

rists, who were often isolated from other sources of encouragement and motivation and thus relied on a variety of printed sources from across the Atlantic to navigate their own world. They helped create, in short, a global South. Nitz's extremely well-researched and well-documented monograph participates in similar transatlantic conversations about the American South in the world, and about the importance of literature to help us live in it.

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**Edward B. Foley. *Presidential Elections And Majority Rule: The Rise, Demise, and Potential Restoration of the Jeffersonian Electoral College*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. 238 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-006015-2.**

Fears of a minoritarian trend have permeated the past two decades in American presidential politics. From the popular vote inversion of the 2000 election to Trump's allegations of postal ballot fraud in 2020, the early 21st Century has brought into question the viability of America's political system. *Presidential Elections and Majority Rule's* focus, however, is not on the striking discrepancy in the national popular vote total evident between losing candidate Al Gore and winning candidate George W. Bush in 2000, nor the yawning hypothetical one which commentators were anticipating as a possibility before the 2020 election. Author Edward Foley, an Ohio State University law professor and former Ohio Solicitor General, instead accentuates the importance of popular vote majorities at the state level, or what can succinctly be defined as a "compound form of majoritarianism" (8). Because the Founding Fathers wanted the winning presidential aspirant to have "support from the majority of the electorate in the states that formed the candidate's Electoral College victory" (6), Foley implies that plurality victories (when a winning candidate wins with less than 50% of votes cast) should be highlighted for their dubiousness. Although Thomas Jefferson successfully furthered majoritarian principles through the passage of the Twelfth Amendment, a plurality-based winner-take-all system was quietly adopted by states under Andrew Jackson with stark consequences for fu-

ture electoral cycles. To Foley, the Jacksonian plurality system's impact emerged in later presidential elections, especially those subordinated to the influence of third party 'spoiler' candidates.

When emphasizing the plurality effect on presidential elections, Foley uses case studies which confound expectations. The salience of these case studies is underlined through Foley's labels of "genuine Jeffersonian winner" and "dubious Jeffersonian winner". The label of "genuine Jeffersonian winner" is applied to presidents who won a majority of the popular vote across states sufficient for an Electoral College win while "dubious Jeffersonian winner" is used for presidents who failed to win absolute majorities in enough states sufficient for an Electoral College victory. One example of Foley's provocative use of these labels derives from the exploration of the 1844 and 1860 presidential elections. Polk's precarious triumph in 1844 ranks as a deviation from Jeffersonian orthodoxy whilst Lincoln's largely sectional victory in 1860 does not. This is because the latter achieved more than the requisite number of Electoral College votes in states won with a majority of the popular vote, whilst the former's defeat of Whig Henry Clay hinged on a plurality in the largest state of New York. To Foley, those who stressed that 1860 constituted a "massive failure of the electoral system" because of Lincoln's reliance on the North were missing the point; Lincoln's rival Stephen Douglas was "incapable of assembling the kind of compound majority-of-majorities necessary for federal legitimacy" (79). Foley's refreshing methodology also resonates through more modern examples of disjunctions between Jefferson's compound form of majoritarianism and the emergence of plurality rule. Carter's narrow defeat of incumbent Gerald Ford in 1976 only evidenced "254 electoral votes based on popular majorities" and thus was 16 short of making the former Georgia governor a "Jeffersonian winner" (101). Yet Carter's ousting of Ford appears far more convincing under Foley's methodology than Clinton's comparatively sweeping electoral victory in 1992, a contest where the 42nd president only won a majority of the popular vote in his home state of Arkansas.

