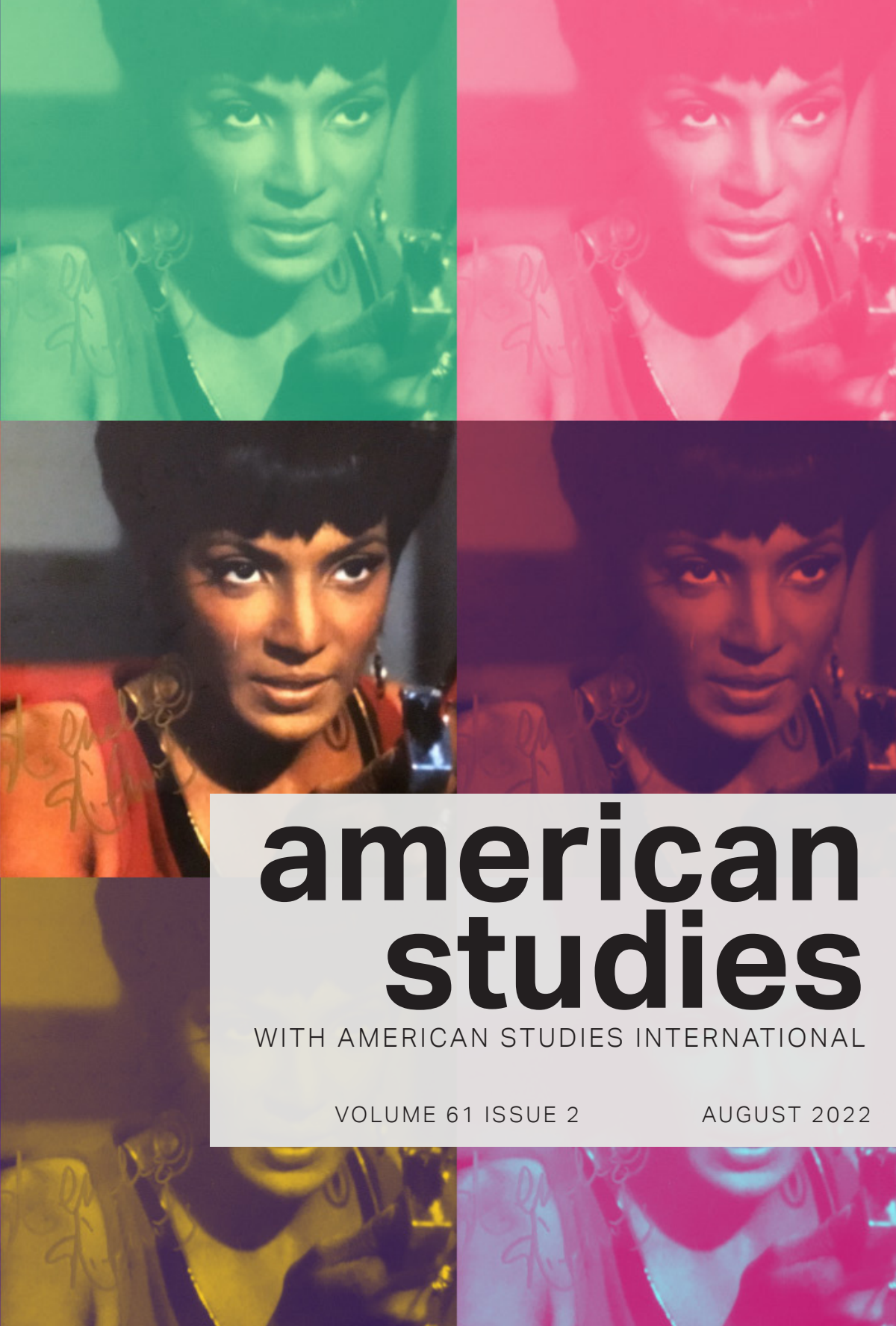

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On the cover: A collage of an image featuring Lt. Uhura from *Star Trek*: The Original Series autographed by Nichelle Nichols. By Ashley Aranda.

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A quarterly interdisciplinary journal sponsored by the Mid-America American Studies Association; the University of Kansas Center for Research; The College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota; the Center for Race, Indigeneity, Disability, Gender and Sexuality Studies (RIDGS), University of Minnesota; the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Kansas; University of Kansas Libraries; and the Departments of American Studies at University of Kansas and University of Minnesota.

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Articles

Review Essays

2022 VOL. 61, NO. 2

Book Reviews

Letter from Randal Jelks

I began my journey with *AMSJ* with a conversation with the former co-editor David Katzman in the late fall of 2008. He asked me if I would be interested in joining the editorial team since he would be retiring. I was taken by surprise. I had to think about the conversation at some length. My only editorial experience had been being the editor of my high school annual. Frankly, I had never seen editing an academic journal in my future, just as I had never seen being a professional academic in my future either. After consulting with my PhD mentor and other colleagues I decided it was an opportunity that I should not pass up. Here was an opportunity to intellectually shape a field of study. Editors in the academy are often minimized as service workers, but I viewed editing as being far more engaging than its traditional relegation. As an editor, I viewed myself as an intellectual midwife assisting humanities scholars to give birth to ideas regarding aesthetics, culture, disabilities, politics—past, present and future. As an intellectual midwife it has been such a joy to help guide so many scholarly births that have become books and ongoing discussions in the field of American Studies.

More significantly, I was fortunate to join a journal that had been in operation since 1960 with support by the Mid-America American Studies Associations (MAASA), KU American Studies Department and in-kind by the University of Kansas Libraries and the University's college of Liberal, Arts, and Science. And even more fortunately, I got to work with my distinguish colleague Sherrie Tucker as my senior co-editor. Since 2009 Sherrie has taught me what it means to be truly democratic and respectful of all ideas that come through submissions, even

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when we knew they did not fit our journal. She has been a model scholar, colleague and friend. Working with her and learning from her genius has been worth the "price of the ticket."

Finally, the journal has given the opportunity to work with outstanding graduate and undergraduate students who have served as our assistant editors, managing editors, and media production assistants. All the students kept me fresh and attuned to forthcoming trends in every way.

My thirteen years of co-editing *AMSJ* has been blissful. It is time to move on and accomplish other goals—writing more books, documentary film producing, and enjoying the fruits of my labor. I thank everyone for the successes we have achieved together at *AMSJ*. For me, it has been an lifetime opportunity and I am eternally grateful.

Randal Maurice Jelks

Note from the Editors

This 2022 summer issue of *American Studies* marks several transitions. We would like to alert you to some farewells, announce news of an exciting transition in editorial operations, and share some very warm welcomes and introductions to our new team.

We say farewell and goodbye to three valued colleagues: Randal M. Jelks, who co-edited the journal from 2009-2022; Elizabeth Wilhelm, who executed the myriad responsibilities of the managing editor position for the past five years (2017-2022), and who is finalizing her dissertation in the department of American Studies at KU—"Realizing Reformation: The Building of the American Correctional Association and the Carceral State"—as we write this Note; and media assistant Ashley Aranda, whose skills upped our blog and design game from 2020-2022. We wish these valued editorial team members all the best with their future endeavors and thank them for their dedication and brilliance which will have a lasting impact on the journal.

American Studies has been housed at University of Kansas for over 60 years. The journal undergoes an external review every five years, and goes up for bid every 10 years. We are grateful to the College of Liberal Arts and Humanities for the generous support of these many decades that has enabled us to submit a competitive bid and sustain the journal at KU. However, this time around, when we began putting our bid together, we learned what other academic journal and book editors have been encountering: budget support for academic publishing has greatly diminished since the start of the pandemic in 2020. The College and

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the Department of American Studies could continue to support a shared course release for the co-editors and office space, and the College agreed to continue media and layout, but other expenses, such as the funding for our graduate positions of Assistant Editor and Managing Editor and editor stipends, were no longer feasible.

MAASA's bidding process for the journal emphasizes institutional support for these important graduate student positions, and rightly so--these make it possible to produce an ambitious quarterly journal of high quality, and they also provide valuable training in the world of academic, peer-reviewed publishing. So we continued knocking on doors throughout the year, seeking other entities on campus that might be able to pick up some of what had previously been funded by the College. But every unit had been hit hard by budget cuts. When things were looking particularly bleak, we reached out to MAASA to inquire if there were other potential bidders lined up. We wanted to make sure *AMSJ* would not be left in the lurch.

Another university had plans to submit a bid to house *AMSJ*: University of Minnesota. The KU editorial team reached out to Bianet Castellanos and Elliot Powell at UMN to see if we could offer any assistance and learned that they, too, were also struggling to produce a viable bid. The economics of research support had become increasingly limited by austerity measures at both of our institutions, and beyond. At the same time, the demands of peer-review articles for tenure and promotion are as high as ever. The need for interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journals that nurture scholarship in transnational American studies, ethnic studies, Indigenous studies, disability studies, and gender and sexuality studies is intensified at a time when scholars in these fields are experiencing reduced opportunities for research funding, academic employment, and job security. We decided to explore the potential for collaboration through a joint bid.

Over a series of Zoom meetings (which we had all gotten quite good at), we began a series of conversations in which our cross-institutional relationship grew in unexpected ways. We began as competitors seeking to edit the journal for the next ten years, yet each attempt was stymied by our shared inability to secure 10-year funding commitments to edit a top-tier journal. Immediately, we delighted one another with discovering shared visions and values. For one, we all preferred to greet scarcity with abundance. While our proposal for a cross-institutional joint editing pilot project did not yield 10-year commitments, it did open doors for commitments from our two institutions that allow us to share costs across a 3-year period that we plan to build into a longer collaboration. For this initial 3-year period, there will be a senior book review editor, one graduate student position and one undergraduate position at UMN. We are already preparing a proposal for a subsequent 3-year period, in which there will be one journal editor, one graduate student position, and one undergraduate position at UMN and one journal editor, one graduate student position and one undergraduate position at KU, and a senior book review editor at one of our institutions. And so forth.

We will keep you posted on these developments and welcome your feedback. Be assured that the joint editorial team at UMN and KU looks forward to working together to reimagine the future of editorships during times of economic uncertainty for publishing venues like *American Studies*. As stated in our successful joint proposal to MAASA, "We seek to foster collaborations that harness the expertise and strengths of our institutions, departments, faculty, staff, and students," while also ensuring the journal's future as a needed platform for conversations in American studies. With this transition, *AMSJ* will continue to engage what we've been calling the geographies of global midwests, to center the Midwest as a vibrant region that is a locus of creative intellectual production and is at the center of social transformation and cultural politics that speak to local, national, and international audiences. Through these collaborations, we aim to promote a new model for multi-campus journal editorship.

We would like to thank the formative Bianet Castellanos in particular, who, as chair of American Studies at UMN, brought to our collaborative discussions creativity and vision at all turns. We're grateful for her commitments to the field and to the journal.

For the new funding that underwrites this exciting new phase of publishing *AMSJ*, we are thankful to the College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota; the Department of American Studies, University of Minnesota; the Center for Race, Indigeneity, Disability, Gender and Sexuality Studies (RIDGS); University of Minnesota; and to the University of Kansas Center for Research (KUCR).

And now, for our welcomes!

David Karjanen joins *AMSJ* as the journal's inaugural Senior Book Review Editor. He is associate professor and university distinguished teaching professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota. His research focuses on comparative political economy, migration, public policy, and public health, particularly in the US and the US-Mexico border. He was a Fulbright Scholar (Slovakia) and is an external research associate at the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at UCSD.

Demiliza Saramosing, a stellar PhD candidate in the Department of American Studies, University of Minnesota, joins as Book Review Editorial Assistant. Demiliza Sagaral Saramosing is an American Studies Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. She holds UMN graduate minors in Race, Indigeneity, Disability, Gender Studies (RIDGS) and American Indian and Indigenous Studies (AIIS). She is currently working on her dissertation project entitled, "Messin' Wid Paradise: Kalihi Youth Mapping Oceanic Futures in the City with No Pity." This project explores the processes of identity formation and the politics of representation among poor and working-class Oceanic youth from varied social, historical, and political backgrounds growing up in the urbanized inner-city of Kalihi, Hawai'i. Demiliza is currently the co-editor of the forthcoming special issue (Fall 2022) entitled, "Towards an Oceanic Filipinx Studies," in the *Alon Journal for Filipinx American and Diasporic Studies.*

We welcome our new co-editor, Chris Perreira, who joined the team in 2020 as associate editor and editor of the *Dialogues* Blog, and now looks forward to his new role. Sherrie is writing this paragraph as she is sure that it would be awkward for Chris to write, but she wants him to know how very excited she is to co-edit with him. And she wants everyone to know that Chris researches and teaches in the areas of culture, race, medicine, and science; Latinx and Chicanx studies; intersections between environmental racism/justice and speculative fiction, art, and thought; and histories and logics of carceral geographies. Chris joined the journal while an assistant professor in American Studies at University of Kansas. He is now an associate professor of Ethnic Studies at UC San Diego. We are grateful to MAASA for bending the "mid-America" regional rules so that *AMSJ* may benefit from his editorial leadership, and we are grateful to UCSD Ethnic Studies for the support that enables the same.

