

ground in undermining the planter class through stealing, foraging, bartering or trying to ensure their physical safety. Yet, as Merritt recognizes, but does not elaborate upon further, the situation was markedly different after the Civil War, when poor whites – many of whom had fought (voluntarily or involuntarily) to preserve slavery – competed with freedmen for unskilled jobs. Thus, this reader, recalling Eric Foner’s words that “[o]rdinary farmers comprised the bulk of the [Klan] membership,” is struck by the fact that Merritt mainly skirts the issue of racial conflict after the Civil War. In fact, Merritt’s only mention of the Ku Klux Klan is in the context of freedmen suffering the “violence of vigilante groups,” with no mention of poor whites’ role in such violence (324), despite her statement that “poor white racism” appeared to be both “violent and pervasive” after emancipation (28).

In the end, however, Merritt’s main object is a deep analysis of class relations in the antebellum South and the author achieves this aim in impressive fashion. In fact, having read *Masterless Men* it is clear to the reader that “the people of the South” were indeed “led into secession, against their will” and Merritt, following in the footsteps of *The Free State of Jones* author Victoria Bynum, succeeds in revealing “one of the biggest and most persistent falsities of southern history (...): the myth of white unity over slavery” (7).

Anders Bo Rasmussen

University of Southern Denmark

**Juliette Wells, *Reading Austen in America*. London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. 239 pages. ISBN: 978-1-3500-1204-2.**

In 1846, Hans Christian Andersen wrote in a letter to his patron Jonas Collin that he had been told by a friend that the English translations of his novels were “pirated in America” and had “winged their way about in cheap editions by the thousands in the New World.” Andersen adds: “That I had already crossed the world-ocean was beyond my dreams” (qtd. in Topsøe-Jensen xix). Although he would never cross the Atlantic and visit America in person, his works certainly did find their way there, and not all of them in pirated versions. Indeed, in the late 1860s, some of Andersen’s tales were published in English in the USA before they were published in Danish. The background to this state of affairs was a devoted American reader’s

ultimately successful attempt to begin a transatlantic conversation with the Danish author via letters. The American reader was Horace Scudder, a young writer of fairy tales inspired by Andersen's who was to become a prominent editor and man of letters, and whose article in the *National Quarterly Review* in 1861 was the first scholarly American article on Andersen's stories and fairy tales.

Only two years after Horace Scudder's article on Andersen, Anna Quincy's article on Jane Austen was published in the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly* in February 1863: "A combination of biography, digested criticism, and personal response, Anna's five-and-a-half article on Austen represented the culmination of the Quincy's sisters' decades-long endeavor to collect information about their beloved author" (Wells 161). This article on Austen was the first of Anna Quincy's publications; she went on to publish a book of poetry and four more articles in the *Atlantic* in the next few years. As in the case of Scudder, this is an example of how a nineteenth-century American reader's devotion to a European author's works could motivate the reader to publicly promote the author in the USA, as well as inform and inspire other publications by the reader.

In one of the chapters of Juliette Wells's eminently readable and excellently researched *Reading Austen in America*, she presents the Quincy sisters' relationship to Jane Austen's works as well as to Austen's brother. Wells aims for and deserves a broad readership of both non-academics and academics: her book can be read and appreciated by a general reader who has read Jane Austen's novels and is interested in the nineteenth century; it also contains riches for American studies scholars, as well as Jane Austen scholars. In each chapter the well-written and accessible running text is supplemented by substantial endnotes, to be read or not according to the reader's inclination. Drawing on a number of different approaches, such as book history, the history of the book trade, and reception studies, and a wealth of material from archives, museums, and collections, Wells brings to life nineteenth-century printers, book buyers, readers, literary tourists, and collectors.

