

Reviews

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MARCEL TRUDEL, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves: Two Hundred Years of Bondage*, Transl. George Tombs (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 2013), 323 pp.

George Tombs's 2013 English translation of Marcel Trudel's *Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec* (2009) was fifty years overdue. Trudel's *magnum opus* first appeared in 1960 under the title *L'esclavage au Canada français* and only first saw new editions in French in 2004 and again in 2009. Tombs has based his translation on this last version (13) which contains the 2009 text, Trudel's preface and an introduction by the translator. However, both texts from 2009 and 2013 are by no means revised editions, as Trudel would still have it (13), but mere reprints of the original 1960s text, as Brett Rushforth has pointed out in his review (2005).¹ The translator does not hesitate to insert both Trudel's work and his own in the vein of Canada's "long denied" (7) history of black people. Indeed, the resistance to Trudel's book was great when it first appeared in 1960. His insertion of slavery as both an established and encouraged fact from the beginnings of the settlement of what we call Canada today unveiled an inconvenient truth for nationalist historians at the time while at the same time challenging the powerful hegemonic narrative of a white settler society in New France. This revelation may well represent one of the reasons why the monograph has since become the authoritative source on slavery in New France and Quebec. In turn, this has also meant that its obvious shortcomings as well as most problematic assertions have been ignored and/or downplayed.

On the one hand, there are strong points to be made in favor of Trudel for which he should be commended: His comprehensive and ambitious study of slavery between some of the First Nations, Blacks, and European settlers, and the presence of black people in New France is certainly the first of its kind. Given that Robin Winks's equally famous monograph from 1971 attempted to cover the whole of Canada, Trudel remains the sole authority on New France and Quebec, although Frank Mackey has recently published works on the history of slavery and black people in Montreal (2004; 2010). Trudel's work was thus

remarkable given the context of the beginning Quiet Revolution in Quebec, not only because the book established slavery as a fact that was heavily supported and maintained by religious elites, among others. Even today, to some extent, it explicitly and provocatively challenges the belief in a whitewashed history of the province by openly addressing métissage as a still "irritating problem" for many Québécois (230) and by directly linking common Québécois family names to slavery and interracial marriage (287-88). One might also mention here Trudel's useful *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français* (1990), which accompanied the 2004 version, but was not, however, part of the 2009 edition nor of the translation. What is more, Trudel is responsible for important groundwork in the uncovering of sources that give information on slaves and slavery, such as birth, marriage, death certificates, and archives for the study of Canada's diverse black populations, thereby questioning the monopoly of the church, which had kept its records safe and was often reluctant to share them. This underlined Trudel's assessment that Quebec had deliberately chosen to ignore the historical presence of black people (268-69). Finally, the book's explicit addressees include a non-academic audience; following Trudel's goal (and that of the translator) to distribute his findings among all those interested (see 8).

On the other hand, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, as a translation, does not rid itself of the major issues of Trudel's work that so far have not been widely insisted upon. We might call them 'anachronistic' at best (see Rushforth 373), but they in fact seriously hamper Trudel's credibility and impinge on the book's overall value. For one, Trudel's interpretation of his sources is highly problematic. From someone who is allegedly, in his translator's words, concerned with "facts" and "statistical and documentary evidence" (8), Trudel instead sells a distorted benign-slavery-in-New-France-story to his readers. This is the image that emerges from his idealized, yet contradictory, descriptions of harmonious 'master-slave relationships' (ch. six and seven, especially). Trudel here ignores the fundamental imbalance in power relations and the brutality of the system of slavery, which he merely alludes to in the case of Marie-Josèphe Angélique and the burning of Montréal in 1734, a "spectacular crime" (174) that he casts as an exception. Angélique's torture and execution run counter to

¹ Brett Rushforth, "Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec," *The Canadian Historical Review* 86.2 (2005): 373-75.

his view of the peaceful contact between ‘masters’ and their “adopted children” (122). Paired with a sometimes inappropriate language that the translator seems anxious to soften—for example with regard to Trudel’s comments on interracial marriage (226)—the book presents readers with serious challenges.

While the translation fulfills its goal to be loyal to Trudel’s “original intention” (10), it misses the opportunity of contextualizing Trudel’s work. Tombs’s preface reads, aside from remarks on his work as a translator, as a subscription to the idealization of Trudel not only as one of Quebec’s most popular historians, but also as a dedicated people’s historian

(see 7, 8, especially). Trudel here becomes a type of truth-bearer and the beacon of light in the line of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians that had willfully written slavery out of Quebec’s history (7). The translation, and most of its reviews, mock Trudel’s tone and use of language (9), but mostly excuses them as an “archaic” (10) part of a 1960s academic jargon. What is missing to date is a critical edition and open reconsideration of Trudel’s book as a standard reference in light of the growing body of scholarship on the history of black people in Canada.

Nele Sawallisch (Mainz)

AMY KATE BAILEY, *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2015), 276 pp.

TAMEKA BRADLEY HOBBS, *Democracy Abroad, Lynching at Home: Racial Violence in Florida* (Tallahassee: UP of Florida, 2015), 273 pp.

MANFRED BERG, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 212 pp.

In July 2016, following the death of two African American men at the hands of police, black artists raised a flag in New York City eerily reminiscent of symbolic protest against mob violence perpetrated against African Americans during the Jim Crow era. The blocky white letters printed on black fabric read “A Man Was Lynched by Police Yesterday.” To protest and publicly condemn lynching, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hung a flag reading “A Man Was Lynched Today,” followed by every reported lynching in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. From 1882 to 1965, white mobs killed thousands of black Americans, mostly black men between 20 and 40 years of age. Lynching was not solely a white on black crime. While the majority of lynch victims were African American, whites and other races and ethnicities also fell victim to mobs. The exact number of victims regardless of race and color will probably never be known, although not for the lack of trying on the part of researchers.

Over the last twenty-five years, sociologists, literary scholars, historians, and scholars of other disciplines have studied lynching in the United States extensively. The three books under review here add to this continuously growing field of study with different approaches, questions, and intentions. With the help of historical statistics, sociologists Amy Kate Bailey and Stewart E. Tolnay specify the identities of black lynch victims and identify commonalities and differences. By looking at four lynching cases in Florida in the 1940s, historian Tameka Bradley Hobbs uncovers the longevity of this form of violence and its painful and destructive legacy in the African American community. In contrast, historian Manfred Berg provides a sweeping historical overview of lynching in the United States.

Sociologists Amy Kate Bailey and Stewart E. Tolnay build on an earlier sociological

study on lynchings in the U.S. South published by Tolnay and his colleague E. M. Beck. In *A Festival of Violence* (1995), the two developed an inventory of black lynch victims in ten Southern states to review the lists compiled by the NAACP, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the Tuskegee Institute. By sifting through newspapers, they managed to verify more than 2,400 deaths between the 1880s and 1930. Moreover, through statistical evidence they linked lynching to the fluctuation of the cotton price during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a thesis that did not go unchallenged by many academics. Lynching, they argued, represented a social control mechanism, a way to manage agricultural laborers. Thus, the decline of lynching came with the industrialization and the demise of the cotton economy.

In *Lynched*, Bailey and Tolnay now turn their attention to the identities of the lynch victims, as previous research has shown “almost total ignorance of the personal characteristics of the vast majority of the thousands of victims of southern mob violence” (xii). Historical case studies, they contend, might shed light on the identities and backgrounds of individual victims, they do not, however, allow for generalizations of the circumstances and triggers for lynching. The authors use the inventory of victims to uncover “fuller identities to several hundreds of lynch victims” (2) and “construct a profile of lynch victims” (13). In eight chapters, Bailey and Tolnay manage to systematically “augment the paucity of information that we had about victims before this record linkage project was completed” (59). They intersperse their statistical analysis with individual cases of lynching and their victims that underline their findings.

The book contains a detailed description of the methodology developed by the authors to collect the data and information on the victims. Central to their project are the census records which contain essential information on individuals and households like sex, age, race, family status and level of education. To uncover the details, the authors tried to find victims in the last census before they were killed. To the chagrin of the researchers and readers alike, a fire destroyed the 1890 census records which made it almost impossible to find out more about the victims killed in the 1890s, the decade with the most deadly attacks.

Of the more than 2,400 victims in the inventory, the research team found 935 and their

specifics in the census record. The average age was 29 years; the youngest was 11 years old, the oldest seventy-six. In general, mixed race people were less likely to be killed by white mobs. To exemplify the differences between lynched men and non-victims, the research team compared the lynch victims to other blacks living in the counties where lynchings occurred, creating more accurate comparative results than if they had compared victims to the general black population in the United States.

Guided by findings of earlier research, the book tests three main hypotheses: 1. Blacks lynched were poorer and more marginal than the black male population in general. 2. Blacks of a higher social status were more likely to be lynched. 3. There exists no statistically significant difference in the social status of lynching victims. Along the lines of earlier research, the detailed statistical analysis shows, in short, that the first two assumptions can be statistically verified: Marginality represents a key element in the difference between victimhood and non-victimhood. The authors, however, underline that the likelihood of victimization of people with one of the specific markers mentioned above depended on the black community's composition in the county where the lynching took place. For instance, a successful African American was less likely to be lynched in a county where the general black population was more affluent. A transient African American was more likely to be killed in an area where fewer black newcomers lived. Ultimately, the authors convincingly argue that not only the particular profiles of possible targets, but also the specifics of the area and the composition of its population proved essential for the selection of victims by mobs.

Despite its significance and strengths, especially its innovative method, the book shows some shortcomings when it comes to citations. Especially in chapter one, which provides a review of scholarship, the lack of references to relevant works is problematic. Throughout the book, historical surveys are offered, but they all too often lack citations. The bibliography is quite long but it would have been helpful if the authors had referenced the literature listed when appropriate. The book contains unnecessary repetitions that more editing could have prevented. Furthermore, the exclusion of Virginia and especially Texas is unfortunate. While the former had a relatively low number of mob violence, the latter had one of the highest death tolls in the nation.

Nevertheless, these flaws ultimately do not lessen the importance of the book. Never before has a study on lynching proven its hypotheses so thoroughly by giving details on and identities of such a staggering number of victims. The book may affirm many assumptions made in previous research, but the sheer size of the number of lynch victims assessed gives them more reliability and credence. Following in Bailey and Tolnay's footsteps, researchers can now start to answer the questions the book has left unanswered. Their method represents an invaluable roadmap for scholars to investigate lynch victims in other states and of other backgrounds.

Historian Tameka Bradley Hobbs is not so much interested in statistical analysis or sweeping overviews of lynching in the United States. Rather, her historical study investigates four cases of lynching in North Florida in the 1940s, a time when these acts of violence had begun to decline significantly and lose support in white communities across the South. Hobbs points out that lynchings happened longer in Florida than in any other state and subsequently unravels the lynchings of A. C. Williams in Gadsden County in 1941, Cellos Harrison in Jackson County in 1943, Willie James Howard in Suwannee County in 1944, and Jesse James Payne in Madison County in 1945. She recounts the events of each of these murders in detail, and more importantly, she paints a lively picture of the communities in which the lynchings occurred and discusses the reactions of the community, law enforcement, the press, and politicians in and outside the state of Florida.

Hobbs successfully integrates the horrific events in the larger developments in the state, the nation, and the world. She adds to the burgeoning historiography that underlines the interrelationship of the local and the global, civil rights, or rather the lack thereof, in the United States and in the international realm. All four lynchings took place during the Second World War that changed the playing field between the races. Whites' blatant disregard for blacks, expressed in its most vicious form in lynchings, received growing national and international attention as these acts of mob violence in midst of the war that was fought for democracy and freedom revealed America's hypocrisy. The pressure on Florida and the South in general grew as the United States feared for its international reputation. The African American community underlined the

parallels between the treatment of blacks in the South and Jews in Germany. Japanese and German propaganda made use of lynching to discredit the United States, raising serious doubts on the image of the U.S. as the pinnacle of democracy and its leadership skills. In the midst of negative international attention, the Federal government intervened more forcefully, by threatening, and eventually pursuing, investigations into mob violence.

White Floridians feared that this renewed interest in Southern race relations could be the swan song for white supremacy and lead to more federal interference in the South. As Hobbs shows, the majority of Florida's politicians, although aware of the possible negative effects on the state politically and economically, refrained from going against mob violence with full force. Moreover, "many locals still excused lynching as a justifiable form of homicide and despised the meddling of outsiders who did not understand the southern way of life or their unique 'Negro problem'" (37). Hobbs points out that while lynchings decreased significantly, the fate of African Americans accused especially of serious crimes did not improve, as "legal lynchings" as a way to resolve the community's desire for retribution" (118) took their place. They might receive their day in court, however, due process existed only on paper. The trials were far from fair and all too often African Americans were quickly sentenced to death with the execution following swiftly. The procedure changed, but the result remained the same.

