

## Book reviews

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Charles Perrow, *Organizing America: Wealth, Power, and the Origins of Corporate Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

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This book at first appears to be Perrow's own history of the modern corporation, but it turns out to be a critique of the canon and a fresh look at the historical material presented by others. As such, it is a lot closer in format and goals to Perrow's classic *Complex Organizations* (New York: Random House, 1986) than it is to the works in business history and sociology it challenges. In *Complex Organizations*, Perrow critiques several of the leading organizational paradigms, challenging their conclusions and reinterpreting their findings through the lens of his own power theory. He has done something akin to that here, focusing on several different historical works and the schools associated with them. He critiques these works through close readings and reconsideration of the evidence they present, and in the process develops an argument of his own. This is not so much an historical work based on secondary sources as it is an effort to engage key arguments about business history and to offer a new interpretation.

Perrow sets his sights on efficiency theorists, such as the Harvard Business School historian Alfred DuPont Chandler, who contend that American firms became behemoths because it was efficient for them to do so. He wants to argue that owners make their firms bigger and bigger as a way to accumulate power, and not as a way to achieve greater efficiency. Bigger is more powerful, but not necessarily more efficient.

Power and agency theories have won quite a bit of attention in the social sciences recently. William Roy and Neil Fligstein offer power theories of the rise of the large firm, but their theories draw more conspicuously on insights from Max Weber and Émile Durkheim. Perrow frames his own work as a more unalloyed theory of power, in the tradition of C. Wright Mills. Efficiency theorists often argue that one should push economic arguments as far as they can go, and this is precisely what Perrow means to do for power arguments. This kind of clear vision of the world, presented in a book that sketches the big picture without bogging down in historical minutiae, makes for a

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compelling read. Students of both organizational sociology and business history will have to take Perrow's arguments seriously, and although many will disagree with Perrow's conclusions, that is what makes horse races.

Perrow's main story concerns how industrialists used their power to create larger and larger organizations, with the goal of concentrating wealth and power. There were unwitting actors in this story, such as government agents who established the initial conditions for the creation of modern corporations, but the story is essentially about how the quest for ever greater wealth and power led to the rise of the mammoth modern corporation.

Perrow traces the rise of the huge corporation in the two industries where large-scale factory production and modern management were pioneered: textiles and railroading. To set the stage, he discusses the political and organizational structures that facilitated the rise of huge, private, unregulated firms by the early years of the twentieth century. Some, myself included, contend that the American state was forged in the heat of anti-colonial sentiment, and that as a result its constitutional powers were carefully contained and Americans came to see an active state as a threat to democracy. Perrow tells a more complex story, in which a series of events conspired to allow industrialists to run roughshod over the state. He takes issue with a number of different arguments about how a weak regulatory state and strong corporations emerged, but in the end he synthesizes bits from each of those other theories in his account. What matters was that the state that emerged at the dawn of the nineteenth century was not equipped to regulate industry and was not inclined to do so even where it might have been able to.

Given this backdrop, it was power and organizational structure rather than regulation that shaped the development of both textiles and railroading. Perrow forcefully challenges the received wisdom that the birthplace of the modern factory, the textile mill, was itself born in a quest for efficiency. He argues, following Richard Edwards and other labor process theorists, that the purpose of the modern factory was to exert control over workers rather than to improve productive efficiency. In Lowell, Massachusetts, early mills depended on young women from local farms who came to work for a few years before marriage but never depended on the mills. Later mills depended on immigrant laborers without farms to return to, and these mills became

successful because those laborers depended on them. Meanwhile, outside of Philadelphia an alternative model of small shops of highly skilled artisans, producing for the luxury market, prospered as well. This small network of inter-dependent shops epitomized another form of efficiency, and in the end it died out not because it was not efficient but because the large mill came to dominate for other reasons.

Perrow insists that in both textiles and railroading, entrepreneurial enterprises, market-like exchanges, and network-based inter-enterprise relations gave way to huge bureaucratic firms not because the latter were more efficient, but because their masters were better at playing the political game. To make this claim, he takes pains to show that other efficient systems for production and transport were quashed by these giants, and that things might have been different. Thus, he shows that the artisan-based networks of luxury textile producers outside of Philadelphia had a good thing going, and might have provided a skilled, network model for future industries. And he shows that a system of independent locomotive operators, much like that of independent truckers found today in the United States, had operated effectively in early railroading and might have become the model for the future. Both of these models depend on small ownership and entrepreneurial spirit rather than bureaucracy to achieve efficiency. The principle of owner-operation found in each model is enough to warm the heart of a dyed-in-the-wool Marxist such as Professor Perrow.

