Irish migrants in the US today are "not depicted as dangerous invaders, if they are mentioned at all" (223), pointing to the white supremacy that underpins such antimigration policies. But Granshaw ends on an optimistic note, hoping that the waves of past migrants who remained here, like the Irish, provide a glimmer of promise that current antimigration efforts—the deportations, the detention camps—will ultimately fail.

Laura L. Mielke. *Provocative Eloquence: Theater, Violence, and Antislavery Speech in the Antebellum United States*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019; xii + 284 pp.

Reviewed by Shane Breaux, City College, CUNY

In *Provocative Eloquence: Theater, Violence, and Antislavery Speech in the Antebellum United States,* Laura L. Mielke argues that a major strategy of US abolitionists to end slavery was their performance of rhetorical, rather than violent, resistance. According to Mielke, most abolitionists believed one who resorted to violence to end slavery was no different than those who trafficked in human chattel, and therefore, they performed acts of rhetorical eloquence so powerful that they incited their spectators to take collective action. She coins the term *provocative eloquence* to examine the productive relationship between words and actions, as well as to argue that abolitionists were ultimately able "to speak their revolution into existence" (96). In five chapters organized by varying categories of rhetorical practices, such as heroic oratory, dramatic suasion, and martyred eloquence, the book provides a fascinating study of the complicated intermingling of rhetoric, performance, and social change.

Mielke creates an extraordinary intertextual and interperformative matrix of representations of slavery and abolitionism in play and performance texts, as well as in other media: abolitionist lectures, newspaper articles, illustrations, novels, and more. Mielke points out both pro- and antislavery rhetoric across these forms to illustrate how abolitionists strategically reiterated and revised various aspects of such sources to suit their goals. The result is a provocative illustration of "a shared performance culture" among abolitionists that allowed them to harness the power of speech to incite physical antislavery resistance

without performing violence themselves (5).

Chapter One establishes the "heroic oratory" of nineteenth-century actor Edwin Forrest. Building on Eric Ashley Hairston's idea of the heroic orator, Mielke defines heroic oratory as the "yoking of articulacy to brawn" (26). As an actor, Forrest was widely celebrated for playing large blustery figures on stage who fought to reclaim power unjustly usurped by tyrants. Mielke argues that Forrest's popularity as these eloquent brawns affected audiences' understandings of his non-theatrical performances of political speeches, presumably about equal rights, in 1838. Therefore, Mielke argues, his performance as the heroic orator, which echoed the heroes he played onstage, prepared his spectators to perform actual rebellions against slavery by reminding them of their potential to perform physical resistance without explicitly calling on them to take physical action.

Chapter Two, in which Mielke focuses on "dramatic suasion," is the most effective chapter in the book for how she expertly illustrates the interplay of text, performance, and embodiment. For Mielke, dramatic suasion is a performative revision of "moral suasion," William Lloyd Garrison's appeal to white people's sense of morality to garner support for abolition. Mielke applies dramatic suasion to antislavery lectures within plays, which served to convince white spectators that slavery itself inherently threatened their right to free speech, particularly in plays that represented the explicit censorship of antislavery speech. For instance, Mielke considers African American stage performers William Wells Brown, in his lectures as well as his play *The Escape* (1857), and Mary Webb, in her solo performance of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Christian Slave* (1855). Because Wells Brown's and Webb's performances were dramatic readings rather than fully staged productions, Mielke argues they created a productive distance between the African American actor and orator. This also created a space for African Americans to speak openly (and dangerously) against slavery both as themselves and as characters that they performed.

Mielke then turns to "martyred eloquence," which she defines as antislavery speech that incited "disproportional displays of force" in retaliation (83). She begins Chapter Three with a violent incident in 1856 when South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks beat Massa-

chusetts Senator Charles Sumner with a cane on the Senate floor after Sumner performed an antislavery speech. Mielke considers how that beating was used in Stowe's novel *Dred; A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856) and two subsequent stage adaptations by John Brougham and H. J. Conway. Here she examines how the martyred orator became an exemplary abolitionist through rhetoric and whose martyrdom resulted from proslavery violence.

Chapters Four and Five consider legal rhetoric to justify racialized violence and the combination of verbal eloquence with forceful action respectively. In Chapter Four, Mielke uses Portia's trial scene in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* to argue that Shylock's plight is "a perverted legal situation" that echoed the legal perversion of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law (118). She then contemplates two racial melodramas of the 1850s also concerned with race, slavery, and legality: J. T. Trowbridge's *Neighbor Jackwood* (1857) and Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* (1859). In Chapter Five, Mielke concludes the book by analyzing performances that reflect the shift from eloquence to physical violence in the name of abolition. She considers John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia in 1859, his subsequent trial and execution, and performed responses to him: Kate Edward Swayze's play *Ossawattomie Brown* (1859) and Henry David Thoreau's lecture "A Plea for Captain John Brown" (1859). She provides convincing analyses of these plays and Thoreau's lecture, but with scant production details, they remain rooted mostly in textual analysis.

Mielke's notion of provocative eloquence and the interperformative methodology she uses to interpret abolitionist strategies provide a model for interpreting performances from other cultural moments, including our own. However, the book has no conclusion, in which Mielke might have suggested ways to apply her idea of provocative eloquence to other historical moments in the United States beyond the antebellum era. For example, her methods would provoke new questions about the debates between leaders of the Black Arts Movement and the Negro Ensemble Company during the Civil Rights Era. They would also certainly be useful to consider the relationship between acts of rhetorical and physical violence inspired by systemic racist police brutality in the United States, the global protests responding to it, and Donald Trump's

rhetorical branding of the protestors as thugs in our current moment. Even still, Mielke's argument and methodology are provocative enough to inspire curiosity about who, when, and where else others might have used rhetoric to evoke collective action.

Andrew Gibb. *Californios, Anglos, and the Performance of Oligarchy in the U.S. West.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2018; ix + 248 pp.

Reviewed by Season Ellison, Bemidji State University

The popular imagination of the American West evokes thoughts of Manifest Destiny, rugged individualism, and the gold rush. New Western History has us consider the subjugation of the native inhabitants of the lands sought by Anglos and the US government, framing the making of the American West primarily as a tale of violent conflict (and rightly so). In *Californios, Anglos, and the Performance of Oligarchy in the U.S. West*, Andrew Gibb nuances this narrative of individualism and conflict by suggesting that power in Mexican California during the mid-nineteenth century was negotiated amongst the californios, the US military, and the Anglo settlers in the region. Through multiple introductions, four dense chapters and an epilogue, Gibb highlights how landowning californio elites, through their varying performances of oligarchy, were as responsible as Anglos for defining cultural practices, group identities, and politics of a burgeoning California.

Gibb adopts the term "seigneurial culture" from historian Douglas Monroy to describe labor practices in Mexican California, wherein landowning elites fulfilled the workers' daily needs, offered gifts, and sponsored lavish celebrations in exchange for workers' loyalty and labor (41). These celebrations served as performatives that reinforced the social hierarchy of the oligarchy and, as Gibb argues, also infused seigneurial cultural practices into the cultures of Anglo newcomers. Echoing influential scholars of performativity, Gibb advances this argument through a careful performance analysis of select case studies, which he draws from diaries, *testimonios*, and other historical documents. To highlight his analysis, Gibb cleverly titles each chapter after a seemingly-re-