John D. Cox. *Traveling South: Travel Narratives and the Construction of American Identity.* Athens: U of Georgia P, 2005. 252 pp. ISBN 0-820-32765-4, $39.95.

By bringing the "travel paradigm" to bear upon a variety of fictional and nonfictional texts, *Traveling South: Travel Narratives and the Construction of American Identity* challenges the historically narrow definition of travel literature, and explores the critically overlooked significance of southern travel writings in the construction of national identity between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. "Travel," John Cox argues, "remained a central paradigm for imagining the freedoms granted to citizens of the new nation" (3). Five chapters of summary analyses pairing conventional and unlikely travel literature examine, in increasingly complex ways, the rhetorical construction of traveling narrative personas. Attentive to existing literary criticism, these roughly chronological chapters contextualize the central role "freedom to travel" played in the emergence of American national culture. Too often, according to Cox, critics and historians of early America turn to international travel texts to understand American culture and society, yet these regional narratives illuminate perhaps more richly the complex divisions within national identity (13). The book's exclusive focus on southern travel literature seeks to open up more dynamic understandings of the epistemological and ontological meanings of American identity as it challenges the isomorphism between personhood and place.

Building upon Mary Louise Pratt's pioneering work on the travel narrative genre, the first chapter looks to two "founding" travel narratives of nation during the critical years surrounding the Revolutionary War. J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur's *Letters of an American Farmer* (1782) and William Bartram's *Travels* (1791) do not merely reflect their surroundings; they dynamically construct "the natural, political, social, and cultural environments" generally taken as the foundations of the travel narrative (20). While travel complicates the agrarian ideal scholars have come to identify with Crevecoeur's *Letters,* the "travel paradigm" critically elevates Bartram's lesser-read text to the heights of national significance more readily associated with Crevecoeur. Farming for Crevecoeur and Bartram characterizes a static attachment to land, while travel, variously depicted in the figure of the hunter and nomadic society, represents freedom of movement. These competing ideals (farmer and traveler) and ideologies (European and Native American) find synthesis in these texts through the creation of representative hybrid personas that embody the new American society. Travel, in short, encourages a unique American national consciousness that is inherently contrary to agrarian localism and rootedness.

Chapter two, by far the most incisive, offers an important assessment of the racialized limits that constitute this uniquely American "freedom to travel." Slavery is antithetical to travel. It destroys travel's significance "as a sign and vehicle of freedom, subjectivity, and citizenship," yet slaves like Frederick Douglass moved in surreptitious ways that subverted the laws and ideologies of slavery. Such liberating forms of "self-directed travel" are contrasted to the "mere movement" of other slaves like the root man Sandy Jenkins, whose limited movement through circumscribed spaces is qualitatively not "emancipatory" travel (79, 94). Solomon Northrup's *Twelve Years a Slave* casts a more critical eye upon the freedom to travel even as his "slave travels," like those of Douglass, place pressure on the meaning of American national identity founded upon the ideology of free travel. Douglass's flight to northern freedom and professional travels as an abolitionist speaker amply illustrate this travel thesis, yet I wonder if Northrup's free travels and employment at Saratoga Springs's prestigious United States Hotel attest more to the exigencies of economic necessity and the service needs of actual leisure travelers than, as Cox argues, his status as an American traveler and citizen (69, 80). Once Northrup travels beyond New York his free papers become the only guarantee of his freedom, and his right to travel, unlike that of the two white men who betray him into slavery, is all too easily revoked. If travel is indeed the defining freedom of the American nation, as Cox argues, then Northrup illustrates how it is ultimately a racially circumscribed right.

A northern ideology of "home" as a refuge from the chaos of the marketplace emerged in contradistinction to the economic and social confusion of the southern plantation household, and chapter three studies the textual responses English abolitionist Fanny Kemble and ex-slave Harriet Jacobs fashioned in the face of this emerging domestic barrier to a unified national culture. Through their radically different travel experiences, their narratives seek to establish a national domestic space based upon the hegemony of northern ideals. Reading selected passages from the *Journal,* Cox demonstrates how Kemble's self-definition as a traveling woman engenders her "freedom to criticize" her new social environment and its degenerative influence upon gender norms (115, 125). And yet, while Kemble's travels may have "produced and illustrated her freedom," travel determined Jacobs's textual and political subjectivity as an ex-slave (127). Again, as in the earlier discussion of Douglass and Northrup, I wonder whether "travel" quite describes Linda Brent's movement between the households of Dr. Flint and "Aunt Marthy," given her extreme circumscription within slave jurisdictions (132). Neither place

quite rightly functions as a "refuge" for Brent, and the reading of her painful sojourn hidden in her grandmother's crawl space seems overly to celebrate the ideology of "home" that the narrative more often critiques (134). Jacobs does, however, redefine travel in her "loophole of retreat" as "both a physical *and* an ideological activity," and this key renegotiation of travel offers a qualitative contrast to her later travels in England and the northern states as a fugitive slave and domestic servant (135).