Throughout *Presidential Elections and Majority Rule*, Foley emphasizes that the compound form of majoritarianism sought by Jefferson has been betrayed by a plurality culture implemented in the late 1820s. This argument offers a powerful counter-narrative to Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s *The Age of Jackson* (1946) and, more recently, Sean Wilentz's *The Rise of American Democracy: From Jefferson to Lincoln* (2005). Unlike those works, *Presidential Elections and Majority Rule* illustrates that the Jacksonian era was

far from helpful for the formation of contemporary American democracy. Foley's insights imply that the democratic gains which resulted from the abolishment of property requirements for presidential voting in the 1820s were more than offset by the allocation of Electoral College votes to plurality, not majority, victors in various states. Yet, perhaps controversially to some readers, Foley's focus on this drift from Jeffersonian probity can omit the history of voter suppression in the United States. Although Foley argues that suppression of the black vote in three contested Southern states in the 1876 presidential election meant that Rutherford B. Hayes could be viewed as a "genuine Jeffersonian winner", attacks on African American voting rights otherwise rarely factor into the former Solicitor General's analysis of elections. George W. Bush's status as a "dubious Jeffersonian winner" in the controversial 2000 contest is attributed to the third-party candidacy of Ralph Nader rather than the use of butterfly ballots and the removal of African American voters from registration rolls. Foley's perception that JFK came convincingly close to holding a "Jeffersonian majority-of-majorities" (100) in 1960 further fails to acknowledge that a substantial number of Kennedy's more lopsided victories came from states in which the African American vote was suppressed.

Nevertheless, Foley's argument is far from antiquated in its strategy for preventing future minoritarian presidents. After an overview of the 2016 presidential election, a contest which hinged on the plurality-based victories anathema to the compound majority-of-majorities stance, Foley proposes changes to the US voting system. One solution Foley offers is "instant runoff voting", a practice in which voters state by state "rank a specified number of candidates in order of preference" (128) and the majority-vote winner is calculated from the rankings. Simplified as "ranked-choice voting", this arrangement would help states "comply with the majority-rule requirement" (126).

Although *Presidential Elections and Majority Rule* was published ten months before the 2020 presidential election, the result of that contest makes Foley's analysis additionally provocative. If the methodology which underpins Foley's early chapters is applied to Biden's tally of electoral votes, the victor forfeits Wisconsin, Arizona, and Georgia, as these three states were all won with a plurality of the popular vote. With 269 electoral votes from states which supported the Democratic ticket with an absolute majority of the popular vote, Biden stood on the cusp of being a genuine Jeffersonian winner as 270 is the minimum number required to win

an election outright. Perhaps the implementation of ranked choice voting would have manifested the exact same 306 Electoral Vote total that Biden achieved under a plurality-based arrangement. Another possible outcome is that under a ranked choice system, supporters of Libertarian Jo Jorgenson's candidacy would have ultimately leant their second preference votes to a resurgent Trump in key swing states and denied Biden the legacy of ousting an incumbent president.

Yet the tumultuous possibilities of applying Foley's recommendations should not diminish the chance that they might also offer some form of equilibrium, both for a populace exhausted by hyperpolarization and an electoral system which has too often been discredited by presidencies with minoritarian foundations at the state level.

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**Roberta Rosenberg and Rachel Rubinstein, Eds. *Teaching Jewish American Literature*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2020. 347 pages. ISBN: 978-1-6032-9445-4.**

*Teaching Jewish American Literature* is an important contribution to the MLA's Options for Teaching series, because it offers an expansive and current view of the field which looked very different about twenty years ago. The volume responds to the transnational turn in American studies, and thereby reasserts the significance of newly defined Jewish American literature. The editors' goal is "to reintegrate Jewish American literary studies into the academy, English department offerings, and literature and language programs" (8). When teaching Jewish American literature special attention should be given to it as a multilingual, global and multicultural literature.

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was commonly assumed that Jewish American literature was created by authors who either arrived in the United States with the mass migration of Eastern European or Ashkenazi Jews (1880-1924) or are descended from it. The editors indicate that relevant research is available on this body of literature, and there are such excellent resources on teaching Holocaust literature that it may "be seen as the de facto substitute for Jewish American literature" (6). This volume aims to widen