
James Annesley. *Fictions of Globalization: Consumption, the Market and the Contemporary American Novel*. London: Continuum, 2006. 163p.

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In the introduction to his comprehensive book, *Fictions of Globalization: Consumption, the Market and the Contemporary American Novel*, James Annesley notes that, in simple terms, globalization is the apparent homogenization and unification of a formerly more diverse world, and is a process propelled by technology, capital, and consumption (5). It is this presumption that drives the central argument of Annesley's text, which, rather than excoriating, lauding, or deconstructing globalization, attempts instead to simply "connect the discussion of literary texts with readings of the social and cultural consequences of globalization" (163). To do so, Annesley divides *Fictions of Globalization* into six chapters, each exploring a different aspect of globalization and its cultural manifestations.

In his first reading of the literary construction of globalization, the chapter titled "Cash Rules Everything Around Me" explores the relationship between commerce, conspicuous consumption, and African-American literature and music. Citing Zora Neale Hurston's 1934 "Characteristics of Negro Expression," Annesley makes some interesting points about contemporary African-American hip-hop narratives and their rearticulation of consumption as a means of subverting a history of master-codes (15). However, though Annesley himself insists that it would be reductive to simply view African-American consumption patterns within this basic paradigm, and insists on reading the relationship of culture and commerce not as a binary, but as "an understanding of the historical experiences of particular social groups" (20), he nonetheless reproduces this pattern in his readings of works by Paul Beatty and the books of Triple Crown Publications. Likewise, in the chapter "Branding, Consumption and Identity," Annesley's study of the American authors Bret Ellis and Chuck Palahniuk is singularly focused. It is only when Annesley explores Candace Bushnell's *Sex in the City* does he expand on his analysis, looking not only at Bushnell's conscious utilization of various consumer goods, but also at her depiction of the commoditization of the female body within this spectacular world, a phenomena he traces through the history of American literature, encompassing works like Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (35).

It is, in fact, when Annesley examines contemporary fiction within a historical trajectory that his argument becomes the most persuasive and insightful. This is particularly evident in the fourth and titular chapter, one that encompasses a discussion of both fiction and nonfiction critical of globalization. In his analysis of the

way in which Don DeLillo's *Underworld* attempts to describe a world irrevocably interlocked within a global economy, Annesley points out that by depicting the world in such a way, *Underworld* ultimately reifies the totalizing system that it attempts to critique (73). Similarly, Naomi Klein's 1999 *No Logo* is problematized in the same fashion. Although, Annesley notes, many of Klein's notions of globalization's damages are valid and acute, she, and other critics of globalization, err by seeing globalization and international corporatization as a new and unique outcome of contemporary life (75). Rather, Annesley asserts, far earlier works like Thoreau's *Walden* and Melville's *Moby Dick* illustrate a similar fear of industry's encroachment into natural and global resources. The whaling industry in *Moby Dick* thus not only represents the destruction of natural forces and the exploitation of human labor through excessive industry, but also a commercial expansion of the American rhetoric of Manifest Destiny on a more global scale, leading Annesley to conclude that "lessons learned from whaling might apply equally well to contemporary global industries, systems that through they might appear dominant, could, with a longer view, be seen as part of variable cycles in a much less stable and homogenized system" (88). For further illustration of this cycle, Annesley points to the collapse of Enron and other technological industries, noting that their apparent domination was merely a façade before their implosion and so, like the whaling industry, represent "not a transformation, but an intensification of an existing process" (93). Though Annesley is acutely aware that this does not make globalization any more powerful or potentially destructive, it does, nevertheless, complicate those readings that seek to see globalization as a unique and immutable force.

Annesley's historicization of the relationship between commerce and literature helps form the context for his stated goal of conducting "an analysis of the discourses that surround contemporary understandings of globalization and consumer society" rather than "clarifying or resolving" the difficulties of its manifestation seems most appropriate (5). Though the penultimate chapter analyzing primarily British literature seems a bit contradictory to this historical trajectory, particularly as the discussion of water's symbolic use in literature seems incongruous to his purpose, Annesley nevertheless returns to his agenda in the final chapter. Annesley's conclusion, in which he discusses both the homogenizing and recuperative uses of English within a powerful global economy, provides a succinct and appropriate ending to the text. Overall, despite some of the problematic moments in *Fictions of Globalization*, the work is true to the double meaning of its title, and presents interesting and exciting reading of both the mythology and cultural production of global consumer society. *