

Peter Swirski

"All Roads Lead to the American", Peter Swirski, [b.m.] 2007 : [recenzja]

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

à la légitimation des déplacements géographiques et symboliques. Le jardin cède la place aux réseaux. Ils stimulent ceux qui, partis du jardin d'Éden perdu, tentent d'explorer les dynamiques démocratiques et libérales dans un devenir ouvert sur les possibles des rencontres.

Visibility Beyond the Visible: The Artistic Discourse of American Transcendentalism

by Alben Bakratheva, New Bulgarian University Publishing House, 2007, 350 pp.

This book deals with the poetics of American Transcendentalism. Beginning with the idea that the major New England transcendentalists were of the utmost literary significance, and focusing on their many-sided artistic discourse, the book's inevitable European perspective enhances its preoccupation with the Americanness of the movement, thus emphasizing the uniqueness of the interrelation between sense of place and artistry that the transcendentalists' writings offer. Moving from an exploration of the Transcendentalists' Puritan background to the complex relations of American Transcendentalism with British Romanticism, the book ends with a lengthy consideration of Emerson's ideas of self-reliance, in comparison to those of Thoreau.

From Lowbrow to Nobrow

By Peter Swirski, McGill-Queen's UP, 2006.

Swirski begins with a series of groundbreaking questions about the nature of popular fiction, vindicating it as an art form that expresses and reflects the aesthetic and social values of its readers. He follows his insightful introduction to the socio-aesthetics of genre literature with a synthesis of the century-long debate on the merits of popular fiction and a study of genre informed by analytic aesthetics and game theory. Swirski then turns to three "nobrow" novels that have been largely ignored by critics. Examining the aesthetics of "artertainment," he sheds new light on the relationship between popular forms and highbrow aesthetics.

All Roads Lead to the American

by Peter Swirski, City (HKUP, 2007).

Examining the history, cinema, literature, cultural myths and social geography of the United States, Peter Swirski's new collection, *All Roads Lead to the American City*, puts some of the greatest as well as the 'baddest' American cities under the microscope. Examining the role of the roads that crisscross and connect the cities, it looks for ways to understand the people who live, commute, work, create, govern, commit crime and conduct business in them. Cities, for the most part, are America. Their values and problems define not only what the United States is, but what other nations perceive the United States to be. Roads and transportation, on the other hand, and



their impact on the American culture and lifestyle, form not only the integral part of the historical rise-and-shine of the modern city, but a physical release from and a cultural antidote to its pressure-cooker stresses. *All Roads Lead to the American City* opens with an essay by a historian, Priscilla Roberts. Panoramic in dimensions, 'All Roads Lead from the American City? The Land of the Urban Frontier' traces in detail the rise of cities and urban culture in America, bringing a consistently political perspective on the volatile debates surrounding the American city. In Chapter Two, 'On the Road in Asian American film: My America ... or Honk if you Love Buddha.' Gina Marchetti, a film scholar, travels in the footsteps of an Asian American filmmaker who records her experience of striking out in search of her own and her country's identity. The twin protagonists of the central chapter, 'A Is for American, B Is for Bad, C Is for City: Ed McBain and the ABC of Urban Procedurals,' are the celebrated novelist Ed McBain and the urban environment of New York City. With an eye towards McBain's documentary aesthetics, literature scholar Peter Swirski takes a detailed look at narrative fiction as socio-urban history. In Chapter Four, "Just Apassin' Through: Betterment and Its Discontents in America's Literature of the Road," literary and religious comparatist, Earle Waugh, takes multi-cultural stock of American road myths and dreams that have lingered from colonial times to this day. Motivated, like all the chapters, by the unease about the human condition in urban society, William John Kyle's 'Urbs Americana—A Work in Progress' concludes the collection. Replete with fact and image, it revisits the themes that animate it throughout: historical settlement, continental expansion, immigration and employment patterns, urban plight and flight, and efforts at renewing the American city and its human resources.