Taking over for Chris as Associate Editor and Editor of the *Dialogues* Blog is Nishani Frazier. Welcome, Nishani! Dr. Frazier is associate professor of American Studies and History at University of Kansas. Prior to University of Kansas, she held positions as Associate Curator of African American History and Archives at Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS), Assistant to the Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Archives at the Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, and personal assistant for Dr. John Hope Franklin before and during his tenure as chair of President Bill Clinton's advisory board on "One America." Her research interests include 1960s freedom movements, oral history, food, digital humanities, and black economic development. Nishani's book, *Harambee City: The Congress of Racial Equality in Cleveland and the Rise of Black Power Populism*, was released with an accompanying website also titled Harambee City. Dr. Frazier's essay, "Black Blockchain: The Future of Black Studies and Blockchain," reflects on the importance of recently departed *Star Trek* television star Nichelle Nichols, Afro-futurism, and blockchain technologies. We are thrilled to have it as the lead article for this issue.

Maddie Pieropan is *AMSJ's* newest media assistant and currently a third year American Studies student attending the University of Kansas. Their research interests include explorations of the intersections between digital humanities, neoliberalism, and settler colonialism.

Chris Perreira, Editor and Sherrie Tucker, Editor

Black Blockchain: The Future of Black Studies and Blockchain

Nishani Frazier

Lt. Nyota Uhura, a fictional character performed by actress Nichelle Nichols, is a much beloved figure of the *Star Trek* universe. MSNBC commentator Jason Johnson features her *Ebony Magazine* cover in his virtual background. CBS' *All Rise* fictional character, Judge Lola Carmichael, furiously rebuked another judge who removed Uhura's picture from her office. Former President Barack Obama confessed to a youthful crush, and *Star Trek* fan, Whoopi Goldberg, joined the second iteration, *Star Trek: Next Generation*, because Nichols characterized for Goldberg a black woman on television who could play someone other than a maid.

The attachment to Lt. Uhura epitomizes Black possibility in spite of a subjugated past. Scholars define this interface of imagined Black future and technology as Afro-futurism. While Afro-futurism exists mainly as a cultural field of study, futurism permeates Black daily life, in sometimes dark, problematic ways. Recent works like *Coded Bias* expose how new technologies, like AI and big data, increase surveillance, reinforce racist notions of Black criminality, and apply discriminatory treatment in Black patient care.

Scholarly attention rightfully centers on the negative impact of futuristic machinery, but these technologies can either empower or suppress. Blockchain embodies this tech duality and concomitantly stores within it the key to self-determination, sovereign identity, and community empowerment while divergently acting as an instrument for oppression. How Black Studies adopts blockchain can determine black people's political, social, cultural, and economic futures. But without the philosophical intervention of Black Studies, blockchain's potential for people power becomes subjugated to individuals, entities, and institutions insensitive to the issues impacting the black com-

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munity. For these reasons, there can be no blockchain without Black Studies, and no Black Studies that can ignore blockchain.

Black Futures and Technology

Few understand blockchain or the technological processes by which it came to be created. Undeniably, blockchain is a frustrating mixed bag of "smart contracts," "crypto currency," "NFTs," "interoperability," and other terms that obscure more than reveal. However, technical expertise is not the sole determining factor for engagement with blockchain, nor is Black engagement with futuristic technology antithetical to the Black experience. Many scholars rightfully argue that Afro-futurism can act to insert the cultural, historical Black self into tomorrow. Or, it can assert the future as a site of survival, and in doing so make it a tool of liberation.[1]

Alternatively, the future can collide into Black people extending real world racist belief systems into digital outcomes that hamper and damage Black freedoms. Scholar Ruha Benjamin examines this issue by merging Critical Race Theory and technology in what she terms "race critical code studies." Benjamin explains that "technological benevolence" conceives futuristic machinery as an unbiased solution to societal conflict, and yet these efforts to address bias ultimately "end up reinforcing the New Jim Code."[2] The solution is to "demand that tech designers and decision-makers become accountable stewards of technology."[3] Black digital humanists suggest a similar approach, insisting that the presence of blackness can change the landscape of technology.[4]

Yet these mediations are not enough. The future is a contestation of power, and the fight for power requires our active presence and vigorous implementation of self-determination.[5] Within this chaos, Black Studies is best poised to enter the bedeviled crossroads by bridging blockchain's meaning for Black people and Black people's import for blockchain. As participatory players, scholars of the Black experience can direct technology for Black people's emancipation.

Blockchain in Black Studies: Sovereignty and People Power

Entre into blockchain is much more than a gesture toward blackness in the future. Blockchain has the ability to incorporate community defined concepts of Black identity and peoplehood within computational structures. This is not just an abstract notion. Heir property is one significant area where the Black community can insist that self-determination merges with blockchain in a real-world application that helps preserve Black land.

According to *ProPublica*, the U.S. Department of Agriculture lists heir property as the leading impetus for Black involuntary land loss. Black owners distrusted southern courts and circumvented estate probate by allotting ownership interest to each descendent. However, this created multiple issues wherein one individual could upend family ownership through the sale of their portion—despite not paying taxes on the property nor having lived on the land.

Local magistrates and police, particularly in small towns, also nefariously aid in breaking up land for developers seeking to seize the whole property.

Heir land loss is a difficult issue to surmount given distrust of the state apparatus, unofficial or undocumented land relationship, and unspecific data on financially responsible parties. *ProPublica*'s most effective solution was legislation that accepted alternative evidence of ownership for heir-based wills.

Blockchain is a useful apparatus for this kind of community determined identity. In fact, Black communities can borrow from existing efforts that use blockchain as a community-based/sovereign identity tool. The land registry and Rohingya refugee blockchain projects created models that countered state mistrust and government identity documentation. In both the Republic of Georgia and India, residents complained about fraudulent land titles. Officials in both countries introduced blockchain as a method "to track land ownership history over time, and do verified land titling registration with background checks on who paid [the property] taxes." Meanwhile, the Rohingya blockchain project embraced alternatives to government credentials when Myanmar violently ousted their people without identification, thus inhibiting entry to other countries. These digital identity cards employed self-sovereign identity, a system that uses multiple forms of documentation issued and controlled by community non-profits.

In Black heir property, your neighbors, local church or organizational networks, or regular tax payments can all attest to your heir standing. These testaments document years of physical possession that serve to substantiate ownership. Most importantly, self-sovereign identity allows for Black organizations to magistrate identity as a trusted source over the state. Thus, an entity like Federation of Southern Cooperatives can use the collective documentation of the Black community to confirm identity and provide evidence in disputes over land.

Self-sovereignty is not just limited to identity. Its foundations lay in community control of information particularly in cases where the parties are not trusted. Blockchain technology similarly assumes distrust between parties, which is why it is both anonymous (identity by code versus personal name) and yet open for all to see (the public can chart each transaction or data block).

As such, self-sovereignty and blockchain particularly operate well in relation to law enforcement where Black confidence is all but absent. Blockchain companies primarily address problems of policing as an information share and system monitoring issue. Authors Ishwarlal Hingorani, Rushabh Khara, Deepika Pomendkar, and Nataasha Raul originally proposed a blockchain-based interoperable platform that managed criminal complaints through two ends. On one side, victims input information through a mobile application. Through the other, police supervisors assign cases and monitor development. The decentralized (openly stored among multiple parties) nature of blockchain then allowed various parties (police, victims, lawyers) to input, monitor, and share information.

Police watchdog groups operating a similar blockchain project can monitor complaints against police misconduct. Victims of police harassment input data through a mobile or other digital device; Pro-bono legal agencies, educational institutions, or activist groups assign advocates; and all parties track the complaint from start to finish. Hingorani, et al. note that police supervisors can also allocate scores based upon case development. Similarly, police departments would receive scores grounded on how well and quickly they address wrongdoing. This allows for targeted protest against police departments who prove recalcitrant. Minimally, this halts police complaints from being buried.

The significance of this kind of blockchain project is staggering. Black Studies programs in collaboration with social justice groups could track police brutality reports across local agencies and state lines, creating a peer-to-peer network that follows individual police or departments with a history of recurring offenses. Additionally, the anonymous nature of the process hinders potential harassment, and reverses surveillance. The result is a Black future where the community 1.) collects needed data; 2.) controls an open source of qualitative and quantitative information on police brutality cases; and 3.) utilizes Black experience and information control to hold municipalities and law enforcement accountable.

In both cases—land preservation and police data control—the black community uses blockchain technology as cyber resistance—a gesture to the very origins of Black Studies and Afro-futurism.

Black Studies in Blockchain: We Don't Trust You Either

Black Studies originated from a 1960s movement spirit that sought to meld community and academic learning in a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship. It exists to bridge academic knowledge spaces with Black communities in an ethical, collective, community-based "call and response" that empowers and improves Black lives. It also reverses this link to incorporate Black epistemology into institutional functions and sensibilities.

Black Studies' tremendous import for blockchain rests in structuring an ethical framework and altering the theoretical underpinnings that define blockchain's operation. Hyper-individuality has mainly guided perceptions about blockchain, along with the belief that the technology exists to allow individuals to circumvent financial institutions and governments. Although this is somewhat helpful, Black communities partially depend on the state to overcome oppression from institutions and individuals. Instead, blockchain is better understood for the Black community as a site of collective action and accountability that allows for people power with/without the context of the state.

Absent any regulation or rehabilitation in blockchain's ideological bent, the technology will disrupt or remove our few protections by elevating a hidden consensus over participatory democracy. Blockchain depends heavily on the idea of decentralization. However, decentralization does not necessarily translate to inclusion or community participation. Blockchain must reflect a

similar "call and response" protocol embodied by Black Studies philosophy in order to sustain trust, particularly with vulnerable communities. Conversation with community keeps the technology honest.

Minimally, Black Studies can help blockchain confront the reality that technology is not necessarily tantamount to equity, disabusing blockchain enthusiasts of "technology benevolence." Blockchain voting is a particularly notorious reflection of how blockchain ignores the simple political realities effecting the Black community; and worse, ignores how it too can be a source of distrust.

Initially, blockchain voting appeared as a solution to nations with histories of election irregularities. However, it expanded to include democratic nations as well. Experimentations are underway in Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Sierra Leone, Russia, Australia, South Korea, Thailand, India, and in parts of the United States.

A drum beat among tech circles extol the virtues of blockchain voting as the solution to America's election system "failures." Blockchain purportedly offers equitable, secure, easy access to voting via digital election at assigned polling locations or personally accessed equipment like mobile phones. Others argue differently and challenge assertions about the technology's safety. MIT and Common Cause both insisted that blockchain voting still suffered from software security issues.

Black Studies scholars would also question these technologies. One can easily imagine state legislatures assigning voting codes by location. How then might that impact "blind" voting or facilitate disenfranchisement? Further, Blockchain provides no physical documentation and inhibits individual efforts to self-affirm (take a picture) of voting decisions. Third, not everyone has a phone or computer. Public locations with shared devices (i.e. libraries) prohibit private and secure voting. Plus, technology based voting assumes monolithic digital literacy. Finally, digital poll locations are no less problematic than paper-based polls as control in many states would reside with parties who intend to prevent Black voting.

In short, trustless blockchain technology still depends on assumed trusted partners who the Black community does not trust. And therein lay the reasons why blockchain must shift to incorporate the ideologies that drive Black Studies. When blockchain advocates ignore how technology harms vulnerable communities, the very premise perpetuates white supremacy and inequity. As a result, blockchain technology ironically sets itself on a track to become the very thing it purports to challenge—a source not to be trusted.

Conclusion

After a year on *Star Trek*, Nichols decided to resign her position as Lt. Nyota Uhura. Bored with playing a peripheral character, the actress determined to depart the show. She'd also endured enough racism with the Desilu/Paramount company to end her time with *Star Trek*.

"Having grown up as I did, I could not tolerate racist comments and actions.

I'd seen enough to know what people really meant, regardless of how they tried to disguise it… the evil of most racist actions and comments is in their veiled insidiousness."[6]

The following day, a chance encounter with Martin Luther King, Jr. altered her course. King, upset about her resignation, intoned "For the first time, the world sees us as we should be seen, as equals, as intelligent people…."[7] In a similar spirit, Scholar andré m. carrington reflected on Nichols significance to the Black community, insisting that we "envision Nyota Uhura as the voice and the listening ear of our race… as a document of our possibilities, rather than as a document of our limitations."[8]

Yet, Uhura's value is more than her symbolic meaning as a character. As a Black woman, Nichols embeds within Uhura the nexus of our past and future. Beyond Uhura, Nichols' reflected our Black epistemology, culture, and history—a woman who defined herself as the granddaughter of a rebellious slave, who lived a life surrounded by Black musical greats, and whose book is dedicated to her Kwanzaa Sisters—a community of Black women in Hollywood who celebrated—in sisterhood—our culture. She held in her hands the power to frame our future identity by embodying the full expression of blackness in technology and the challenge it poses to racism.

In the spirit of Uhura and Nichols, Black Studies must stretch itself to intertwine with technologies that impact our future possibilities. It is philosophically obligated to "translate" blockchain technology, document its prospects or limitations, and bend it to empower Black survival and self-determination. Blockchain is simultaneously duty bound, based on its own notion of equality, to incorporate principles receptive to community-based accountability. Real-world interaction must redefine blockchain, or its future will be filled with false promises of inclusiveness. And while blockchain enthusiasts may very well ignore the Black community, the same cannot be said for us. Black Studies has to intervene in this technology to ensure blockchain serves our liberation or face the inevitable dangers of yet another digital mechanism that acts against us, and perpetuates our unfreedom.

Notes

1. For sample works on the liberatory aspects of Afro-futurism see, C. Brandan Ogbunu, "How Afrofuturism Can Help the World Mend," *Wired Magazine* (July 15, 2020), accessed August 5, 2021 https://www.wired.com/story/how-afrofuturism-can-help-the-world-mend/; Elizabeth C. Hamilton, "Afrofuturism and the Technologies of Survival," *African Arts* (50:4, 2017): 18–23; Jonita Davis, "How Black Women Are Reshaping Afrofuturism," *Yes Magazine* (April 24, 2020) https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2020/04/24/how-black-women-are-reshaping-afrofuturism. The term was first coined by Mark Dery. Mark Dery, "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose," in Mark Dery, ed. *Flame Wars* (New York: Duke University Press, 1994), 179-222.

