewishness at all, this might be seen—for now—as an authentically good thing.

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Legend and Belief. Dialectics of a Folklore Genre. By Linda Dégh. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001. Pp. 498, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations.)

Linda Dégh is one of the researchers whose works on legend and storytelling belong to the 'canonical' corpus of 20th century folkloristics. This monograph is an outcome of her life's work, the result of co-operation with her late husband, Andrew Vázsonyi, and of lively dialogues with many folklorists to whom Dégh gives credit in her acknowledgements (vii-viii). One of the distinctive traits of the book is its belief in the existence of scholarly truth, in valid theory that leads us to the correct understanding of the complex world of folklore and the genre of legend in particular. Although Dégh pursues a master theory, making her discourse authoritative and monological, she ponders other expert opinions, starting from the Grimm brothers. She relies upon "intensive field ethnography, archive and library research, and rigorous text and context analysis" (9). The book aims to present a coherent theoretical framework for interpreting legends that the author sees as "a traditional product of the Western world" (9). This sets some frames for her study, which deals with European and North American 20th century folklore, both oral and written. Dégh introduces the reader to contemporary "New Age" beliefs and occultism: ghosts, haunted places, Satanism, sensitives, UFOs, etc. However, she does not explore the occult

phenomena but instead "examines the world of legend that surrounds them" (4).

Dégh examines the extensive research on legend and sees a major "communication gap between armchair legend scholars, who deal with abstracts and fossils, and those who in their role as fellow travelers pursue the dynamics of narration as it unfolds, conscious of being a participant in the enterprise" (95). Being a fieldworker herself, Dégh clearly favors the latter. Although she acknowledges research done in the archives on past storytelling practices, she writes that such works "cannot compete with first-hand observations by the analysts themselves" (207). Thus she finds historical and philological research of limited value; she also criticizes folklorists who have truncated legend texts and published them without any data about storytelling context and without professional commentaries. As negative examples, Dégh refers to many European anthologies of urban legends (96).

A great deal of legend research has focused on its subgenres, leading to a rich terminology conceptualizing the varieties of belief expressions. It developed towards seeing complexity, pluralism, and contradictions in the realm of legends, its forms and functions. Dégh prefers simply to lump all these materials together and treat them all as legend, the genre that "entertains debate about belief" (97). Thus, legend becomes an overarching term for a variety of expressive forms whose common core is belief and discussion about it. Dégh sees legend as an extremely vital genre, which has maintained its importance in

everyday communication and acquired a prominent place in modern mass media. According to Dégh, belief in legend does not imply the concept of the supernatural (as in her discussion of the legends about the *House of Blue Lights* in Indianapolis of which only 5 percent contain supernatural elements [165]).

"Legend" thus becomes a flexible and immense category, an endless ocean of constantly emerging and transforming texts, all of which share questions about belief. This begs the question of what "belief" is. Throughout the book this issue gets less attention, which becomes evident even from the index, where we find only seven references to the notion of "belief." Sometimes the author gives almost cryptic comments (e.g., "It is not the belief of the narrator, nor any beliefs of the participants, but rather *the belief itself*, making its presence felt, that is essential to any kind of legend" [140][italics in original]). Belief is "invisible and inaudible" (82); it thus seems to be an immanent, hidden quality of some texts that only a folklorist can recognize and label as legends. But then how shall we distinguish them from non-legends? Probably not all verbal statements that include belief and discussions about it should be considered legends. Dégh writes: "Building on experience in the ethnography of the legend, beyond the narrow-minded fuss of setting formal categories for an index as an end-product, I *believe* that the legend must be seen as a plot unit regardless of the lack of formal cohesiveness of its variants" (102, my italics). Even if this belief would be expressed in informal communication, this statement obviously could not be cat-

egorized as a legend, although it explicitly refers to personal belief and is open for debate. The missing plot does not seem to be a firm criterion for excluding this text as a legend because elsewhere in the book Dégh discusses non-narrative legends as well.

Obviously not all legend-like texts have always been suggested to be believable; their primary function may be amusement or something else, such as a satirical expression of ideology or political attitudes. One of Dégh's sources of legends in contemporary mass media is the tabloid *Weekly World News*. For example, its October 7, 2003 issue contains a commented photo album of the gay wedding of Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden. Although it is presented as a well-documented event and purports to be true, referring to the authority of the CIA, its authors probably do not expect to find a single credulous reader.