Most of the book is devoted to the case of railroading. Perrow calls railroading “The Second Big Business” after textiles (in a chapter with that title), playing on Alfred DuPont Chandler’s title: *Railroads: The Nation’s First Big Business* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965). Perrow compares the United States with Britain and France, similarly to my argument in *Forging Industrial Policy: The United States, Britain, and France in the Railway Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and at times with Prussia, following the argument in Colleen Dunlavy’s *Politics and Industrialization: Early Railroads in the United States and Prussia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Why did America find herself with huge oligopolistic and unregulated railroads at the dawn of the twentieth century? The structure of the political system, the American preference for minimal regulation, and the power of early entrepreneurs and financiers all played roles. Perrow takes particular issue with my argument that the logic of the polity influenced regulation; Americans experienced a

polity in which the state's powers were curtailed to protect political liberty and they came to think of state regulation as a threat to economic liberty. I argue that Americans were loath to regulate the railroads, or any other industry, and that this was the defining feature of American industrialization.

Despite his claim of providing an unalloyed power and organizational account of the rise of the huge firm, Perrow's historical arguments are quite eclectic. Thus, although he takes issue with my argument about the origins of Americans' antipathy toward regulation, the core idea is in his own, more complex, argument about the forces that contained the impulse to regulate the railroads in America. In the grand tradition of muckraking, he gives corruption a starring role in the story. Whereas corruption plays a supporting role in many accounts, Perrow argues that in the absence of a modern regulatory state, corruption defined the American system. As corruption is the province of those with resources, it favors large and resourceful enterprises and hence it favors big business. Railroading's Credit Mobilier scandal, the biggest corporate scandal to date, involved members of Congress who voted liberal subsidies to railroads and were handsomely paid for their votes. Railroads routinely bought state subsidies from state legislatures and then bought their way out of legislative stipulations that required them to provide public services in return. As compared with Britain and France, where states did regulate railroads actively, this system gave the biggest railroads, with the biggest purses, the biggest say in regulation. The big consequently got bigger.

Underlying Perrow's theory of the rise of large organizations is his novel theory of the relation between agency and structure, a relation that social scientists have been preoccupied with of late. What is the nature of human agency? That depends fundamentally on what human nature is like. With both neo-classical economists and classical Marxists, Perrow seems to hold that it is in our nature to accumulate without bounds. He does not necessarily think that efficiency is in our nature, and so what drives the evolution of capitalism is the desire to die with the most Bentleys in the driveway. One reasonable conclusion of this argument is that individual capitalists will prefer accumulation over efficiency, and will orient their behavior to building the biggest pile of gold. What stops them, and what creates efficiency for the society as a whole, is a regulatory system that redirects this impulse to accumulate. In the world according to Perrow's account there are many different efficiency dynamics. The American system has realized one of those

dynamics, but in the process it shed alternative dynamics, such as that of entrepreneurialism and that of cooperative inter-firm networks. Our regulatory system, or lack of one, explains our giant corporations.

One implication is that history has not served up the only, or best, way of organizing industry. The United States won the GNP game largely because of its unparalleled natural resources and dynamic influx of immigrants. The U.S. constellation of huge industrial oligopolies has not prevented growth, but it has not really been the reason for it either.

Although Perrow presents his account as the purveyor of the most power-centric theory of the rise of the big firm in America, his theoretical apparatus is not so very different from those used by William Roy, in *Socializing Capital: The Rise of the Large Industrial Corporation in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), or Neil Fligstein, in *The Transformation of Corporate Control* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Roy and Fligstein, like Perrow, try to explain the rise of the huge firm in American history, and like Perrow, both give power the leading role in the story. Both also give a lot of credit to inertia. Once new regulatory practices or business strategies are put into place, participants in a system attribute rationality to them and come to believe in them. They see them as natural and as reinforcing the economic order, rather than as structuring it in the first place. Power puts new regulatory regimes and business strategies into place, but they persist not so much through power as through routine. In Fligstein's case, the conglomerate arises because finance experts win control of large corporations with a new business model, which involves diversifying the corporate portfolio. Business comes to take the efficiency of that model for granted until the core-competence model comes along to replace it. In Roy's case, business comes to believe in economies of scale around the turn of the century, when antitrust law was engineering an unanticipated consolidation of American industry. What came about in business, the conglomerate and the monopoly, came to be seen as efficient. This is the big picture that Perrow paints as well, for he begins with the observation that we all think that firms are big because bigger is better. His problem is to explain how we came to think that way.