2. Ruha Benjamin, *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019), pg. 96.

3. Benjamin, *Race After Technology*, pg. 121

4. Kalí Tal, "Life Behind the Screen," *Wired*, October 1, 1996, https://www.wired.com/1996/10/screen/; Tara McPherson, "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? Or Think-

ing the History of Race and Computation," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, eds. Matthew Gold and Lauren Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-88c11800-9446-469b-a3be-3fdb36bfbd1e/section/20df8acd-9ab9-4f35-8a5d-e91aa5f4a0ea#ch09; Domenico Fiormonte, "Toward A Cultural Critique of Digital Humanities," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*, eds. Matthew Gold and Lauren Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/5cac8409-e521-4349-ab03-f341a5359a34#ch35; Kimberly Gallon, "Making a Case for the Black Digital Humanities," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities* 2016, ed. Matthew Gold and Lauren Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/fa10e2e1-0c3d-4519-a958-d823aac989eb#ch04; Aleia M. Brown & Joshua Crutchfield, "Black Scholars Matter: #Blk-Twitterstorians Building a Digital Community," *The Black Scholar*, 47:3 (July 2017): 45-55; Marisa Parham, "The Digital in the Humanities: An Interview with Marisa Parham," interview by Melissa Dinsman, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, May 19, 2016, transcription, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/digital-humanities-interview-marisa-parham/.

5. Nishani Frazier, Hilary Green, and Christy Hyman provides further exploration on black digital power in their forthcoming joint essay for *Debates in Digital Humanities*.

6. Nichelle Nichols, *Beyond Uhura: Star Trek and Other Memories* (G. P. Putnam Sons: New York, 1994), pg. 161

7. Nichols, *Beyond Uhura*, 164.

8. andré m. carrington, *Speculative Blackness: The Future of Race in Science Fiction* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), pg. 87.

Reframing Literacies of Success: The Importance of Access and Transparency in the Communications Classroom

Hannah Soyer

Accessibility in the classroom is an all-encompassing approach to education that is necessary and beneficial not just for students with disabilities (visible and invisible), but also for students with different learning styles, students from different class backgrounds, and students whose first language may not be English. The root word of *accessibility* is *access,* and when we choose to foreground this in our teaching, all students benefit. As stated by disability and design scholar Bess Williamson, access is "most powerful when interpreted broadly, bringing notice to mobility and communication barriers that may not be as tangible as sidewalk curbs and public announcement systems."[1] It is most powerful when interpreted broadly because it catalyzes an understanding of barriers that various communities face and allows for the beginning of this barrier removal. Pairing this broad understanding of access with a sense of transparency is important for fostering trust and accountability, something I have come to believe is necessary in my own teaching practice.

My first semester of teaching Composition and Rhetoric at the University of Kansas forced me to think a lot about these concepts. I am a physically disabled woman who uses a motorized wheelchair, and as I entered the classroom each morning—hyper aware of the fact that I was, at most, five years older than my students—I had no teaching persona in the form of armor to distance myself from my students, or to form a shield of authority around me. I was overly conscious of my physical presence in the classroom as a small, young, wheelchair using woman, an identity I could not hide. I didn't know how to pretend an authority of my students I felt I did not have (due not to my disability, but rather my age, and also a healthy dose of imposter syndrome), and so, instead, leaned into transpar-

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ency and honesty as my teaching practice. In order to do this, I had to develop a certain level of self-awareness as an instructor, which then became an important skill for my students to develop as well.

Applying the concept of access to teaching is not simply about responding to individual students' accommodations, but rather designing a course and approach to teaching proactively, in which disability (i.e., "othered" bodyminds) are considered and integrated from the beginning. This means utilizing many different formats of material, such as video with closed captioning, transcripts, audio, etc. This doesn't just benefit students who are blind or deaf, but also students with different learning styles. In addition, having video or audio along with a transcript and closed captions allows for more access for speakers of other languages.

Because I am unable to hide my disability, and because I believe strongly in increased representation and discussion of disability, I chose to incorporate material that deals with disability into my curriculum, something which I continue to do today. Structuring course content around diversity and working to highlight voices of marginalized communities is especially important when discussing communication and storytelling. For instance, I have used famed blind model Molly Burke's Instagram account as a way to discuss how image descriptions in captions are another form of communication that are also a point of access for visually impaired individuals. I also always incorporate Chimimanda Agozie's well-known Ted Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," into my writing classes, as a way to get students thinking about the ways in which literacy is "socially constructed and enacted," as rhetoric scholar J. Blake Scott asserts.[2] Incorporating material that centers diverse voices *and* being proactive about providing material in different formats is a two-pronged approach to access, which looks at both course content and design, and allows for a broad interpretation of access, one which benefits all students.

When looking at a course on communication, specifically, access means we must rethink our preconceived notions of what "communication" is, beyond simply vocalized speech or written text. I taught four semesters of Composition and Rhetoric at the University of Kansas, a course which has an emphasis on rhetorical flexibility and multi-modality. Integrating accessibility into this class and the other classes I taught means fostering an understanding of communication in its many different forms, including artforms like dance, design, and music.

If we think of disability and communication, our first thought may be of American Sign Language, as ASL is its own language and mode of speech. But the intersections of communication and disability are so much more than this: slurred speech, typing vs. handwriting, blinking, etc. This "cracking open" our definition of communications necessitates an understanding that there is no *right* way to communicate. Indeed, as celebrated disability educator, speaker, and writer Emily Ladau points out in her book *Demystifying Disability,*

> We're so often taught that there are rules for communicating effectively—firm handshakes, direct eye contact, responsive fa-

> cial expressions and body language, and so on. However, these so-called skills aren't always accessible to disabled people, and we shouldn't expect them as the norm.[3]

So, where do transparency and openness intersect with access? Ultimately, both of these approaches center trust—trust of our students, and the students' trust of us. If we are going to design and implement course material that honors different learning styles and abilities, we would do well to trust that our students know what they need in order to succeed and that diversifying our understanding of communication benefits everyone. And likewise, for our students to actually engage *and* create their own material, they must be able to trust us. This is where transparency comes in.

Throughout my time teaching writing courses, the ability to be transparent with my students has ultimately led to a deepened sense of relatability between everyone in the classroom, a heightened level of trust, and thus an increased feeling on my end that I am in a spot to facilitate learning and writing. The wonderful side effect of this, then, is that my students begin to develop their own self-awareness, which leads to further critical thinking in regards to their own work. By modeling my own self-awareness as an instructor through transparency and openness, I have been better able to impart this self-awareness on my students.

For example, a key component of Composition & Rhetoric courses I have taught in the past is the Cultural Literacy Narrative, which asks students to reflect on their own communication practices and draw conclusions about how this has been influenced by a culture or cultures they are a part of. Beginning the course with this unit effectively sets the tone for the remainder of the semester, in which we interrogate our own perceptions of language and communication, and forge new pathways.

To introduce the Cultural Literacy Narrative, I ask students to bring to class their own definition of writing. I then have my students get into groups and discuss their definitions, while coming up with a new definition that they can all agree on as a group. These definitions are then shared, and a class-wide discussion on what writing is ensues. Ultimately, the goal of this activity is to introduce to students how very broad "writing" can be, and very flexible the term "text" can be as a result.

To follow up on this activity, I have my students do this again, except in regards to literacy. The goal of this activity is to cultivate discussion and reflection on what we view literacy to be, what we mean by "literate," and how some literacies are privileged over others. I use this opportunity to discuss how Standardized Edited English (SEE) is privileged in Western-academia, who it benefits and who it hinders, and how my role as their instructor is to cultivate an awareness of this in them, and help them learn the rules *if they choose*—that is, if they would like me to mark for grammar, spelling, and punctuation on their papers, I will, but only if they would like me to, as a way for them to gain access to the communities SEE advantages (as education scholar Lisa Delpit posits).

This is then an appropriate time to introduce and question the idea of literacy as success, referring to those narratives that assume, as rhetoric scholar Kara Poe Alexander states, "the more literate one is, the more successful he or she will be."[4] What does this mean? How is "literate," in this context, actually defined? Have they experienced this narrative in their own lives? Or witnessed it? This ties in perfectly, then, with conversations of access and disability, and why it is crucial to broaden our definition of communication.

In addition to all of this, a level of self-awareness also promotes a sense of ownership for a student and their work. If they can consciously make choices about their writing and then explain how and why they made those choices, they will likely see the work they have produced as theirs and take pride in it, as it has required a deeper level of understanding to create. Fostering a student's self-awareness ideally not only creates a heightened feeling of ownership over the work they produce, but also over their ideas and processes. Encouraging a sense of ownership at every step of the composition process then fosters a heightened level of consciousness among students in regard to the choices they are making.

When we model access in our classrooms, we then also *teach* access, facilitating an environment where students can learn about ways of being and ways of communicating they may not have been aware of. In turn, this awareness fosters new modes of communication in the world beyond the classroom, along with instilling empathy into communication. When we think about how someone's intelligence or humanity is often measured by their ability to "speak well," the intersections of access and communication can be revolutionary starting points for students to engage with, and revolutionary concepts for teachers to introduce.

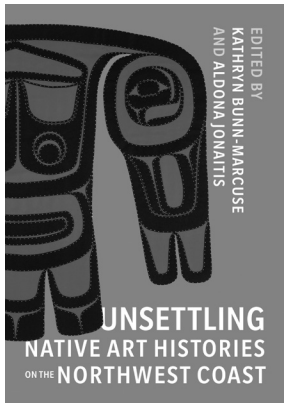
Notes

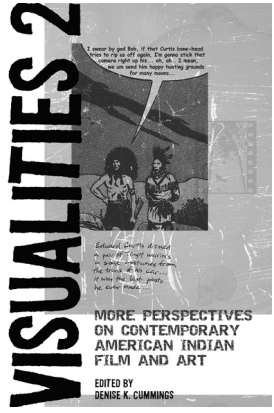
1. Williamson, Bess. "Access." *Keywords for Disability Studies.* NYU Press, 2015, p. 16.
2. Scott, J. Blake. "The Literacy Narrative as Production Pedagogy in the Composition Classroom." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1997, pp. 108-17.
3. Ladau, Emily. *Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to be an Ally*. Ten Speed Press, 2021.
4. Alexander, Kara Poe. "Successes, Victims, and Prodigies: 'Master' and 'Little' Cultural Narratives in the Literacy Narrative Genre." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 62, no. 4, 2011, pp. 608-63.

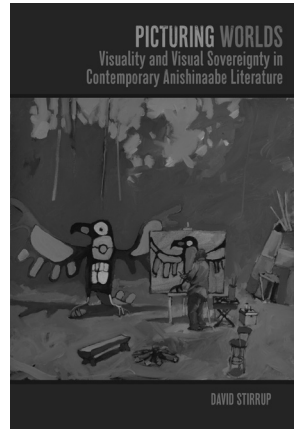
Review Essay

Self-Determination, Categorization, and the Unsettling of Indigenous Visual Studies

Jeremy Carnes







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UNSETTLING NATIVE ART HISTORIES ON THE NORTHWEST COAST. Edited by Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse and Aldona Jonaitis. University of Washington Press. 2022.

VISUALITIES 2: More Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film and Art. Edited by Denise K. Cummings. Michigan State University Press. 2019.

KNOWING NATIVE ARTS. By Nancy Marie Mithlo. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2020.

SHIFTING GROUNDS: Landscape in Contemporary Native American Art. By Kate Morris. University of Washington Press. 2019.

PICTURING WORLDS: Visuality and Visual Sovereignty in Contemporary Anishnaabe Literature. By David Stirrup. Michigan State University Press. 2020.

Interest in and studies of Indigenous visualities and visual cultures are not new. From anthropological texts claiming a particular understanding of Indigenous visual cultures and representations, to photography projects documenting the "vanishing race" (the most famous being that of Edward Curtis), to contemporary representations of Indigenous people in film, there has been a continued interest in the visualities of indigeneity. Only relatively recently, however, have scholars begun to consider visuality from the perspective of Indigenous communities themselves—their experiences, ontologies, cosmologies, etc. Of course, the bulk of this work is being led by Indigenous scholars whose knowledge and lived experience is helping to open scholarly understandings of Indigenous visual cultures away from these colonial formulations toward a self-determined engagement with visuality evident in particular Indigenous and communal contexts.

It is within this context that scholars are beginning to ask questions about how we approach Indigenous visual cultures, how we study Indigenous visualities, and how Indigenous visual artists are included or excluded from certain spaces like museums and galleries. How do Indigenous artists get work on display when sources of funding and curation privilege a particular approach to visual artwork that may not be immediately compatible with Indigenous approaches? How do we understand Indigenous visual cultures without the overdetermination of colonialism that so often defines parameters for understanding? How can we begin to complicate historical understandings of visuality in a way that breaks down binaries, categorizations, and distinctions, which help to support colonial institutions and approaches?

Nearly all these questions, along with many others, are taken up in Nancy Mithlo's (Chiricahua Apache) *Knowing Native Arts*. Through art, Mithlo considers larger questions about institutional and governmental structures that continue to ignore and oppress Indigenous communities. As Mithlo writes of her book,

"*Knowing Native Arts* identifies and debates the central frames of Native arts scholarship, including the institution of the museum and the academy, forms of Indigenous aesthetic analysis, the receptive scope of Native arts in new global and digital realms, and models of exhibition practices in light of current American Indian curatorial mandates" (4). Mithlo's "musings," as she calls this collection of essays, are indispensable in considering the contemporary art world that many Native artists are navigating.