Let's also consider the following issue of belief and believability. While writing about chain letters and supernatural belief held by educated, affluent Americans, Dégh refers to the stationery of a letter, including the names of "prominent intellectuals whose names are too well-known to be revealed" (192). I admit, I do not share the author's belief that the address list of the chain letter is true and not made up by somebody to amuse the next readers. The disbelief I verbalize in this review has taken us far from the original topic of the chain letter and its supposed quality of bringing good luck. Is there a difference between discussing belief in legend conversations and doing it at a meta-textual level? The

problem also remains how to distinguish legends from non-legends if the latter conversational forms also often include debates about belief.

More elaborate discussions about the notion of belief can be found in the second half of the book, mainly in the fifth chapter on "The Landscape and the Climate of the Legend." Legend-tellers are characterized as believers, which implies a general fascination with extranormal topics and readiness to participate in discussions of believability (221). Dégh writes about "diverse degrees of belief" (229) and its "fluctuation" (315). Belief at the heart of the legend can be understood through the "articulation of culture-specific, religion-specific truth by individuals" (318). Believing is conceptualized as a behavioral attitude (261), but generally the author seems to avoid fixed definitions in accordance with her understanding of legend and belief as fluid categories.

There are only a few errors in the book, such as the year of publication of *Malleus maleficarum* (263), which should be 1487. The title of Leea Virtanen's book *Varastettu isoäiti* (453) should be translated as "Stolen grandmother." Philologically oriented readers of the book would probably like to see more specific references to the pages of previous scholarship, instead of general references to whole publications.

The book is rich in topics not discussed in this brief review. It is animated by the spirit of lively discussions and simply invites its reader to think critically and argue with the author, who is both polemical and generous with brilliant ideas that will hopefully be developed

in future scholarship. Among such illuminating insights are seeing Western folk religion as "the informal doppelgänger of mainstream Christian philosophy" (262), "institutionalization of legends by the occult and borderline sciences" (262), "scientification of the legend" (266), and a multitude of others. Dégh's monograph is a major contribution to the scholarship on legend, a useful treatise in a long format, which offers guidelines to other folklorists who wish to pursue the study of legends. This book teaches how to problematize folklore material and question the validity of previous research; it is a proof that it is possible to express one's individual voice in the polyphonic folkloristic discourse about the legend, a truly big and immortal genre.

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The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation. Edited by Mieke Bal with the assistance of Bryan Gonzales. Cultural Memory in the Present. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. xix + 392, introduction, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations.)

The Practice of Cultural Analysis is an introduction to the discipline of Cultural Analysis, whose focus is "not only on contemporary culture, but also on historical phenomena analyzed and interpreted from a contemporary theoretical viewpoint, in their relevance to the present" (Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), www.hum.uva.nl/asca; accessed December 18, 2002). The book is a volume of essays demonstrating the necessity and the practical applications of a new, interdisciplinary school, in which self-reflection is central to the analysis of cultural objects, informing both academic process and interpretation as well as our understanding and experience of our own present.

Self-reflection and the effect of observation and intervention within studies of culture are not new to many of the contemporary humanities and social sciences, including Folklore and Anthropology. Therefore, for scholars within these disciplines, Cultural Analysis reinforces and creates a forum for current practice, in which interpretation of cultural processes, such as gender formation or heritage and identity building, is attentive not only to the data collected, but also to the historical moment in which scholars perform their analysis, the cultural and

academic experience they bring to their studies, their relationships to previous scholars and studies, the objects chosen, and the conclusions drawn. *The Practice of Cultural Analysis* is "designed to promote dialogue" (325), however, and seeks to demonstrate the relevance of this approach to a variety of disciplines throughout academia. Therefore the book includes essays that discuss, for example, literature, history, art, politics, aesthetics, popular culture, gender, and film. And in turn, the book also seeks to show how different disciplines and their study help to create and strengthen the need for the new interdisciplinary school.

