

developments spurred a second queer radicalization with the formation of a French version of Act Up in 1989. Since the 1990s, arguments that communitarianism does not belong in French universalist society have prompted debates about equality for all and questions about special rights. Prearo posits that both positions are two sides of the same coin: LGBTs (and the various other acronyms) identify with communities that build equal rights in a heteronormative world. The last phase is coalition building between different groups, which Prearo evaluates positively. But one might wonder how far these coalitions might reach beyond LGBT themes. Finally, he briefly mentions the challenges of the spatial turn in queer studies, but the discussion remains abstract, and he provides no concrete examples.

Prearo has written a highly accessible, relevant, and interesting book on the different pathways of homosexual politics and identifications, clearly demonstrating how bound these developments were to their specific historical circumstances. His choice to focus more on movements than on cultural politics leaves out, in my view, important parts of French homopolitical history. The book provides a concisely argued and convincing discussion of the “political moment of homosexuality,” but cultural elements could be seen as equally important, particularly in the French case.

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Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance. By MARK RIFKIN. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. Pp. xi, 293. \$75.00 (cloth); \$25.00 (paper).

Mark Rifkin’s enterprising and absorbing book takes “Indigenous survival and self-determination as the ethical horizon toward which we all may move” (38). It is an exercise in the ethical reading of its chosen texts, which are themselves central to the canon of what the book accepts, in a tactical concession to traditional criticism, as the American Renaissance: Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854), and Herman Melville’s *Pierre* (1852). What will make Rifkin’s study of special interest to readers of this journal is its engagement with queer studies, for this is a book that stages an agon between conflicting methods of reading, a struggle rooted in the double task Rifkin assigns himself: to establish, first of all, that *The House of the Seven Gables*, *Walden*, and *Pierre* articulate robust *queer* critiques of the nineteenth-century United States; and second, that this mode of critique remains in thrall to the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous people. In Rifkin’s reading, the queer work of these texts “*is* counterhegemonic while also recirculating settlement as a constant through which the challenges, deviations, qualifica-

tions, and/or contestations offered by the texts gain meaning” (26). The compensatory italics in that phrase (“*is* counterhegemonic”) tell much of the tale. Queer reading is presented as, in effect, the *second* most radical mode of critique—where by “radical” I mean concerned with fundamental and systemic criticism of the order of things. For Rifkin, queer reading must be superseded by an Indigenous decolonizing and a reorientation of priorities. So readers will find here an insistence—resonant with a number of other recent works—that decolonization remains the absolute limit of critical, political reading.¹

The result is an elaborate exercise in negative interpretation, in reading for the structuring absence of Indigeneity to capture settler colonialism as an always incomplete process. “Settler jurisdiction” must be understood in these terms as “an open-ended and continuously fraught project” (31). Rifkin’s ambition is nothing less than to recast our understanding of all US literary texts through a style of reading that “does not center on the representation of Native sovereignty, but [seeks] to demonstrate methodologically what it might mean to proliferate a commitment to Indigenous self-determination, exceeding figurations of Indianness in favor of the difficult work of attending to how nonnative modes of being-in-the-world realize settler colonialism as their animating condition of possibility” (194). Rifkin’s engaging introduction prepares the conceptual ground for this argument, leaning on the phenomenological tradition (particularly that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty) and on Bruno Latour’s notion of assembling the social. Phenomenology gives Rifkin a language for describing the embodied nature of quotidian life; Latour supplies terms for blocking premature claims about colonization as completed rather than in process. Yet by relying on what are in effect metaphorical uses of phenomenology and Latour, Rifkin forecloses the possibility of reading his three core texts in a more dialectical fashion, considering (for example) the historical function of those texts in their original moments of circulation. If settler colonialism *is* a matter of constant, high-velocity cycles of iteration and reiteration, dependent (like all social formations) on a continuing and contingent reproduction of its basic social relations—and surely it is—then one might be at least as interested in the ideological work of literary texts as one is in their immanent structures of feeling.