The breadth of topics and considerations Mithlo takes up in a relatively short book is nothing less than incredible. Her opening essay builds on the scholarship of Nancy J. Parezo, considering the complexities of Native Arts and art scholarship today through the areas of research and publication, funding, self-determination, and globalization. She argues for more individuals from disenfranchised communities in leadership roles in museums, a clearer understanding and consideration of historical arguments in art history scholarship, and an increase in Native arts research at national and international Native Studies organizational conferences like the Native American Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) annual conference.

While Mithlo's arguments continually return to and reconsider the current state of Native arts practice and scholarship, she offers some nuanced considerations of art itself as it operates in particular social, political, and communal contexts. Throughout the book, Mithlo remains demonstrably interested in what I see as three central strands in Native visual cultural studies today: self-determination, the fallible categorizations of orality/visuality/writing, and the colonized histories of art into which scholars often try to "fit" Native artwork. Throughout this review essay, I will trace these concepts throughout five new books from various disciplines in the academy to consider the current state of Indigenous visual studies.

Before moving on, it is important to note the academic positionality of both Native American and Indigenous Studies and Visual Studies as distinct, yet intertwined, academic fields. Central to both of these fields are their distinct existences in the liminal spaces of disciplinary categorization, especially in North American institutions. While Native American and Indigenous Studies departments are growing and becoming more common, the work done in those departments is necessarily and inherently interdisciplinary given the ties to various other departmental areas of study including political science, legal studies, English, writing and rhetoric, visual studies, and art or art history, among many others. Visual Studies, especially in a contemporary world of digital production, exists in various departments including art and art history, visual or graphic design, English, writing and rhetoric, and many others. Thus, as we approach an understanding of what these authors call Indigenous visual culture, Indigenous visual studies, or Indigenous visualities, we are necessarily colliding the often-cordoned worlds of study that many of us are so comfortable residing within at U.S.-based institutions. While the academy is interested in the benefits

of interdisciplinary, it certainly is not built around such an approach; these fields undercut those expectations and connect many of these spheres of thought in an effort to understand the complexity of Indigenous lives, creations, and communities.

Self-Determination and Visual Sovereignty

The importance of self-determination for Native artists over their own visual works, what some scholars call visual sovereignty, is central to thinking about Indigenous visual studies, but Mithlo's specific approach complicates the larger relation of aesthetics and politics in some fruitful ways. For instance, in her consideration of the politics of Native art she claims, "the politicized nature of Native arts is more than a direct aim at colonization" (105). Referencing Cayuga artist Tammy Rahr, Mithlo explains that political responses should not be predetermined by a colonial context and that "Indigenous political perspective exceeds the political designations allowed under state control alone" (107). Native arts exist in both temporal and social relations beyond those determined or affected by colonialism; to consistently overdetermine their meaning infringes upon the self-determined nature of Indigenous communities apart from their relations with settler nations.

Furthermore, the relationality between Indigenous visualities and settler ones are not always directly opposed, as Michelle H. Raheja explains in her *Reservation Reelism* with the concept of visual sovereignty. Likening visual sovereignty to the Haudenosaunee Tow Row Wampum Belt Treaty, Raheja defines it as "a visual manifestation of their inherent right to retain their geographic, cultural, political, linguistic, and economic sovereignty" (Raheja 2010, 199). What is central to Raheja's understanding of visual sovereignty is how it creates space built on Indigenous traditions and community representations while also drawing on conventions of non-Native visual practices as well. Writing specifically about film, Raheja notes, "visual sovereignty recognizes the complexities of creating media for multiple audiences, critiquing filmic representations of native Americans, at the same time that it participates in some of the conventions that have produced these representations" (200). To simply read Indigenous visual culture and settler visual cultures as existing in binary and oppositional relations is to ignore the history of influence Indigenous peoples and settlers had on one another.

This strand of visual sovereignty is most clear in Kate Morris's *Shifting Grounds: Landscape in Contemporary Native American Art*. Central to Morris's argument is that the landscape, rather than disappearing from Native artistic practices, has in fact evolved to become a source of communal reclamation over space and political resistance to dispossession. Whether it is in the diptychs of Kay WalkingStick (Cherokee), which mix abstraction with a more realist form of representation, or Kent Monkman's (Fisher River Band Cree) tongue-in-cheek deconstructions of idealism, especially moral idealism, landscape becomes a central practice in contemporary Native arts. For Morris, the ways that Native

artists take up landscapes offers "an assertion of Indigenous presence, a transmission of place-based knowledge, a depiction of *landbase*" (11). She continues, "the desire of Indigenous artists to express and strengthen their connection to the land—without reproducing the tropes or ideologies of the European landscape tradition—has been a motivating factor in the development of Indigenous art in the postmodern period" (29). While eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European and American artists used the landscape to mark land, especially the American West, as relatively devoid of inhabitants and lush with materials for consumption, Native artists mark the land as something tied to their very essence and the being of their communities.

Tied to Morris's central arguments about the sovereignty of visualities in landscapes are the ways in which Native artists utilize motifs from landscapes in new ways to continually create relationships even between abstraction and the land. Morris's argument is focused on the use of the horizontal line, primarily in works by George Morrison and James Lavadour. She argues that the continued use of the horizontal line effortlessly "transforms an abstract image into a landscape because it orients the viewer in space" (77). Contemporary approaches that connect abstraction with the land are often concerned with notions of perspective; rather than the modern approaches to landscape that often rely on aerial views downward and give a sense of power to the viewer, postmodern landscapes, whether abstract or not, focus on the horizontal line as a viewer would see the horizon at ground level.

The final two chapters of *Shifting Grounds* extends the importance of visual sovereignty as it relates to land through Morris's explorations of a focus on site-specific works and relationships between the land and the body in various artworks. As Morris writes, she is interested in "exploring the ways that Indigenous artists have employed site-specific works to literally ground themselves and their viewers in the particulars of place" (81). She examines works like Alan Michaelson's (Mohawk) *Third Bank of the River* and Bob Haozous's (Chiricahua Apache) *Cultural Crossroads of the Americas* to consider how place becomes a central thematic in understanding relationships between communities, individuals, and the land and the body for Indigenous artists. She takes up this last point in the final chapter, where she argues that there is an implied association between the canvas and the afflicted body, most obviously in Kay WalkingStick's later works.

In a final turn, Morris expertly examines the work of Kent Monkman, and specifically the figure of Miss Chief, to coalesce some of the major points of her book. Morris argues that Miss Chief's "very existence in the landscape disrupts the rhetoric of settler colonialism" by consistently contradicting the common stereotypes of Indigenous people (131). The ways Monkman depicts Miss Chief as an embodied contradiction to settler colonialism also disrupts the stories often told about land in the era of Manifest Destiny, including the narrative that the land was empty or being "misused" by Indigenous communities. The centering

of the landscape in Monkman's paintings, according to Morris, is not itself a disruption of the colonial narrative; rather, it is the way that Indigenous bodies are centered in that landscape that shifts our understandings of place and land in the larger constellation of relations. Thus, Morris leaves us to consider how contemporary Native artists align land, bodies, and relationality in complex webs of representation in visual realms that consistently reorient, or shift, the grounds of visual cultural studies more broadly.

The use of visual sovereignty to rethink the relationship between Indigenous communities and settler ones is central to the contemporary moves of visual studies. This approach and reorientation also courses throughout the essays in *Visualities 2: More Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film and Art* (Cummings 2019). Essays range from Chanette Romero's examination of *The Spirit of Annie Mae* and the sexism and violence within the American Indian Movement that often gets ignored or glossed over to Penelope Myrtle Kelsey's (Seneca) comparison of the genocide of Native communities to the decimation of the buffalo population on the American plains. Overall, the collection takes up questions of representing issues of community, trauma, and intracommunal violence in a way that keeps from discounting the important work of activists while also furthering communal-led representations of Indigenous peoples in popular and public spaces.

Throughout *Visualities 2* there is a continual return to the specific moves of Indigenous artists to recreate, reclaim, or "indigenize" various facets of visual culture. In Jennifer Gautier's essay, she argues that Australian Aboriginal filmmaker Rachel Perkins "Indigenizes popular Hollywood genres to undertake political interventions" (128). By analyzing Perkins's use of a variety of genres—melodrama, musical, Western, comedy, romance, road film—Gautier contends that Perkins's films "speak back to national narratives, calling into question the official history of Australia and of Australian national cinema" (128). Similarly, Laura E. Smith examines the "indigenization" of settler monuments in Canada, especially through the use of moccasins created and added by DJ Ehren "Bear Witness" Thomas (Cayuga Six Nations). These reclamations of various Indigenous figures in Canadian monuments recontextualizes Indigeneity away from stereotypes and towards "Native beings as complex and multilayered" peoples and communities (195).

Of course, the issue with "indigenizing" genres and media remains; indigenizing something implicitly marks the move as starting from a non-Indigenous, Western, or colonial standpoint. It is reminiscent of calls for recognition that are heavily critiqued by Dene scholar Glen Sean Coulthard. There are clearly benefits for remaking genres or media that are already codified in common understanding through Western ideals of epistemologies. Yet, there are scholars that might argue the need for centering the Indigenous-defined genres and media that, while affected by colonialism, can and do exist without being always overdetermined by it. We see this work in Lee Schweninger's and Molly McGlennen's essays in *Visualities 2*.

Schweninger is interested in what he calls "an Indigenous particularity," which he defines as an "intrinsic linking of politics and aesthetics" (162). He examines the notion of a "national cinema" to examine the challenge Indigenous film poses for this popular narrative. For Schweninger, importantly, a central challenge lies in the literal and figurative border crossings common in and surrounding Indigenous film in maintaining relations with the land; the centrality of borders, and thus a Western definition of the nation, is not a central concern to the aesthetics or politics of Indigenous film. Similarly, McGlennen (Anishinaabe) examines Inuit art cooperatives in order to show how Inuit artists resist by infiltrating "institutionally constructed logics regarding Indigenous peoples and their creative works," logics that "perpetuate various settler colonial enterprises in the broader art world" (219). It is through what many of these scholars call visual sovereignty that Indigenous artists push against colonial approaches to art while also existing beyond the spaces of understanding constantly defined by colonialism. Attention to these moves in Indigenous art has also brought attention to the often problematic and nearly invariably limiting categories and dichotomies used to understand spheres of practice or knowledge making.

Binaries and Categories are Colonial Tools

The problem of categories and binaries courses through much of Mithlo's *Knowing Native Arts*. For instance, she considers the contemporary turn to the "post-Indian," following in the steps of Gerald Vizenor, but argues that the term has become rife with connotational issues. She writes, "A post-Indian platform may sound liberatory, but this stance actually reifies the power of a colonial mindset by allowing the audience to maintain a status quo narrow interpretative field while jeopardizing the legal status that sovereign nationhood provides" (Mithlo 2020, 122). In other words, contemporary moves to mobilize the concept of the "post-Indian" have been usurped by the categorizations of settler colonialism. Beyond the identity of the "Indian," in a settler colonial society, there is no tie to tribal community and therefore no connection to the sovereign nation. An attempt to move away from the stereotypical categorizations of the "Indian," discourse surrounding "post-Indian" has been redirected in a similarly harmful way.

Mithlo further considers the way these stereotypes coalesce in photographic aesthetic practices as a way to visually mark Indigenous bodies as "Indian," with all the attendant diminutions included, and as a way to visually resist categorization and binary thinking. Mithlo examines nineteenth-century photography and the popular use of the contrast picture—a photo seemingly depicting a before and after in regard to the civilizing project of Native communities—primarily to show the ways Indigenous photographers pushed against these binaries to deconstruct settler colonial understandings of Native people. Writing about Kiowa photographer Horace Poolaw, Mithlo contends, "Poolaw has made available evidence that Native peoples do not live in cleanly demarcated worlds of tradition and modernity but occupy the same space and time as the rest of America" (144). However, even as Mithlo shows the ways that

Native photographers undercut these problematic categorizations, she also notes how the project of photography and cataloguing life can be imbricated in the colonial project because of the problem of representation. In this section, she leaves the reader with more questions than answers as she is still struggling through these issues herself, but they offer an imperative step into thinking about the inherent problems of categories in aesthetic practice that we can see elsewhere in contemporary Indigenous visual culture.

Perhaps nowhere is the discussion of binaries and categories clearer than in David Stirrup's *Picturing Worlds: Visuality and Visual Sovereignty in Contemporary Anishinaabe Literature* (2020). From the title, it is clear how Stirrup's project works to disrupt the categorizations of the oral, textual, and visual, following on Indigenous studies scholars like Lisa Brooks, Dean Rader, and Birgit Brander Rasmussen, among others. Stirrup argues that the literary works in his study "blur the category distinctions between oral, visual, and written traditions, actively unsettling the binary within Native literature scholarship into which the oral and written have commonly been inserted" (2). The common distinctions of these categories are themselves a form of oppression and subjugation; they have remained a backbone for colonial epistemes that mark Indigenous peoples as ahistorical, backward, or savage as compared with the settler's own history, progression, and civilization. Stirrup continues, "The singular fact of the prioritizing of orality as a singular mode of expressive life simultaneously serves to emphasize the fact of nonliteracy. It services, in other words, the imperialistic binary that has conventionally maintained notions that Native peoples had no literature" (24). The correlations between the issues of categorization that Stirrup introduces with the turn toward visual sovereignty is clear. Throughout his book, Stirrup highlights the literatures of Anishinaabe writers and considers how their works complicate these distinctions and, therefore, complicate the imperial project itself.