The Practice of Cultural Analysis begins with an introduction by Mieke Bal, Professor of Theory of Literature and a Founding Director of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis. Bal focuses on the cultural object and its significance as a "gesture of showing," a discursive act that is performative in its very nature (7). Bal and, subsequently, each of the authors seek to introduce readers to a new way of looking—one in which we are all active participants in the performance of culture and its material objects, and therefore active participants within analysis and interpretation. This concept is familiar to contemporary Folklorists and also practiced today within the context of the museum, "the kind of cultural object on which cultural analysis can set to work" (7), wherein an approach to both the cultural object and its analysis as performance places the academic or observer in the midst of a dialogue. Bal suggests in the introduction, and more in depth in her own *Double Exposures: The*

Subject of Cultural Analysis (London: Routledge, 1996), that this may be seen in terms of first, second, and third person, wherein an expositor (or curator) communicates with a visitor about an object, respectively (8).

Following Bal's introduction and a short prelude in which Janneke Lam discusses the visualization of the process of looking through a dialogue in images between herself and Edwin Janssen, *The Practice of Cultural Analysis* is divided into four parts that lead the reader from Cultural Analysis practice to self-reflexivity and include essays from nineteen authors. Part I, titled "Don't Look Now: Visual Memory in the Present," discusses the presence of the past in the present and the "theoretical theme of visuality, of looking" (24). Evelyn Fox Keller considers the role of intervention within Biology, focusing on the microscope and use of x-rays. Nanette Solomon, Griselda Pollock, and Carol Zemel analyze gender and cultural identity in Art History. Solomon looks at images of women as culturally produced signs and studies a paradigm shift in representation within the works of Vermeer. Pollock also examines woman as sign, but her study explores gender roles and relationships within the world of art. Focusing primarily on Lee Krasner, Pollock seeks to broaden the feminist discussion of "the necessary relations between a woman who is an artist, her cultural moment, and the discursive terms available for historical analysis and interpretation" (78). Carol Zemel considers photographic images of Jewish life in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s and the ways in which these representations both reflect

and create national character and consciousness. Thomas Elsaesser examines the place of film and cinema and contemporary Film Studies in the history and academics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Finally Stephen Bann proposes a paradigm for the study of History, stating that ". . . the cultural critic is not simply someone who analyzes and reorders textual material, even to the point of undermining it and exposing its hidden ideologies . . . the cultural critique works on discourses which have already been fragmented, already destroyed, if we set them within the broader historical perspective" (127).

Part II, titled "Close-Ups and Mirrors: The Return of Close Reading, with a Difference," contains essays that demonstrate close reading as a critical practice. Although the previous section suggests that Cultural Analysis applies to the study of many cultural forms, the authors in this group of essays focus primarily on written texts. Helga Geyer-Ryan examines the cultural construction of Venice as both place and rhetorical figure within literature. Ernst van Alphen discusses loss of self both within the text of *Nightwood* and within himself as its reader. Frank R. Ankersmit considers History and historical truth. J. Cheryl Exum analyzes various visual interpretations of the *Book of Ruth*, such as Philip Hermogenes Calderon's painting *Ruth and Naomi* and the films *The Story of Ruth* by Henry Koster and *Naomi and Her Two Daughters-in-Law* by William Blake. Isabel Hoving looks at space and identity as they relate to both Cultural Analysis and postcolonial theory, stating that "the focus on the complexity of text or

image itself, and the focus on lived experience in cultural analysis, can form an antidote to the universalizing tendencies in postcolonial theory" (204). Hoving imagines that "one characteristic of such a theoretical practice will certainly be that it will welcome the voices and discourses of writers, poets, and narrators from outside the academy with the same eagerness with which dominant theories of movement are usually met" (218). Finally, Siegfried Zielinski considers standardizing praxes of expression and multiplicity within contemporary art and creativity.

Part III, titled "Method Matters: Reflections on the Identity of Cultural Analysis," presents "different perspectives that indicate the diversity of views that are compatible with, and helpful for, the kind of practice which [*The Practice of Cultural Analysis*] demonstrates in the first two parts" (229). Johannes Fabian discusses his ethnographic research in the Shaba region of Zaire, 1972-1974, and the relationship between politics and popular paintings produced during that time. Both Luis Dupré and Theo de Boer set forth philosophical reflections on culture itself. Dupré investigates both the plurality of symbolic systems and metaphysical unity that are found within culture. De Boer looks at culture in order to further investigate "the function, nature, and meaning of cultural analysis in three areas that we may see as three levels of reality: unconscious reality, daily reality, and fictional reality" (272). John Neubauer considers the definition of analysis, and Jon Cook contemplates knowledge, its relationship to the institution of the university, and the effect that

institutional change has on our understanding of what knowledge is and the identity of cultural studies and cultural analysis.