As an institutional and cultural sociologist by background, I find these developments from the power camp inspiring. They are so because they bring together ideas about how institutions and their understandings are formed, from power theory, with ideas about why they persist,

from institutional theory. They are inspiring as well because those of us in the institutional camp have long recognized that we should build in more agency and interest, and Perrow, Roy, and Fligstein have done just that, starting from the perspective of power rather than from that of institutions. Just when we institutionalists thought we had our work cut out for us, power theorists came along to lay an important foundation that both camps can build on.

*Harvard University*

Frank Dobbin

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Ray Pratt, *Projecting Paranoia: Conspiratorial Visions in American Film*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2001.

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Ray Pratt's *Projecting Paranoia: Conspiratorial Visions in American Film* confronts readers with a startling perspective on many of Hollywood's most interesting and controversial films, namely, that they reflect a violently chaotic universe saturated with a profound sense of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. In the films that Pratt reviews, he uncovers a consistent trend of pessimism, fatalism, and nihilism. He defines "paranoia" as "the belief by an individual or among a group, that it is being conspired against with the intention of inflicting harm" (p. 12). This definition alters the word, which according to the Webster definition "is not based on objective reality but on a need to defend the ego against unconsciousness impulses, that uses projection as a form of defense, that often results in a contemporary megalomania" (*Webster's Third International Dictionary*). Pratt maintains that the fears and anxieties he finds deeply laden in so many films are, in fact, depictions of reality, as opposed to delusional distortions of unbalanced, unrealistic minds, and they reflect accurate, although not officially sanctioned, perspectives. By avoiding the inevitable guilt that paranoid behavior normally elicits, Pratt crafts a portrait of an evil, malevolent world of duplicity and deceit. The villain in these films is often represented by a branch of the U.S. government, a major corporation, organized crime, or some other symbolic stand-in for these pervasive institutions. Considering the fear and cynicism brought about by unpopular governmental and corporate actions, e.g., the Enron meltdown, the Energy Crisis, the Presidential voting scandal, the sexual sins of politicians and priests, disillusionment with the Gulf War, Waco, Ruby Ridge, Watergate, and Vietnam, to name a few, it is no wonder that we live in a world fraught with fear, suspicion, and anxiety.

Pratt discusses the underlying currents of fear existing throughout film history, confronting their audiences with very real dangers omnipresent in society, especially in the post World War II period. The films discussed include examples of cinema's best, ranging from German expressionist classics such as *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1926) and *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931) to postmodern thrillers like *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994) and *Wag the Dog* (Barry Levinson, 1998). He focuses specifically on fear-filled genres rife with pessimism, ranging from film noir (*The Maltese Falcon*, *Laura*, *The Big Sleep*), "resistance films of the 1960s," (*Bonnie and Clyde*, *Easy Rider*, *Catch 22*), neo-noir (*Chinatown*, *The Long Goodbye*, *Farewell, My Lovely*), "paranoia thrillers," (*The Conversation*, *The Parallax View*, *All the President's Men*), "family values" gone awry (*Frances*, *Blue Velvet*, *Fatal Attraction*), "male paranoia" films (*Out of the Past*, *Lolita*, *Basic Instinct*), "women and sexual paranoia" (*Rosemary's Baby*, *Klute*, *The Silence of the Lambs*), "bad cops and noir politics" (*The Big Heat*, *Serpico*, *L.A. Confidential*), and "assassination" and "surveillance" films (*JFK*, *The Truman Show*, *Enemy of the State*). As these films testify, paranoia pervades Hollywood, appearing during every period of film history. That very pervasiveness reflects the sociopolitical roots of paranoia lying deep within the fabric of American culture.

