

Correspondence

To the Editor:

Sir,

I refer to the review of my 1988 publication *The Colonial Roots of American Fiction* (*Notes toward a new theory*), in the *Journal of American Studies*, 24 (1990), 451–52.

The reviewer gives the impression of having read only the first and last few pages of my book and these pages absent-mindedly: the review totally misrepresents my critical hypothesis by stating that it covers the whole development of American fiction “from Melville and Poe to the present-day minimalists”. Yet I treat Melville and Poe and generally speaking all nineteenth-century novelists as heavily influenced by the English narrative tradition (see especially pp. 11 and 33 of my text), and argue that only the twentieth-century is marked by a releasing of a real American originality.

The review also states that “it is content not structure or narrative function which determines the grounds of analysis”. Yet the best part of my second chapter draws a structural, thematic and anthropological comparison between Faulkner’s *Old Man* and Mrs. Rowlandson’s *Captivity*. My third chapter deals with Constance Rourke’s previous and successful attempt at linking Colonial crafts with so much of the later artistic production (music and fine arts). And so on.

Further, I am accused of attempting “in four pages only, to demonstrate the validity of the ‘diary thesis’ for Japan and Russia”. This is not the case, I simply recalled the fact that as far as Japanese fiction is concerned the “diary thesis” is, as it is, already past debate.

There is no possible clash between my thesis and those of critics such as Sacvan Bercovitch when their main concern is with nineteenth-century fiction.

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John Simons has informed the editor that he wishes to stand by his review.