Finally, in the last section, titled "Double Afterwords," William P. Germano, Vice President and Publishing Director at Routledge Publishers, discusses the benefits and difficulties of publishing works that deal with interdisciplinary studies and cultural studies. Germano suggests that the label "interdisciplinary" can be problematic for many publishers, where cultural studies offers unity of theme and can be more successfully marketed. In closing, *The Practice of Cultural Analysis* features an essay by Jonathan Culler, editor of the journal *Diacritics*, in which he reflects on the field of cultural studies in both the United States and Britain and its relationship to the discipline of Cultural Analysis. Cultural Analysis does not face the same difficulties of proving legitimacy as cultural studies, he states, as its own "theoretical engagement: its reflection on the way in which its own disciplinary and methodological standpoint shape the objects that it analyzes," (345-346) ground it within academia.

The Practice of Cultural Analysis is an ambitious book. Mieke Bal and her colleagues set about to define, legitimate, and demonstrate an entire discipline. On the whole, the publication is successful. The reader is certain to understand what Cultural Analysis is, its practical applications, and its relevance to a wide variety of research topics. The book is heavily weighted toward written texts, however, and many of the authors come to Cultural Analysis with backgrounds

in Literature, History, Philosophy, and Art History. *The Practice of Cultural Analysis* would have benefited from inclusion of more ethnographic- and museum-based studies. In her introduction, Bal discusses Cultural Analysis' direct relevance to the interpretation of the museum as a performative and dialogic cultural object, yet none of the essays really articulate this connection fully.

The essays featured in *The Practice of Cultural Analysis* not only provide the reader a solid foundation and understanding of the discipline of Cultural Analysis, but they also offer scholars throughout the humanities and social sciences a fresh perspective on the nature of analysis and the interpretation of culture and its material objects. *The Practice of Cultural Analysis* is a significant contribution in the changing landscape of contemporary academics.

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Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives. Edited by Elizabeth E. Heilman. Pedagogy and Popular Culture. (New York and London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003. Pp. ix + 308, introduction, appendix, index.)

Five books into the commercial and social phenomenon of *Harry Potter*, the scholarly world is taking more notice of its various implications and opportunities for research. *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives* is a notable attempt to contextualize the series of books by J.K. Rowling in the overlapping academic spheres of cultural studies, reader response theory, literary theory, education, sociology, and related fields. The volume, edited by Elizabeth E. Heilman as part of a series titled "Pedagogy and Popular Culture," is composed of an introduction, fourteen essays, and an appendix.

From Heilman's introduction alone, the complexity of the collection is evident. She begins by relating how she bought her first *Harry Potter* book to read with her son and expands her viewpoint to describe how the social impact of the books can be both experienced and studied in numerous ways. More than many other studies of children's literature, this collection contains personal anecdotes of interactions with the *Harry Potter* books and related subcultures interwoven with densely layered theory; works cited in the essays include everything from Roland Barthes and Judith Butler to Umberto Eco and Edward Said. The book's complexity must speak for itself, as Heilman's overly general summary of

the book demonstrates: "This book examines *Harry Potter* from some of the major theoretical and critical vantage points for the study of literature and culture" (2).

The essays are divided into four major categories. The first, Cultural Studies Perspectives, contains three essays, which approach the issue of cultural reactions to the *Harry Potter* books from different angles. In the first, "Pottermania: Good, Clean Fun or Cultural Hegemony?" Tammy Turner-Vorbeck uses Neo-Marxist theories to articulate some of the perceived difficulties with the *Harry Potter* books and merchandise: the fetishization of commodities, the transmission of socially normative messages, and the battles to foster resistance through literary criticism and media literacy. The second essay, "Harry Potter's World: Magic, Technoculture, and Becoming Human" by Peter Appelbaum, links magic, science, and identity in the *Harry Potter* books and the culture that has sprung up around the books. The glamor of magic in *Harry Potter* gives the books a wide appeal, and the commodification of knowledge and the existence of consumerism among young wizards "makes the children in the books more 'realistic'" (36). Realism is a key concern in the third essay, "Controversial Content in Children's Literature: Is *Harry Potter* Harmful to Children?" by Deborah J. Taub and Heather L. Servaty. The authors catalogue objections to the *Harry Potter* books, review relevant scholarship on how children read and learn about issues such as death and the occult, and conclude with guide-

lines for parents and teachers who wish to protect as well as respect children's learning abilities.

