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THE CORPORATE EYE: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884-1929 by Elspeth Brown; AMERICAN EXPOSURES: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century by Louis Kaplan

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reading of Tsiang, Julia Lee ignores his important relationship to mainstream white authors such as Waldo Frank and Theodore Dreiser. This relationship gestures to a more dynamic critical vocabulary than resistance or accommodation, such as racial collaboration, re-Orientalism, and cultural exchange.

Second, these essays provide an at best nominal vision of the promised-for “eccentric” view of Asian American literature. While possibilities abound for such an analysis (examined figures include bilingual, diasporic writers such as Yung Wing), the contributors deploy a monolingual, nation-based approach, rarely making use of international archives/scholarship or performing bilingual literary analyses. Thus, despite this collection’s contention that they are pursuing the literary and social transnational, one gets the feeling that these literary materials—often cross-national and bilingual in nature—exceed these essays’ analytical vocabulary. For example, the contributors cling to the reductive analytical categories of “Asian” and “Asian American” despite the editors’ own contention that the term “Asian American” simply did not exist in the pre-’65 period, and thus represents an anachronism within this kind of scholarship. A greater attention to non-English sources and international scholarship would reveal – taking the Chinese diaspora as an example—that terms such as *Huagong* or *Huaqiao* represent more accurate terms than “Asian” or “Asian American” to describe the states of subjectivity found in texts by Yung Wing and Yan Phou Lee.

Despite such criticisms, this collection represents a useful contribution to existing Asian American literary scholarship. The literary archive this collection furnishes is an important one, recovering many Asian American authors, such as Sugimoto and Richard Kim, who have become otherwise lost to scholarly view. Further, the contributors’ commitment to privileging literary formal analysis over “political” readings of literature is very welcome in a field that for too long has advanced the political over the aesthetic, often creating an activist-based scholarship rather than an intellectual-based one. Finally, the Asian American literary field would do well to pay attention to the arguments posited in this collection’s introduction if it hopes to move beyond its current cultural nationalism vs. transnationalism/Area Studies impasse, even if the collection’s essays themselves often fail to heed such advice.

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THE CORPORATE EYE: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884-1929. By Elspeth Brown. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2005.

AMERICAN EXPOSURES: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century. By Louis Kaplan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2005.

The Corporate Eye and *American Exposures* analyze how community is manifested in images. Elspeth Brown traces the use of photographs as tools to manage, regulate, and discipline workers during the Progressive era’s intense industrialization and shows how advertising both fed and responded to the burgeoning consumer culture of the twentieth century’s first decades. Louis Kaplan juxtaposes vibrant communities manifested in disjunctures and failed connections to the oppressive sameness of what he calls “the fusional community.” Both books ambitiously engage large interpretive frameworks: industrial psychology, the history of technology, and instrumental use of photographs (Brown) and post-structuralist theories, represented by the philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy (Kaplan).

Brown's study of the corporate eye unfolds comfortably, innovatively treating familiar figures, such as Frederick Taylor and Lewis Hine, and introducing less well-known but influential educators and consultants, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, for example. Her analysis of the advertising images of Lejaren à Hiller elevates this Wisconsin-born photographer to the same level as his more famous contemporary, Edward Steichen. Brown traces how corporations used information gleaned from photographs to hire a tractable work force from a heterogeneous labor pool and situates her study among the cultural histories of the period. *The Corporate Eye* guides us through a series of theoretical challenges with a deft hand, presents us with the fine-grained detail of the best historical work, and generously supplies an extended note—enticingly excerptible for student use—on reading photographs. This is first rate scholarship.

American Exposures offers a complex, sometimes intriguing look at the silences, absences, and disconnections that map the limits and essential “singularities” of community. Kaplan handles an impressive array of contemporary photographers, situated by race, ethnicity, or nationality on the margins of the so-called mainstream. How one pictures diasporic communities and represents the “slashes” and not the hyphens of hybridity are weighty subjects worthy of the attention he gives them (and more). However, the prose and the structure of *American Exposures* detract from this ambitious work's effectiveness. Throughout the book, Kaplan writes himself into textual cul-de-sacs from which the often-repeated phrase “in other words” frequently offers escape to a declarative sentence that deserves underlining. Complicating matters is his reliance on the elliptical utterances of the French philosopher Nancy. Kaplan's forays into fusional versions of community are turgid fare. Only with his exploration of Nan Goldin's work does the author hit his stride. For those up to the task, the text rewards with astute insights into the works of photographers à la mode, most notably Goldin, Frederic Brenner, and Nikki Lee.

