

Volume **49**
Number **2**
May **2015**

Journal of.
American
Studies

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Journal of American Studies

Subscriptions

Journal of American Studies is published four times a year in February, May, August and November. The subscription price (excluding VAT), which includes postage, of Volume 49, 2015, is £326 (USA, Canada and Mexico US \$568), for institutions print and electronic, institutions electronic only £276/\$480; individual rates are available on application to the publisher. Single parts are available at £90 net (USA, Canada and Mexico \$156) each. Orders, which must be accompanied by payment, may be sent to a bookseller, subscription agent or to the publishers: Cambridge University Press, Journals Fulfillment Department, UPH, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8BS, UK or in the USA, Canada and Mexico to Cambridge University Press, The Journals Fulfillment Department, 100 Brook Hill Drive, West Nyack, New York 10994-2133. EU subscribers (outside the UK) who are not registered for VAT should add VAT at their country's rate. VAT registered subscribers should provide their VAT registration number. Japanese prices for institutions are available from Kinokuniya Company Ltd, P. O. Box 55, Chitose, Tokyo 156, Japan. Prices include delivery by air. Copies of the Journal for subscribers in the USA, Canada and Mexico are sent by air to New York to arrive with minimum delay.

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Review Essay

Disorder and Early Sorrow

PETER A. COCLANIS

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Editors' Note

We are delighted in this issue to feature a special collection of essays edited by Fionnghuala Sweeney and Karen Salt on “Acts of Emancipation in the Art, Culture and Politics of the Black Diaspora.” Consisting of seven essays plus a feature-length introduction, the articles consider a number of different ways in which acts and arts of emancipation have been remembered and understood. Showcasing the exciting range of new scholarship that is emerging in the related fields of African American studies, African diasporic studies, slavery studies and American studies, among many more, this special issue adopts an interdisciplinary framework to excavate the stories of actors so often marginalized and underrepresented. As Sweeney writes toward the end of her introduction, the essays all “prompt consideration of the kinds of symbolic and political acts that capture what it meant to be involved in emancipation more broadly, of deeds of justice and humanity, great and small, that have deeper psychological, sociological and political meaning for our understanding of emancipation than is often thought,” and “emphasize that elaboration of the philosophical, political, existential and aesthetic questions around the nature of freedom and the nature of emancipation continues to be necessary.”

On the review side, we feature two review essays. In the first, “Recent Music History Scholarship: Pleasures and Drawbacks,” Harvey Cohen examines a range of recent works on American music as he investigates core debates related to race, jazz and American cultural history. He sheds powerful light on the extent to which “African American history, with its dramatic arcs of repression and redemption, has served as a particularly fruitful area for such scholarship”. In the second, “Disorder and Early Sorrow,” Peter Coclanis provides a detailed response to Joshua Rothman’s groundbreaking book *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A History of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson*. In addition, we also feature an array of reviews that cover a range of topics from the course of American politics in the early republic, to representations of death in film, pop culture and American empire, to perceptions of communists in Cold War New York.