The thesis of Scott's book "is that the American philosophers and poets under study participated in the reconstruction of the old epistemological paradigm of Cartesian dualism and worked, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, to implant a new paradigm of consciousness in the thinking of their time." (p. 4)

Each of the six main chapters can be read independently of the others. An introduction to these delineates what Scott terms "the American passage beyond modernity," (p. 1) i.e. its rejection of traditional dualism, which took place roughly from 1880 to 1952, with the death of John Dewey. This is followed by a chapter describing the development of Royce's mature philosophy of "interpretation as knowing" and of Peirce's theory of signs. The point here is to get beyond the dichotomy of percep vs. concept, and to realize that "[i]nterpreting the symbols constituting a literary text in the way given in Royce's theory is an act of participating in the experience of its meaning--entering the dimension of Thirdness." (p. 33) The chapter following argues that in the work of T.S. Eliot the self is significantly redefined, moving from a private Cartesian one in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915) to a new and more encompassing image in Four Quartets (1943) Such a move, Scott argues, has parallels in Royce, James, and Hocking.

Chapters three and four focus on William James. The first of these stresses the importance of metaphors as constitutive of consciousness for James, and traces the familiar trail from the "stream of thought" in The Principles to consciousness as an "as yet undifferentiated state" in pure experience. For Scott, "[t]he innovativeness of much modernist art and literature--including the work of abstract expressionists like Jackson Pollock, the Cubists, the modernist fiction of Proust and Joyce, and the poetry of Eliot, Pound, and Williams--consists in its ability to render just such 'undifferentiated' states of thought." (p. 69) The second concentrates on one of these poets, Wallace Stevens's and suggests that there are significant parallels between Steven's move away from traditional dualism and James's pure experience journey.

Chapter five focuses on Dewey, emphasizing his rejection of the quest for certainty, his view of knowledge as including the affective, and, most importantly, his view of art as an ongoing transactional experience. "Dewey could be describing the poetics of such works as The Waste Land, The Cantos, and Paterson when he writes that 'The form of the whole is . . . present in every member. Fulfilling, consummating, are continuous functions, not mere ends, located in one place only.' (AE 62-63)." (p. 106) A subsequent chapter focusing on William Carlos William's poem Paterson reemphasizes the importance of a "poetics of contextualism." In his conclusion Scott argues that both the poets and the philosophers he has highlighted have advocated a return to
experience as it is directly undergone, i.e., as emergent and unitary rather than Cartesian. Only if this is done, i.e., only if consciousness is viewed as participatory rather than exclusive and autonomous, can authoritarianism be avoided.

There is much in all this to be admired. Scott writes clearly and persuasively. His interdisciplinary approach is a refreshing one, and his use of American Philosophy—as opposed to current literary critics in vogue—to look at poetry and art, is relatively unique. He sees his emphasis upon experience as aligned with Cornel West's American Evasion of Philosophy, and opposed to Richard Rorty's "linguistic behaviorism" when the latter argues that language does go "all the way down." Remaining for further consideration in a second book by Scott is the whole issue as the just why, or how, direct experience is so directly available to us, given that, as James himself noted, we are so "embedded in language," so to speak. Nonetheless the present study is both informative and "inspiring," i.e., it prompts further investigation of this rich subject area.

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Foster sets two goals for this book: 1) to present research on the relations between men and women in the Shaker, Oneida, and Mormon movements, and 2) to explore the ways in which the experimental communities raised and dealt with questions of women's roles, family organization, and sexuality (Preface, xiv). I think he accomplishes these goals to a degree. Foster presents useful historical context for the founding of these communities and provides helpful descriptions of their inner workings and values. There is a lack of depth to the analysis, however, which may stem from a minimal acquaintance with feminist theory or from his decision not

... to present any highly articulated contemporary feminist critique of these experiments. Instead, I have let these groups speak for themselves about their attitudes toward the role of women in society. (Preface, xv)

What Foster may miss in doing this is that the "themselves" which he lets speak are overwhelmingly male.

The overall theme, found in the analysis of the three communities is that although not "feminist" by current (by which I believe Foster means only liberal feminist) standards, each community effectively challenged traditional roles for women.

Chapters two through four focus on the Shakers (United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing). The Shakers,