The sections on the longevity and toll of lynching on the African American community are the most captivating part of the book. This is Hobbs at her best. The oral history method she uses elevates the book to another level and underlines the importance of giving voice to the voiceless and silenced. Lynching did not only end the victims' lives, but it destroyed the lives of family members. Their fate in the community was sealed and many fled to the North in order to escape the white communities. The long-term effects are still visible today. As Hobbs points out, lynching has left a "legacy of suspicion, distrust, and an inherent lack of faith in the legal and judicial system [...] in the collective consciousness" (4) of the black communities affected by lynching, not only in Florida. In telling and retelling stories of lynching, blacks tried to take control back from whites who usually dominated and oppressed them in all aspects of life. They

also acted as a warning to new generations "about the dangers present in the racism and discrimination that permeated American society" (218).

The composition of the introduction is a little off-putting. The book would have benefited from the addition of another chapter instead of putting all information on the general history of blacks and the history of lynching before the 1940s into the introduction. The same holds true for the conclusion. Furthermore, a tighter editorial process could have avoided repetitions. All criticism notwithstanding, *Democracy Abroad, Lynching at Home* is an important book that shows the traumatizing effects of lynching on the African American community. It proves that more research is needed on this topic, especially in light of the ongoing police violence against blacks. This experience is not only reminiscent of lynching, but will haunt the African American community and race relations for decades.

Unlike Bailey, Tolnay and Hobbs, Manfred Berg's *Popular Justice* does not solely focus on the lynching of African Americans, but presents a well-informed introduction to lynching. Rather than a work of original research, the book draws from and synthesizes the extensive research on mob violence in the United States that has evolved over the years. Today, lynching is usually associated with racial violence against African Americans in the South at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century or extralegal punishment in the West—and rightfully so. Still, this act of violence predates the second half of the nineteenth century and evolved over time. Other racial and ethnic minorities as well as whites fell victim to lynching. It was not a sole phenomenon of the South, but also manifested itself in other parts of the country. In nine chapters, Berg follows lynching's diverse history from colonial times to its legacy and memory today, introducing readers to the different forms of this extralegal punishment throughout U.S. history. In accordance with other scholars, Berg puts this mob violence in context of "the frontier experience, the race conflict, and the anti-authoritarian spirit of grassroots democracy" (xi). Distrustful of authority, Americans have held onto the power of the people and vigilante justice as a citizenship right.

The book's first chapter investigates the roots of lynching in the colonial era and later

the American Revolution. It reveals the development of extralegal punishment linking its persistence in the United States to the “libertarian spirit forged in the American Revolution” (22). More importantly, it establishes a strong link between colonial slavery and the rise of the lynching of African Americans. In chapter two, Berg delves deeper into the occurrence of lynching before and during the Civil War, arguing that the rise of mass democracy, the smoldering conflict over slavery and its expansion, and the move westward fueled mob violence and lynching in the United States. Only slowly did the “state monopoly of force” take hold in the United States, but popular justice has remained a staple in American society (28).

Especially the South lagged behind in revoking its right to vigilantism and self-defense. Throughout the existence of slavery, it was applied to rid the community of offenders, regardless of race, as well as to uphold “the peculiar institution” against any criticism or onslaught. White mobs attacked white abolitionists and black slaves whom they suspected of undermining slavery, as the fear of slave uprising in the antebellum era was omnipresent; lynching followed suit. Their violence went unpunished as the majority of the white community continued to embrace it as their right to defend and protect their own.

Chapters four and five delve deeper into the omnipresence of lynching in the South during and especially after the Civil War. The belief that whites were allowed to control and punish blacks violently with impunity exceeded the abolishment of slavery. The era of Reconstruction was filled with extralegal violence against Northerners, Northern sympathizers, and blacks, especially black Union soldiers. Berg contends that white mobs, especially the newly formed Ku Klux Klan, murdered more people during Reconstruction than during the heyday of lynching in the 1880s and 1890s, as they intended to uphold white supremacy, stop black advances, and prevent Union interference in the South. To explain the demise of lynching of blacks in the South, Berg points to the growing anti-lynching movements among blacks and whites, more police interventions, and the negative national and international attention the United States garnered. But he also links the decline of lynching to a distinct increase in the application of the death penalty. Although he admits that “no perfect statistical proof exists that the death penalty became a substitute for lynch law,” he points

to the parallels between African Americans’ fates in death penalty and lynch cases (159).

Berg does not downplay the enormous toll lynching has taken on the African American community and the scars it has left on the nation, but he makes clear that lynching was not solely a white-on-black crime. Other racial and ethnic minorities fell victim to white lynch mobs as they were perceived as the intruding “other” who should not be granted access to the U.S. The fear of economic competition as well as racial and ethnic xenophobia spurred lynch mobs. White Americans lynched Native Americans on the frontier, Chinese and Mexican laborers, especially in California, but also Italians represented frequent victims. Moreover, the author successfully debunks the persistent myth of the rightful vigilante justice on the frontier. According to this, settlers acted in self-defense and with the support of the community against rogue criminals due to the lack of a functioning government. More often than not, they believed that “law enforcement should not be a government monopoly but a right and duty of the people themselves” (57). Westerners distrusted bigger government and objected to paying more taxes. While the lynching of African Americans has mostly been shunned in American history and memory as an act of crude and racist violence, lynching in the West is often still represented as a justifiable and romanticized act of self-defense and a viable force in popular culture and memory.

Academically-inclined readers will struggle with the fact that the book lacks footnotes or endnotes throughout, although it contains quotes from primary and secondary texts. The reader’s only chance to learn more about the author’s sources is a short “Note on Sources” at the end of the book. It contains a concise annotated bibliography and lists the key primary and secondary sources on which the chapters are based. Readers might want to turn to the book’s German version published under the title *Lynchjustiz* in the 2014 Hamburger Edition, which provides endnotes with references to the quotes in the text. All in all, while the book does not contain much original research or new findings, it offers a comprehensive synthesis of thought-provoking theses. It is an accessible introduction to the wide field of the history of lynching in the United States from its beginnings to the present.

In conclusion, the books under review offer varying viewpoints and approaches to the sub-

ject. For instance, while Hobbs considers the racial strife in the post-Civil War South as the starting point of lynchings, Berg traces it back to slavery and physical punishment. However, Hobbs and Berg certainly agree on the death penalty as substitute for lynching—and much more. Bailey and Tolnay, on the other hand, raise doubts on the claim that the death penalty replaced lynching in the United States. But Hobbs's victims might very well fall under the categories unearthed by Bailey and Tolnay

if one looks at the census records before their lynching. The books simultaneously complement and contradict each other. They, thereby, create space for productive discussions and give researchers plenty of starting points for further research on lynching and its legacy in the United States. Ultimately, all three books make important contributions in the field in their own right.

Christine Knauer (Tübingen)

CHRISTINE KNAUER, *Let Us Fight as Free Men: Black Soldiers and Civil Rights* (Philadelphia: Uof Pennsylvania P, 2014), 337 pp.

Christine Knauer's *Let Us Fight as Free Men* is a welcome addition to the growing body of historical scholarship on African American soldiers and the role of war and black military service in the black struggle for racial equality in the twentieth century. While a number of historians have analyzed the ways in which World War I served to simultaneously consolidate and challenge white supremacy, there are no studies that provide a detailed analysis of such social and political dynamics in the post-World War II era. Christine Knauer's important book begins to bridge that historiographical gap.

Her study concentrates on black activists' efforts to integrate the U.S. military in the second half of the 1940s, on black military service during the Korean War, and on the multiple ways in which African American activists and commentators interpreted the meanings of that particular war and black soldiers' role in it. However, readers also learn much about the contributions of black servicemen and servicewomen to the American war effort during World War II, an aspect of the book that serves as a backdrop for the thorough analysis of the decade following the conflict's end. Combining methodologies and analytical perspectives drawn from social, cultural, and military history, Knauer mined a considerable number of archives and analyzed the press coverage of dozens of African American and white newspapers and magazines.

What distinguishes Knauer's work from other studies on soldiers of color after World War II is her detailed account of the interrelationship between black military service and civil rights activism, as well as her insightful analysis of the efforts of black pundits and journalists to reshape the image of black soldiers as a means of challenging centuries of racist stereotypes. She skillfully uses gender as a theoretical concept to probe how such

ideas as citizenship and civil rights were intertwined with notions of femininity and masculinity. *Let Us Fight as Free Men* thus shows not only how discrimination within the U.S. military prompted black servicemen and servicewomen to fight for full equality in the military and in U.S. society more generally, but also how African American activists and editors utilized it to challenge entrenched traditions of white supremacy. Most significantly, the study reveals a concerted effort on the part of African American journalists to counter white supremacist memory with their own version of the past and the present, stressing black soldiers' manly heroism in the wars that the United States had fought and attempting to project a more positive image of their contributions to U.S. nation-building. The Korean War, which was the first military conflict since the Civil War that saw black soldiers being awarded the prestigious Medal of Honor, provided ample opportunity for the black press to make its case.

Yet, Knauer's book also speaks to the ambiguities of this aspect of the black freedom struggle. She shows that this particular focus on black men and their heroic service on the battlefield tended to ignore black servicewomen and affirmed traditional gender hierarchies within U.S. society. Her analysis also reveals that African Americans did not always speak with one voice in their campaigns to elevate black soldiers to heroic status and to integrate both the U.S. military and American society, veering between adamantly rejecting and deliberately embracing the idea of American patriotism to prove that blacks deserved to be treated like full citizens.

Christine Knauer's extensively researched, well-argued, and well-written study adds much to our understanding of the role of war and the U.S. military in the African American freedom struggle of the twentieth century. It is to be hoped that it finds a very wide readership.

Simon Wendt (Frankfurt a.M.)

ROBIN BERNSTEIN, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York and London: New York UP, 2011), 307 pp.

The idea of childhood innocence has become a naturalized element of discussions over race and rights, and, as Robin Bernstein shows in her discussion of Keith Bardwell, a Justice of the Peace in Louisiana refusing to wed a white woman and a black man, the notion of having to “protect the children” oftentimes trumps other concerns within social debates—even if, as was the case in the Bardwell controversy, these children are wholly imagined at that particular point of the discussion (see 1-2). Arguing that the concept of childhood innocence has been central to the construction and negotiation of race since the nineteenth century, Bernstein highlights the binary construction of racial innocence in children: White children were imbued with innocence, black children excluded from it, while other children of color were erased from this racial binary altogether. Using a rich archive of written texts, illustrations, theater performances and artifacts of material culture (such as handkerchiefs or dolls), Bernstein traces and analyzes how “scriptive things” invited and shaped practices of conformation to anti-black ideology but also of resistance and re-appropriation.

In the introduction, Bernstein traces the development of the negotiation of childhood innocence from the Calvinist doctrine of infant depravity to the celebrations of childhood innocence such as by Locke (who famously declared children to be *tabulae rasae*) or Rousseau (whose *Émile* celebrated the idea of children’s uncorruptedness by civilization). The idea of children’s innocence took on an important turn in the nineteenth century, and it is this turn that lies at the base of Bernstein’s investigations of the role of racial innocence in the political processes of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Children were no longer seen as merely innocent, but became considered the embodiment of innocence itself, and as such were thought of as holy angels who could lead (inherently corrupted) adults to heaven. Importantly, however, the abstract idea of childhood (and childhood innocence) was comprised of *white* childhood, and the idea of the white angel-child both needed and created the need of its counterpart, the black “pickaninny.”

Methodologically, Bernstein works with a material culture approach of reading “scriptive things” (see 8–13, 69–91): an analysis of lived behavior in which cultural artifacts and the way they are used or denied to be used play a crucial role. In trying to read past performances of everyday objects by using archival and historical knowledge to determine which actions the scripted object invited and which ones it discouraged, this approach aims to uncover the (scripted) practices of historical objects. At the center of these investigations is not the way objects were used by *individual* agents, but which actions they invited, i.e. its aim is “not to determine what any individual did with an artifact but rather to understand how a nonagential artefact, in its historical context, prompted or invited—scripted—actions of humans who were agential and not infrequently resistant.” (8)

The first chapter (“Tender Angels, Insensate Pickanninies: The Divergent Paths of Racial Innocence”) outlines the split between black and white childhood in the nineteenth century, a split that, as Bernstein argues, was made along the lines of the alleged (in)ability to feel pain. In that context, white childhood is constructed along the image of the tender and vulnerable angel-child, and black childhood along that of the pickaninny, a comically exaggerated and grotesque black figure insensible to pain. These binary images of black and white childhood co-emerged and depended on each other, i.e. the pickaninny was used to emphasize the innocence of childhood (epitomized, of course, as white childhood), while the white angel-child was used to support notions of black insensateness.

