

In clearly written prose grounded in primary source research, Snyder-Grenier argues that the Henry Street Settlement has survived across time because of its “adaptability,” its core mission to bring “diverse people together,” and the fact that the issues the founders created the institution to address remain salient across the decades (3). She argues the history of the settlement sheds light on the larger histories of the Lower East Side, New York, and the nation. In this vein, the book addresses a wide variety of themes, including poverty, education, health care, immigration, gender, multiculturalism, and the professionalization of social work and nursing.

The book is divided into three chronological sections. The first discusses the founding of the settlement until the start of the 1930s. Appalled by the conditions on New York’s Lower East Side, Lillian Wald, a child of Jewish immigrants, a nurse, and the settlement’s founder, moved to the neighborhood to provide medical care for the mostly Southern and Eastern European immigrant population. Inspired by existing settlement houses like London’s Toynbee Hall, Wald believed living among those she served would help her best address the needs of the community. She raised funds to hire more nurses, and her venture quickly expanded to confront other issues, such as child labor and education.

Part Two examines the changes that came to the settlement between the Great Depression of the 1930s and the start of Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty in the mid-1960s. During this period the population of the neighborhood Henry Street served changed significantly. The types of funding the settlement depended on also changed, with more support now coming from the federal government.

Finally, Part Three continues from the late 1960s until the present as the settlement faced new challenges due to leadership changes, funding shortfalls, and changing circumstances in the neighborhood, including rising crime, homelessness, drug use, and the emergence of the AIDS crisis. As Snyder-Grenier puts it, the settlement “has had to adapt to shifting demographics, changing ways of funding, a fluctuating political environment, and the extensive demolition and rebuilding of surrounding housing” and yet it continued changing with the times in order to carry on with its mission of serving neighborhood residents (190).

The book appropriately includes the voices of the people the settlement served and effectively places the settlement within the changing context of the times. But overall, this is a work that is more interested in celebrating Henry Street than offering a critique of the institution or the settlement house movement generally. To highlight the uniqueness of Henry Street’s offerings, such as its focus on the arts, the book could have done more to place Henry Street into conversation with other contemporary settlement houses.

With its long chronological reach and ability to tie Henry Street to broader themes of the day, sections of the book could be integrated into an upper-division undergraduate course. In terms of lesson creation, Henry Street offers an interesting case study for incorporation into lectures or class activities. Readers interested in the history of the settlement house movement or the history of social work will find the book informative.

Overall, the book highlights how popular ideas regarding the roots of poverty swing with the times, from individuals being perceived as the drivers of their own fate to social conditions bearing more of the blame for inequity. Did Henry Street impact the lives of individuals in a positive way? Absolutely. Over time, has it changed the national conversation about poverty? While Henry Street initiatives have inspired federal programs, frustratingly, the challenges Wald founded Henry Street to address, such as poverty and disparity in accessibility to health care, are still with us today.

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Louis Menand. *The Free World: Art and Thought in the Cold War*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021. Pp. 857. \$35.00.

Among his many talents as a scholar and writer, Louis Menand has a remarkable ability to make complex ideas comprehensible without oversimplification. His Pulitzer-prize winning 2001 book, *The Metaphysical Club*, did so with late nineteenth-century American philosophy. *The Free World* does so with intellectual and artistic creativity in the Cold War, from the end of World War II through the Vietnam War.

This period of time saw a flourishing of cultural production, of art, thought, music, cinema, and literature, sustained by a burgeoning culture-industry comprised of publishers, magazines, institutes, museums, and galleries, and consumed by an increasingly educated public. Menand is interested in how the Cold War itself propelled this extraordinary cultural output. The Cold War “raised the stakes” and “charged the atmosphere” (6), as artists and thinkers grappled with the meaning of democracy, equality, and individualism in a consumer capitalist society. In sum, culture became the arena in which liberal idealism was represented – and contested. The thread running through the book, connecting its diverse subjects, from George Kennan to Hannah Arendt to James Baldwin to Andy Warhol, is freedom. What is it and how do we find it? Freedom was, Menand writes, “the slogan of the times” (xiv); totalitarianism, in all its forms, the anti-slogan.

With its fixation on freedom, the United States came to replace European capitals, namely Paris, as the center of artistic and intellectual life. The U.S. was imagined as a beacon of freedom in Cold War political life, and, signifying another kind of freedom, as a place where intellectual boundaries could be pushed and the avant-garde could thrive. A series of Supreme Court rulings in the 1950s and 1960s also liberated art, for the first time, from state censorship. Yet, though centered on the U.S., *The Free World* is a transatlantic study, featuring the stories of European exiles such as Arendt and Claude Levi-Strauss and of non-Americans like George Orwell, Jean Paul Sartre, and Jacques Derrida. Menand is interested in how these thinkers’ ideas germinated in the context of American Cold War ideology, and, in turn, their reception in the U.S. As an intellectual historian, Menand depicts the social forces that sparked new ideas or new forms of art or music, and he uncovers the various relationships, collaborations, and even chance-meetings that influenced them. Many of these stories are familiar – Menand largely draws from other scholars – but they are so well told, and often juxtaposed together in unexpected ways, that they read as fresh. He has a gift for finding the right idiosyncratic biographical detail, the humorous aside, the odd twist of fate. And, he explains weighty concepts like existentialism, structuralism, and post-structuralism, with illuminating precision. Despite the book’s length, one wants to read every word.

The best chapters cohere around a particular person or a particular set of ideas and tap explicitly into the theme of freedom. Other chapters are more fragmented and strained, grouping together strange bedfellows, such the chapter on feminism that begins with Betty Friedan and ends with Susan Sontag and the underground New York art scene. It all works, though, because Menand is voracious in his excitement about ideas and art, both high and low. He treats figures as diverse as Isaiah Berlin and Tom Hayden, or Elvis Presley and John Cage, with equal seriousness, and it is often hard to discern where he stands. That said, his predilections do seep out, such as when he defends the Beats or Derrida against their harshest critics or when he expresses impatience for Sontag’s humorlessness.

Menand is particularly adept at tracing connections between U.S. foreign policy and intellectual output. *The Free World* begins with Kennan, whose realist, anti-ideological vision clashed with the idealist doctrine of liberal expansion, and it ends with the Students for a Democratic Society and other dissenters of Cold War doctrine, including the National Student Association, which, in a dark irony, was funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The takeaway is that, in the Cold War context, even dissent served the state. The hegemony of liberal idealism was inescapable, since to fight it was to demonstrate the freedom it offered.

It is fitting that Menand has written a book about freedom in the Cold War in such intelligible, vivid prose. Orwell, after all, “made jargon, formula, elision, obfuscation, and cliché the enemies of liberty and democracy and the symptoms of creeping totalitarianism” (50). The book’s clarity is its greatest benefit to teachers. It provides deep context for teaching the Cold War and for introducing art, literature, and philosophy into the history classroom. Some of the chapters could be excerpted and assigned. What’s more, it provides a model for how to translate complicated ideas into everyday language – something sorely lacking in much contemporary academic discourse.