The authors' invocations of the seminal theorist Roland Barthes offer a guide to the significant differences between the approaches of these two works. While acknowledging the indeterminacy of photographs, Brown begins with Barthes' insistence that photographic signification is a historical process. Her task is to map lines of power connecting images to a particular mode of production and ultimately to the ideology of capitalism. The specific histories of institutions and the conditions of work are important to her mission. Kaplan takes from Barthes an abstract photographic vocabulary that reinforces the philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy, as manifested in *The Inoperative Community*. His argument is philosophical and aesthetic, so the heft of what Barthes would have called the determining weight of history is not meticulously measured. Moments of insight and precision are accompanied by lengthy fights with other critics, frequently over photographs that are not pictured in *American Exposures*.

Neither book gives its photographs the full presence that elements central to the authors' arguments—texts rather than illustrations—deserve. The occasionally postage-stamp reproductions of pictorialist images diminish the overall effect of Brown's otherwise handsome volume. *American Exposures* reveals more vexing issues. After having gone through the extra expense of producing a signature of color plates, reproductions are puzzlingly poor; here Nikki Lee's images do not carry the same impact as the color-saturated photos included in her *Projects*. It is more important to correct Kaplan's version of Lee's tourist-like photo at the base of the Statue of Liberty so that the vibrant red of her outfit (not brown) contrasts with the medium (not olive) green of the lawn behind her and the oxidized patina of the Statue overhead than to point out that this snapshot was not taken on Ellis Island, as Kaplan assumes, but on Liberty (nee

Bedloes) Island. More alarming is the handling of Dorothea Lange's 1937 photograph of an Indiana woman in a California migrant labor camp. The checkerboarded image may be a mishandled scan, a suspicion reinforced by the subtle softening of the deep shadow that virtually obscures half the woman's face in the Library of Congress print. The unacknowledged, perhaps unconscious manipulation of photographs that contribute to a discussion of manipulability may be the final irony of a book that too often doubles back on itself.

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CITY BOUNTIFUL: A Century of Community Gardening in America. By Laura J. Lawson. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. 2005.

Laura Lawson's *City Bountiful* fills an important topical gap in American urban studies. The author offers a work of scholarship and depth which makes use of an impressive assortment of historical gardening documentation drawn from a wide range of national and local sources. This material can be obscure and is sometimes quantitatively inaccurate and partial, but nevertheless it is carefully employed to tell this interesting historical story. An additional, even major, strength is Lawson's experience and insight as a practising community gardener. *City Bountiful* is ultimately a penetrating survey of the development of urban gardens from their late nineteenth century beginnings until the near present.

The book is logically structured into three sections each exploring particular urban gardening periods: Part I examines *Early Garden Programs*, 1890s to 1917, Part II explores the *National Urban Garden Campaigns*, 1917 to 1945, and Part III follows the growth of the *Gardening for Community* movement from 1945 to the present. Definitions are indeed important in any complex endeavour, and Laura Lawson helps this understanding when she states that the urban garden program: "encapsulates various cooperative enterprises that provide space and resources for urban dwellers to cultivate vegetables and flowers" (3). The motivations, justifications, and backdrops behind these projects can and do evolve as new issues arise. Further over the past century political, economic, and social perspectives change as do cities, and such outside and persistent pressures can affect the measurement of gardening success.

The urban gardening movement did offer several redeeming benefits to urban dwellers in each passing generation. Various social values were promoted such as self-help, independence, healthy eating as well as cooperation, education, and job training. The garden was seen by some to be as important as playgrounds and schools to the urban community. There was also the idea of the garden as an aesthetic oasis for urban communities whose landscape might correct the bleakness of urban crowding, squalor, and poverty. Vacant lots could indeed flower and communities could see the transformation. The projects often relied on volunteer labor and many depended upon donated land and the largesse of others. Such circumstances as these could and did change. These transitory aspects also made continuity and consistence in the urban gardening movement difficult. The changing ethnic make up of evolving communities created still another dynamic.

As this book attests urban gardens since the 1890s followed several developmental patterns and in: "Each phase of urban garden promotion—vacant lot cultivation associations, school gardens, civic beautification gardens, war gardens, relief gardens, victory gardens and community gardens—has been shaped by its own social, political, economic and environmental context" (287). In its more recent form, the community