In the second chapter (“Scriptive Things”), Bernstein introduces her methodology, the analytical tool of “the scriptive thing” and exemplifies its usefulness in a study of topsy-turvy dolls (i.e. dolls that each consisted of a black and white doll joined at the waist, and that could be transformed from one to the other by turning the conjoining skirt over the doll not used at that moment). The analysis highlights these dolls’ infusion with cultural notions of childhood innocence, sexual transgression, and racial mixing, and the negotiation of highly volatile political ideas within a seemingly innocent plaything. It is the supposed innocence of childhood and all things associated with it that allows the creation of a clearly transgressive object filled with social and political commentary. As Bernstein

argues: “It is racial innocence that enabled a topsy-turvy doll to penetrate the slaveholder’s home, whereas a sculpture lacking the aura of racial innocence would have brought destruction to itself and its maker.” (91)

In chapters three to five, Bernstein employs the scriptive things methodology on different groups of objects. Chapter three (“Everyone Is Impressed: Slavery as a Tender Embrace from Uncle Tom’s to Uncle Remus’s Cabin”), focuses on how different performances scripted by material artifacts transformed the iconic image of the loving touch between a slaveholding child and an enslaved adult (as epitomized in what Bernstein calls the archive of repertoires of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, i.e. the novel and its accompanying cultural products) from an abolitionist critique of slavery to a defense of it.

Chapter four (“The Black-and-Whiteness of Raggedy Ann”) analyzes three performances of this American icon (a 1915 doll, 1918 character of a children’s novel, and 1923 theatrical performance) in terms of their negotiation of blackface minstrel shows and the pickaninny imagery. Because “Raggedy Ann, as insensate to pain as any other imagined faithful slave, any other pickaninny, enjoys being thrown, boiled, wrung out, skinned, and hanged,” these performances, Bernstein argues, are unsettling and problematic because they trivialize racial violence and posit slavery as “racially innocent fun” (193).

The final chapter five (“The Scripts of Black Dolls”) investigates further the argument that black childhood is historically associated with an imperviousness to pain by examining the

cultural scriptedness of black dolls, and how these same dolls were appropriated by early twentieth century African-Americans as a point of resistance. While the makers of the dolls encouraged children to abuse them, New Negro adults encouraged a new playscript, positing “tender play with black dolls as a potential cure for that pathology” (i.e. internalized racism, 235).

While Bernstein’s analyses are informed and concise, they sometimes remain a little vague as to their central premises and terminologies, to the disadvantage of clarity and precision. The main flaw of *Racial Innocence*, however, lies in its neglect of gender issues: Most of Bernstein’s examples are of girls (and girls’ toys), yet there is no discussion of how childhood is gendered, how, in fact, girlhood and childhood are sometimes synonymous, but terminologically blurred categories of social construction, and how this feeds back to the idea of female innocence, and the glorification of the asexual (but simultaneously sexualized) girl.

That being said, *Racial Innocence* is a highly informative, challenging and methodologically dense text dealing with well-chosen examples and illustrations. Its strength lies both in the density and pointedness of its interpretations and in its contribution to the interdisciplinary exchange between literary studies and material studies: The methodological approach of reading “scripted things” further extends the horizon of cultural studies and effectively expands the tools available to historical and cultural analysis.

Marion Rana (Bremen)

CHRISTINA SCHÄFFER, *The Brownies' Book: Inspiring Racial Pride in African-American Children*, Mainzer Studien zur Amerikanistik 60 (Frankfurt et. al: Peter Lang, 2012), 536 pp.

GARY D. SCHMIDT, *Making Americans: Children's Literature from 1930 to 1960* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2013), 318 pp.

Christina Schäffer's *The Brownies' Book* and Gary D. Schmidt's *Making Americans* are only two of the many recent contributions to an increasingly interdisciplinary field of research, which intertwines the study of children's literature with children's culture and a host of other academic disciplines, such as gender and media studies or the social and political sciences. In light of the explosion of publications related to children's literature and childhood studies, Sarah Wadsworth has proclaimed another "Year of the Child,"¹ and according to John Wall this dynamic field is presently entering its "third wave." After a first struggle for the recognition of children as social agents and subjects of human rights in the 1980s and demands for social equality since the late 1990s, children's studies now aim to radically transform social structures and norms (Wall 70-71).²

As a result, there has been a steady chipping away at one of the most cherished myths of the late twentieth century—childhood innocence. In his seminal introduction to *The Children's Culture Reader* (1998), Henry Jenkins explains that this powerful cultural construct, which developed from Romantic notions that children were not yet corrupted by society, served as a critique of the injustices and inequalities of Western industrial societies. By the late twentieth century, these ideas had given way to an understanding of children as pre-social, apolitical beings who needed to be protected from the dire realities surrounding them. Jenkins therefore calls for alternative models of children's culture which ac-

knowledge the ideological battles waged over such popular constructs and which recognize and advocate "children's cultural, social, and political agency" (32).³ Schäffer's, as well as Schmidt's, book responds to these developments and challenges, albeit in different ways.

With *The Brownies' Book: Inspiring Racial Pride in African-American Children*, Schäffer provides a long overdue, comprehensive study of W. E. B. Du Bois's efforts at launching the first monthly magazine by black authors for black children. The study contains five major chapters. Chapter two, "Genesis of a Magazine for the Children of the Sun," introduces Du Bois's objectives and, using the first issue from January 1920 as an example, the chief concerns, themes, and philosophical concepts behind it. Chapter three, "Taking Pride in Being Black: Strategies of Composing an African-American Children's Magazine," gives an overview of the magazine's contributors and categorizes the contents of both text and image. Here, Schäffer highlights the collaboration between editors, authors, photographers, illustrators, and the audience and underlines the magazine's collage-like quality with its multiple genres and media, including advertisements. The fourth chapter, "Countering White Supremacist Attitudes: The Construction of New Images," sets off the magazine's textual and visual representations of black children as beautiful, dignified, and noble in body, mind, and character against the context of the perniciously racist and stereotypical representations of blacks in general and black children in particular. Chapter five, "In Search of a Usable Past: Possible Roots for Racial Pride," substantiates Schäffer's main thesis that *The Brownies' Book* successfully establishes a repository for an Afro-American historical and cultural consciousness and cultural memory. The magazine does so through African history, the memories of the trauma of as well as the resistance against slavery, the heritage of the South, the appropriation of European traditions, as well as the creation of a heroic ancestral gallery in which the iconic figures of male and female geni and freedom fighters occupy particularly prominent places. "*The Brownies' Book* and Beyond," the sixth chapter, traces the magazine's decline and

¹ Sarah Wadsworth, "The Year of the Child: Children's Literature, Childhood Studies, and the Turn to Childism," *American Literary History* 27.2 (2015): 331-41.

² John Wall, "Childism: The Challenge of Childhood to Ethics and the Humanities," *The Children's Table: Childhood Studies and the Humanities*, ed. Anna Mac Duane (Athens and London: The U of Georgia P, 2013) 68-84.

³ Henry Jenkins, Introduction, *The Children's Culture Reader*, ed. Henry Jenkins (New York and London: New York UP, 1998) 1-37.

legacy in subsequent issues of *The Crisis* and links it to the Harlem Renaissance.

Schäffer is clearly indebted to the scholarly work done on *The Brownies' Book* by Violet Joyce Harris.⁴ One of the book's strengths is the in-depth examination of the major columns by Du Bois and his co-editor and co-author Jessie Fauset, but also of the contributions of the many other black writers. Schäffer provides novel insights with regard to the interplay of print and visual materials, the editorial struggles for contributions, subscriptions, and financial support, the advertisement strategies, the appropriations of European traditions, and the humanist and cautiously conciliatory pedagogy of this early Afrocentric project for children. Hence, her study makes visible not only Du Bois's perspicacious vision of a broadened, multicultural democracy and global citizenship of children, but also the collaborative efforts of black artists, intellectuals, and educators to realize this vision. In this way, Schäffer convincingly demonstrates that with *The Brownies' Book*, Du Bois and the many known and unknown collaborators sought to instill racial pride and a cultural and political consciousness into the young African-American readership by insisting on their rights and responsibilities as social and political agents as well as American and world citizens. The black readers, in turn, eagerly responded to the magazine and actively participated by contributing letters, stories, biographies, and photographs.

Schäffer is at her best when she mines the depths of the 24 issues of the children's magazine for the names of its lesser-known contributors and when she unfolds the interplay between the print and visual materials through detailed close readings. Yet the photos in particular raise the question whether the magazine can always successfully appropriate the dominant "white gaze" and visual conventions. In fact, some of the photo material stems from agencies such as "Underwood & Underwood, a company owned by two white brothers" (93). Schäffer avoids discussing racialized practices of looking and in how far vision, race, age, and power potentially counter the magazine's proclamations of black beauty and race consciousness. It would certainly be

impossible for any comprehensive study of a magazine as multifaceted as *The Brownies' Book* to do justice to the complexities of such questions. When it comes to the magazine's use of European traditions, however, Schäffer's study succeeds in illuminating Du Bois's indebtedness to the German Romantic tradition and hero-worship for the black ancestral gallery. She also convincingly outlines how *The Brownies' Book* appropriates European literary and iconographical fairy tale traditions to fashion the "brownie," or "African-American fairy" (343) as a hybrid figure that signifies on the supremacist ideology inherent in these traditions. While these subjects and their aesthetic renderings beg for further research, they confirm Du Bois's dictum that "all art is propaganda" and show that the makers of *The Brownies' Book* gave their child readers ample credit for their capabilities of coping with and surviving in a racist world. Neither did they hesitate to spell out the expectations they had for their young readers.

Gary D. Schmidt's *Making Americans: Children's Literature from 1930 to 1960* likewise examines the ways in which children's literature prepares its young American readers for a more inclusive democratic society at a time when literature for children became a popular literary category and genre of its own. Schmidt illuminates especially the roles and significance of the publishers, reviewers, librarians, and teachers, a network that Schäffer tends to neglect. *Making Americans* is structured into four parts, chronologically and thematically: part one from 1930 to 1940 ("Defining America as the Pioneer Nation"); part two from 1930 to 1955 ("Otherness within a Democracy"); part three the war period from 1940 to 1945 ("American Children's Literature and World War II"); and part four from 1945 to 1960 ("Positioning the American Democracy Globally"). Each of these parts has two chapters, in the first of which Schmidt outlines the changing functions and historical contexts. He also provides surveys of the increasingly multicultural children's literature published during each period. In the second chapter, he offers close readings of children's books by selected authors and book series, supporting his argument that American children's literature shows a progressive development of democratic inclusion and an emerging multiculturalism at the same time that it contributes to America's nation building with

⁴ Violet Joyce Harris, "The Brownies' Book: Challenge to the Selective Tradition in Children's Literature," diss., (U of Georgia, 1986).

all its cultural and ideological underpinnings. Here, he examines texts by the writer and illustrator James Daugherty (1930-1940); the Bobbs-Merrill Childhood of Famous Americans Series (1930-1955); the immigrant writers Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire (1940-1945); and the authors and illustrators Virginia Lee Burton and Robert McCloskey (1945-1960).

Schmidt, who is both children's book author and scholar, renders an elegantly written and sophisticated cultural history of American children's literature from 1930 to 1960, seeking to complicate the claim of cultural critics that mid-century American children's literature overwhelmingly and optimistically affirmed an ideal version of American democracy. Instead, he argues, American children's literature is the history of a socially progressive process which, however flawed, attempted to revise and correct "the treatment of the immigrant" and "the place of the 'Other,'" "the role of the common citizen in shaping national affairs," "the desperate need for civil rights," and "America's role in global affairs" (xxvi). Reviewers have unanimously applauded Schmidt for illuminating the progressive agenda of not only writers and illustrators but also the other professionals involved in the publishing and marketing processes, the "minders"—librarians, teachers, and educators—a term Schmidt borrows from Leonard Marcus (xii).⁵ However, reviewers have also criticized the book for its descriptive rather than analytical method and its limited contextualization.⁶ Indeed, when read alongside Schäffer's study of *The Brownies' Book*, what becomes obvious is Schmidt's problematic usage of the term

"radical." He fails to distinguish between, on the one hand, the general move toward a more leftist political stance during the Great Depression and the New Deal, and on the other hand, the swing back to a more nationalistic stance in the subsequent decades, the postwar era in particular, when anticommunist feelings were on the rise. As Manning Marable states in his biography of W. E. B. Du Bois, "[r]adicalism is always a relative term" and there were many "democratic current[s] among many movements of social unrest" (83), all of which require to be placed within their specific historical and political contexts.⁷ As it is, Schmidt's presumed progressive (and "radical") narrative of children's literature veers dangerously close to becoming a characteristically American success story in itself.