Each of Rifkin’s chapters delivers a thorough, close, and historically rich reading of its text. Students of Hawthorne will be as impressed by Rifkin’s recovery of the queer politics of *Seven Gables* (never has the novel’s critique of the normative order of family been so clearly rendered) as they will by the chapter’s deft coordination of the marginalization of Native people within that novel and their pressuring presence on Hawthorne’s understanding of the real stakes of his project. Similarly, Rifkin’s reading

¹ See, among others, Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Space between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

of *Walden* argues that what would seem to be Thoreau's revolutionary reconceptualization of individualist erotics (particularly after the brilliant work of Henry Abelove) is in fact a specious form of settler sovereignty.² And if most historically minded readers know that New York City was built on stolen land, that fact is revived in Rifkin's treatment of *Pierre* to reveal the limits of what he argues is that novel's otherwise salutary, and profoundly queer, sense that the modern city might be an escape into the contemporary—so far from the purportedly ancient world of the ever-vanishing "Indian." Rifkin's readings are alive to the texts, analytically rigorous, and eloquently committed without succumbing to tendentiousness. Literary historians will be heartened by these careful, fifty-page close readings of single works. If the formalist critic wishes for more consideration of literary form as such—that single great index to the force of literature in history, key to its cultural dreamwork—that may be as much a measure of the energy of *Settler Common Sense* as it is a matter for methodological disagreement. I have already invoked Rifkin's arguments more than once in my own lecture course.

Settler Common Sense leaves us with a question about Rifkin's hierarchy of reading. Given the ambition of the argument, a contrasting case may be illuminating. When Fredric Jameson argued, more than three decades ago and in an echo of Jean-Paul Sartre, that Marxism was the ultimate horizon of all reading, one understood both the negative dimension of the critique and the positive dimension of social transformation. It is equally clear (as so many, from Silvia Federici to Cedric Robinson to Kevin Floyd, have taught us) that any Marxism worth its name must already be reconstructed as feminist, antiracist, and queer (it was, in this case, psychoanalytic from the start).³ The capaciousness of that system of thought justified its claim to cognitive priority, and its procedures of symptomatic reading showed up the false confines of any alternative in hermeneutical rather than ethico-political terms. Rifkin's claim for the hierarchy of the decolonizing over the queer analytic—and the interpretive primacy of both over any other system of reading—remains, however, within the ethical field. When he writes that "the persistence of Indigenous sovereignty would undo existing settler jurisdictional mappings" (113), one is forced to recognize that Indigenous sovereignty unsettles so little

² Henry Abelove, "From Thoreau to Queer Politics," in *Deep Gossip* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 29–41. See also Abelove, "Yankee Doodle Dandy," *Massachusetts Review* 49, no. 1/2 (2008): 13–21.

³ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981); Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004); Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2011); Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Kevin Floyd, *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

in the settler-colonial texts he reads because it so lightly pressures those texts. The importance of reading for that light pressure is Rifkin's point, though the book will force us all to strain against the bounds of its own merely ethical injunction. But its watchword, "Always decolonize!" must certainly be our own.

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Radical Relations: Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, and Their Children in the United States since World War II. By DANIEL WINUNWE RIVERS. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Pp. 296. \$32.50 (cloth).

The right of gays and lesbians to parent children is becoming an increasingly visible part of the mainstream LGBT movement—a new visibility that may lead some to believe that gay and lesbian families are a recent phenomenon. Up until recently, historiography of LGBT history would have supported this belief. Daniel Winunwe Rivers's *Radical Relations: Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, and Their Children in the United States since World War II* represents a departure from this narrative, and it is an incredibly valuable addition to our understanding of the queer past and US history more broadly. Indeed, this work challenges one of the fundamental beliefs within American culture: the assumption that the family is, by definition, heterosexual.

The book is broken up into seven chapters that progress chronologically, ranging from the immediate post-World War II period to the 2000s. The first two chapters focus on the period between 1945 and 1969, years in which, as Rivers illustrates, gay and lesbian parents were forced to live in the shadows. Chapter 1, which draws on the evidence of oral interviews conducted by the author, focuses on the legal harassment lesbian mothers and gay fathers faced in this period. Chapter 2 focuses on the ways in which gay fathers and lesbian mothers persisted despite the legal challenges they faced in what Rivers refers to as the "pre-liberation era." In fact, this chapter reveals that the 1950s and 1960s witnessed the formation of the first lesbian and gay parental organizing. Collectively, these chapters reveal both the ways in which the American heterosexual family ideal gained strength in the post-World War II period and the survival strategies that gay and lesbian parents began to develop to protect their families against strong opposition.

Chapter 3 focuses on the first generation of gays and lesbians to fight openly for their parental rights through the legal system. Here, Rivers tracks the custody battles that erupted after 1967 and chronicles the ways in which the heterosexual family ideal was used in arguments against gay and lesbian custodial rights. However, this chapter also points to incremental changes