

larly Bush's air-dropping of food packages in a mine-ridden Afghanistan with a plausible dropping of kabab packages in New York. But where "War Is Peace" (title of the last essay), where paradoxes are the norm, even the most imaginative artist could inevitably fall short.

Power Politics challenges both postmodernists and traditionalists. On the one hand, it coaxes the meaning out of statistics and denounces the world of games. It dares to look at powers in terms of archetypal twins: Advani and Andy, Bush and Bin Laden replace Rahel and Estha of *The God of Small Things*. On the other hand, it insists on the force of non-violence but in terms most violent and risky: "The only way to combat . . . is by fighting specific wars in specific ways" (86). This comes soon after the description of a scene of villagers arriving to demonstrate, "prepared to be beaten, humiliated, and taken to prison" (81). For Roy such ideological and linguistic incongruencies are necessary because the "fight" (82) is philosophical too.

In *Power Politics* Roy once again works with content removed from under the very noses of experts in order to be re-written, re-presented, and re-produced through captivating narrative styles and unobtrusive endnotes designed for strategic mass consumption. By insisting on the accountability of art, Roy's work redefines the content of literary studies, as it does the subjectivity of readers and writers.

Clara A. B. Joseph

Sacvan Bercovitch, ed. *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, Volume 6, Prose Writing 1910-1950. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2002. pp. xx, 620. \$95.00 US.

After an introduction by Sacvan Bercovitch and acknowledgements, this volume is divided into the following sections: 1) A Cultural History of the Modern American Novel by David Minter; 2) Fictions of the Harlem Renaissance by Rafia Zafar; and, 3) Ethnic Modernism by Werner Sollors. There is also a detailed chronology by Jonathan Fortescue at the end. Running 272 pages, Minter's first section is the longest of the three. It contains an Introduction and three major divisions: 1) A Dream City, Lyric Years, and a Great War; 2) Fiction in a Time of Plenty; and 3) The Fate of Writing During the Depression.

Though the volume title specifies the dates 1910-1950, there is no hint in Minter's essay as to why 1910 is a significant beginning. While his essay

emphasizes the period, it is far-ranging in time, discussing authors from almost every period of American history. Judged by the length, its position in the volume, and his elaboration of themes, one might assume that Minter's essay in its overarching manner is supposed to set forth the basic structure and orientation of the volume and serve as an introduction to the essays by Zafar and Sollors. Beyond the preliminary discussion of Henry James, the ironic standpoint and brief but sustained discussions of London, Dreiser, Wharton, Hemingway, Faulkner and Fitzgerald, the subsections are organized topically. This allows Minter to bring together many authors around single issues, such as the Great War, the city, hope and despair, and the fear of feminization. Given the range of issues in this discussion, one is surprised that race as one of the central modern issues of America in particular and the world in general, is not given greater prominence.

Though race is not emphasized, W.E.B. Du Bois runs like a recursive thread through his essay, but Minter omits Du Bois's telling aphorism, "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line." Minter refers to Du Bois's "double consciousness" from *The Souls of Black Folk*, but fails to let us know that Du Bois's comment had to do with "the Negro." Minter goes on to tell us that Mark Twain was the harbinger of a double consciousness, "standing on the edge of the twentieth century rather than on the edge of a boundless territory" (14). When we meet "double consciousness" again, it has become a general way to express the exclusion of the modern artist, this time to clarify how T.S. Eliot felt as an "outsider" (160). To be sure, any notion might serve to clarify a variety of situations, but in the case of the modern in America, the context of ideas is important. It may be that Minter omitted a substantial discussion of race because he was aware that the next two sections would be addressing it. I hope so, but I also feel that because slavery and its aftermath have had such a material effect upon American culture, Minter, like many others, obscures it, thus giving his essay a strange "lightness of being" tenor.

"[T]he [Harlem] Renaissance presents itself as a metonym for the most significant internal migration within the history of the United States," writes Zafar. She goes on to say, "Geography loomed large in the New Negro movement, whether as particular place – Harlem – or philosophical space – the African diaspora" (287). Harlem does not represent the only migration of African Americans after the Civil War. There were migrations that followed the Mississippi River, from Louisiana through St. Louis and Memphis, ending in the large northern metropolises of Chicago and Detroit and in several smaller cities. And while African American migrations within the country and the Harlem Renaissance are important, the movement of

Americans west across the Mississippi after the Civil War is what created the ideological meaning of “the West” in America. Such overstatement is unnecessary to give significance to the Harlem Renaissance. One must admit that the Harlem Renaissance was an elite and patronized “movement” – though that may be disputed with the analysis of particular works by Langston Hughes, for instance – and was only tentatively expressive of the “African diasporic” cultural experience.

Though Zafar approaches the Renaissance a bit defensively, she nevertheless offers interesting discussions of individual authors. Carl Van Vechten’s position as a patron is noted and she does problematize his book, *Nigger Heaven*, but disagrees with the accusation that he was a “voyeur” or “racial opportunist.” Langston Hughes appears interspersed throughout her discussion, but he is revealed most in a section entitled, “Harlem as a State of Mind,” along with Claude McKay and Jean Toomer. Du Bois’s name comes up again, this time in the context of elitism: his notion of the “talented tenth” is placed next to Alain Locke’s “New Negro.” Zafar continues with a sub-section on gender, “A New Negro, A New Woman: Larsen, Fauset, Bonner,” where a lively discussion ensues between these women. Thunman, Cullen and Ama Bontemps also appear, with commentary on genre. Another section contains a brief discussion of Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright. Zafar tends to favor Hurston’s “modernist aesthetics” over Wright’s socialist realism. Sollors goes into more detail on this debate between Hurston and Wright.

Sollors offers a different understanding of modernism arising from a more international assessment of ‘ethnic’ writers. The section is especially useful for its introduction to less canonical writers, such as Jewish, Slovenian, and Scandinavian authors. Sollors maintains an overarching theme of the movement from country to city but this conveys a nostalgic sense because the movement as it applies to the “ethnic” context indicates immigration from the “old” to the “new” world. This section is given coherence by noting shifts in aesthetic attitudes between the wars with the development of fascism and communism abroad and by observing rapid changes in technology, especially the streetcar and the clock, as well as in nostalgia for the breast.

Sollors begins his foray into the heterogeneous nature of modernist expression by discussing Gertrude Stein’s impact on writers of the period, and on “modernist” or even social realists like Richard Wright. Sollors presents a balanced view of Stein’s significant influence, which does not obscure her potentially offensive political remarks and attitudes. Pound and Eliot have been mentioned in other essays, but it is only here that racism, and Pound’s

Book Reviews

fascism, are noted. Sollors also notes that even Hurston made problematical statements in praise of Hitler.

We are offered a fair assessment of the pitfalls of the categories "modern," "pre-modern" and "anti-modern," with sustained discussions of recurrent motifs. Sollors shows how theorists from the Frankfurt school and other immigrants who tended to critique realism as an ultra-totalitarian mode of writing often ignored the fact that though "totalitarianism" may have turned anti-modernist, it did have its "modernist" phases. Thus he suggests that social realists such as Richard Wright, or "pre-modern" writers such as Mary Antin, have often been treated unfairly as a result of this cold war ethos. Taken as a whole, especially in this informative essay by Sollors, *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Volume Six*, certainly succeeds in its attempt to offer diverse approaches to the period between 1910 and 1950. Though some readers, such as this reviewer, may be longing for more coherence, the book is a useful tool for anyone working on writers in this period.

Carol Stewart