Revealing the ideological battles waged over the emerging category and genre of children's literature in the period from 1920 to 1960, Schäffer and Schmidt shed new light on important chapters in children's literature and culture. They demonstrate that the writers and illustrators as well as the "minders" treated children as political subjects and citizens with rights and duties. Nevertheless, their studies also show the racial divide between the lives of white and black children when read alongside each other. Notably, Schäffer and Schmidt's research raises more questions than it provides answers, which is a sure sign that the recent peak of scholarly activities in this vibrant field has by no means been exhausted yet.

Michaela Keck (Oldenburg)

⁵ Wadsworth 335; Gwen Athene Tarbox, "Making Americans: Children's Literature from 1930 to 1960, by Gary D. Schmidt," *Children's Literature* 43 (2015): 270-73; Sara L. Schwebel, "Making Americans: Children's Literature from 1930 to 1960, by Gary D. Schmidt," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 39.2 (2014): 297-99.

⁶ Tarbox 273; Schwebel 299.

⁷ Manning Marable, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat* (1986; Boulder and London: Paradigm, 2005).

WERNER SOLLORS, *African American Writing: A Literary Approach* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple U P, 2016), 296 pp.

African American Writing, Werner Sollors's latest book, commands attention for a variety of reasons: as a compilation of previously published essays, it brings to light within the covers of one single book the astounding scope, learning, and depth of Sollors's scholarship in the field at hand. *AAW* begins with an essay on eighteenth-century slave narrator Olaudah Equiano and ends two centuries later with a discussion of African American writing in the age of an Obama presidency. Some of the essays originally appeared as introductions to critical editions, such as the Norton critical edition of Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* and Du Bois's *Autobiography* by Oxford University Press; others were contributions to publications with rather limited circulation, as in the case of Sollors's riveting account of African American intellectuals and Europe between the two World Wars, which was first published as part of a special issue of an academic series by the University of Tours (GRAAT) and dedicated to the late Michel Fabre. One essay, on LeRoi Jones's *Dutchman*, was taken from Sollors's first book *Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones: The Quest for a "Populist Modernism"* (1978), a pathbreaking study of Baraka's metamorphosis from Beat to black poet based on Sollors's dissertation at the Freie Universität Berlin; not only does this early monograph on Baraka stand out as a major achievement in the criticism of African American literature as 'American' literature, it also paved the way for the exceptional career of a German scholar of African American studies at two Ivy League universities, Columbia and Harvard.

Taken together, the twelve essays assembled here cover a large, impressive body of African American texts, both well and lesser known: from Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* and Charles Chesnutt's plantation stories, to modernist novels such as Jean Toomer's *Cane*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and Richard Wright's *Native Son*; from programmatic essays (by Wright and Hurston) and a discussion of the influence of anthropology and sociology on African American writing, to Du Bois's ambiguous account of his visit to Germany in 1936 and, finally, a survey of contemporary black literary responses to the notion of interracial kinship

and a post-racial society (both concepts have been widely discussed after Obama's inauguration as the nation's first black president). The essays also display Sollors's unique approach to African American writing, i. e., his attempt to understand the text under scrutiny as part of a larger transnational American modernist tradition without eclipsing its ethnic cultural specificity. This tendency is particularly apparent in a chapter on Jean Toomer's *Cane*, in my opinion the brilliant centerpiece of the collection. Subtitled "Modernism and Race in Interwar America," it sets out to delineate the myriad ways in which African American writing between the two World Wars has tapped into modernist techniques and mindsets. *Cane*, Sollors argues, "makes its readers self-conscious to let them yearn for a fresher and fuller look at the world" (71). In doing so, it addresses a larger philosophical question underlying much of American literature, from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne to Henry Roth and Ralph Ellison, namely, the possibility of having both full knowledge and self-knowledge in the modern world: "In pursuing this question in the United States, Toomer also searched for a more cosmic understanding of the wholeness of a polyvocal America as it was once sung by Walt Whitman and now proclaimed by Waldo Frank" (71).

Informed by the demand of his close friend Waldo Frank that American writers should study the influence and disappearance of ethnic cultural expressions in the U.S. as integral parts of their own 'American' experience, Toomer articulates in *Cane* the modernist obsession with fragmentation and the quest for wholeness by way of a passing from the rural world of the South to the Northern cities, especially Washington and Chicago. As Sollors elucidates, the modern urban world of these cities left African Americans not only uprooted but unable to ever go back to peasantry, to nature. The answer to this dilemma could not lie in a return to traditional values; rather it meant to go on and find viable answers in new forms of creation and thereby "move forward the project of modernism itself" (71). What I found particularly fascinating in Sollors's reading of Toomer's formally and thematically experimental novel (but also of other writers of the same era, for example Charles Chesnutt and W. E. B. Du Bois) is that it glaringly foregrounds the urgency of these modernist black texts for contemporary read-

ers. In his late collection of aphorisms, *Essentials* (1931), Toomer invokes his belonging to the only 'pure' race extant, i. e., the human race, and he does so in a language that clearly speaks to contemporary concerns about ideological constructs such as racial, gender and class distinctions:

I am of no particular race. I am of the human race, a man at large in the human world, preparing a new race.

I am of no specific region. I am of the earth.

I am of no particular class. I am of the human class, preparing a new class.

I am neither male nor female nor in-between.

I am of sex, with male differentiations.

I am of no special field, I am of the field of being. (81-82)

Toomer's striking 'planetary' identification ties in with later phenomenological assumptions about the place of humans in an increasingly man-made world, as in the writings of Merleau-Ponty or Charles Jonson; it also raises questions about the nature-culture divide which has come under attack by both poststructuralism and ecocriticism alike. Finally, it serves to back up Toomer's notion of America as encompassing people of various ethnic backgrounds rather than merely 'white' Americans. Though clearly in conflict with the dominant American self-description of his time, his increasing emphasis on 'Americanness' as essentially a process of creolization has been, as Sollors convincingly claims, Toomer's outstanding and lasting contribution to modern literature.

In their formal approaches to African American literary texts, *AAW* ranges from archive-driven, bio-historical assessments of a writer's ambiguous stances, as in the case of Du Bois's trip to Nazi Germany in 1936, to meticulous semiotic analysis in the chapter on Wright and Hurston. Whatever take on a specific writer or

period Sollors chooses, his exploration of the depth and scope of African American writing is always on target, always well-founded, and always informed by a rare infatuation with literature as both individual achievement and cultural expression. While navigating a highly contested and highly politicized field of critical inquiry, Sollors reads African American literature, to retool Ezra Pound's definition of the good reader in his *ABC of Reading*, "with an open mind." As a collection of essays previously published between 1978 to 2011, *AAW* also sheds light on Sollors's lingering interest in the themes and ideas expressed in his path-breaking studies *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent American Culture* (1986), *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (1997), *Ethnic Modernism* (2008), and, finally, *The Temptation of Despair: Tales of the 1940* (2014) which could be read as a continuation and extension of the writers discussed in chapter five, "African American Intellectuals and Europe between the Two World Wars." Evidently, what interests Sollors most is not the exotism of the cultural fringe. Rather, his lasting contribution to the field of African American literature has been to expose and study the many interracial, cross-cultural, and frequently transnational relationships that have continued to shape this important corpus of American literature. The love and erudition that Sollors brings to these texts have been outstanding. If both have garnered for him the respect and recognition of American Studies scholars worldwide, the twelve essays collected in *African American Writing* provide ample proof to the originality and critical ingenuity of their author. They also go to show how Sollors's transatlantic perspective has changed our perception of African American literature as it were.

Klaus Benesch (Munich)

MICHELE ELAM, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to James Baldwin* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2015), 246 pp.

In the last twenty years, the major influence of theoretical frameworks such as the “Black Atlantic”¹ and the “Black Diaspora”² has led to the transformation of African American Studies to a more internationally oriented academic field. While this transcultural perspective has provided new insights into the works of numerous African American writers and intellectuals, the case of James Baldwin proves particularly fruitful for this angle of research: Baldwin has not only spent years of his life in countries such as France, Turkey, and Switzerland, but he has also collaborated with (and been influenced by) numerous international artists and intellectuals, and he is one of relatively few African American writers whose work has received a broad international reception. If one adds to this fact the ongoing relevance of ‘Baldwinian’ answers to questions connected to race, gender, identity, and migration, there is hardly any ground to doubt Michele Elam’s introductory argument that Baldwin’s “prescient questioning of the boundaries of race, sex, love, leadership, and country assume new urgency” in what she calls “the ‘post-race’ transnational twenty-first century” (3).

Connected by this argument, *The Cambridge Companion to James Baldwin* presents thirteen essays by distinguished scholars of (African) American Studies, which all aim to provide new “perspectives on Baldwin’s aesthetic practice and politics across genre, across gender, across the globe, and across the color line” (12). The volume is complemented by an introductory essay by editor Michele Elam, a ‘coda’ by D. Quentin Miller, and some additional scholarly sources (among them, a chronology of Baldwin’s life, a guide to further reading, and a list of Baldwin’s works). While the supplemental material is clearly

informative for anyone with little knowledge about Baldwin, Elam’s introduction appeals to scholars who are already familiar with Baldwin’s best known novels, plays, and essays, and who have an additional interest in the lesser examined domains of his work and in the complex, often contradictory images that others have (and had) of Baldwin. Stating that Baldwin’s slipping between the categories and periodizations of literary history has frequently led to a simplification of his oeuvre, Elam highlights several underappreciated aspects of his work that are investigated further throughout the volume and create coherence between the individual contributions: Baldwin’s role as “one of the first black public intellectuals of the postwar period” (5); his complex understanding of how art can relate to social reality and activate its audience through its “ethical potency” (8); his groundbreaking conception of race and identity as socially and historically constructed; and his rich view of the relation between the human interior and the social exterior. She then briefly describes the structure of the volume. The thirteen essays are arranged in two sections entitled “genres and mélanges” and “collaborations and influences,” with the seven texts of the first part focusing on “Baldwin’s social relation to form” (13) and the latter six considering complementary questions related to his “formal relation to society” (13).

Stating that critics and biographers often describe Baldwin’s late fiction as formally weak, Jacqueline Goldsby opens the first part with an analysis of Baldwin’s fourth novel *Tell Me How Long the Train’s Been Gone* (1968). Goldsby suggests to understand the lack of formal rigor that critics found in Baldwin’s late novels as an experimental ‘formlessness’ intended to reflect the complexity of human relationships. She investigates this ‘formless form’ by looking closely at the novel’s use of flashbacks, and at its juxtaposition of the aesthetics of prose fiction and theater. Goldsby proposes to see these features as ways of testing the temporal and aesthetic limits of different forms of art and of trying to allow for human connections “that may strain one’s sense of normalcy and order.” (37) While Goldsby’s essay thus enlarges our understanding of Baldwin’s intentions and techniques as a writer of fiction, Meta Duewa Jones undertakes an analysis of a part of Baldwin’s oeuvre that has almost never been investigated closely: his poetry. Departing from the observation that

¹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993).

² Ronald Segal, *The Black Diaspora: Five Centuries of the Black Experience Outside Africa* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003).

Baldwin wrote poetry throughout his life, but published his first commercial collection only four years before his death, Jones proposes to approach Baldwin's poems from a temporal frame. She investigates how time (and especially death) features as "a motif, a metaphor, and a measurement" (42) in Baldwin's poems, and she connects his use of such motifs with Baldwin's strategies of inscribing himself in the literary tradition of black poetry.

The next two essays both provide investigations of themes that recur in Baldwin's work in different genres. Soyica Diggs Colbert considers how the religious practice of the sermon informs three of Baldwin's most famous texts: his first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, the play *Blues for Mister Charlie*, and his collection of essays *The Fire Next Time*. She argues convincingly that, in each of these texts, "in Baldwin's rendering, the sermon borrows from the traditional function of the practice to build a community and emancipate the listener, but he deploys it toward secular aims that inevitably require disruption of the status quo." (68) Radiclan Clytus investigates Baldwin's use of another traditional form of black expression: music. Departing from Baldwin's essay "The Uses of the Blues," he roots Baldwin's lifelong interest in jazz and blues in his view of music as a form allowing us to deal with existential suffering and questions of identity. Clytus relates this conception of music to Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy of existentialism, and he provides an insightful analysis of Baldwin's short story "Sonny's Blues" by blending the story's reference to philosophical ideas such as estrangement, sovereign will, and freedom with its depiction of music as a way of facilitating the empathic connection between people.