Despite analyzing hundreds of films, Pratt did manage to overlook others that appear equally "paranoid." Had he analyzed every film of this nature, this volume's size would have been at least doubled. For example, Pratt reviews a number of Fritz Lang's films (*Fury*, 1936 and *Woman in the Window*, 1945) but does omit a few. *Clash by Night* (1952), for example, is not discussed, yet it, too, evokes fear and anxiety, in this case about marital fidelity and the evil that lurks inside the human heart. Similarly, he discusses two representative Hitchcock thrillers (*Shadow of a Doubt*, *Psycho*). Some other interesting and important Hitchcock films that I would like to have seen discussed, however, are absent, including *Life Boat* (1944), *Spellbound* (1945), and *Rope* (1948). Surely these, too, evoke ample feelings of paranoia. Similarly, although Orson Welles's classic *Citizen Kane* appears in this volume, Pratt chose not to discuss *Journey Into Fear*, *Lady from Shanghai*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, each equally deserving of such analysis.

This book also contains some overlapping categories that have the potential to cause confusion. Jacques Tourneur's *Out of the Past* (1947), for instance, one of the finest examples of film noir, is discussed not as

a noir classic but, instead, as an example of “male paranoia films.” While Jeff (Robert Mitchum), the film’s fatalistic detective hero, epitomizes the paranoid film noir hero with his doom-laden rhetoric, he does so within the familiar film noir pattern. Similarly, Fritz Lang’s *The Big Heat* (1953), also a classic example of film noir, appears under “Bad Cops and Noir Politics.” Despite these ambiguities, however, Pratt’s categories do serve to focus attention on some broad thematic similarities that help us grapple with his thesis.

In the chapter titled “The Dark Vision of Film Noir,” Pratt argues that for many directors the classic noir films “functioned as an oppositional, expressive politics, a kind of countercinema to the optimistic Hollywood product of the time,” although for others, “it might have been a marketable fad” (p. 48). He notes that the classic noir period, stretching from 1940 through 1959, has fascinated critics and historians for decades. He then speculates that “at its peak, classic film noir mirrored the fear and paranoia of the Hollywood red scare era” (p. 49). Pratt suggests that McCarthyism and red-baiting helped to precipitate the film noir movement, because it gave filmmakers another reason for cynicism and pessimism. There is ample evidence to support this conclusion (see Nicholas Christopher’s *Somewhere in the Night: Film Noir and the American City*, p. 51). It is ironic, therefore, that McCarthyism and its attendant red-baiting led to the demise of the classic noir movement by blacklisting influential noir producers, directors, writers, and actors. Many of the key players within the genre were affected by blacklisting, including director Abraham Polonsky and actor John Garfield, both discussed extensively in the book.

In his chapter “The Culture of Resistance in Films of the 1960s,” Pratt discusses such 1960s-era classics as *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Easy Rider*, *Catch 22*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Seven Days in May*, and *Dr. Strangelove*. In these classics he discovers roots of cultural, political, and social paranoia, which are undeniably present in all of them. In *Easy Rider*, for example, he evokes the images of broken motorcycles and dead bodies of the film’s outlaw heroes, killed by vicious rednecks who cannot tolerate the freedom and seeming social irresponsibility of the counterculture movement. Next, Pratt discusses *The Manchurian Candidate*, Robert Frankenheimer’s “noirish” political thriller about a political assassination, crediting it with “prefigurative insight” for its prescient portrayal of a plot to assassinate a U.S. political leader. This film, in fact, was withdrawn from theatrical release after John F. Kennedy’s assassination in 1962 because it was deemed too sensitive after the real assassination took place (p. 91).