Early in the book, Stirrup examines the work of George Copway and Jane Johnston Schoolcraft. Copway argues, in the 1850s, that the graphic tradition "is writing that precedes European contact and is commensurate with the act of writing that constitutes his *Traditional History*" (Stirrup 2020, 42). Both Copway and Schoolcraft work the resistance of colonial epistemologies into their art by reconsidering the relationship between the visual and the alphabetic and highlighting the ways the landscape carries a particular knowledge. As Stirrup turns to more contemporary literary works, he shows the ways in which these same attitudes of Copway and Schoolcraft have continued into the era of New Media. Examining writers like Gerald Vizenor, Kimberly Blaeser, Gordon Henry, Louise Erdrich, and Heid Erdrich, among many others, Stirrup offers a deep and intricately nuanced consideration of Anishinaabe literary practice that reaches beyond the confines we often place around the notion of the "literary."

In his examination of Heid Erdrich's "Pre-Occupied" Stirrup focuses on Vizenor's concept of transmotion, which Vizenor in *Fugitive Poses* has described as "personal, reciprocal, the source of survivable, but not territorial" and "an ethical

presence of nature, native stories, and natural reason" (Vizenor 1998, 182–83). For Stirrup, transmotion is "the condition of encounter in which connection does not lead to substation or absorption of the other" (75). Transmotion then becomes a way to consider the ontological differentiation between a visual/written/oral categorization of settler societies and the visual/written/oral continuum that marks the communicative and artistic practices of Indigenous communities, and specifically Anishinaabe communities. These systems, which Stirrup traces throughout his book, accentuate the ways that Indigenous artistic practices based in epistemologies beyond settler ones can consistently rework and resist settler understandings of the visual, the written, and the oral, which relatedly aids in rethinking the entrenched narratives of colonial histories and the stories settlers tell of Indigenous peoples.

Away from Colonized Histories

In the second essay in her book, "Native Arts's Visual Remix," Mithlo describes a methodology that she calls "talking back" to histories constructed around images produced by non-Native artists, primarily photographers. Rather than continue to centralize these manipulative images that tell a specific history of Indigenous peoples, Mithlo argues that contemporary Indigenous artists are developing a "process of cultural revitalization [that] takes the form of reclamation: reclamation of photographs, stories, places, and ultimately assumptions" (Mithlo 2020, 52). Focusing on the archive of images taken of Kiowa, Comanche, Chiricahua Apache, Caddo, and Cheyenne prisoners held at Fort Marion (now the Castillo de San Marcos) in St. Augustine, Florida, in the 1870s and again in the 1880s, Mithlo highlights the ways remix develops an engagement with the past that blurs a strict relationship with chronology.

In later examining Ho-Chunk photographer Tom Jones's artworks and photographic manipulations, Mithlo clarifies that talking back "is not simply a reactive measure of asserting one's contemporary presence, it is a dialogic force that changes the nature of the conversation from one of potential victimhood or simple reworking to a significant and, in this case, sassy case of 'back talk'" (63–66). The remixes of Jones or Emily Arthur, whose print *Re-Remembering (Not History)* superimposes images of the Fort Marion Prisoners onto a Florida swamplands scene, talk back to history in order to reconsider the narratives we tell and ways that we might unsettle those narratives.

In her introduction to the collection *Unsettling Native Art Histories on the Northwest Coast* (2022), Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse outlines four tenets that follow from their call to "unsettle" art histories. She writes:

> The authors in this volume reflect the current ethics in our field, which recognize that:
>
> - Native artists have shaped the record of Native history with their creations, which constitute recorded history through various media.

- The histories recorded in artistic creations belong to the communities from which they come.
- Indigenous artists, scholars, and communities are the experts on their own histories.
- Scholarship and museum practice have obligations to Indigenous communities and thus must respect these ethical tenets (Bunn-Marcuse and Jonaitis 2022, 4).

As is clear in these tenets, the move toward "unsettling" involves a rethinking of the work of research. Following scholars like Shawn Wilson, Bunn-Marcuse explains that while approaches that devalue Indigenous knowledges are still popular in the academy, Indigenous scholars are beginning to reorient scholarship and question the continual centering of Western knowledge systems. It is in this reorientation and questioning that the turn toward unsettling, specifically art histories, arises by centering Indigenous knowledges that consider the centrality of the community and communal histories above those deemed "correct" and/or "rigorous" by the standards of the Western academy.

However, much like visual sovereignty, this process of unsettling is not a total turn away. Bunn-Marcuse, following Megan Smetzer, writes that unsettling can "create new productions woven from fragments of older work, weaving continuous threads from long-held beliefs and practices into contemporary forms that have never existed before" (2022, 14). In highlighting a form of scholarly hybridity then, Bunn-Marcuse reminds us that even if we unsettle, it can never undo the settling itself. That is, moves away from settler histories or settler methods of historical research cannot entirely undo the changes made to art history, the academy, or society. There is no way to return to a time before the prelapsarian moment, the colonial fall.

The contents of *Unsettling Native Art Histories* are split into four sections. The first, "Cultural Heritage Protection: Questions of Rights and Authority," considers who carries the authority to tell history and where that authority originates. For instance, Emily L. Moore traces the history of the Seward Shame Pole, a series of three different Tlingit ridicule poles that memorialize the affront William H. Seward showed to the Tongass village and their Chief Ebbets. Moore juxtaposes these ridicule poles with the construction of a bronze monument to Seward erected at the Alaskan State Capitol, which relies on a much different historical account than the one offered and passed down among Tlingit communities. Kaitlin McCormick similarly considers who has the right to create Northwest Coast art, focusing on argillite and those who carve it as a practice embedded within Haida cultural expression. Finally, both essays by Christopher Green and Berlo and Jonaitis take these questions of cultural expression into the specific territories of (re)appropriation (Green) and replication (Berlo and Jonaitis) to consider positionality as deeply rooted in any approach to history or the project of unsettling history.

The second section, "Women's Work: Stories, Art, and Power," unsettles art

history of the Northwest coast by recentering the work of Indigenous women so pivotal to the community. This section depicts what scholars Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, Angie Morrill explain: the artwork of Indigenous women has been "hidden by the gendered logics of settler colonialism" (14). From the Haida art and scholarship examined in Jisgang Nika Collison's (Haida) essay, to Smetzer's own examination of resilience in the art of Tlingit artist Shgen George, through Louann Ika'wega Neel's personal examination of the carving art of her grandmother, Ellen Neel, a Kwakwaka'wakw artist, these essays show how the artwork of Indigenous women contribute to the survivanace of Indigenous communities of the Northwest coast.

The third section, "Changing Museums," considers the role of institutions, especially as scholars and community members rework the telling of history and prioritize narratives differently. The chapters in this section consider what in museums must change to center the world of tribal community members, whose stories have so often been kept on the margins of institutionalized histories. Sharon Fortney (Northern Coast Salish) considers these concerns within the contexts of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the changing approaches at the Museum of Vancouver. She highlights the ways the Museum of Vancouver is incorporating the communities and stories of local Indigenous peoples that have often remained excluded from these spaces. In their essay, "The Museum Disappeared," Karen Duffek, Peter Morin, and Karen Benbassat Ali explore an experimental installation by Morin, a Tahltan artist, which considered the museum from a Tahltan perspective, "that is, as a way of not only containing artifacts but of organizing, holding, and exchanging knowledge" (Bunn-Marcuse and Jonaitis 2022, 178). The final two essays consider the importance of local community stories and the stories of Indigenous artists themselves to rework the way a museum can operate with historical collections. Bunn-Marcuse focuses on the histories mobilized by Indigenous artists; Lucy Fowler Williams shows how museum personnel can work within protocols and relationships that center Indigenous communities, which can transform the museum as an institution.

Finally, in "Beyond Art," the authors push against the ways Northwest coast art has been framed in order to "demonstrate how past creations are living documents carrying information critical to today's inquiries" (Bunn-Marcuse and Jonaitis 2022, 13). As such, the essays here work beyond the hegemonic confines of what is determined as "art" in order to rethink the relationship between art and community throughout the Native Northwest coast. Evelyn Vanderhoop (Haida) discusses the ways women's artwork, especially the weaving of pieces like Ravenstail Sky Robes, can embody the intangible in our world, especially natural forces like weather. Denise Nicole Green examines "the textiles and regalia used in one particular potlatch to analyze how the body, memory, and material culture intersect to make the potlatch ceremony as a site of creative, spiritual, and cultural production" (259). Finally, Tlingit and Inupiaq poet and scholar Ishmael Hope argues the need for a deep understanding of

Tlingit cultural context to understand Tlingit aesthetics because, as he notes, "pleasing aesthetic quality… is inseparable from the contextual appreciation of … history" (289).

A Short Conclusion

Perhaps more than anything, what scholars can glean from these recent moves in Indigenous visual studies is that Indigenous communities exist beyond the confines of settler societies, no matter how hard those societies have tried to reign or box them into specific definitions and understandings. The interdisciplinarity at the heart of Indigenous studies itself is clear in these texts; the disciplinary confines of the contemporary academy are no more successful at cordoning than the settler societies whose ideologies those institutions advance. What all these works taken together help me to further understand is that artworks by Indigenous peoples are inherently resistant in their very existence. Their presence and their resistance to colonial knowledge continues to crack open the foundations of the settler colonial project, revealing the need for unsettling colonized histories, disposing of strict binaries and categorizations, and expanding visual sovereignty as a method for visually marking the inherent rights and powers of Indigenous peoples over their own communities and (hi)stories.

When I was approached to write this essay, the journal hoped to highlight the work of scholars writing about Indigenous comics. I had to regrettably inform them that there is very little work produced in that area of study, especially in book-length format. (See Aldama [2020] and Sheyahshe [2016] as the current two primary works.) However, what heartens me as a scholar of Indigenous visual studies, and comics particularly, is that future works coming out in these areas have a strong and continually strengthening foundation of work that complicates singular approaches, deconstructs the ancestral dichotomies of the settler colonial academy, and highlights the inspiring and incredibly complex works of Indigenous visual artists. As Denise Cummings notes in her introduction to *Visualities 2*, "We eradicate or ignore history and its symbols at the peril of repeating, but… we can certainly reinterpret it in ways that opens our eyes" (Cummings 2019, xiii–xiv). These works certainly open our eyes, bring us to a complex understanding of various Indigenous visual practices, and ask of us, "What next?"

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Review Essay

"A vibrant life force": A Review Essay on *Black Queer Flesh: Rejecting Subjectivity in the African American Novel*

David B. Green

BLACK QUEER FLESH: Rejecting Subjectivity in The African American Novel. By Alvin J. Henry. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2020.

Throughout my reading of Alvin J. Henry's *Black Queer Flesh: Rejecting Subjectivity in The African American Novel*, I hummed the song, "Ima Read" by the Berlin-based, Jamaican born rapper Zebra Katz. "Ima Read" has a catchy and seductive two-step dance beat and the video-visual is produced with a haunting black-white medium reminiscent of classic horror films from the early twentieth century. Even more, the song's lyrics dance with the profane as Zebra Katz constantly says that he is going to "read that bitch/ ima school that bitch," while repeating throughout the chorus, "Ima read/ Ima read/ Ima read."[1] Reading, then, constitutes the point of the song—and not just any reading. Here, Zebra Kats enacts a reading performative deeply rooted within the Black queer vernacular—a reading that slays, arrests, destabilizes, and checks the offender for their acts of aggression, if not violence.[2] A reading, furthermore, that simultaneously throws—as the drag icon Dorian Corey reminds us in the documentary *Paris is Burning*—a little shade and reveal interpretive strategies crucial to examining the ways that Black queer drag queens fashioned and made meaning of their lives within and against a world that limited and reduced their existence to mere entertainment and violence. Thus, at

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the intersection of the performance and practice of reading Zebra Katz, Dorian Corey, and Alvin J. Henry converge in their efforts to, as Zebra Katz sings, "give that bitch some knowledge."

If we readers are bothered by my prioritizing the profane, the in your face/ness of the b-word "bitch"—and instead desires a much more "civilized" or responsible, if not typical, way to write about/ read/ introduce/ scholarship, and in this case Henry's *Black Queer Flesh*, then we might want to rethink our complicity in the ways that we imagine subjectivity. Furthermore, given these concerns, we might want to deeply ponder our participation in liberal humanism—which, in simple terms, constitutes the project of expecting respectable self-making determined by white power brokers; and, in my case, expecting me to frame the introduction to this review in the typical fashion of academic writing. In *Black Queer Flesh* then, Henry advances a study of radical reading practices that asks us to rethink, and wholly reject, notions of subjectivity and liberal humanism. In our rejection of subjectivity, especially, Henry argues for a paradigmatic shift in the ways that we read for and examine meaning-making in African America Literature. Discovering Black queer flesh—the liberating and, indeed, "vibrant life force" (7) of black queer life often negated and denied in and beyond Black life—is the reward of our new, radical reading practices.