While both the sermon and black music serve as traditional forms enriching Baldwin's work in different genres, E. Patrick Johnson focuses on Baldwin's plays *The Amen Corner* and *Blues for Mister Charlie* in order to analyze how "it is [their] nontraditional engagement with theatrical form that reinforces their political message." (85) Emphasizing the importance that Baldwin attributed to the visceral experience of proximity between actor and audience, Johnson understands the references to ritual processes of the black church and—in the case of *Blues for Mister Charlie*—the use of non-realist dramatic structure as ways of allowing the audience to develop critical modes of engagement at a time when commercial the-

ater mostly expected uncritical identification. Another 'Baldwinian' technique of pointing to social incongruities and increasing the audience's critical awareness is investigated by Danielle C. Heard: Baldwin's humor. Departing from Baldwin's collaboration with comedian Dick Gregory, Heard argues for the necessity "of viewing Baldwin's life and literary performances through the prism of comedy" (102). She then concentrates on several facets of Baldwin's humor: his affinity for the "negative feeling" (in Kenneth Burke's sense), the affected accent of Baldwin's speaking voice, 'masturbatory' tropes such as Baldwin's comical play with his 'ugly' face, and the "dramatization of the comic gap between the elder's wisdom and the child's helpless naiveté" (113). The latter facet connects to the last essay of the first section: Nicholas Boggs's analysis of Baldwin's and Yoran Cazac's children's book *Little Man Little Man: A Story of Childhood* (1976). While most critics dismissed Baldwin's collaboration with the white European artist Cazac as a "failed children's book" (119), Boggs proposes to read it as a "child's story for adults" (119) that provides a counter-narrative to the dominant representations of black childhood and articulates alternative models of black masculinity and kinship. Focusing on both Baldwin's text and Cazac's illustrations, Boggs investigates in detail how the book develops its own notion of double consciousness through the character of Blinky and how it presents an image of Harlem that is both "distorted and made strangely, unexpectedly beautiful" (122).

While the essays by Heard and Boggs already provide informative examples of Baldwin's collaborations, Norman Brian opens the second section on "collaborations and influences" with a more general investigation of what "it mean[s] to think of Baldwin as a collaborator" (135). Analyzing the nature and the aims of different collaborative projects such as the photo-text *Nothing Personal* (with Richard Avedon), the staged dialogues with Margaret Mead, Nikki Giovanni, and Audre Lorde, the children's book *Little Man Little Man*, the editorial process with Sol Steiner, and the experimental jazz album "A Lover's Question" (with David Linx), Brian notes several commonalities between these projects: they are more interested in genuine understanding than in unified agreement, they allow for difference and incompleteness, they aim to lead into "uncharted territory"

(145), and they relate to Baldwin's "vision of radical love based in engagement and trust, especially across lines of difference" (141). While hierarchical structures are notably absent in these collaborative projects, Erica R. Edwards's essay invites us to reflect on Baldwin's literary depictions of a form of public engagement necessarily related to power and hierarchy: black leadership. Describing the figure of the prophet as Baldwin's preferred notion for his own role as public spokesman and 'leader,' Edwards investigates the images of the prophet in three texts of Baldwin's oeuvre: the short story "The Death of the Prophet," the essay *No Name in the Street*, and the screenplay *One Day When I Was Lost*. She observes that Baldwin's images of leadership are typically articulated in a "language of debilitating loss and arresting despair" (151) that shows Baldwin's writings as constantly "driven by the intimate relationships between the lost prophet and the lost self, and between fallen leaders and Baldwin's own writerly enterprise" (162).

The centrality of loss for Baldwin's writings is further emphasized by Aliyyah I. Abdur-Rahman, who finds in Baldwin's relational and contextual conception of identity the "sobering reminder that identities take shape in and through constitutive loss" (176). Abdur-Rahman shows convincingly that Baldwin's early writings already anticipate aspects of the poststructuralist deconstruction of identity: While *Giovanni's Room* (1956) depicts coherent heterosexual identity as requiring the construction of a deviant other, the short story "Going to Meet the Man" (1965) links its formation to a moment of terrified spectatorship. Another aspect connected to the fragility and vulnerability of human existence is explored by Christopher Freedberg: the experience of love. Whereas critics often labeled Baldwin's vision of love as sentimental, Freedberg suggests considering more closely that Baldwin thought of this 'private' feeling as containing transformative possibilities and the potential for social change. He roots Baldwin's conception of love as "infinite category of human possibility" (191) in novels such as *Another Country* as well as in Baldwin's critical reviews of popular American films and novels, and he finds it to share many elements with Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy.

One of the most original investigations is undertaken by Douglas Field. Departing from the observation that virtually all

of Baldwin's fictional writings have at their core a narrative of imprisonment or police brutality, Field provides an analysis of the FBI files on James Baldwin. He claims that the 1,884 pages collected between 1960 and 1974 do not only reveal much about the extent of Baldwin's political commitment to the Civil Rights Movement, but are also informative about the Bureau's methods and aims regarding African American intellectuals. Whereas the FBI officers are only marginally interested in the political content of Baldwin's essays or in the literary analysis of his fiction, the files are full of 'gossip' and show the Bureau's "(largely self-appointed) role as the guardian of morality and decency" (202). The last essay invites us to reflect on what can be seen as an effect of the climate of suspicion and surveillance encountered in the U.S.—Baldwin's expatriation. Relying on a short autobiographic essay from 1987 and her own visit to St. Paul-de-Vence, Magdalena J. Zaborowska contrasts Baldwin's lifelong status as an exile and nomad to the "writerly domestication" (212) he later experienced as homeowner of 'Chez Baldwin' in the South of France. Drawing on theoretical concepts by Gaston Bachelard, Walter Benjamin, and Henri Lefebvre, Zaborowska's essay sheds light on several questions relevant to a transnational perspective in African American studies: the desire for closeness to one's subject that motivated her own and other scholars' visits to 'Chez Baldwin'; her experience that looking at a writer's home always implies "look[ing] for the material as the context for the metaphorical" (214); the influence of the newfound experience of belonging on Baldwin's last drama *The Welcome Table* and other late writings.

The volume closes with a brief coda by D. Quentin Miller. Inviting us to think of Baldwin as a complex "jigsaw puzzle" (227), Miller emphasizes the relevance of continuing to find new pieces and new ways of putting them together: "What Baldwin offers, and what each of the essays in this *Companion* highlights, is a man dedicated to searching for the cure to this American disease. [...] Here and elsewhere, James Baldwin lays bare his heart for us. He offers his blood, sometimes frozen in fear, sometimes boiling with fever, so that we may learn to diagnose that disease in our own time" (230). To this ongoing task, the essays of *The Cambridge Companion to James Baldwin* are not the only recent contri-

bution, but certainly a major one.¹ Although there are—as in every edited volume—differences in quality between the individual contributions, the number of actually original essays bringing in new perspectives and/or addressing neglected topics and genres of Baldwin's work is astonishingly high. Together, their most important merit for future scholars is probably not one specific result or answer (although there are specific results to

be found in here!), but their ability of advising us to further look for missing pieces of Miller's 'jigsaw puzzle' in regions and genres hitherto unexplored by 'Baldwin Studies,' especially when it comes to Baldwin's international side, to his collaborations, and to his relevance for poststructuralist, philosophical, and ethical perspectives.

Gianna Zocco (Wien)

¹ With the foundation of the *James Baldwin Review* in 2015 (ed. Douglas Field, Justin A. Joyce, Dwight A. McBride), the celebration of *The Year of James Baldwin* in New York City 2014, and the *International James Baldwin Conference* at the American University of Paris in May 2016, the academic interest in James Baldwin has recently reached a new peak of interest internationally.

STEFANIE MUELLER, *The Presence of the Past in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013), 270 pp.

In *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (2007), Saidiya Hartman offers an insightful rumination on the ongoing structural and personal effects of slavery in the wake of the transatlantic slave trade. As she notes: “I, too, live in the time of slavery, by which I mean I am living in the future created by it” (133).¹ While Hartman has pushed generic boundaries for her considerations of racialized inequality, creating part autobiographical travelogue, part historiographical essay, part transnational sociological study, Toni Morrison has repeatedly and famously formalized her explorations of the legacies of slavery by turning to the genre of the novel. In order to analyze ways in which the Nobel laureate narrativizes the ongoing meaning of the apparatus of enslavement, Stefanie Mueller employs a sociological framework, approaching the following three novels: *Paradise* (1998), *Love* (2003), and *A Mercy* (2008).

The title of the monograph reviewed here takes its cue from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s *Logic of Practice* (1990)—in which he locates “the active presence of the whole past” in the concept of habitus (qtd. in Mueller 34). It is this concept that facilitates Mueller’s examination of the relationship between past and present, which she combines with another, long-established sociological interest in analyzing how individuals are implicated in larger social structures. In her introductory chapter titled “Thinking Relationally,” which lays the theoretical groundwork of the monograph, Mueller surveys the sociological concepts relevant to her readings of Morrison’s novels. The most central one is Bourdieu’s habitus—“the interiorization of the exterior” (30), or “embodied history” (44n35)—located at the” interface between field and practice, which it generates and which does indeed change the field” (31n22). According to Bourdieu, individuals internalize exterior/social and prior/historical structures (of inequality) and reproduce them in their minds and actions. Habitus is thus both “opus operatum” and “modus operandi” (qtd. in Mueller 33), i.e. effect of

structural relations of a field as well as generative cause of practices.

The first of four chapters offering close readings of Morrison’s novels opens with a narratological analysis of different strategies of focalization in *Paradise*, employed to signal the fragile dynamics of collectivization among the female characters who, as those familiar with the text will recall, assemble in an isolated place Morrison calls the Convent, set apart from an all-black town named Ruby. Mueller conceptualizes the dynamics at play between Ruby and the Convent and the functions of the line drawn between these two places with recourse to Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson’s model as developed in their sociological study *The Established and the Outsiders* (1965). Her special focus lies on examining how the storytelling of a shared history facilitates the establishment of internal cohesion in and external exclusion from the town of Ruby as well as on exposing the growing internal conflicts and disintegration of the community in the course of the novel, leading to the massacre of the women in the Convent. Mueller concludes the chapter by pointing out that “Morrison depicts the original power imbalances and the politics of difference that go along with [the figuration of slavery] as encoded in the collective and individual practices of her characters and thereby as undermining the African American community itself” (94).

Opening the next chapter on *Love* also with a narratological analysis of focalizing techniques and use of tense, Mueller stresses the oral quality of this novel to discuss its use of what she calls “memory narratives” (106), by which she refers to Morrison’s narrative mode of mobilizing knowledge of the past to show that it remains relevant in the characters’ present—“rememory” (212). Through narrative acts of remembering, Morrison collapses a past spanning the Jim Crow era and the first decades of desegregation into the present of the 1990s, depicting “the condition of the African American community as one of dangerous fragmentation” (129). As Mueller elaborates, “the novel’s historical subject is [...] the lack of solidarity within the black community” (147). This is also the case in *Paradise*, but as Mueller maintains, *Love* explores in more detail how “the dominated” (157) take part in reproducing the gendered and raced power relations to which they are subjected.

Mueller’s interest in investigating the relationship between past and present seems

¹ Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2007), Print.

particularly justified in the following chapter on *A Mercy*, thanks to the time in which the novel is set, the late seventeenth century. It is also the strongest chapter of the monograph. What makes *A Mercy* an important literary exploration of structural inequality is the fact that it takes place, as Mueller notes, “at a time when slavery was not yet paired with racism and [...] also the first of Morrison’s novels that is explicitly set during slavery” (159). Mueller once again first reviews narrative discourse to then place the novel in the larger framework of what scholars like Bernard W. Bell and Ashraf Rushdy have called the neo-slave narrative, which allows Mueller to provide her readers with a succinct reading of the novel’s negotiation of literacy and kinship relations, as well as of the nexus between law, religion, and capitalism in the early North American colonies. The novel has a prominent place in the overall outline of the study because it “interrogates the genesis” (208) of the particular social structures that will be generative for ways in which black subjects will be positioned at later points in history, for instance in the future(s) depicted in the novels analyzed in the previous chapters.

Before Mueller rounds up her book with an “Epilogue,” she inserts a cursory reading of *Beloved*, underlining the significance of the concepts of habitus and symbolic power for a critical reading of “the reproduction of the re-

lations of domination” (227). The conclusion reviews Morrison’s career, reading it as the trajectory of an outstanding African American author whose oeuvre crosses over into the sphere of the “consecrated avant-garde” (255).

It is not only a worthwhile but necessary undertaking to continually rethink how literary writing can and should be conceptualized in an analytical framework provided by sociology, and Mueller’s book offers a welcome contribution in this respect. While reading the monograph, a set of general questions came to the reviewer’s mind: in what ways do Morrison’s novels and, by extension, her interviews and essays open up specific perspectives on inequalities which in turn contribute to and modify sociological theorizing; what kind of sociological epistemology, in other words, do Morrison’s works themselves constitute; how can her oeuvre be read for its analytical value, as sociology in its own right? Mueller’s monograph must be credited for prompting such questions. As she notes, Bourdieu himself claimed that a novel potentially “supplies all the tools necessary for its own sociological analysis” (qtd. in Mueller 231). For readers interested in relating Bourdieu’s sociological approach to literature—and vice versa—Mueller’s study provides a well-versed reference point.