The book showcases a large number of important films, many of which are not often discussed elsewhere, such as Nicholas Kazan's *Dream Lover* (1994), Wim Wenders's *The End of Violence* (1997), and Tony Scott's *Enemy of the State* (1998), among others. However, this book also omits literally dozens of films that are also saturated with underlying paranoia. *Casablanca*, as was previously mentioned, evokes a terrifying world of Nazi brutality and ruthlessness that seems hardly less menacing than the world of corrupt politicians, scheming criminals, and crooked cops evoked in film noir. In fact, many post-W.W.II films, perhaps even a majority, depict individuals and forces just as deeply disturbing as the ones singled out by Pratt for inclusion. Most sci-fi films, including *Star Wars*, *Alien*, *Terminator*, and *Independence Day*, project forces and creatures that are every bit as menacing as the corrupt institutions and evil plotters discussed in Pratt's book. It turns out that the paranoia so artfully analyzed by Pratt is even more ubiquitous in film culture than he has stated. The cruel cattlemen and their hired gunfighter in George Stevens's classic western *Shane*, for example, present a force similarly threatening and sinister to those forces depicted in the "paranoid" films discussed in this book. The difference, of course, is that in these more mainstream films the villains ultimately are defeated, but not without first evoking a substantial amount of fear and anxiety.

Essentially, every successful film contains conflict, and every film villain evokes fear and anxiety. In a sense, every film contains at least traces of Pratt's "paranoia" within its dramatic structure. The more powerful the villain, the stronger are the feelings of "paranoia" evoked from the audience. The cattlemen and their hired guns who confront the heroes of classic westerns like *Shane* also evoke feelings of paranoia, as do the gangsters and criminals of so many film noirs and neo noirs. Any impediment to the protagonists' progress is a possible cause of paranoia, although most films do not evoke fear and anxiety as deeply and as completely as the ones selected by Pratt for analysis. Those discussed in *Projecting Paranoia* are, to be sure, more pessimistic than most films, including many of the classic westerns previously mentioned. However, gifted filmmakers of any genre often succeed in evoking pity and terror, the two emotions Aristotle maintains are evoked by tragedies. If the villains are human, as in most films, or even if they are aliens, monstrous animals, or some other embodiment of evil, talented filmmakers often succeed in causing these characters to evoke fears, anxieties, and feelings of inadequacy among their audiences. When handled realistically, villains also evoke feelings of paranoia.

If this is the case, is there any justification for singling out for special analysis the films Pratt discusses in his book? The answer, in my view, is emphatically yes. The films discussed in *Projecting Paranoia* should be addressed collectively precisely because they do evoke even more strongly and more explicitly than more mainstream Hollywood productions the uncertainties and terrors of our age. The films Pratt selected played an important role in awakening within their often relatively small audiences some sense of the harsh, threatening nature of social institutions upon individuals in our current culture. Whether the dangers evoke images of “Big Brother” controlling behavior or of the darkness and despair that lies at the heart of human existence, the “paranoia films” this book discusses do have the power to serve as powerful “wake-up calls,” warning complacent citizenry of the evils and dangers that they are being forced to face, usually without adequate preparation.

The notion that most films contain elements that might evoke paranoia, if anything, renders Pratt’s thesis even more compelling. His book focuses on those films in which fear and anxiety are most fully presented, but those films are simply the most extreme examples of broad trends in Hollywood films. Even sentimental and family-oriented films like *The Sound of Music* depict dark, dystopic forces at work that threaten the very fabric of social and personal life (in this case, the Nazis in Austria). To cite another example, even a children’s classic like *The Wizard of Oz* evinces some paranoia. Consider the Wicked Witch of the North not to mention the other non-human, largely symbolic characters. The point is that when examined from the perspective of “paranoia,” virtually every film possesses it to some degree.

Pratt employs a large number of bibliographic sources in this book, with most chapters averaging fifty to sixty footnotes, while others total many more. To assist readers through the maze of references, he has added a section of “bibliographic essays” in which he discusses the sources used in each chapter in general terms. This section is essential in order to survey the multiplicity of sources used in this book. In fact, the sources in this book can be mined for sources – some of which are difficult to obtain – useful to anyone writing in the areas of film studies discussed in the book. The references alone attest to the apparent meticulous care taken in writing this volume.

In the final analysis, we should congratulate Pratt for discussing such a complex subject as thoroughly and as engagingly as he has. For all of

its complexities, this book is difficult to put down. His thesis, although a bit labored and at times forced onto his evidence, nevertheless raises interesting and, at the same time, deeply disturbing issues about contemporary society, and especially about film culture. With so many filmmakers laboring mightily and creatively to bring home what is roughly the same message, namely, that we are living in dangerous times and have every right to feel paranoid about it, one begins to wonder whether to adopt an attitude of deep despair or merely one of subsuming pessimism. In either case, Pratt's book has given us something else to watch out for when viewing films: the paranoia factor.