The second grouping, Reader Response and Interpretive Perspectives, also contains three essays, which explore in varying degrees of objectivity issues of intertextuality and how *Harry Potter* is read, interpreted, and reinterpreted. In "Ways of Reading *Harry Potter*: Multiple Stories for Multiple Reader Identities," Kathleen F. Malu layers reader response theories and personal data collected from herself, her son, and her son's classmates to navigate how and why certain readers respond differently to narrative elements in the *Harry Potter* books. The next essay, "Reading *Harry Potter* with Navajo Eyes" by Hollie Anderson, relies entirely on personal response to convey how a certain cultural background will cause particular narrative elements to resonate more than others. For instance, the book characters known as animagi, wizards who can turn into animals, correspond to Navajo beliefs about shapeshifters, whereas the author was made "uncomfortable" by certain elements in the book, such as a death party, because discussing death is taboo in Navajo culture (105). The following essay, "Writing Harry's World: Children Coauthoring Hogwarts" by Ernie Bond and Nancy Michelson, is more scholarly and rigorously researched. Utilizing theories of narrative and identity, the authors examine Internet culture, including fan fiction, which exhibits numerous interesting traits—it is written by Internet-savvy young people and contains many strong reinvented female characters.

The third section of the book, *Literary Perspectives: The Hero, Myth, and Genre*, contains three essays with disparate topics and methods. The first, "*Harry Potter: A Return to the Romantic Hero*" by Maria Nikolajeva, classifies Harry Potter as a romantic hero based on Northrop Frye's five stages of mythic literary characters. She makes the point that the romantic hero is typically masculine, and, following from psychoanalytic insights, usually faces a same-sex villain. However, the character of Harry can also be seen as a reaction to postmodern generic conventions, as he is a refreshingly "straightforward hero" (138). The next essay, "Generic Fusion and the Mosaic of *Harry Potter*" by Anne Hiebert Alton, surveys how the *Harry Potter* books fit to varying degrees within traditional—and sometimes despised—children's literature genres, noting how generic elements influence marketing strategies along with plot content. The *Harry Potter* books combine elements from pulp fiction, series books, school stories, sports stories, fairy tales, and quest romances, resulting in "a generic mosaic made up of numerous individual pieces combined in a way that allows them to keep their individual shape while constantly changing their significance" (159). Deborah de Rosa, author of the final essay in this group, "Wizardly Challenges to and Affirmations of the Initiation Paradigm in *Harry Potter*," brings Joseph Campbell's work on myths to the discussion of Harry Potter as a hero. Though some of Campbell's universalistic claims might appear overly simplistic, the author makes a few inter-

esting points, such as how Rowling inverts the traumatic periods in Harry's life such that he experienced abuse at home and was nurtured at school, whereas the latter is conventionally more of an initiatory experience.

In *Critical and Sociological Perspectives*, the final category of the collection, the four essays are mostly concerned with normative representations of social groups within the books. In "Comedy, Conflict, and Community: Home and Family in *Harry Potter*," authors John Kornfeld and Laurie Prothro discuss the comedic (albeit conventional) dynamics of the two main nuclear families in the *Harry Potter* books, the Dursleys and the Weasleys. The home and family dynamics at Hogwarts, in contrast, are more complex, and provide Harry with the "strength to stray and separate as he undertakes his ultimate quest: to find his parents and thereby find his place in the world" (201). The next essay, "The Seeker of Secrets: Images of Learning, Knowing, and Schooling" by Charles Elster, collapses the dichotomy of "school learning" and "book learning" in favor of a more active paradigm of "inquiry based learning," which benefits not only Harry in the books but also provides alternate models for children who read the books. Elizabeth E. Heilman takes a feminist approach to *Harry Potter* characters in her essay, "Blue Wizards and Pink Witches: Representations of Gender Identity and Power." She examines the (often derogatory) representations of female characters as well as the constraining ways of performing masculinity available to male characters, ending with a call for