*Reading Austen in America* is divided into two parts. Part One focuses on "The 1816 Philadelphia *Emma* and its Readers"; *Emma* was the first Austen novel to be printed in the USA and the only one to be printed while Austen was still alive. Wells has been able to trace two more copies of this edition in addition to the four that had previously been catalogued, and the book also includes a census of the six copies as an appendix: "Census of

Surviving Copies of the 1816 Philadelphia Emma.” Part One of Wells’s book consists of three chapters: “The Origins of the First Austen Novel Printed in America”; “Tales of Three Copies: Books, Owners, and Readers”; and “An Accomplished Scotswoman Reads Austen Abroad.” The last of these three chapters is one of the absolute highlights of Reading Austen in America. It draws on the previously unpublished personal writings of the Countess of Dalhousie, who traveled with her husband, lived in Halifax and Quebec in the late 1810s and early 1820s, and thus read Austen in America.

Another highlight, which I have already touched on above, is the first of the two chapters in Part Two, “Transatlantic Austen Conversations.” This chapter is entitled “Enthusiasts Connected Through the ‘Electric Telegraph of Genius’: The Quincy Sisters of Boston and the Francis W. Austen Family of Portsmouth.” Like Wells does in her description of the Dalhousies, the Quincy sisters frequently relate people to characters in Jane Austen’s novels, which shows the depth of commitment to Austen and makes for colorful reading for anybody who has immersed themselves in Austen at one point or another. Wells points out that, although mostly neglected in earlier accounts, Eliza Susan and Anna Quincy’s “writings on Austen, which span from 1833 to 1870, afford the most extensive record of Austen appreciation by mid-nineteenth-century readers of any nationality” (139). The sisters managed to establish contact with Jane Austen’s brother, Admiral Sir Francis W. Austen, to whom Anna actually paid a mutually appreciated visit in 1856. During this trip to England she also visited places depicted in Austen’s novels and experienced that she gained a deeper understanding of the novels through what we now call literary tourism. The last chapter, “Collectors and Bibliographers: Alberta H. Burke of Baltimore and David J. Gilson of Oxford,” deals with an extended twentieth-century transatlantic interchange between an American collector of everything that even remotely has to do with Austen and an equally committed English Austen collector and bibliographer.

Seen as a whole Reading Austen in America manages to provide a sense of the development of Austen’s status from relatively unknown among most readers to one of the best-loved and most prominent canonical authors in the English language. Wells does this by primarily focusing on Austen’s readers and devotees in nineteenth-century America – and she does it wonderfully well.

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Maria Holmgren Troy

Karlstad University

**Richard White, *The Republic for Which it Stands: The United States During Reconstruction And the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 941 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-973581-5.**

The thirty-six years between the ending of the American Civil War and the beginning of the Progressive era are commonly stereotyped as part of a lugubrious and nebulous period in American life, a bathetic interlude between the gravitas of Lincoln and the dynamism of Theodore Roosevelt. Although Richard White's meticulous addition to The Oxford History of the United States series does not always dispel this reputation, it does much to alleviate its peripheral position in the American historical pantheon.

In making this period politically salient, White manages to synthesize both breadth and depth. The book deftly chronicles every major political event from 1865 to 1896, but each chapter retains a specific focus, encompassing methodical explorations of subjects that range from the logistics of homestead buying in the 1870s to the development of mining in the 1880s. The result is immensely sophisticated, moving seamlessly from disciplines as diverse as theology, the law, and economics. Whilst the statistical detail is not all accessible, White incentivizes the reader to engage through literary observations which transcend the complexities. In a chapter dealing with the consequences of the 1873 depression, he leavens the catalogue of economic chaos and falling living standards with a description of the new phenomenon of tramps by Walt Whitman, who concludes "our republican experiment...is at heart an unhealthy failure" (quoted in White, 271). Other literary invocations are more sporadic. The opinions of the realist novelist and literary critic William Dean Howells provide commentary on issues as discrepant as the table manners of Andrew Carnegie (described as having a 'queer pig face') and the societal prevalence of neurasthenia, a catch-all term for depression and emotional distress.

For all White's versatility and interdisciplinary expertise, *The Republic*