To start with, Henry is not cursing anyone out throughout *Black Queer Flesh.* Though, he does challenge, and thus take issue with, the ways that despite their attempts to narrate the experiences of Black folkx in America, Black novelists have relied on formulations of agency, self-determination, and triumph to construct the subjectivity of their central and secondary Black characters. Agency, self-determination, and triumph—which here is read as defeating the economic odds of poverty expected of black people—co-constitute the subjectivities predetermined for Black characters. These predetermined subjectivities are wrought forth by Western literary aesthetics, and chiefly the Bildungsroman literary genre. The Bildungsroman (henceforth "Bildung"), limits, Henry argues, ways to examine self-making and knowledge production at the center of Black literary production. He insists that because of these limits, Black novelists not only struggle to expand representation, experiences, and the knowledge-making of Black characters within the African American novel, but that even the most astute readers of Black literature approach analysis of these novels with these narrow subjectivities in mind. Typical readings, then, lead to oversight into the ways that some of the most well-known Black characters develop strategies to cope with and not deny their experiences with anti-black racism and racial anxiety, on the one end, and on the many other ends, challenge expectations of their livelihoods—and a key aspect of this livelihood is the possibilities that black queer, disabled, and otherwise vilified characters reject tropes of Black subjectivity and, in turn, construct new ways of living liberated lives without these subjectivities.

Henry examines novels that constitute portions of the African American Literary canon. Jessie Fauset's *Plum Bun*, Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* and *Passing,* Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Richard Wright's *The Long Dream* and pieces

of his protest novel *Native Son*, have all collectively argued that Black life in America has been conditioned by anti-black racism, up-lift politics, the politics of respectability, the regime of heterosexuality, and the normalization of ability and, thus, the rejection of disability. To resist these conditions, Black characters, within the Bildungsroman genre, must present themselves not as victims of racism/ patriarchy/ systemic injustice and oppression but as those who triumph over these violences. In short, Black characters must craft psychological, material, and embodied experiences that reflect success. They must deny and forget about the hard, conditions—and chiefly anti-black racism—from which such success manifests. In short, the sustainability of their success for the long-term measures, hinges on their ability to always deny the psychologic impacts of, for example, remembering their experience with anti-black racism.

It's easy to say that novelists have urged a compartmentalization of these struggles. However, Henry argues that compartmentalization is not enough. Instead, in order to "make it," to survive, and even to thrive, then Black characters engage not in what historian Darlene Clarke Hine theorizes as "a culture of dissemblance" alone but they must also develop a false sense of happiness. Henry names this false happiness "surplus jouissance," and when performed effectively, it serves as a buffer against any memory of suffering that perpetually conditions their Black lives. More dangerously speaking, though, Henry argues that surplus jouissance constitutes an emotion (and 'ego') that limits Black possibility to social expectations: being straight/ heterosexual, able-bodied, compliant and complacent. Surplus jouissance constitutes safety for Black folks while it placates any fears that white folk have internalized about Black people as inherently criminal and violent.

To say that Henry's approach is bold—to take on Black literary giants—is an understatement. I find his approach critically necessary because the stakes in not doing so are too are high. If, in fact, a Black literary canon exists and if, within this canon, Black novelists struggle to expand Black life because they adopted limited and narrow practices of Black representation, then what happens when Black queer people look towards these novels for inspiration? For some sense of belonging? For some narrations of their possibilities of existence? If Black literature is literature of and for the people, then how do we make sense of the exclusion of some people, and namely Black queer people, from this literature? From the Canon?

Black Queer Flesh has an invested preoccupation with these questions with a possible solution. Henry offers the discovery of Black Queer Flesh as a solution for Black queer redress in African American novels. Black Queer Flesh is a kind of freedom of existence; an existence, Henry argues, without subjectivity; without those tired and weatherworn tropes of expectations of Black life. Black Queer Flesh ruptures skin and punctures histories. Black Queer Flesh makes visible ideas of living represented by characters that we know very well but have not always read into the ways that their actions signify Black queer freedom. Black Queer Flesh does not prioritize Black queer characters, per se. Taking queer as a non-normative register that signals non-normative difference, writ large, enables Henry to examine,

for example, the homosocial erotics, punk aesthetics, and disability embodiments in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*—arguing, rather provocatively, that the nameless character "Invisible" is indeed a disabled queer punk (gag on that, honey!).

In many ways, Black Queer Flesh performs a central tenet of queer of color critique—a disidentification with both power structures that defined Black life as heterosexual and the respectable tenets that underwrite homonormativity; which means, chiefly, signifying ways of being gay that are visible, socially accepted, and non-threatening. Black Queer Flesh resists these tenets and enacts its own mode of being *and not being*. Because Black Queer Flesh is a performance of disidentification, it refuses containment and being grasped or held. Indeed, Black Queer Flesh resists the seduction of subjectivity. Black Queer Flesh, theoretically speaking then, is a "thingfication" that signifies multiple resistances—and, it seems, that's it.

Throughout *Black Queer Flesh*, Henry allows for Black Queer Flesh to operate as a thing that surfaces when characters resist subjectivity. That's to say, when characters defy the logics or social order of their being. When, for example, Nella Larsen's Clare Kendry of *Passing* defies the logics of motherhood, Henry suggests that, if only fleetingly, she embodies Black Queer Flesh. When the Invisible of Ellison's *Invisible Man*, or Wright's Fishbelly of *The Long Dream* resist heteronormativity and embrace a queer sociality and erotics, they represent Black queer flesh; When, in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiment*s—that last text of Henry's analysis—Saidiya Hartman engages in a unique form of narrating the histories of black queer and riotous women against archives that ignore their stories, she, too engages in Black Queer Flesh.

Yet, in its refusal to be hailed as subjectivity—or "dispossessed from dispossession" (220), Black Queer Flesh merely exists, appears and reaches an apex, a performance of stasis if you will, that left me wanting more of its performative power. What else is Black Queer Flesh beyond a puncture, a "methodology of the oppressed" if you will? As soon as Black Queer Flesh surfaces, it disappears—a result, Henry might argue, of the discursive and aesthetic limits of the Bildungsroman and the real inability for Black queer people to exist in the world. If, however, we take Henry at his argument, that the Bildungsroman poses great limitations for Black writers, then I wonder what Black Queer Flesh looks like, how it moves beyond surface manifestation, when we consider literature and even poems written by self-identifying Black queer writers across different periods of the twentieth century. Not only does there seem to be a limitation by genre, but also the choice to focus on canonicity (it seems) disallows for a consideration of literature written, say, in the "long 1980s," the period explored in Darius Bost's *The Evidence of Being,* for example. Outside of this era, however, I wonder where James Baldwin's *Go Tell It On The Mountain* fit into this conversation? Does Jimmy experience Black Queer Flesh at the altar, or anywhere throughout the novel? I ask: how do Black Queer Writers write and imagine Black Queer Flesh? Henry gestures towards this possibility with his praise of Nella Larsen's recognition of the limits

of the Bildungsroman early in the text. Yet, despite her knowledge, Larsen, Henry argues, does not achieve Black Queer Flesh beyond surface/ puncture.

For me, these questions are especially important given Henry's provocative reading of, for example, Trueblood—a minor character in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. An implication of his reading of Trueblood through a framework of Black Queer Flesh asks readers to excuse/ forgive Trueblood of raping and impregnating his daughter so that we might see, in his trickster ways, new meanings of how he navigates the aftermath of his raping-impregnating his daughter; how his telling and retelling of this scene of subjection, if you will, offers something important that readers might have missed about his "move without moving." I can only imagine how Henry's reading might trigger survivors of sexual violence, rape, and incest.

These critical observations aside, Henry gifts us with ways to learn to un/ read, and re/read with a very Black queer sensibility. Indeed, reading as gesture, as an unfinished towards, powerfully signals Henry's contribution to how we can do literary criticism. Although at times, his readings are exhaustive—at times, long winded to the point of distraction—the reward lies at the idea of reminding readers about the power of the performative—to gesture, signify, without desiring ends that are all tied with a bow-tie; to disidentify with logics of closure. Ironic, given that the higher education complex espouses a timeline, a ticking tenure clock, that presupposes a creative start and a sound, packed, finished. We can agree that this is unhealthy—and here lay a major point of Henry's "read." Racial anxiety is yet and still anxiety and in the current moment—of Covid-19, we can all admit that we have experienced degrees of anxiety that impacts how we engage our mental health, our subjectivities, and more importantly our flesh. How we make meaning, how we embrace our flesh, our anxiety, can be the difference of faking it until you make it—of "because I'm happy" surplus jouissance in the Pharrell sense—and actually sitting with this anxiety, even if it means going underground, as does the Invisible Man, and attending to our feelings, self-caring it up without judgement, fear, or shame. Black Queer Flesh has the potential to free you.

Notes

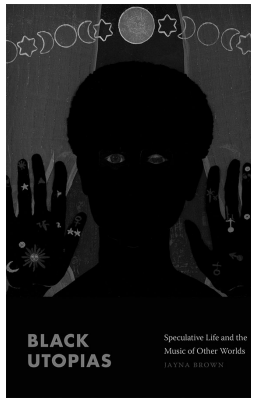
1. Zebra Katz (featuring Nneja Red Foxx), "Ima Read" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oo4Sqt2Bmag

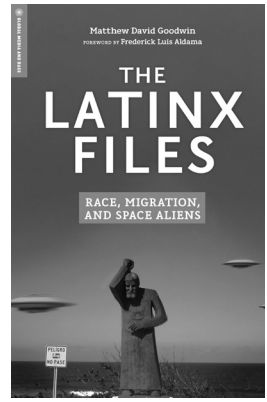
2. I'm using "read" here in a Black queer vernacular sense. In Black queer culture, reading is a stylized form of critique that intersects camp culture and the Black vernacular. To read in this sense, then, means "to tell someone off," or tell somebody about themselves. See Urban Dictionary and E. Patrick Johnson's reading of queer theory in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology.*

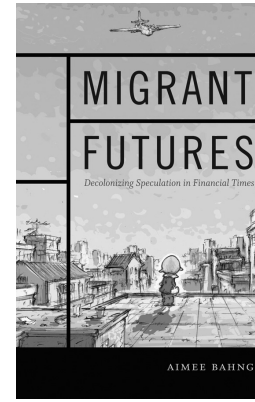
Review Essay

Speculating the Future from Our Apocalyptic Present

Samuel Ginsburg







BLACK UTOPIAS: Speculative Life and the Music of Other Worlds. By Jayna Brown. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2021.

THE LATINX FILES: Race, Migration and Space Aliens. By Matthew David Goodwin. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. 2021.

MIGRANT FUTURES: Decolonizing Speculation in Financial Times. By Aimee Bahng. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2018.

The future is a contested space, a battleground with no shortage of fronts, all of which are oriented forward but remain firmly rooted in the present context in which they are written. This combination of known and unknown, of *is* and *not yet*, deeply fortified and open-sourced, makes the act of speculation a highly

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political and consequential practice. While this may mean that there are openings for alternative and rebellious speculating, the other consequence is that our understandings of the range of potential futures, the spectrum of possibilities that we can envision, can shift as quickly as the current situation changes. For example, at the end of the acknowledgements section that opens *Black Utopias*: *Speculative Life and the Music of Other Worlds* (2021), Jayna Brown inserts a coda that both positions the text to come within our dystopic present and highlights some of the challenges involved in studying the future. She writes, "Since I began writing this book the world has become ever more apocalyptic as we face, among other conditions, a global pandemic; the climate crisis; a rampant, voracious, and brutal system of global capitalism; and authoritarianism and white supremacy" (ix). The quickness with which potential futures can be uprooted by a present that feels more and more like the worst possible scenario does not necessarily align with the time, rigor, and patience involved in writing and publishing an academic book, which tends to act as a snapshot within a historical context and scholarly lineage. Still, Brown acknowledges that these shifts do not make writing about the future a futile task, but instead underline the urgency of such a project. She continues, "I dedicate this book to our collective endeavor as we try to imagine other possibilities after the final days to come" (ix). Just as the push for utopia is framed as an ongoing process of radical longing and an exercise in testing boundaries and exceeding limits, the apocalyptic present also appears to be an ongoing procession of final days, like the ones previously survived, like the ones we know are waiting for us just out of sight.

All of the books reviewed here—Brown's *Black Utopias* along with Matthew David Goodwin's *Latinx Files: Race, Migration and Space Aliens* (2021) and Aimee Bahng's *Migrant Futures: Decolonizing Speculation in Financial Times* (2018)—are forced to contend with how the ever-moving present enhances or inhibits the study of the future. For example, in her introduction, Bahng notes that "As *Migrant Futures* headed into the final stages of production," the United States witnessed the election of Donald Trump and the corresponding effects on global financial markets, an example of how "electoral projections produced economic reality" (3). Staking a claim for the urgency of this kind of analysis of the fight over futurity, she explains that this example "yokes the abstract violence of finance capitalism to more overt manifestations of state violence as exacted through the police force disproportionately on black and brown, queer and trans bodies in the United States" (4). In this case, referencing our chaotic and violent present proves Bahng's thesis about the material dangers within state, corporate, and neoliberal speculation. On the other hand, Goodwin's *Latinx Files* ends with the assertion that none of the imagined futures and resistances previously discussed in his book will matter if we do not survive the current climate crisis: "Humanity is on direct course to make the planet uninhabitable through our use of fossil fuels rather than solar, wind, and waterpower. … There will be no alien consciousness if we destroy our planet" (119). Caught within a conjunction of fields and subfields (Science Fiction Studies, Latinx Studies, Literary Studies, the Humanities, etc.)

that seem to constantly need to prove their worth and significance, Goodwin's admission is bold in that it both marks the limits of literary/cultural studies and makes clear that our work cannot be extricated from the horrors going on around us. While the primary thread that connects these three texts is their shared interest in visions of the future as told by writers, musicians, and artists from underrepresented groups, they are equally bound by a certain darkness that appears to inherently go along with discussions of where we go from here.