Another difficulty with analyzing films solely from Pratt's perspective, as expressions of paranoia, is that the approach fails to take into adequate consideration the sheer entertainment value of such "paranoia." Many film viewers apparently desire to be frightened out of their wits, or at least experience deep suspicion and anxiety. Alfred Hitchcock is one director who tapped into this pent-up demand of audiences to be deeply disturbed by films. If paranoia was rated the way sexuality and violence are, nearly all Hitchcock films would be forced to bear a "P" warning. Similarly, viewers of the films of Orson Welles, Billy Wilder, Fritz Lang, and John Huston would be confronted by high "P" ratings. More contemporary films by directors such as David Lynch, Robert Altman, Woody Allen, John Watters, Oliver Stone, Jonathan Demme, and Spike Lee would also bear the "P" label. In fact, it appears that cinema's most interesting films would be classified as "paranoid." If this is true, then there is ample reason to believe that "paranoia" films very likely will continue to proliferate in the future.

*National University, San Jose, California*

Tom Pollard

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Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Adventure: Science, Technology and Cultural Studies at the Third Millennium*. New York: Guilford Press, 2001.

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This collaborative analysis by Steven Best and Douglas Kellner brings a remarkable trilogy on postmodernism to a challenging conclusion. Beginning with their *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (1991), and continuing with *The Postmodern Turn* (1997), *The Postmodern Adventure* dives into debates surrounding postmodernism and

postmodernity. This volume focuses upon the swirling currents of contemporary technoscience, neoliberal globalization, and transnational popular culture to examine “the coevolution of science, technology, and capital” (p. 113). Their analysis is complex, but is tied together very well as they weave their observations into a running commentary on Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow*.

Best and Kellner see that 1973 novel as a key literary mapping for the transition from modernity to postmodernity, so they continually return to its characters and storyline to construct their account of “the postmodern adventure.” For them, creative literature from contemporary writers such as Pynchon “forces one to see, experience, and interpret phenomena in a multiplicity of ways and thus contributes to a postmodern vision that frees one from partial or restricted views” (p. 53). *Gravity’s Rainbow* clearly can do this for its readers, so Best and Kellner use Pynchon’s vision of the rocket state, plastic industrialism, global diasporas, institutionalized war economies, contemporary technoscience as a force of production, and world mass media to appraise the unfolding of global capital and transnational society since 1945.

Very few contemporary authors find their way out of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century cognitive frameworks, as they cling to enlightenment notions of humanity and Industrial Revolution approaches to society, when approaching the present. The real virtue of Best and Kellner’s *The Postmodern Adventure* is their full-speed ahead exploration of the perplexing issues raised by postmodern practices in science, technowar from Vietnam to Afghanistan, cyborgized posthumanization, and the impact of globalization on nation-states, major and small. This book is plainly worth reading as a preliminary, yet still accurate, cognitive mapping of foundational changes in social epistemology, cultural ontology, and personal axiology underpinning postmodern life as the third millennium begins. Best and Kellner present this activity as “a form of metacartography” (p. 8), and this characterization is accurate. The changes that economies and societies are experiencing now are profound, and perhaps only literary referents, like *Gravity’s Rainbow*, Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Wells’s *Island of Dr. Moreau*, Huxley’s *Brave New World*, or Orwell’s *1984*, can provide the conceptual coordinates required for such a mapping.

Consequently, Best and Kellner do a great service for social theory by concentrating their analysis upon the ethical and political implications

raised by “the discovery and exploration of powerful technological realities such as those of genetic engineering, cloning, cyberscience, VR, and technopolitics. These developments demand analysis of the ways that new technologies pose grave dangers and/or can be used to remake society, culture, and human beings in progressive forms. The postmodern adventure also comprises interrogating the discourses of emergent theories and sciences, engaging novel modes of culture and society, and constructing disparate identities, politics, and theories” (p. 9). For these reasons alone, *The Postmodern Adventure* is worthwhile reading for students and scholars alike. It completes the survey of postmodernity that Best and Kellner launched in 1991, and it affords one of the best introductions to the knotty problematics facing theory and society in the coming century and millennium.

*Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University* Timothy W. Luke

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