

There is some unevenness across the volume in language, structure, and terminology. Whilst the explications of the Intervention and other policy measures at the start of most chapters might aid the capacity of the individual contributions to stand alone, the reader of the entire volume might find these to be redundant on occasion, particularly given the careful work by some of the earlier chapters to outline the stakeholders, reports and policy documents. The 'insularity' of the chapters is furthered by the lack of cross-referencing amongst the contributions (aside from the introduction). The use of the military in the early stages of the Intervention is conspicuous in its absence for the most part of the volume.

Regardless: This collection of essays might prove to be a valuable resource for scholars of contemporary Australian Studies and beyond. And, as indicated at the outset of this review, the broader context of national(ist)ic policies in zones of cultural contact across the globe means such explications and analyses are timely and necessary.

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Oliver Scheiding, René Dietrich, and Clemens Spahr, eds. *A History of American Poetry. Contexts – Developments – Readings*. Trier: WVT, 2016. 482 pp.

With their close to five-hundred-page edited volume, Oliver Scheiding, René Dietrich and Clemens Spahr have taken up the impressive task of revisiting and reevaluating America's literary history of poetry. They are not only keeping a keen eye on the fluidity of poetic canon-formations, but also provide what they identify as a "context-based close reading" (2). In this spirit, *A History of American Poetry* opens with a note to the reader, in which the editors explain the rationale behind each chapter. On one level it seeks to methodologically and structurally provide information on respective historical and literary contexts. On the other level it analytically sets two select poets "into dialogue" (3). Released in Ansgar and Vera Nünning's series *WVT-Handbücher zum Literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium*, the handbook for students promises "to the reader diachronic readings of representative poetic texts and authors from the early Americas to the present" (3). The densely written collection aims at providing answers to

the student's needs for fresh and informative readings of canonical and non-canonical poems. The thirty chapters engage revisionary trends and thus unfold a critical history of American poetry that challenges conventional interpretations and provides insightful new readings of well-known poems and writers as well as introductions to poets and texts that may be more unfamiliar. (3)

The handbook is divided into five (not all-too-surprising) major sections: 'Early American Poetry,' 'Romanticism and Nineteenth-Century American Poetry,' 'American Modernisms,' 'Post-War Poetry and Postmodern Experiment' and 'Contemporary American Poetries' [*sic*]. Running through the contents page offers a veritable treasure trove for advanced readers of U.S. poetry, as one immediately recognizes many familiar names of poets, starting out with the usual suspects for Puritan poetry, Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor, as representatives of "Religious Poetry and New England Verse," while ending with the much lesser known poets Myung Mi Kim and Claudia

Rankine in the final chapter on "Twenty-First Century Poetry and Politics." One might be tempted to muse over the arbitrariness of placing Anne Waldman, Saul Williams, Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath into the fourth section titled "Postwar Poetry and Postmodern Experiment," while reserving Amiri Baraka, Rita Dove, Adrienne Rich and Harryette Mullen for the section "Contemporary American Poetries." Yet, although the word 'contemporary' appears elusive as a periodization marker for what the final section holds in store, the editorial efforts suggest a subversive approach here, as the label presents poetry exclusively by former marginalized voices: ranging from Native American poetry, to African American poetry, contemporary women's poetry, Asian American poetry, Chicano/a Poetry and Disability Poetry. The editors do not, and that is but one of the noticeable strengths of the laudable project, read them as a direct consequence of the Civil Rights movement and its lasting impact on expanding and revising a predominantly white, male canon in the United States. Instead, they explain that "in the light of the multiple ethnic voices that have helped to constitute American poetry it seems futile to offer an all-encompassing chapter on 'ethnic poetries'" (3). Thwarting this expectation, "the handbook contains numerous chapters on African American and Native American poetry in different historical periods as well as discussions of more recent Asian and Latino American poetry" (ibid.). This revisionist approach aims at an ethnic inclusion from the start, as Astrid Franke's chapter on the 18th- and 19th-century "slave poets" (49), Phillis Wheatley and George Moses Horton, exemplifies. This stance is also present in René Dietrich's chapter on "Native American Poetry in the Age of U.S. Expansion" as well as in Michael Basseler's discussion of the complex relationship of African American poets to "Legacies of Modernism," to name but a few. A second asset of the handbook that can only be briefly mentioned here lies in foregrounding and differentiating the diverse communal relevance of poetry from "the public function" (Scheiding 26) of colonial handwritten manuscript culture, a poet-and-audience-centered performance poetry (Zapf 347), to small press Chicana feminist poetry and its political repercussion in the national literary arena (Fellner 427).

The overall outcome of this welcome undertaking, penned by thirty Americanists affiliated with a number of German, Belgian, and Austrian universities, serves as an argument in favour of including American poetry in American Studies programs; and this despite the fact of a noticeable (or perhaps all-too-frequently uttered) shift in students' interest toward other genres and mediatized forms of literary expression. Written *for* students, the handbook requires a great deal of self-study, if not expert guidance. Although the authors make a valuable effort in elucidating terms in those parts of their chapters that provide insight into the construction of literary periods such as romanticism or modernism, the analytic sections are frequently interspersed with heavy literary jargon as a result of the scholars' meticulous close-reading. Due to the lack of a glossary, less advanced students might struggle, but when taking up the challenge, they will gain new insights into the United States and its changing poetic landscape, encountering, if not uncovering, that poetry has obtained a plethora of cultural functions and a multiplicity of voices from America's colonial past to its postcolonial present.

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