uncommon rigor. Murphey sees the present moment as an opportunity, a time in which unfortunate experiments in behaviorism, positivism, linguistic philosophy and ‘the French disease (407)’ are receding. It is a time that calls for a reengagement with Lewis’ thought.

But perhaps Lewis’ greatest strength is also his greatest weakness. He bridges so many worlds that he may not have a home in any. For those whose interest in pragmatism is driven by its concern for existential or social issues, James, Dewey and Mead provide more compelling guides. Lewis’ central concern for epistemology may smell too much like the analytic philosophy that marginalized ethical and political thinkers. Or, more concretely, they may lack the tools of logical analysis to penetrate Lewis’ work. Within the pragmatic tradition, Lewis’ closest affinity is with certain stripes of Peircean or Roycean scholarship.

Lewis may find a home on the other side of the divide in analytic philosophy. However, as Murphey notes, Lewis was subject to a cruel irony. He is arguably the grandfather of neopragmatism, that blend of analytic and pragmatic philosophy that ultimately fed on its own premises. His conceptual pragmatism argued for an undetermined number of conceptual schema that may be joined with the ‘given’ element of experience. This bears more than a passing resemblance to the conceptual holism that we find in the work of Quine, Goodman or Rorty. Sellars declared the given to be a ‘myth’ and Davidson questioned the distinction between schema and content. Particularly damaging was Quine’s ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’ that is believed to have undercut the analytic / synthetic distinction central to Lewis’ thought. In Murphey’s own words: “[H]e suddenly finds himself outflanked. By 1952, the AKV (An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation) was in ruins, and Lewis left epistemology behind (331).” I note this not because Lewis’ thought is necessarily irrelevant or untrue, but only because he could have a difficult time finding a home in a tradition that feels that he has been left behind.

Lewis is then a bridging thinker, between epistemology and ethics, analytics and pragmatism. Hopefully, this is not terminal. Rather than a eulogy, perhaps this book is an opportunity. Lewis found himself in a period moving from moral and religious concerns to those of logic and scientific method. As the dominance of analytic philosophy fades and a culturally engaged pragmatism has been revitalized, it may be that we are in the same position, only in reverse. The same conflicts return. The problem then may not be with Lewis and his inability to find a new home, but in our desire for easy categorization. If this is the case, then Murray Murphey has done us a valuable service by reintroducing us to C. I. Lewis.

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Michael Magee, Emancipating Pragmatism: Emerson, Jazz, and Experimental Writing (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004). 264 pages. $27.50

Some books add new information; others rearrange existing information, thereby sheds new light on it. Here is one that does a bit of both. In this book we find an
important and complex theme – the debt of contemporary American thought to African-Americans. Its manifestations are many and varied, but at bottom this is present. What makes *Emacipating Pragmatism* so refreshing is how it tackles the subject, as well as how convincing it is.

Ellison wrote that America is “jazz-shaped.” The topics indicated in the subtitle form the three major points which Magee weaves together in an intricate, “jazz-shaped” whole. It traces the development through Emerson, who articulated his own thinking of history and language around abolitionism, and underwent a fundamental change in his own thinking. His understanding of history and language became less a representation of his thought and more a tool for activating the thought of his readers – less focus on what words mean, more on what they do. It is in this way, Magee argues, that Emerson may rightly be called a pragmatist.

As American politics (ideally) is democratic order in action, so jazz is democratic order in sound. Both involve a dialectical back-and-forth, each individual playing off the others and thereby constituting themselves. When set against the more “aristocratic” order (as represented in Emerson’s correspondence with Thomas Carlyle), the change is revolutionary. Indeed, Magee points out that Emerson recognized the unprecedented character of the United States, and the consequence being that we must make it up as we go along (p. 19).

Ralph Ellison plays a mediating role in the show: as catalyst for the chemical reaction, his writing is informed by Emerson, pragmatism, and jazz. Ellison in turn influenced many other writers, who were themselves keen on jazz.

That Magee recognizes the broad outlines of his task is enough to recommend the book; that he carries the task out so gracefully recommends it even more. Almost too gracefully: it takes some time to orient oneself in the first chapter: it simply plunges headfirst into the material – no introduction and no indication of what’s ahead in general, except where it seems necessary. Given the theme of the book, its style and structure are appropriate.

Chapter one, then, is the introduction, the riff on which he will play. Magee outlines the topic – democratic symbolic activity – which is adumbrated by Emerson, developed in pragmatism, embodied in jazz, and exploited by Ellison. Abolitionism (the strong anti-slavery position in antebellum America) is posited as central to Emerson’s thought and informing its more general contours. This Magee bases on the antislavery writings in the “WO Liberty” notebook, which was lost for over 60 years. Magee argues that Ellison figures strongly in the revival of pragmatist thinking because he recognized how much of a debt pragmatism itself owes to African Americans for its development. Ellison’s own thought makes use of Emerson and Dewey, suggesting the interplay involved throughout the treatment.

Magee’s aim here is to outline a theory of democratic symbolic activity, which is aptly illustrated by Ellison: in a jazz ensemble, individuals develop their identity through collaboration in a group by playing with and off each other. This goes for jazz musicians, readers interpreting works by authors, and voices speaking out in a democracy – each case involves an act of using symbols, and using them collaboratively. Emerson’s writing
is itself experimental, embodying this vision of DSA by giving each sentence equal weight.

