errors. On p. 14, Professor Sealts speaks of "Boston's Second Church, Unitarian," which is not technically correct. On p. 71, the first Greek word lacks a rough breathing. But these are rather minor quibbles. This is a rather good book.

University of Minnesota

Dallas L. Ouren


The author, Associate Professor of History at the Claremont Graduate School, has given us an informative and well-written study of the internal conflict in the lives of three writers, a conflict between their "natural superiority" and the "leveling effects" of the democracy within which they found themselves. Each of the three outstanding individuals realized that if he was to fulfill his duty -- since "noblesse oblige" -- to critique his society, he must maintain a certain "distance" (even if this meant, as it did for James and Santayana, living abroad). In this they were following, more or less, the lead of the young (at 27) Alexis de Tocqueville, the subject of the first chapter, who came to the young American republic (in 1831) to see the future of his own society, and who remains "a polestar for American self-study (1)."

Henry Adams (1838-1918), great-grandson of our second president, and grandson of our sixth president, ranks (alongside Emerson) "as our most remarkable all-round man of letters (34)." His Democracy, along with The Education of Henry Adams, indicates how democratic culture makes it difficult to sustain one's superiority by putting special limitations on intelligent and expressive people. Adams refused to be bound by these limitations, even when he was ambitious to serve his country (as a sort of national critic modeled after Tocqueville). Adams was imbued with the New English notion of high culture and how it can contribute (as the steward of the people's best interests) to the body politic from outside the sway of popular democracy through serious political journalism. Like his great-grandfather, he saw the New England character as the source of American democracy, and thought that democracy in the nineteenth century could be rescued only by that same character (now softened from its original Puritan Calvinist rage). Despite all his efforts Adams, in the end, felt alienated from the democracy that he felt had alienated him.

The solution of Henry James (1843-1916) he felt alienation was expatriation (finally to England). "Surely, this confirms the Tocquevillian prediction of the democratic principle driving the [natural] aristocratic out (15)." His The Ambassadors is the best American novel about American characters analyzing the characteristics of America. In retrospect it can be called a
book about gender issues, and a small step towards men's liberation. When the main character returns from abroad, he is his own person, having started to unravel the whole fabric of high-tone New England genteel deceit (of others and of self). The unraveling shows how "the sacred rage" of the Puritan code of morality became the prudish moralism of "the genteel tradition" by the incorporation of beauty, as a result of which -- for those who had the money to purchase and display beautiful possessions -- some came to rely more on the comforts of art than on those of religion. In the novel James tells us of his discovery: the conventions of society tend to fail the rich and privileged as well as the poor and "unusual," that we are all tyrannized by conventions as they cause friction with human nature.

It was George Santayana (1863-1952) who coined the phrase "the genteel tradition" and employed it to its fullest in his critique of American culture entitled The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy (1911), his farewell to America after he financially became able to retire to Europe (at 48). His observations of American civilization became part of the American self-critical canon, making him one of the founding Americanists. What helped is that he was, and was not, an American. Santayana's way with words "restored the delightful to philosophy in a time when it had ceased to be something someone might want to do in the regular course of a civilized life, on a sunny day, in a beautiful place, in good company, with a light heart, confident in being the better for the pleasure of it (144)." Perhaps this is the reason "Santayana's influence among philosophers has not equaled his literary reputation (149)."

From our present-day perspective of Gender Studies, Dawidoff observes: "Santayana lived in a [sexually inactive] closet. . . .It does not disparage Santayana to see him the genius of the closet: a life dedicated to seeing everything outside himself clearly, in order to protect what he thought would have exposed him to [unjust] hounding persecution and oppression (147)." It is to Dawidoff's credit that he neither is silent concerning Santayana's sexual orientation nor makes it the only way of viewing and interpreting him.

In summary: "The democratic demand and the mantle of specialness clash. This is the true American Tocquevillian insight, . . . an angry indictment against a culture that works for the interests of the money -- or power -- smart, not the truth-smart. This is nothing more than what Socrates found out in Athens: the city [not even the one built on a hill] does not want advice that is beholden to the philosopher's inner voice (66)." This is the problem of how the "elites" lead the "masses" without themselves slipping into the mentality of the power-hungry and mediocre by becoming "snobs" (or those with more pretensions than talent) and treating their followers like "slobs" (unworthy members of the same society of which both leaders and followers are necessary members).

Antón Donoso
University of Detroit Mercy