Brown's *Black Utopias* narrates a lineage of Black mythmaking and worldbuilding that responds to their respective creators' experiences in already dystopic earthly conditions. She argues that mainstream understandings of reality, along with humanity, have been historically denied to Black people; it only makes sense then that they would search for and construct alternative forms of being. Brown writes, "After all, black people's existence is mythological in the first place. We don't really exist, according to the logic of the human. And what does this current plane of reality, also known as a mutually agreed-upon fiction, mean to us anyway? And who mutually agreed upon it?" (4). Recognizing the arbitrary, artificial, but materially violent nature of social structures that exclude Black people, one can reconnect with the dreams, prophecies, fictions, and visions that contest unjust paradigms of reality and offer rebellious alternatives. By embracing a tradition of Black speculation, Brown asks, "What does it mean to be open to these worlds? To a madness all my own?" (5). In many of Brown's examples throughout the book, a reframing of how we read supposed madness appears to be a key piece to understanding the depths of utopic worldbuilding projects. In *How to Go Mad without Losing Your Mind: Madness and Black Radical Creativity* (2021), La Marr Jurelle Bruce writes, "On the one hand, madness is a floating signifier and dynamic social construction that evades stable definition. On the other hand, or maybe on the same hand, madness is a lived reality that demands sustained attention" (6). In the face of the various colonizing logics that value reason over madness/creativity/sentimentality, Bruce states that "most urgently, mad methodology primes us to extend *radical compassion* to the madpersons, queer personae, ghosts, freaks, weirdos, imaginary friends, disembodied voices, unvoiced bodies, and unReasonable others, who trespass, like stowaways or fugitives, in Reasonable modernity" (10). In *Black Utopias*, Black mythmakers reject the reasonable, recognizing it as a space that historically and by definition is violent and exclusionary. Brown not only offers this same kind of compassion to the preachers, artists, and fictional characters that others may write off as simply mad, but goes even further to ask a simple but radical question: What if they are right?

The chapters of *Black Utopias* follow Black visionaries that question oppressive conceptualizations of reality and humanity. In Chapter 1, "Along the Psychic Highway: Black Women Mystics and Utopias of the Ecstatic," the focus is on the stories of spiritual figures like Sojourner Truth and Rebecca Cox Jackson who show that not all utopian projects are truly liberatory. Brown writes, "The utopian urge within militant forms of resistance is ultimately… defined

by patriarchal nationalist belonging and political recognition. In contrast, the radical utopian practices of the preaching women included challenges to state and capitalist control, alternatives to heterosexual marriage and motherhood, feminisms, experimental health and religious practices, and the wild worlds of dreams and visions" (27). These stories also highlight the political potential of utopianism, offering a form of escapism that doubles as a "powerful form of refusal" (47). Chapter 2, "Lovely Sky Boat: Alice Coltrane and the Metaphysics of Sound," studies the radical worldbuilding of musician and mystic Alice Coltrane. Despite her marginalization by music critics and fans of her husband, John, Brown writes about Alice Coltrane's composition of an alternative Black consciousness that both incorporated the revolutionary politics of the 1960s and 1970s while rejecting the Western spiritual tourism of that same era. Maintaining that the reality-bending practice of writing a history of Black women mystics must also include fictional characters, Chapter 3, "Our Place Is Among the Stars: Octavia E. Butler and the Preservation of Space," concentrates not on the worlds created by science fiction author Octavia Butler, but those of Lauren Olamina, the protagonist of Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (1998). While Olamina's utopias strive to be hierarchy-free societies, Brown points out that they still maintain human-centric ideas of species supremacy. Still, Butler's novels offer especially relevant ideas about glimmers of hope within dystopic times: "But apocalypse holds awful promise; times of crisis open up possibility. A crisis could mean a total paradigmatic break, and imagining such a break is an opportunity for expansive speculation. … What could happen if we were loosed from structurally and institutionally enforced forms of relation?" (87).

In Chapters 4 and 5, "Speculative Life: Utopia without the Human" and "In the Realm of Senses: Heterotopias of Subjectivity, Desire, and Discourse," Brown cites Sylvia Wynter and Samuel Delaney to discuss the possibility of nonhuman utopias, or utopias that break from speciesism. She writes, "When not served by the category human/man, we can detach from our investment in belonging to such categories and instead marvel at the potential modes of existing as biological entities such exclusion opens up. We can foster the ways of being alive some of us on the planet already tenaciously practice in the spaces of our exclusion" (112). The book culminates with Chapter 6, "The Freedom Not to Be: Sun Ra's Alternative Ontology," a look at Ra's push for alien and extra-human worlds. This project and philosophy includes rejecting seemingly neutral concepts that cannot be detached from the oppressive nature of deciding who is and is not granted humanity: "Peace, freedom, and equality—fundamental principles to a humanist politics—cannot be lifted out of these determinations. To speak of them, to picket for them, is to ask to be human. Ra's play with words here acknowledges *human* as an always exclusionary term" (172). More than anything, *Black Utopias* plants the idea that these sorts of utopic visions are even more viable as it becomes clearer that we are currently living in an age of extinction. At some point we must question which side has the better understanding of our present situation: those doubling down on oppressive structures, or those who

have long been searching for radical alternatives.

Similar to Sun Ra's exploration of extraterrestrial possibilities, Goodwin's *Latinx Files* explores the work of artists and writers that have reclaimed the alien, a label that has longed been used to defame Latinx people, Indigenous populations, and immigrants in the United States. Aliens represent threats of invasions and previously unknown cultures, evoking both fascination and horror. Goodwin explains, "The space alien is significant for expressing Latinx solidarity, a third space that allows for non-nationalist yet unifying dialogue. But equally important, the space alien is not a utopian figure beyond race and nation—it can just as easily express the tensions and conflicts among Latinx communities through its capacity to express our fears about extraterrestrials" (10). In the Introduction and Chapter 1, "On Space Aliens," Goodwin lays out the political potential of the space alien, defining it as "a Multitude, existing in a field of possibilities, with many constructions and functions, residing in the intersections of various discourses" (13). It is powerful because it is formless, and it shapeshifts in ways that allow different artists and writers to glean new possibilities from such an omnipresent cultural figure. Serving as a blank canvas, the alien is ultimately bound to the perspective and politics of the author deploying it. If the goal, explicitly or implicitly, is to uphold white supremacy, then the "going alien" narrative easily transforms oppressors into victims and "provides the means for Whites to fantasize that they are on the right side of history" (25). On the other hand, the Latinx science fiction writers and artists studied in this book have used the alien to tell complex stories about colonization, migration, invasion, tourism, and other journeys into new and unexpected places, along with the social difficulties that extraterrestrials experience once they arrive. Similar to how Joy James's (2013) conceptualization of the Black Cyborg shows the political potential of marginalized groups rejecting models of humanity that are created by and help maintain white supremacy, the Latinx alien no longer strives to be counted as human and embraces the possibility of being something much more powerful. Positioning (and problematizing) the field of Latinxfuturism within and among traditions of Afrofuturism, Chicanafuturism, and Latinofuturism, and despite Goodwin's claim that Latinx Science Fiction Studies remains in a recovery period, *Latinx Films* proves that there is already plenty of scholarship-worthy material to analyze.

Chapter 2, "Gloria Anzaldúa and the Making of an Alien Consciousness," offers a case study in the political, theoretical, and literary potential of the space alien through a reading of Anzaldúa's use of the figure. Starting with an unpublished poem that compares her experience with a life-threatening infection to the title monstrosity from the film *Alien* (1979), Goodwin writes, "The aliens demand recognition not as external invaders, but as a part of her. This aspect of the poem demonstrates a desire to embrace the alien, and shows the psychological difficulty, the guilt, and the horror involved with attempting to do so" (28). In this and other works, Anzaldúa emphasized the "radical strangeness" of the space alien and its condition as a migrant and border crosser. The most

notable contribution of this chapter to the rest of this book's analysis is the elaboration of Anzaldúa's "alien" consciousness, from the last chapter of her widely influential *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). Goodwin writes, "Anzaldúa imagines that in the future a more evolved humanity will have a more evolved consciousness. … Anzaldúa describes the alien consciousness as a way of being that is tolerant of ambiguity, contradiction, and perplexity, and that does not think dualistically but rather embraces multiplicity" (30). In Chapter 3, "Reclaiming the Space Alien," the multiplicity of the space alien is highlighted through the various uses of the figure by political cartoonist Lalo Alcaraz. From rejecting the fear-mongering invasion narrative, alluding to sympathetic aliens like Mr. Spock and E.T., or showing solidarity to extraterrestrial travelers, Alcaraz uses humor to dismantle the racist and xenophobic rhetoric that transforms "alien" into a racist, xenophobic, and dangerous slur. Similar projects are analyzed in Chapter 4, "Aliens in a Strange Land," which looks at fiction by Latinx authors Pedro Zagitt, Richie Narvaez, Brenda Peynado, and Carlos Hernández. Each author offers sympathetic versions of the alien that still maintain their individual agency: "They are not invading but have the potential to change the status quo and transform the nation" (74).

Chapters 5 and 6 work together to show two opposite sides of the political potential of the alien: the enlightened, utopia-driven aliens that strive for radical inclusivity, and the horrific, awkward, and inhuman versions that highlight humanity's inability to embrace an alien consciousness. Focusing on Isabella Rios's *Victum* (1976) and *Bordertown* (2003) and Ernest Hogan's *Cortez on Jupiter* (1990), Chapter 5, "The Unbearable Enlightenment of the Space Alien," features aliens that offer the possibility of hope that we may one day achieve the best version of humanity. Goodwin writes, "As an expression of the alien consciousness, the space alien becomes a means to imagine a better world than our actual world filled with systematic pervasive racism and oppression of the poor" (88). In the case of Hogan's novel especially, part of that hope for the future is based on a return to art, not just as an intellectual or emotional activity, but also as a means of survival within a violent, exclusionary space. In Chapter 6, "Space Aliens and the Discovery of Horror," while the terrifying aliens of Pablo Brescia's "Code 51" (2020), Junot Díaz's "Monstro" (2020), and Daína Chaviano's "The Annunciation" (2003) symbolize the most pessimistic outcomes of alien-human relations, there is also a possibility of liberation that emerges from such darkness. Finally, Chapter 7, "*La conciencia Chupacabras*," offers an alternative twist to Anzaldúa's alien consciousness: a Chupacabra consciousness, "which gives counterbalance to the utopian sensibility of the alien consciousness by focusing of the present-day threats to Latinx communities rather than future triumph" (108). Following the Chupacabra phenomenon that began in Puerto Rico and has long been intertwined with both exoticizing depictions of the island and U.S. colonial institutions, the mysterious creature comes to demonstrate the multitude of the space alien and its ability to both cross borders and reject unified definitions. In the end, Goodwin argues that it is the shrinking of our

universe, the conversion of what we refer to as "Space" into something we can collectively call "Home," that will lead us closer to adopting a radically inclusive alien consciousness.

With a similar intellectual urge to make connections between big and small acts of resistance or violence, Aimee Bahng's *Migrant Futures* connects speculative fiction to speculative finance, looking at who narrates the future and what effect that has on material conditions in the present. This premise is based on an understanding of finance as a form of capitalist mythmaking; while traditional forms of speculative fiction are based on possibility, finance focuses on probability, masking its similarly constructed narratives and worldbuilding with projections based on supposedly objective datapoints and statistics. If financial visions of the future trap marginalized people in a perpetual waiting room, while radical and queer speculative narratives offer the possibility of a distant but visible horizon, Bahng writes, "By enjambing these two formulations of the not yet—one that seeks to illuminate histories of empire and exclusion, and another that insists on a futurity as an opening up rather than a closing down—I want to consider the relationship between the waiting room and the horizon. … *Migrant Futures* sets out to think speculation from below and highlights alternative engagements from the colonized, displaced, and disavowed" (7). It is important to note that Bahng most often uses *futurity* instead of *future* to emphasize not the endpoint or product of these speculations but instead the process by which the future is written and incorporated into daily life. This sets up certain science fiction authors and their work as engaging in an ideological battle with financial, corporate, and governmental institutions over whose vision of the future is going to survive. As Bahng suggests, "Projects of futurity abound, each preoccupied with fears of oncoming deterioration, disaster, or accident. Some invite us to buy into these futures markets, placing bets on which will return the best dividends; others imagine things differently" (9). Bahng's clear delineation of the stakes involved in authoring alternative futures is reminiscent of Walidah Imarisha's elaboration of "visionary fiction," or speculative fiction that actively moves to create freer words. In a 2016 interview with *EAP: The Magazine*, Imarisha says, "So while all organizing is science fiction, and all organizers are sci fi creators, we absolutely need fantastical genres like science fiction, like fantasy, genres that not only allow us to step beyond the boundaries of what we are told is possible, but demand that we do, demand that we engage our imaginations." What Bahng's book makes even more apparent is that the other side, the colonizing or neoliberal side, is fighting just as hard to author the future and can rely on a number of built-in and unfair advantages.

