Franklin's career in Paris. The work is masterfully edited, presents detailed information in footnotes about many obscure individuals with whom Franklin corresponded, and contains a comprehensive index. This work is essential reading for individuals interested in the diplomacy and the cultural activities of the American Revolution.

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Myra Fehlen has written a brilliant and beautiful book. Its focus is the fate of American individualism. Its thesis is that American individualism is unique despite the fact that both American and European variants of it had a common origin in the Renaissance and the Reformation. In Europe, individualism's liberal proponents were forced, in spite of their appeals to nature, to recognize that the new societies which they were making had arisen out of pre-existing ones and were therefore "historically contingent." In America, however, "The European immigrant . . . saw himself not as entering a better society but as leaving society altogether." These new Americans conceived of themselves as ". . . building their civilization out of nature itself" as the direct expression of natural law. In America, then, " . . . the ideology of liberal, democratic individualism reached maturity as no longer the historical dispossession of past rulers but the natural possessor of its own world." This is the incarnation of which Fehlen writes.

American incarnation was tied from the beginning to the land of the new continent so that, in a sense, Americans transformed time into space. But time cannot be ignored. Nor does Fehlen do so. The time which appears in her account, however, is not the time in which an American War for Independence was fought, fundamental institutions were constituted, and a continent was conquered. It is, rather, the time in which Americans discovered and reflected upon the meaning of their incarnation. Fehlen follows this story, which she bases on a sure
mastery of scholarship, through deft analyses of a progression of literary forms: geography and husbandry, essays and poetry, romance and tragedy. Though many writers are discussed, the author's treatment of Jefferson, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Melville are notable.

Fehlen begins her account with a resumé of recent scholarship on the meaning of Columbus' discovery and the settlement of the new land. Here, she draws heavy on the work of Edmundo O'Gorman, Henry Steel Commager, Richard Morris, and Richard Slotkin, among others. From there she moves on to an illuminating discussion of the way that Americans came to view their relationship with the land. In this regard, the arguments of Jefferson and others, in opposition to continentals who had suggested that America was degenerate, are effectively brought forward to show that Americans thought of themselves as husbands of a rich land rather than as solitary creators of new wealth.

Eventually, however, the notion of husbandry gave way to that of an almost complete identification between man and continent. Thus, the essays and poetry of Emerson stand at the center of Fehlen's study as they do in so much other contemporary scholarship on the history of American thought. For, according to the author, "[Emerson] completed the development of the modern concept of individualism." This completion, however, was highly problematical, for Emerson could represent the American fusion of continent and nation only by making that fusion inherent in himself as the actor/thinker of an "indwelling transcendentalism." Fehlen describes this core of Emerson's thought, in another place, as a "transcendent autonomy" achieved through the "identity of the American with America." But Fehlen is too kind. If this is what Emerson thought, what else was it but a rather tiresome, if disguised, solipsism?

Fehlen follows subsequent efforts to modify or escape the position of Emerson through the byways of American romance and tragedy. In the former case, Hawthorne comes in for extensive analysis; in the latter, Melville's novel, Pierre. A summary of Fehlen's work here would not do justice to the complexities of her study. Nor would it catch some of its difficulties. To put the problem briefly, however, the author becomes too entangled in the mystifications of artists reflecting upon the mystifications of art to quite make clear the dilemmas into which American individualism had run both in this country and in its attempts to relate itself to the "old world." It is astounding in this regard that Fehlen's analysis of The Scarlett Letter pays so little attention to the role of Dimmesdale.
The conclusion to the book is rather brief and not wholly satisfactory. Readers can make of it what they can. In its incompleteness, however, there is an opportunity for further work. Halfway through this study the focus of the book subtly shifts. What began as the effort to understand the connections between the individual, the nation, and the continent in the ideology of the "American Incarnation," ends somewhere in the thicket of the relationships, fictional or otherwise, between American men and American women. It is to be hoped that the author will turn more explicitly to this subject in a subsequent work.

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