Carsten Junker (Leipzig)

STELLA BOLAKI AND SABINE BROECK, eds, *Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2015), Xii + 250 pp.

Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies is a collection of essays edited by Stella Bolaki and Sabine Broeck in a transnational effort to show how the African American poet Audre Lorde's (1934-1992) influential work has lived on. It is a volume that is based on a number of collaboratively organized conferences, workshops, and panels between 2012 and 2015, above all in England and Canada. The book is prefaced by Sara Ahmed's very personal words, describing the meaning Audre Lorde has had in her own life as a woman "of color" (x) growing up in a white neighborhood in Australia. Ahmed's "Foreword" makes evident that Lorde's poetry, essays, and autobiography are political and have paved the way for radically voicing concerns about racism and sexism. It also reveals that the national is always already transnational since "the very ground of nations is shaped by histories of empire and colonialism" (xi). In times of a proliferation of the label "transnational," Ahmed embraces a very down-to-earth definition that evokes the feminist idea of "the personal is the political": "[...] the transnational is an actual lived space populated by real bodies. It is not a glossy word in a brochure but one that requires work. We have to work to learn from others who do not share our language. We have to travel out of our comfort zones, to open our ears" (xi). And this is precisely what the volume asks its readers to do.

The editors of the collection describe their aim as exploring "the depth and range of Lorde's literary, intellectual, and activist commitments by situating her life and work within transatlantic and transnational perspectives" (1). As early as in the introduction, readers begin to understand some of the dimensions of Lorde's interest in connecting with black women across national borders, how the 1980s and the few years in the early 1990s brought her to Europe—above all to Germany, Switzerland, and England—and how concerned and even shocked she was to see racism and sexism on the rise again. People had connected tremendous hope with the destruction of the wall in Germany, but the racist attacks spreading across East Germany at the time motivated her and Gloria Joseph, her partner, to write a letter of protest to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and to ask: "Is this the new

German version of 'ethnic cleansing?'" (11). Such details of Lorde's European activities have largely remained hidden, at least to those who are not actively involved in the preservation of Lorde's legacy. They must, therefore, be spread across academia and into activist groups, in particular now that we have seen a renewed emergence of violent racist behavior since 2016, not only in Europe, but here most of all due to the current refugee crisis.

Owing to the atmosphere of the 1980s in Europe, Lorde encounters during her numerous visits moments of racism and people who seem to be unwilling to acknowledge the devastating consequences of earlier European colonialism. However, while emphasizing the important role of "People of Color" across the world in the use of "difference for something other than destruction" (Lorde's "The Dream of Europe" in 1988 [26]), both Lorde and the editors of this volume leave unacknowledged the many people, then and now, including so-called white Europeans, who work against racism—just consider the great number of volunteers who, especially in the first months of the crisis, helped refugees in their daily struggles to build a new life for themselves—and those who, for example, in academia, openly discuss these issues with colleagues and students. Although none of this is unproblematic and there are too many counter-examples, these efforts and people do not deserve to be included in what the editors with reference to Lorde's speech call "a rotten Europe" (24).

The book consists of three main parts entitled "Archives," "Connections," and "Work" (with 20 essays, including the editors' introduction and afterword). The essays draw on a number of perspectives such as those of "historical witnesses and members of Lorde's personal community of transnational friends and sisters" (14), of academic collaborators, and of views on the diversity of Lorde's understanding of "work" (15). As is always true for collections, it is impossible in one review to pay due attention to all essays and writers, but what is perhaps even more important is to acknowledge the collaboration of all contributors to make Lorde's legacies known.

In her contribution, Dagmar Schultz describes the making and distribution of her own film on Lorde's time in Germany, entitled *The Berlin Years, 1984 to 1992*. The process of the film's production and completion in 2012 was accompanied by a number of obstacles—financial, ideological, and structural. After its

release, the film was shown at numerous festivals, received many awards, and raised awareness in its viewers of the need to consider race as an integral part of intersectionality, a term which Lorde herself never used but which is exactly what she promoted in her work.

A number of interviews with Lorde conducted at different times by different people, among them the black German feminist Marion Kraft, the filmmaker Pratibha Parmar, and the British professor of creative writing Jackie Kay, as well as the recollections of Gloria I. Joseph, enhance the very personal note of the volume. What comes across in all contributions is the recognition of the 1980s as a time of major change, of the rise of both black and white women's feminist activities, the heterogeneity of these movements, but also the mutual misunderstandings as well as the racism—conscious or unconscious—present in many European feminist events, such as at the first International Feminist (or Women's) Book Fair in London in 1984. In an interview with Parmar and Kay, published in 1988 for the first time and republished here, Audre Lorde, who is known for highly valuing differences and their intersections, explains one of the differences she sees between U.S.-American and European feminism in naming:

In other ways our solutions are different. Take the issue of how we name ourselves, for example. In the United States, *Black* means of African heritage, and we use the term *women of color* to include Native American, Latina, Asian American women. I understand that here, *Black* is a political term which includes all oppressed ethnic groups, and the term *women of color* is frowned on. (80)

These differences in naming suggest the strong need for networking across national but also sexual and ethnic boundaries in order to point to discrimination that exists among women, even within the same ethnicity. Racism and heterosexism, for Lorde, as Lester C. Olson points out in the essay on "Sisterhood as Performance in Audre Lorde's Public Advocacy," "harmed solidarity among women in the interest of realizing political, economic, and social change for women" (111). All essays repeatedly focus on Lorde's idea of sisterhood that made her move beyond the U.S. borders across the world to reach out to black women in the Caribbean, South Africa, Europe, and Asia. Again, an awareness of what it means to

be called black was for Lorde essential, since being labeled black did not and does not mean the same thing in the nations of the world. As Olson explains, "Lorde knew that *black* does not imply African descent in either New Zealand or Australia. In Australia the word refers to indigenous aboriginal peoples such as the Wurundjeri, while in New Zealand it refers to the Maori" (115). Olson's attempt to find a term with which to adequately describe Lorde's international activities results in suggesting "[t]ransnational sisterhood" (116), at least "when thinking geographically about Lorde's advocacy" (116). The way in which Olson summarizes Lorde's idea of sisterhood deserves representation here since its implications are present, as I believe, in all essays of this volume and capture Lorde's political activism and outreach in a nutshell:

For Lorde, sisterhood is not simply demographic (*women*), geographic, or even relational (*oppression*). Rather, sisterhood is contingent, and it is enacted in ways that demonstrate a communal commitment to doing something about transforming oppression while encouraging oppressed women to embrace each other within and across national boundaries. [...] Sisterhood is a deed or a performance. (119)

Transnational outreach is always accompanied by "transracial feminist alliances" (122-23), as the German Katharina Gerund, in her well-researched essay on Lorde and (West) German Women, points out. In Germany, Lorde pointed her finger at racial segregation and supported Afro-Germans in their struggle to promote "a critical reflection of whiteness in the feminist movement" (131), which can be seen as a position from which critical whiteness studies "has increased the awareness of racist structures within feminism" (131). While this is an important aim in feminism as well as Critical Whiteness Studies, I find it troubling to encounter the term "white guilt" (e. g., 129, 131) in some essays in this volume, even if sometimes only by implication. Racism existed then and still does now, but most of the white European feminists of the 1980s, just like those in the 1960s in the U.S., had to undergo a process of consciousness-raising and of becoming aware of their own collaboration with racist social tendencies. In order to build transracial alliances, feelings of guilt are not an effective position from which to start such an endeavor. Inter-

ethnic racism existed and still exists, but so does intra-ethnic discrimination. Guilt is a legal or moral term that presupposes a trial in which the positions of victim and perpetrator usually result in the latter's designation as the guilty one. Gerund maintains that the interactions between Audre Lorde with white and Afro-Germans "expose the main problems in collaborations between white and Afro-German women—such as white guilt, racism, and white superiority—but also indicate their possibilities, productivity, and creativity" (131). Today, the latter should certainly be the basis for feminist transracial alliances.

In the same way Audre Lorde criticized German racism, she also exposed the corruption of the Saint Croix government after Hurricane Hugo had left its devastating traces on the Caribbean islands. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs points out, "[t]he government took days to respond to the hurricane disaster, and even then its emphasis was on securing corporate property. Lorde describes the response as 'man-made ugliness'" (165). The response in no way differed from "the 2005 nonresponse and military antagonism after Hurricane Katrina" (165), as Gumbs continues. These events and their management reveal one of the main reasons for Lorde's activism: no matter where she went and no matter whether the country was predominantly white or black, she found corruption and discrimination that had to be fought just like cancer. As Tamara Lea Spira argues: "As Lorde lay in bed in Grenada, battling cancer, she felt deep clarity about the intricate connection between the diseases of racism, sexism, capitalism, and imperialism and the cancer in her body" (187). This is more than a symbolic equation; it literally refers to the U.S. government's cutting of research grants to the National Cancer Institute in 1986 and turning the money over "illegally" "to the contras in Nicaragua" (187).

After reading through all the essays (including those that could not be mentioned

here in more detail by Cassandra Ellerbe-Dueck/Gloria Wekker, Rina Nissim, Zeedah Meierhofer-Mangeli, Tiffany N. Florvil, Paul M. Farber, and Sarah Cefai), it becomes very clear that Audre Lorde's legacy lives on, in art installations in Liverpool (Chantal Oaks 212), in feminist publishing series in Greece (Christiana Lambrinidis 220), in Black German organizations (Peggy Piesche 223), in commemorations of the twentieth anniversary of Lorde's death in 2012 (Piesche 222), in the work of many black women writers in Germany (Piesche 224); that is, in the personal, political, and academic legacy that Audre Lorde has left behind. Lorde has become present and influential, beyond the countries already mentioned, in Spain, Serbia, Italy, and Russia; in the work of the Palestinian and Muslim poet Suheir Hammad; in cancer narratives; and her influence keeps growing (Bolaki and Broeck 226-30). There is no doubt that the editors of the volume are right in concluding that "Lorde is a truly transnational figure, and her work has far-reaching legacies" (229). What is equally important, however, as I believe, is to historically situate Lorde's work, to be aware of the changes she has or has not motivated, and to not forget that people in the second decade of the new millennium might have seen social improvements as well as curricular developments in academia that can no longer be classified as racist. It is certainly true that we still encounter few black people in powerful positions in society, in particular in Germany, and we, therefore, need to be aware of Black Lives Matter. However, we also have to continue to collaborate across all kinds of borders and differences and not to revive one-sided allocations of guilt. The volume is aptly entitled *Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies*. In that sense, we need to focus on collaboration and not confrontation: The volume is an excellent source to help us do so.

Carmen Birkle (Marburg)

FLORIAN BAST, *Of Bodies, Communities, and Voices: Agency in Writings by Octavia Butler*, (Heidelberg: Winter, 2015), 221 pp.

In April 2014, the *Guardian* caused a stir by announcing that two previously unpublished stories—a novella entitled “A Necessary Being” and a short story, “Childminder”—had been found among notes and papers at a library in San Marino, CA.¹ The author of these texts was none other than Octavia Butler, the first black woman writer to gain fame in science fiction and the first to receive a MacArthur Fellowship for outstanding achievements in writing. The pieces were published in June 2014, immediately triggering a multitude of reviews in magazines, newspapers, and blogs within and outside of academia as well as an initial round of academic articles. The renewed attention around Octavia Butler thus highlights her continuing relevance within and influence on the cultural landscape of the United States, not only as a black woman writer who has considerably changed the ways in which we define the genres of science fiction and of African American literature, but as an iconic literary figure whose artistry touches audiences “as limitless as the identities of the characters in her writing” (Hampton 248).² Thus, Florian Bast’s monograph arrives at a particularly exciting time in Butler scholarship.

In his book, Bast analyzes selected works of Butler’s oeuvre through the lens of a central philosophical category, agency, arguing that Butler’s writing encompasses numerous texts that are centrally engaged with exploring the intricate ethical and theoretical complexities of agency—not only as individual texts but also in intertextual dialogue with each other. In so doing, Bast asserts further by echoing Barbara Christian’s “Race for Theory,”³ Butler’s work both contributes to theoretical conceptions of agency by engaging with

ongoing philosophical debates around it and exposes “the consequences that such general conceptualizations [of agency] have on those who face (multiple forms of) oppression” (18–19). Agency, as Bast points out, has been and continues to be paramount to African American (women’s) literary history, particularly with regards to constructions of the body, of community, and of voice (each of which is addressed in one of the three analytical chapters in this study) as well as to issues such as subjectivity, freedom, racism, and sexism, among many others (12). Yet this study’s focus on agency not only brings to the forefront the complex dynamics of oppression and marginalization in Butler’s texts, a notion that resonates particularly with a doubly-marginalized writer of black feminist science fiction. Even more importantly, Bast utilizes a highly productive analytical tool that does justice to and allows for the multifaceted—and often highly ambiguous—intersections between Butler’s heterogeneous works, which time and again balk at one-dimensional perspectives, narrow political agendas, strict ideological dogmas and simple or preconceived conclusions.

