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Going the Distance: Dissident Subjectivity in Modernist  
American Literature (review)

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similar backlash with the Liebermann commission, which was part of a series of portraits of famous Hamburg citizens by modern German painters established by Lichtwark to raise the status of Hamburg and to educate its citizens in contemporary art. As Kay demonstrates, Liebermann's work received a hostile critical reception, because its impressionist and Frans Hals-like style did not meet public expectations. In a letter to Lichtwark, Petersen himself stated: 'this is not the portrait of a Burgomaster, but of a drunken and depraved coffinbearer.' Kay rightly concludes that this antagonistic critical reaction had to do with 'how critics of modernism associated impressionism with the working class and radical politics.' Her argument could have been strengthened had she discussed Hals's renewed reputation in the nineteenth century. Leftist critics like Théophile Thoré (also known as William Bürger) regarded Hals no longer as a depraved drunkard (as his earlier biographers saw him and as the quotation from Petersen suggests) but as a radical naturalist painter. It could be argued that Liebermann was not merely 'influenced' by Hals, as Kay puts it, but was rather making reference to Hals in order to claim the importance of naturalism and the need to do away with outworn formulas of the past.

Kay has persuasively demonstrated not only Lichtwark's passionate promotion of modernist painting in the cause of German cultural progress, but also its resistance and acceptance among members of Hamburg's middle class. Her work adds to the growing evidence of the heterogenous and complex character of the German bourgeoisie of this period. Moreover, she complicates the simplistic view that regards all supporters of avant-garde art as liberals and all its detractors as nationalist conservatives. As Kay rightly states: 'It is false to assume that cultural modernism must be linked inexorably with the Left, and traditional art with conservatism and nationalism – as though these cultural and political categories are resolutely fixed.' Kay, through the clarity of her writing and her thorough archival research, has made an important contribution to late nineteenth-century German studies. (MITCHELL FRANK)

David R. Jarraway. *Going the Distance:  
Dissident Subjectivity in Modernist American Literature*  
Louisiana State University Press. 280. US \$25.95

There is something distant about David Jarraway's rich and complicated reading of 'dissident subjectivities' in modernist American literature. By combing the literary work of Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, Frank O'Hara, and Elizabeth Bishop with a mélange of theoretical and philosophical ideas, Jarraway develops a reading protocol reliant on 'distance' – a term that is at once spatial, temporal, and very aesthetic, providing a conceptual framework that opens 'up a new space

for subjectivity, beyond its Cartesian lineaments.' In other words, distance exposes familiar identities, objects, and ideologies to greater scrutiny; it 'holds out the promise of politicizing thinking in the very act of defamiliarizing it.'

With such a large, distant concept, Jarraway dwells in confusing and perhaps slippery intellectual territory, to be sure. But his close readings flesh out his deliberately nebulous concept of 'distanced formlessness' more precisely. In many ways, he, much like the writers he studies, relies not only on a new space for subjectivity, but also on a new space for thinking and writing about subjectivity. His readings of Frank O'Hara, for instance, are compelling, especially as they try to negotiate debates about the uses (and in some instances, abuses) of queer theory. Just listen: 'If, after having ventured several further clarifications of the original effort, the final "form" of my chapter-essay has sacrificed some of its initial pleasure of freedom ... I feel the sacrifice would have been worth it if an actual *argument* for methodological interpretation has come to take the place of its mere *exemplification*. Nonetheless, the queer perversities of O'Hara have conditioned me sufficiently, I hope, to retain some of my original naïveté about the pleasure of his poetry, and the "more" that that object might still continue to give "of itself."'

I can anticipate that some readers might not enjoy the 'top heavy' effect of making methodology such a primary part of his close reading efforts. But, as we all should know by now, there's intellectual and political value in giving us some 'distance' from the immediacy of our own reading pleasures. Jarraway believes, probably rightly, that the 'resistant and ultimately uncontainable sense of self in America today' has literary antecedents that arrive much earlier on the scene than the political 1960s that helped create, develop, and popularize so much work on the dissident subject. One of the primary strengths and pleasures of this book is that he places the high theory and political insights of the past thirty years in a longer literary historical context. And the almost effortless manner in which Jarraway slides between theory, philosophy, and his modernist literary archive convinces one that dissident subjectivity - dare we say 'poststructuralist' subjectivity? - is a crucial part of his writers' aesthetic products. What his book does best, I feel, is to demonstrate that while we are in the midst of a deep theory backlash, there's still so much we can learn from philosophical and theoretical thinking. And we can and should bring that thought to our studies of modernist American authors. For Jarraway wants us to 'understand how rich the possibilities are when the gates of Modernism are at last *heard* to turn upon the self, thereby suggesting the multiplicity we are permitted to make of that self, if we could only find the courage and stamina to go on listening.' He's got my ear. (MICHAEL L. COBB)