feminist critical pedagogy in education. The next essay in this section is "Images of the Privileged Insider and Outcast Outsider," coauthored by Elizabeth E. Heilman and Anne E. Gregory. The authors examine the Hogwarts house groupings; racial, cultural, and ethnic stereotypes in the books; and how these representations are discourses calling for classroom deconstruction. The final essay, "The Civic Leadership of *Harry Potter*: Agency, Ritual, and Schooling" by Rebecca Skulnick and Jesse Goodman, locates Harry's position as a hero in the agency he exercises in certain rituals, such as the Sorting Hat Ceremony, Quidditch games, and his decision, along with Dumbledore, to pronounce Voldemort's dreaded name without fear. This essay, though thought-provoking and well-written, might lose credibility with anyone who studies folklore, as the authors refer to "the actual narrative, the folktale" (273), meaning the text of the *Harry Potter* books; a "folktale" (275), which is actually an anecdote about a teacher encountering difficulties using the books in the classroom; "the folklore of *Harry Potter*" (273), meaning the phenomenon of the books; and "*Harry Potter*, the folktale and folklore" (275), which seems bereft of any real meaning.

The Appendix contains lists of inconsistencies between the *Harry Potter* books and movies and internal inconsistencies within the books. Written by a high school student, this section is disappointing not only because it is a mere list that follows highly theoretical and provocative essays, but also because some of the questions raised seemed banal, such as asking "If Harry Potter was raised with such severe child abuse, why isn't he weird?" and "Why don't the students ever take regular classes such as Math or English?" (282).

On the whole, these essays are stimulating responses to a widely popular phenomenon. Many of the essays complement and enter into a dialogue with each other about issues such as developmental psychology and concerns about teaching and ideologies. For instance, Elster's essay addresses the "dialectic about whether accomplishment in learning is a matter of nature or nurture" (211), using Harry's inherited magical abilities as an example, while Skulnick and Goodman note how "The Sorting Hat not only validates the power of Hogwarts but also demonstrates the dissonance between self-determination and predetermination: are civic identities composed of choices or are they a birth-right?" (266). On the issue of ideologies, many of the authors seem concerned that children might passively absorb the simplistic messages and stereotypes of the *Harry Potter* books or fall prey to vicious consumer impulses. In order to counteract these possibilities, many of the authors make suggestions for how to not only study but critically engage the *Harry Potter* books in classrooms; as Heilman writes in her introduction, "in addition to the significance of this collection for literary and cultural studies, this book is important because it can help parents and teachers to make school curriculum and conversations about books more meaningful" (9). This collection is indeed significant for both reasons, and as such it is a valuable addition to the body of work about popular culture, children's literature, and the magical, enticing world of *Harry Potter*.

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The Black Gentleman. By Ülo Valk. FF Communications No. 276. (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2001. Pp. 217, introduction, bibliography.)

A revision of his 1994 dissertation, first published in Estonian in 1998, Ülo Valk's *The Black Gentleman* presents readers with an impressively thorough and comprehensive study of the role of the Devil in Estonian folklore. Valk explores diabolical manifestations in various forms throughout legend, superstition, and folktale, as well as situating his data in a larger context by providing comparisons both across Christian Europe and locally in Estonian folk religion. On the former account, he draws parallels between the Estonian material and information from theological writings on the Devil in medieval and early modern Western Europe, as well as in the folklore of Estonia's neighbors, like Germany, which lay closer to what is commonly thought of as the center of Christendom. On the latter, he tells us from the beginning of the monograph that his purpose is to redress a relative scholarly neglect of the Devil in Estonian folklore, which he attributes to a misunderstanding of the material as not adequately pre-Christian. Prior scholars fail to understand, he writes, that the Devil has at least as much longevity as any other figure in Estonian tradition; he is similar to any one of a whole menagerie of native daemons and spirits, simply with a name-change and a facelift to reflect a new Christian priority. "The ideas of different eras have merged in the figure of the Devil," Valk writes. "The pre-Christian traits are intertwined with Orthodox and Roman Catholic ideas as well as Lutheran

influences which finally became predominant" (11).