By identifying and analyzing the many aspects of agency found in and between Butler’s works, Bast’s study thus fills an important desideratum, as he provides the first book-length study on agency in Butler’s oeuvre (and, in fact, in African American literature overall)—a considerable achievement given the vast and continuously growing body of scholarship on the fiction of this author.⁴ Indeed, a multitude of influential scholars, ranging from Donna Haraway, Sheryl Vint, and Roger Luckhurst to Angelyn Mitchell, Sandra Y. Govan, and Caroline Rody, have addressed various agency-related themes in Butler’s work, including constructions of power, subjectivity, freedom or hegemony. It is a major achievement of Bast’s study that he productively draws on and successfully ties into his own project this vast polyphony of theoretical voices, which not only resonate in the conceptual chapter on agency following his introduction, but particularly come to the forefront and are engaged

¹ Alison Flood, “Unseen Octavia E. Butler Stories Recovered,” *Guardian*. *Guardian* (2014): n. pag. Web. 8 March 2016.

² Gregory Jerome Hampton, “Octavia E. Butler,” *Callaloo* 19.2 (2006): 246–48. Print.

³ Barbara Christian, “The Race for Theory.” *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*. Ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham: Duke UP, 1994), 348–59. Print.

⁴ To get an impression of how much Octavia Butler’s fiction has piqued the interest of scholars, one only has to look at the sheer number of articles and book chapters published on *Kindred*, Butler’s famous neo-slave narrative, which amounts to over 40 publications alone.

with in each of his subsequent analytical chapters that turn to six selected primary works by Octavia Butler: *Kindred* (1979), *Dawn* (1987), *Parable of the Talents* (1998), *Survivor* (1978), *Fledgling* (2005), and “The Evening and the Morning and the Night” (1987). In so doing, *Of Bodies, Community, and Voices* succeeds in an in-depth analysis of a “heretofore underdiscussed aspect of [Butler’s] work” that proves a highly productive contribution to the newly reinvigorated discussion of her work (14). Besides engaging with various theoretical approaches that have been applied to the works of Octavia Butler, Bast also directs the reader to a wide scope of scholarly works within extensive footnotes and features an impressive range of secondary sources within his comprehensive bibliography.

In particular, the second chapter lays the theoretical basis for the study as Bast theorizes a concept of agency that is concretely applicable to the primary texts selected for his readings, defining agency as “an individual’s capability to reach a decision about themselves and implement it” (25). Moreover, Bast asserts that within Butler’s texts, agency manifests itself through what he refers to as *agential acts*, that is, acts that are “intended to achieve a higher degree of agency, explicitly to express, defend, or expand agency” (25). Furthermore, with Bast treating the concept of agency as historically contingent and culturally constructed, this chapter lays the groundwork for contextualizing and historicizing this philosophical category within discourses of the Enlightenment’s liberal humanism. It also turns to (ongoing) postmodern theoretical debates that have fiercely negotiated liberal humanist conceptualizations of agency. In this regard, the study focuses on challenges that have been articulated in particular within feminist and black feminist theoretical work on agency which—together with African American literary criticism and science fiction criticism—form the backbone of Bast’s own approach to selected primary works by Butler. These theoretical debates on agency are picked up again with more topical foci in the subsections introducing the three analytical chapters of this book, with each one focusing on one specific conceptualization of agency—in connection with the body, community, and voice, respectively—that is then analyzed in two different primary texts.

The first topical chapter of Bast’s study turns to the complexities of agency’s em-

bodiment in two novels by Butler: *Kindred* and *Dawn*. Against the backdrop of African American literary history—and particularly the slave narrative as inherently tied to the embodied experiences of its narrators—Bast argues in his reading of *Kindred* that Butler’s novel openly negotiates and dismantles the Enlightenment’s legacy of disembodiment. According to him, it simultaneously “insists on the embodiment of agency and subjectivity, choosing to reference and to complicate African American literary traditions of narrating and negotiating issues of agency, subjectivity, and the body from a postmodern perspective” and in “persistently choosing to narrate agency through and in terms of the body [...] actually performs this central concern” (49). This assessment is put into stark contrast in the second reading of *Dawn* (the first part of Butler’s Xenogenesis trilogy) which, in Bast’s reading, lays bare the drastic and dangerous consequences that an ideology of total embodiment can have for conceptualizations of agency.

Chapter four, “Community: The Relationality of Agency and Relational Agential Acts” similarly explores the wide and highly complex spectrum of Butler’s negotiations of specific conceptualizations of agency, focusing on a facet of agency that has played a particularly central role within black feminist literary criticism and black women’s fiction: its relationality. Similarly to the previous chapter, the study first introduces a central notion of liberal humanist constructions of agency—the connection between agency and autonomy—which, as Bast’s readings subsequently argue, is forcefully challenged by Butler’s fiction as the “two strikingly different texts” (102) selected for this chapter, *Parable of the Talents* and *Survivor*, exemplify. By putting the two novels into dialogue with each other in order to “shed light on their interconnection and on shared narrative projects within the oeuvre” (102), Bast asserts that each of these texts insists on a relationality of agency on various textual levels, including their respective diegetic setups, yet expresses this notion through different agential acts: *Parable of the Talents* lays open the oppressive undercurrents of the Enlightenment’s constructions of autonomy and rugged individualism and explores the central agential act of community building. *Survivor*, on the other hand, foregrounds relational agency through the agential act of community choosing.

The study's final analytical chapter turns to a conceptualization of agency that has always been central in African American literature: the deeply entwined connection between agency and homodiegetic narration. In his readings of Octavia Butler's short story "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" and the vampire novel *Fledgling*, Bast illustrates the complexity and ambiguity that the textual agential act of first-person narration can entail: "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" emphasizes the immense agential potential of voice as a means to establish a coherent self against the threat of deterministic destruction and marginalization. In stark contrast, as Bast points out, *Fledgling*—while following the plot structure of what Bast has elsewhere referred to as a "black female vampiric Bildungsroman"⁵—nevertheless unsettles any simplified reading of the empowering potential of self-narration by using an ethically unreliable narrator and revealing her highly problematic treatment of those close to her. In numerous detailed and nuanced close-readings that shed new light on key scenes of the novel—a characteristic that applies to the analyses of all of Butler's texts he engages in and that constitutes one of the central strengths of Bast's work—he convincingly argues that the novel "fundamentally questions agency as the *conditio sine qua non* of human happiness" (215), choosing instead a "programmatically ambivalence that prioritizes a minute dissection of the multilayered dynamics of oppression over both a definite judgment of the arrangement and a clear binary of oppressor and victim" (215).

In so doing, Bast's analysis of "The Evening, the Morning and the Night" and *Fledgling* gives the reader yet another example of the wide and diverse scope of the intricate complexities and highly multifaceted engagements with agency that can be found in and between selected texts by Octavia Butler, thus underlining the effectiveness of his choice to focus solely on one author in his study. Given the structure and depth of the topical chapters—both in their theoretical subsections focused on specific conceptualizations of agency

and in their close-readings of primary texts by Butler—they can well stand on their own and give strong evidence for the central arguments Bast lays out in his introduction. Yet, by also entwining and cross-referencing Butler's heterogeneous reflections on agency between chapters, Bast simultaneously manages to tie this back into his overarching discussion of agency in Butler's works and thus to give his study a coherent framework.

However, while Bast's conclusion opens up other potential ways to investigate as complex a concept as agency and points to continuing desiderata in this field—not only in other novels by Octavia Butler but also in other genres of African American literature, such as black poetics—it would have been welcome to have a more elaborate outlook on other works by African American women writers using the fantastic in their negotiations of agency. Among those who very consciously followed in Butler's footsteps—demonstrating that "[f]antasy, [...] whether expressed in separate genres like science fiction or [...] as an integral element of folk culture, allows for fantasies of power" (Koenen 212)⁶—one might think of Tananarive Due, Nisi Shawl or Andrea Hairston, among many others. This notwithstanding, Bast's *Of Bodies, Community, and Voices: Agency in Writings by Octavia Butler* is a well-structured, highly insightful and impressively researched study that constitutes a significant contribution not only to African American literary criticism but to the field of American Studies. As Bast rightly points out in his conclusion, turning to the category of agency always also brings us, as Americanists, to issues of social justice that lie at the heart of our discipline. Thus, it can only be hoped that this study will inspire more scholars to further explore the intricacies of agency in American literature and, in so doing, to follow Bast's venture into this field of research. As he concludes: "Countless other possibilities of engaging this ethically charged, literarily crucial, and philosophical complex concept beckon" (221).

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⁵ Florian Bast, "I Won't Always Ask': Complicating Agency in Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*," *Current Objectives of Postgraduate American Studies* 11 (2010): n. pag. Web. 10 March 2016.

⁶ Anne Koenen, *Visions of Doom, Plots of Power: The Fantastic in Anglo-American Women's Literature* (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 1999), Print.

KRISTINA GRAAFF, *Street Literature: Black Popular Fiction in the Era of U.S. Mass Incarceration* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2015), 274 pp.

In the late 1990s, street literature novels emerged in urban areas in the United States and have since risen to popularity particularly among African Americans. So far, this kind of popular fiction has rarely been addressed by academia, and in the instances that street literature has attracted scholarly interest, the discussions largely center either on classificatory questions or on these novels' potential as an educational tool for promoting literacy among adolescents from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds.¹ Kristina Graaff's *Street Literature: Black Popular Fiction in the Era of U.S. Mass Incarceration* presents an attempt to comprehend this literary phenomenon outside of the already established critical discourse. Her interdisciplinary analysis acknowledges street literature as a genre in its own right and examines the interaction between its representational and material organization. It focuses on 'the streets' and 'prisons' as symbiotic spaces that figure prominently in the narratives as well as in the lives of the authors, publishers and readers. By investigating the narrative and social (re) configuration of these two spaces, the author convincingly argues that the genre essentially reflects and rewrites larger socioeconomic developments, e.g. the increasing dominance of neoliberalism and the so-called War on Drugs with its concomitant system of mass incarceration. Moreover, examining this genre as both a social practice and a literary phenomenon enables Graaff to show street literature's inherent ambiguities if not, in some instances, its double standards, in that it criticizes the street-prison symbiosis narratively while the involved actors often rely on it economically.

In the first part of her study, Graaff introduces her conceptualization of 'the streets'

and 'prisons' as the analytical framework undergirding her investigation. Her account of the current U.S. justice system is noteworthy in this context, as it places special emphasis on the processes that engendered the emergence of prisons as institutions of mass incarceration and continue to govern their maintenance. At the same time, the author critically examines the disproportionate imprisonment of African Americans within the current U.S. justice system and criticizes the mainstream media and their coverage for amplifying racial prejudices about criminality by habitually portraying black men as violent perpetrators. Instead of accepting these populist explanations, Graaff proposes alternative explanatory models that better account for the growth of the (black) prison population: Besides the War on Drugs with "its variety of penal policies that [...] are discriminatorily implemented in black low-income neighborhoods" (49) and "are more punitive toward petty crimes" (52), she also zooms in on public and private stakeholders' economic interest in the preservation of the current prison system, as it puts a cheap workforce at their disposal.

The author then moves on to elucidate the symbiotic relationship between the streets and the prison system. Graaff primarily draws on Wacquant's sociological work on the ghetto-prison symbiosis, which traces the growing social, functional, and structural similarities between these two spaces. Likewise, Graaff's study rests on the assumption that the street-prison symbiosis is "a form of ethnoracial confinement particularly affecting African Americans from low-income areas" (13), and, accordingly, one aim of her study is to trace the circulation of writers, readers, narratives and financial resources between these confining spaces. However, Graaff also aims to demonstrate how the streets and prisons are reconfigured and rewritten through and in street literature. For these purposes, Graaff rescales Wacquant's ghetto-prison symbiosis into the street-prison symbiosis, as she intends to uncover the emancipatory potential implicit in the streets as a purportedly "empty signifier" (77).