Frederick Law Olmstead's 1863 *Cotton Kingdom* is the exclusive focus of a fourth chapter that explores the proposed reform of southern agricultural production and slaveholding culture according to the ideal of the New England yeoman farmer (143–44). This suggested reform, however, again affirms northern hegemony, given its overt criticisms of both the "peculiar institution" and the Confederacy, unlike Olmstead's earlier and more conciliatory books of travel in the South. This mythic ideal of the New England yeoman structures all Olmstead's usually critical views of the South as a region, and prompts him to propose the immigration of free laborers as the most beneficial expedient to the South's socially, economically, and environmentally debilitating dependency upon slavery. In this vein, *The Cotton Kingdom* offers revealing meditations on various modes of mobility ranging from internal migration to European immigration that further inquiry would have critically enhanced, given how travelers (and migrants) like Olmstead, in the chapter's conclusion, become vehicles for the dissemination of northern free market ideologies within the slaveholding south.

Chapter five shifts its focus from single-author books to examine the writings and diaries of Union soldiers whose movements during the Civil War years comprised "the largest movement of travelers through various parts of the South" (165). Many of the book's earlier arguments find synthesis in this final chapter, for these soldiers' narratives exemplify the most dramatic national transformations inherent in southern travel literature (166). Enlistment into the Union Army required the voluntary relinquishment of the freedom to travel, and a number of these soldiers' writings relate the frustrations produced by this curtailment of a fundamental right of free citizenship (169). Wartime mobility inevitably expanded the way these soldiers, Union and Confederate, conceived of themselves and their relationships to the American nation, as the mobilization of the Union Army radically reconstituted a national landscape fractured by regional antagonisms. Cox turns his attention almost exclusively to descriptive passages culled from soldiers' narratives that position these men as observers to and commentators upon southern cultural mores and landscapes, as they sought to reconcile regional differences with

their personal experiences of northern life. Commonality with southerners and shared historical "origins" are readily found in their accounts, which paved the ideological foundation for the "gradual incorporation of the South into the American nation" (192).

The book's application of the travel paradigm to slave narratives and the writings of Union soldiers offers, to my mind, the most generative and instructive challenges to conventional definitions of travel literature. This critical turn acknowledges the troubling limits of the "freedom to travel" and its deeply compromised ideological formation that other chapters too easily claim as the foundation of a unique American national culture. The Articles of Confederation, as the introduction duly notes, granted the freedom to travel within national boundaries to "free citizens," with the telling exception of "paupers, vagabonds, and fugitives from justice" (2–3). More critical attention to the constitutive limits and exclusions of "travel" as a national concept throughout the book would have helped me understand better the ideological and cultural work that "freedom to travel" carried out in these various narratives and in antebellum American society at large. Do Union soldiers, slaves like Douglass and Jacobs, or migrants like Crevecoeur's fictional James all "travel" or exercise the "right to travel" in the same way? Rather than scrutinize further the critically productive (dis)junctures between such forms of free *and* unfree mobility, the book's final pages introduce the "tourist" figure as an analytic to understand these qualitatively different movements. Travel may have made Union soldiers "more fully American, as they participated in one of the freedoms on which the United States was founded," yet black Americans in the post-Reconstruction era continued to face severe restrictions upon their uniquely American "right to travel," despite their new status as citizen-subjects (190). The "color line" policed this American freedom of travel in ways that were disturbingly continuous with the critique *Traveling South* identified in Northrup's early narrative. These particular Americans could not access this "fundamental American right" to free travel, and the book's most cogent conclusions remain those that consider the fundamental contradictions inherent in the American ideology of free travel. Critical concepts including (im)migration, diaspora, exile, and displacement may have more productively defined the various forms of movement at stake in these narratives, while anticipating the struggles over mobility and national identity yet to come.

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