Chapter two focuses on Emerson and how he treats the forms of culture and text equivalently; he identifies them in terms of symbolic activity, and his experimental writing reflects this. It was his strategy of empowering individuals, by forcing them to become active when relating to a text. In adopting a style of evasion, writing provocative lines that resisted easy interpretation – evasion of univocal meaning – he aimed to craft a mood rather than meaning, a mood that could then be elevated. This disrupted the notion of reader as passive spectator. Similarly, Emerson’s use of words as tools for activating the reader rather than for conveying his thought resulted in a “de-authorizing” of the writer. The very notion of reading, then, was transformed.

Magee spends six pages countering the major views of critics on Emerson; he could have kept going. His argument does not take a stand in the debates so much as shift the ground on which it is based – dissolving the questions in the process. That he sees the need to criticize previous work is driven by a sense of the tenacity of ideas.

Chapter three delves into Ellison’s project to practice what Emerson had preached. For the most part Magee studies *Invisible Man*, his best-known work, and how it engages Emerson every step of the way. Chapter four goes on to consider other experimental writers, particularly Amiri Baraka and Frank O’Hara. O’Hara’s theory of “personism” amounts to a democratization of language, making a poem into a dialogue between two individuals— and the reader into an eavesdropper. Again the notion of jazz informs the theory, and by now the political implications running throughout should be obvious.

An epilogue rounds out the book, in which Magee calls for “an open-ended definition of what pragmatism means” (179). One avenue of further exploration is in the work of Susan Howe and Harryette Mullens, whom he identifies as carrying on the Emersonian tradition of unsettling tradition through their own work. Where this sort of activity goes on, there is democratic symbolic activity – and pragmatism is thereby freed of any tyranny.

*EM* is well researched and well argued. Its themes, as mentioned above, are important and complex, and Magee has navigated them ably. That said, there are some difficulties, centered around quotations. Emerson is misquoted at a couple points. One is extremely minor, but another is not. When Emerson reportedly says, “Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds” (63), a crucial word goes missing; this does Emerson, and Magee, a disservice. It is a foolish consistency Emerson derides. Omitting the adjective gives us the impression that Emerson stands for whim and nothing else. Emerson celebrates genius, not whim; he makes that clear enough when he writes: “I would write on the lintels of the door-post, Whim. I hope it is something better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation.” (CW 2:54?) The hope suggests that he is waiting for something more than mere caprice.

When he mentions Frank O’Hara referencing Emerson (136), he misses the opportunity again, for he has fallen into the same error – regrettable in a book that devotes so much energy to clarifying what Emerson is about. Magee introduces a study
of Emerson's definition of consistency with this quote, which is unfortunate, since it threatens to undermine the whole thing.

Whereas a few quotes have been tarnished, in one case it is the interpretation of a quote which suffers. In chapter one Magee treats Dewey as a philosophy of democracy: he quotes a passage in which Dewey considers how a philosophy would look like as a function of democracy, then interprets him as if he were speaking of philosophy in general (18). The article is crucial: philosophy is not a philosophy. Given the care and effort towards fleshing out a project, especially one which aims at revising our perception of the history of ideas, errors of this kind have no place.

The goal of clarification takes on several forms in the book. In the first chapter Magee takes pains to clarify the field he is working in, doing so by juxtaposing Ralph Ellison against William Carlos Williams. Ellison keyed in to the collaborative spirit of African American language, whereas Williams held a romantic vision of black speakers as improvising their being sui generis, generating their authenticity from their individual souls (37). Here is a case where subtle but profound differences call for explanation.

In the case of pragmatism, a similar treatment would be welcome. Magee is interested in the pragmatism of John Dewey, a different strain from that of the founder. The rationale is that Dewey is a sort of middle term between pragmatism and Ellison's contribution (17). This, along with the fact that Burke refers to Dewey frequently, points to Magee's choice. Regardless of the more widespread fame of his thought, pragmatism cannot be summarized in Dewey's thought, which is different from that of the founder and black sheep of pragmatism, C.S Peirce. On the social and contextual nature of truth, Peirce agrees with his followers; on issues relevant to Magee's concerns, such as the relation of thought and action, he parts company. If Peirce sees the need to distinguish his own thought from theirs by renaming it (CP 5.414, 8.205), it would be well to discuss the matter in any treatment of pragmatism.

All things considered, the pluses far outweigh the minuses: Magee’s insights throw light on American history and its intellectual development, making *Emancipating Pragmatism* worthwhile reading for a wide audience. Which, given its content, is only right.

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In 2003 America’s great theologian and philosopher, Jonathan Edwards, turned 300. The occasion for writing is significant, of course, and the constellation of scholars that wrote the book befits the growing importance of Edwards’ legacy. *Jonathan Edwards at 300* is a collection of papers given by Edwards scholars at the Library of Congress. Contributors include Robert E. Brown, Ava Chamberlain, Philip F. Gura, Sang H. Lee, George M. Marsden, Gerald R. McDermott, Mark A. Noll, Amy Plantinga