Graaff presents close readings of three popular street literature novels in the second part of her study and scrutinizes the representational strategies employed by this genre's depiction of the streets and the prison system. A striking feature of her inquiry into the narrative organization of the street-prison symbi-

¹ See for instance: Karin Van Orman and Jamila Lyiscott, "Politely Disregarded: Street Fiction, Mass Incarceration, and Critical Praxis," *The English Journal* 102.4 (2013): 59-66; Vanessa Irvin Morris, *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Street Literature* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2012); Marc Lamont Hill, Bianny Pérez, and Decoteau J. Irby, "Street Fiction: What Is It and What Does It Mean for English Teachers?" *The English Journal* 97.3 (2008): 76-81.

osis is the diversity of analytic sources, which underpin her analysis, e.g. psychological models of identity formation, contextual information about post-incarceration reintegration and treatment of HIV/Aids in correctional facilities. In order to provide a systematic outlook on the various narrative configurations of the street-prison symbiosis, the author structures her argument by discussing the individual novels as representatives of “three common novel types: the ‘street literature bildungsroman’ [...], the ‘circulation narrative’ [...] and the ‘heteronormative cautionary tale’ [...]” (81).

Whereas the ‘street literature bildungsroman’ mainly focuses on its protagonists’ personal and political maturation through reading and self-education and eventually leads to challenging the confining ties of the street-prison symbiosis, the ‘circulation narrative’ plays out the tension between behavioral (e.g. lack of perseverance) and structural reasons (e.g. stigmatization through prison record, racism) to explain the protagonists’ circulation between streets and prisons. The latter also avails itself of a neoliberal reasoning that places a special emphasis on a financially self-sufficient individual as a central force for liberating oneself from the confinement of the streets and the prison system. Despite their different stances in relation to the street-prison symbiosis, Graaff shows that both types represent the two main locations in a similar manner: They portray prisons, in a somewhat justificatory gesture, as a space to reflect and as a means to gain distance from the “lure of the streets” (118), which, in turn, are characterized by their corrupt and potentially destructive value system.

In discussing the last type, Graaff notes that her chosen novel is uncommon as it focuses on the spread of HIV through unprotected sexual activities in prison and, upon the prisoners’ release, in the communities. Choosing a novel that gives prominence to a commonly neglected topic initially seems counterintuitive in putting forth a representative overview of street literature’s narrative organization. Yet, the author explains her decision by referring to the significance of the largely ignored HIV related street-prison symbiosis and uses this last novel to call attention to the characteristic heteronormative stance that “promotes the same hypermasculine, homo- and transphobic ideas of manhood inside prison that are also a central feature of the daily street culture

portrayed in the majority of novels” (139). At this point, the author includes consideration about how gender plays into street literature’s depiction of the streets and the prison system. This inclusion is vital, or even overdue, in light of the literary material analyzed in the book, which exclusively consists of novels that have been written by male authors and center on male protagonists.

In the third part of the book, Graaff places street literature novels in a larger social and political context. Concentrating predominantly on the economic level of the street-prison symbiosis, she inquires into the processes and networks that guide the writing, publishing, and distribution of street literature. In this regard, the author explores a range of informative material, such as interviews with incarcerated black writers and independent publishers, and information gleaned during fieldwork activities. In her aspiration to uncover the institutional discrimination many African-Americans routinely face due to their confinement to the streets and the prison system, the author occasionally appears to overstate her case. Graaff, for instance, interprets the measures restricting and monitoring writing in correctional facilities as “institutional attempts to hamper literacy among the black prison population” (175). She thus implies an organized effort, deliberately applied in order to reduce the rate of literacy among African-Americans without providing the reader with sufficient empirical evidence (e.g. interviews or reports from prison officials).

By means of several case reports, Graaff unveils how the various actors involved in the street-prison nexus use street literature as a financial resource, and how the writing, production, and sale of these novels mirrors larger neoliberal advances of the state. She refers to the many cases where inmates pen novels solely with the intention of securing their subsistence after their release reacting in this way to the reduction of rehabilitative measures in prison. Their literary works, in turn, are usually accepted by independent publishing companies that have emerged as a consequence of the growing demand for street literature novels in low-income areas. Graaff repeatedly points to the ambivalent role these publishing companies play within the larger network of street literature’s production. On the one hand, independent publishing companies create business structures that particularly cater to incarcerated authors and their

respective needs and hence play a key role in making the production and dissemination of these novels possible in the first place. On the other hand, however, Graaff also presents cases where publishers decidedly exploit the writers' dependency for their own financial gain, for example by denying royalties or refusing to acknowledge copyrights.

Graaff further shows the various actors' attempts to re-claim and re-appropriate the streets and the prison system through the production of street literature novels. The streets in particular hold considerable potential for liberation from the street-prison symbiosis, as they seem to offer the possibility of economic independence. This perspective on the streets is further augmented by an ideology that encourages authors to transfer the entrepreneurial skills acquired in the drug selling business to the book selling business and to represent themselves as "entrepreneurial hustler[s]" (234). Such an outlook highlights the ideological nexus between the streets and the prison system. In light of the criticism many street literature authors express narratively, their financial reliance, sometimes even exploita-

tion, seems thus to be at odds with an effective agenda of change.

Kristina Graaff's *Street Literature: Black Popular Fiction in the Era of U.S. Mass Incarceration* has many qualities that, taken together, make for a noteworthy research project within the field of American Studies. First, the book's division into three parts buttresses the author's overall argumentative logic as each part is organized around a distinct aspect of Graaff's discussion, e.g. conceptual, narrative and material. Second, the study's power to convince rests to a great degree, albeit not exclusively, on the author's extensive research and knowledge of the scene. Graaff accomplishes translating the expertise gained during her fieldwork activity into a coherent and persuasive argument. Third, it constitutes a good example of how fictional and physical spaces can be mutually constitutive. By combining literary analyses of spatiality with ethnographic fieldwork, Graaff puts forth a genuinely interdisciplinary account and thus opens new perspectives and areas of (literary) inquiry.

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WINFRIED SIEMERLING, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered: Black Canadian Writing, Cultural History, and the Presence of the Past* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2015), 560 pp.

With his *Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, Winfried Siemerling has produced a necessary milestone for Black Canadian studies and, possibly, has written his *magnum opus*. The recipient of the 2015 Gabrielle Roy Prize, awarded by the Association for Canadian and Québec Literatures (ACQL), it counts as a major intervention in the still burgeoning scholarly field of Black Canadian Studies. At the same time as it is geared towards students, teachers, and scholars, the study garners much of its appeal by its outspoken address, too, of “a much wider readership” (ix). In *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, Siemerling combines several “time-spaces” (3) to situate what we call “Black Canadian writing” today in “its diasporic black Atlantic and hemispheric contexts,” which is one of his longstanding projects (ix).¹ In doing so, he follows other scholars like George Elliott Clarke who have criticized Paul Gilroy's lack of attention to Canada as part of transatlantic history. Siemerling's ambitious project features a vast amount of material from different temporal, spatial, and linguistic dimensions, stretching from the early eighteenth century to the immediate present, over various geographical locales, with a particular focus on the interplay between Canada and the Caribbean, and including the two major languages of English and French.

Following its didactic outreach, the study makes a deliberate attempt to incorporate digital enhancement and learning at home and in the classroom via its companion website *blackatlantic.ca*. This website offers, for example, links to author biographies as well as an ever-changing row of author portraits on the right-hand side of the page visualizing the Black Canadian diaspora. Most importantly, the website offers a plethora of documents and documentation following the chapter outline.

¹ For Siemerling's work in transnational and hemispheric studies, see *Canada and Its Americas: Transnational Navigations*. Ed. Winfried Siemerling and Sarah Phillips Casteel. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2010); *The New North American Studies: Culture, Writing, and the Politics of Re/Cognition*. (London: Routledge, 2005).

In this way, readers are able to access primary source material, articles, newspaper clips, videos, etc., for each (sub)chapter according to their personal interests in order to ‘dig deeper’ into the archive. Here, then, lies one of the important contributions of Siemerling's volume, i. e. continuing the work of scholars and artists like Lorris Elliott and Clarke in unearthing, presenting, and making accessible the Black Canadian archive, as well as reinforcing its undeniable presence and undisputable importance for Black Atlantic (literary) history and research.² The archive becomes ever more palpable in the appendix's timeline of works and authors (362-96), which lists close to 300 years of textual production. Overall, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered* can be used in different ways and might cater to different needs: one can read it as one continuous narrative, as a scholarly investigation by using the extensive body of notes, or as a handbook offering ventures into specific works and authors.

Without a doubt, this extensive study makes several crucial contributions to Black Canadian literary and cultural studies. Aside from rendering the archive palpable as one browses through the pages, and even aside from pointing out the transatlantic, transnational reverberations in Black “Canadian” writing, Siemerling (re)appraises two important figures of the nineteenth century in important ways that shift their position overall in Canadian literature. For one, this concerns, quite surprisingly, the white canonical author Susanna Strickland Moodie (1803-1885). While she is best known for her writing as an English immigrant in the Canadian wild, as in *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852), Siemerling focuses on her complex relationship to Black people and race. Moodie was of course active in England's Anti-Slavery Society and became the amanuensis of the two 1831 narratives of former slaves Mary Prince (from Bermuda) and Ashton Warner (from St Vincent). For Siemerling, this work is also an imperative, however, to consider Moodie in relation to the construction of Canadian whiteness (see 72). For instance, Siemerling does well in pointing out how Moodie treats the institu-

² See Lorris Elliott, most notably *Other Voices: Writings by Blacks in Canada* (1985); and George Elliott Clarke, *Fire on the Water* (2 vols, Lawrencetown Beach (N.S.): Pottersfield Press, 1991-1992); *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002).

tion of slavery as pertaining to Britain's past rather than consider its immediate afterlife on both sides across the U.S.-Canada border, in order to focus on "British moral superiority" (82). Looking at the depiction of blackness in her own works, Siemerling detects "racial ambivalence" at best (85).

The second reevaluation focuses on Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893), one of the most prominent and important Black figures in Canada West at mid-nineteenth century. It is crucial that Siemerling calls her a "transformative figure" in North America at the time (99). Her work as a journalist and first Black woman newspaper editor, her activism and feminist stance, and no least her connections to the intellectual Black elite made her a "key figure" in her own right (100). Her work in a male-dominated intellectual sphere, actively intervening in emigration debates that moved the Black community at mid-century, most notably through her *Plea for Emigration* (1852), Siemerling sees her represent "values that are later emphasized by Marcus Garvey or Malcolm X" (101). In her criticism of the United States, he links her to the "repressed side of the American Renaissance" of the 1850s (107), and moreover, incorporates her into his own terminology of the "Black Canadian Renaissance" (97).

With this obvious play on F. O. Matthiessen's milestone intervention and limited application of the term to white, male writers, Siemerling is intent on stressing the plethora of writing by Black "freedom-seekers" (98) around the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 which was, however, expressly "written and rooted in Canada" (98). While his assessment of the 1850s as a major period in Black Canadian writing is well taken (see 67), the terminology remains somewhat confusing. Although Siemerling explains the difference to Matthiessen's expression, it still suggests a break in the production of texts by Black people in what is Canada today, which, however, would contradict not only his own findings but also that of scholars like Clarke, who have repeatedly underlined the continuity of such writing (see, for example, his article "This is No Hearsay": Reading the Canadian Slave Narratives" from 2005).

Thus while *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered* does offer multiple ways "for more exten-

sive contexts of discussion" (ix), its ambitious design overall also creates several problems on a structural and methodological level. The sheer mass of material seems overwhelming at times and selective at others. The chapter outlines, for example, are intricate to the point of becoming a maze for the reader who gets easily lost. The only detailed table of contents is available on the companion website. This can make navigation between the various layers of subchapters difficult. Also, the study represents a great way to familiarize oneself with the richness of Black Canadian writing and to find ever so many routes into the field. However, the introduction of so many authors and their representative works also translates into a fair amount of summary (of plot as well as secondary literature), which at times overshadows the original purpose of the book, which Siemerling describes as tracing the presence of the past and outlining the quest of a usable past for and in Black Canadian writing (see 11-27).

What is more, it is rather difficult to see where the line of selection was drawn: in the chapter on the nineteenth century, for example, Thomas Smallwood and his narrative receive no discussion at all, although Siemerling lists him explicitly as one of "the most important abolitionists of Canada West" (96). In the discussion of the twentieth century, though there was admittedly an acceleration of the literary production, it seems that in view of the wide variety of authors, languages, and topics, from the influences of Caribbean emigrés to Jazz music, from the Haitian Diaspora to the Black prairies, the book can no longer do justice to the complexities of each. However, it is certainly not the place here to debate the (dis)advantages of creating a multivolume work for the multifaceted literary history of transatlantic Black Canada. After all, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered* does assemble "in one place" (ix) the current state of the art, based on an impressive amount of research and synthesis. It will therefore be an indispensable resource for students, teachers, and scholars alike as long as they bear in mind that there is room for many more explorations.

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