To support his argument and redress this perceived scholarly dearth, Valk presents his readers with a seven-part examination of the Devil, devoting the first four to his manifestations, and the final three—more briefly—to different narrative contexts in which he appears. Thus, he begins with extended discussions of the anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, fantastic, and inanimate incarnations of the devil, and continues with discussions of the devil's appearances as a coachman and in delusions. In each section, he furnishes ample exemplary evidence for the prominence of the devil in Estonian folklore, as well as significant statistical evidence toward that same end.

In the section on anthropomorphic manifestations, for instance, Valk provides examples of the Evil One—a term that he often uses—in the form of a man, a woman, a landlord, and a German nobleman. Of the cases he has examined, he reports that 58.9 percent presents a Devil in human guise. Most of these describe a "typical situation where the Devil is first encountered in human form and then exposed" (27). He demonstrates the breadth of different versions of this scenario, exemplifying the typical, the exceptional, and even a number of cases that do not follow this pattern at all. In addition, he explains what one might term the folk mechanics of the Estonian Devil. We find, for example, that the Devil is often identifiable because he is unusually short or tall (40-41), because he is unusually thin, old, or young (43-45), or because of another anomalous physical feature like peculiar clothing or a single zoomorphic attribute like horse's hooves. Further, as in other European daemonic traditions, we find

that the Devil cannot, in fact, take on a human form, and is thus also identifiable by features peculiar to a facsimile built of base materials like water and earth (26).

In the final part of this section, Valk abandons his emphasis on data in part, providing a particularly illuminating discussion of what he terms "the demonisation of the Germans as well as the 'Germanisation' of the Devil" (87). Through various examples, mostly found in legend, he establishes that the physical appearance of German landlords in Estonia from the seventeenth century forward fits with the general Estonian perception of the look of the Devil. Further, he tells us that as "the landlord merged with the demonic sphere, the place where he lived was transformed into hell" (92). The cause of this, he says, lies in Estonian popular theology—especially that of self-described prophet Tallima Paap—where visions of hell are common, and its occupants are often German nobles (88-89). The peasants' association of their landlords with Germans, as well as a perception of those landlords as both cruel and overtly wealthy (taboo in Estonian folk Christianity) led to this conflation and established both Germans and Germany as a model for the demonic in Estonian folklore.

The remainder of the monograph reads much more like the first, data-rich, portion of the anthropomorphic section than the critical second portion. In the zoomorphic section, Valk contextualizes his Estonian data briefly in terms of various world religions and scholarly explanations, then launches into

example after example of what he terms "the second-frequent manifestation after the anthropomorphic one" (103). He provides a table of statistical data concerning the frequency with which the Estonian Devil appears in various animal forms, following that with examples of manifestations as both domestic and wild animals. His section on fantastic manifestations provides readers with more of the same, as he describes for us satyric Devils (146-149), fiery-eyed Devils (151), and Devils with the teeth of a rake or iron teeth, who spit standard fire, blue fire, or tar (152). Finally, he explores inanimate manifestations of the Devil, concentrating primarily on the Devil as a haystack (163-165), a whirlwind (166), a ball of fire (167), and a trough (168).

Thorough as it is, *The Black Gentleman* is not without its problems. From the outset, Valk tells his readers that were he given a second chance, he would "write a very different study"—that he would add more theoretical and analytical reflection to his already ample empirical data, pay "more attention to the cultural and social context of the time when these pieces of folklore were noted down," and further develop his discussions of "generic variations of folk religion" (9). He emphasizes, however, that this is not a rewrite of his dissertation, merely a revision, and that despite the problems apparent in this study, he is not willing to retread old ground—"to warm up jelly", to use an Estonian expression" (9). By his own admission, then, there is a great deal of untapped potential in the study of the Devil in Estonian folklore, and the framework that he lays out here

could be better developed in one or many future studies. On the other hand, the obvious possibilities for future research based on the data that he provides is a testament to the importance of this book. What Ülo Valk does here, in essence, is open a new discussion of a largely untapped body of folklore, and invite others, both through the strengths and the weaknesses of this study, to participate.

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