Reflecting on the realities of neoliberal capitalism and transnational finance markets and the capacity for science fiction to minimize political borders and think on planetary (or intergalactic) levels, *Migrant Futures* covers a wide variety of geographic areas, including Southeast Asia, the United States–Mexico border, and the Brazilian Amazon. Chapter 1, "Imperial Rubber: The Speculative Arcs of Karen Tei Yamashita's Rainforest Futures," focuses on Yamashita's *Through*

the Arc of the Rainforest (1990), which converts the ruins of Fordlândia, Henry Ford's failed rubber plant and civilizing mission in the Amazon rainforest, into an archeological site. While Ford speculated an imperial and extractive future through the planning and construction of a prefabricated industrial town in the heart of the jungle, both the project's ultimate flop and Yamashita's narration of it through the eyes of a much more technologically advanced alien population reverses popular narratives of colonization as an inevitable and civilizing event: "The cultural production of the jungle as feral and overgrown sets up the narrative occasion for staging a neocolonial intervention. Yamashita's alternative fabulation shifts the site of agency to an always willful rainforest, where the seemingly indefatigable capitalist appetite for more consumption of human and natural resources must be kept in check" (30). Chapter 2, "Homeland Futurity: Speculations at the Border," juxtaposes Yamashita's novel *Tropic of Orange* (1997) with the 2008 film *Sleepdealer*, directed by Alex Rivera. Both works open up the possibility of transborder solidarities in opposition to militarized and corporatized border spaces. On the film's critical speculation, Bahng writes that "Refusing to relinquish technology as a site under the purview of the state, science fictions such as Rivera's *Sleepdealer* work to reclaim the ever important imaginative terrain of speculation, of futurity, so as to contest the ways in which capitalism has already bought, sold, and parceled the future into portions of risk to be managed, waves of fear to be stemmed, and threats of terror to be contained" (77). Left in the hands of the state and multinational corporations, speculation and technoscience become militarized, privatized, and deregulated, forming infrastructures of invisibility and violence, as exemplified as the mirrored projects of Area 51 and Guantanamo Bay.

Chapter 3, "Speculation and the Speculum: Surrogations of Futurity," looks at reproduction, surveillance, and securitization through analysis of Nalo Hopkinson's novel *Midnight Robber* (2000) and the film *Children of Men* (2006), directed by Alfonso Cuarón. Both works critique mainstream models of survival and the myth of the white savior. In particular, Hopkinson's novel suggests interspecies alliance, alternatives to colonizing conceptualizations of technological development, and the queering of traditional family structures as the keys to navigating dystopic conditions. Chapter 4, "The Cruel Optimism of the Asian Century," reframes the "Asian Century," the projected dominance of Asia during the twenty-first century based on technological, financial, and demographic explosions, within the contexts of economic bubbles and the exploitation of marginalized laborers. Sonny Liew's graphic novel *Malinky Robot* (2011) exposes this underside of Singapore's vision of cosmopolitan development: "The fashioning of a worldly Singaporean as the idealized inhabitant of this Asian future involves the figurative disavowal as well as the actual evacuation of undesirable populations in Singapore, both of which have occurred since the turn toward neoliberalism" (129). Following two nonhuman examples of these "undesirable" residents, *Malinky Robot* questions the shifting definition of humanity within the Capitalocene and proposes an interspecies

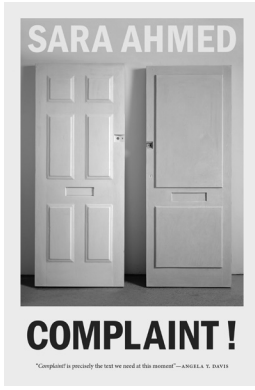
resistance. Finally, Chapter 5, "Salt Fish Futures: The Irradiated Transpacific and the Financialization of the Human Genome Project," analyzes Larissa Lai's novel *Salt Fish Girl* to look at the competing speculations over the future of the Pacific Ocean and transpacific futurity. Bringing together the history of nuclear testing and the rebranding of genetic mutation as regeneration, Bahng writes, "Thinking transpacific futurity from the extrapolation point of nuclear fallout demands a perspectival shift that disrupts the promissory optimism surrounding how genetically modified organisms, as well as other forms of biocapital exchange, will deliver the so-called Asian Century" (166). In the end, Bahng admits that radical, decolonizing speculation has long odds of defeating the militarized, neoliberal speculation, which makes the practice all the more necessary for keeping liberatory possibilities in view.

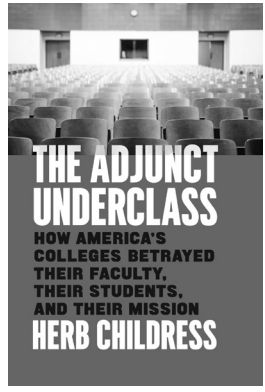
All three of these books convincingly argue that speculative fiction and the authoring of future worlds has material connections to and effects on the present. One scene described by Bahng in Chapter 2 of *Migrant Futures* articulates the darker side of this kind of speculation. In 2007 the U.S. government invited Sigma, a thinktank made up of science fiction writers, to a Department of Homeland Security conference to discuss the future of border security, cybercrime, and antiterrorist strategies. Bahng writes about this meeting, "Speculating on potential threats… these fictional world-smiths collaborated with policy makers in producing border futurities that, when operationalized, cohere not only in the rhetoric of regulation and securitization but also the military and economic structures that actualize fantasies of nation, homeland, and threat" (52). The military industrial complex is fueled by images of shadowy figures that can be defeated only through increasingly invasive surveillance and the terrorizing of marginalized groups arbitrarily deemed as dangerous or working against an imagined common national interest. When actual science fiction writers can be called on to create those threats and envision the violence needed to eliminate them, the stakes of alternative worldbuilding are laid bare. For Bahng, this highlights the fraught discursive space of futurity and the role of speculation in the maintenance of and challenge to oppressive economic and governmental narrative structures. For Goodwin, it could suggest that a reframing of otherness and radical inclusivity could transform these speculations into more complex understandings of borders and border crossers. For Brown, this sets up the political potential of both alternative worldbuilding and the rejecting of notions of reality and humanity that will never be inclusive. As inequality, climate change, global health crises, and threats of white-supremacist fascism make it harder every day to envision any kind of future, speculation becomes an even more important tool so that we never stop imagining better alternatives.

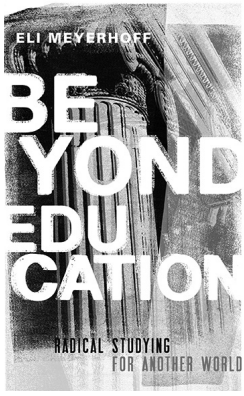
Review Essay

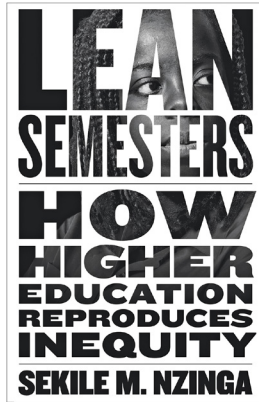
University Studies, Up Close and Critical

Ben Chappell









COMPLAINT! By Sara Ahmed. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2021.

THE ADJUNCT UNDERCLASS: How America's Colleges Betrayed Their Faculty, Their Students, and Their Mission. By Herb Childress. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2019.

BEYOND EDUCATION: Radical Studying for Another World. By Eli Meyerhoff. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2019.

LEAN SEMESTERS: How Higher Education Reproduces Inequity. By Sekile M. Nzinga. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2020.

0026-3079/2020/5904-023$2.50/0 American Studies, 61.2 (2022)

Over a couple of decades now, scholars in the emergent field of critical university studies have deployed the analytics of humanities and social science scholarship to take stock of their own profession and workplaces. This work contrasts with other public debates on the nature and purpose of higher education, whether those advancing "best practices" for accommodating changing social circumstances or issuing calls for large-scale, "disruptive" restructuring, both of which often proceed on the assumption that the limitations of the present and future sociopolitical contexts are to be simply taken for granted. The "critical" marker signifies instead a project that proceeds with the assumption that social relations can and ought to be changed. To that end, critical work holds universities up against their own lofty ambitions and claims in order to see, within the context of historical dynamics of hierarchy, what knowledge institutions are actually like.

Much of this work has operated within an epochal frame, marking shifts in higher education such as the expanded access afforded by the G.I. Bill after World War II (Newfield 2007), or right-wing reaction to the diversification of student populations and attendant social movements in the 1960s (Ferguson 2017). Another critical impulse has manifested as an interest in how "post-social" tendencies of the neoliberal moment have reshaped knowledge institutions and exerted pressure on subjects trying to inhabit them (Brown 2015). As Abigail Boggs and Nick Mitchell (2018) have observed, a sizable portion of the critical university studies discourse joins in a "crisis consensus" about how university restructuring is ruining a profession that normally would be both good for society and nice work if you can get it. One version of this narrative is captured in the title of Benjamin Ginsberg's 2011 book *The Fall of the Faculty*. Ginsberg sees the decline of academia in a loss of autonomy by intellectuals, brought on by an observable "administrative turn" in university organization, neoliberal priorities in budgeting and accounting, and managerialism that takes for granted the aim of "running it like a business." Yasmin Nair (2014) has critiqued the "class shock" evident in some of these takes as being invested in the fantasy of a certain bourgeois intellectual lifestyle that is not widely possible, and perhaps never has been without the support of unpaid and invisible labor (for example, provided by "professors' wives" and others not recognized themselves as intellectuals, but who kept the whole ship afloat).

Many if not most scholars may recognize their own experiences in these sweeping accounts, but what are those experiences like? Several recent books enrich this conversation by drawing at least partly on interviews to ground their analyses of the fraught landscape of higher education. The result is a dire picture of the cost to individuals who carry on intellectual work despite the harm that can result from their commitment. Close attention to the human effect of the current state and circumstances of universities reinforces the necessity of a critical approach, demonstrating that there is little to be taken for granted, and much that needs to change.

In a book examined more extensively below, Eli Meyerhoff argues that left-wing critiques of university restructuring fall short by maintaining an attachment to what Meyerhoff considers the "romance" of education. This attachment is evident in various genres of narrating the crisis consensus, including jeremiad, a linear narrative of fall from a more pure or authentic past into the current, diminished state, and melodrama, a narrative of villains and heroes. Ginsberg's book referenced above shows how these narratives can be combined, but in *The Adjunct Underclass: How America's Colleges Betrayed Their Faculty, Their Students, and Their Mission*, Herb Childress avoids naming villains by describing the casualization of the faculty workforce as a general failure of the U.S. higher education system. This book is a bitter account of professional frustration and even dismay, as Childress assesses the structurally exploitive conditions of university work by stating, "This is how you kill a profession" (ix).

Childress does not discuss his choice of a title, which is historically freighted by the centrality of "underclass" to the "culture of poverty" discourse that did substantial political work in the rise of postsocial, neoliberal public policy in the 1980s and 1990s. The use of underclass to refer to part-time or non-tenure-track faculty is evident in the literature at least as early as 1989 (Benjet and Loweth; Sekile Nzinga also cites Chandra Mohanty using it in 2013 [57]). However, then as now, this usage ought to be unpacked for its comparison of contingent intellectual workers to people characterized as being stuck in a social position of deprivation that is attributable (depending on the political framing) to either structural disadvantage or an inability to meet the modern personal requirements for prosperity. Nevertheless, Childress's argument does not really hang on such a comparison, and indeed the term underclass does not appear in the body of the book. Instead, Childress's jeremiad is a story of deprofessionalization, resulting in a segmented academic labor force. Childress argues that the increasing reliance by universities on contingent positions to meet the need for faculty, particularly in the work of teaching, is akin to other sectors of society where "para-professional" positions based on contingent, short-term contracts and constricted compensation have become a permanent feature of the workforce. This results in a bifurcation of status and earnings with a sharp dividing line between privileged and exploited individuals contributing to the same general field of work. Just as the image of a person "starting in the mailroom" and working up through the ranks of a single company seems anachronistic, Childress points out that the conventional wisdom that part-time or temporary-contract teaching constitutes a "foot in the door" and a step toward a more stable and sustaining career at an institution is increasingly at odds with reality.

Childress presents this argument with the tone of someone who has witnessed such disappointments up close. The book refers briefly to interviews with colleagues who have found themselves shunted into the "para" status, and draws more extensively on statistical trends in hiring, enrollment, funding, and other factors in the social landscape of academia. Despite its decidedly grim

portrayal, however, the book does not land in the "quit lit" category of arguments that the academic work situation is irredeemable and should simply be avoided. After all, Childress notes, there are still people who do the work of academics, and some make a living wage at it. Some even have tenure or tenurable contracts. To make the point about how restrictive this segment of the intellectual workforce is, however, Childress provides a pessimistic version of what Meyerhoff identifies as a third genre of narrating the crisis: a how-to guide.

Childress's version of how to navigate the fraught path of an academic career comes partly in the form of a quiz to gauge one's chances of making it to the inner circle of professional positions, according to the author's estimation of the relative value of certain decisive forms of human capital. This somewhat tongue-in-cheek presentation makes the point that belonging to the tenurable elite is a privilege rigged heavily in favor of things like the reputation of one's degree program within a discipline. If you are unable to gain admission to one of the top programs, Childress suggests, then indeed it may be best just not to go to graduate school. Despite the "hard truth" that the quiz may convey, its structure also makes some reductive assumptions about the situations faced by different groups—for example, by suggesting that lesbian scholars have a greater chance of landing a job than heterosexual women because of the perceived care demands placed on women by a heteronormative family structure.

Sekile Nzinga, in the book reviewed below, explains more substantively how care obligations can be part of the overall picture of exploitation of intellectual workers, but Childress's attempt to deal with this relies on too many assumptions about how that work is distributed socially, and about the fine-tuned distinctions that may or may not exist within patriarchal hiring patterns. The form of the quiz, then, imposes value on binary questions ("are you A or B?") rather than substantiating arguments in lived experience. In any case, it places the explanatory weight of unequal outcomes on the personal characteristics of intellectual job candidates in a relatively simplistic schema.

A more important contribution than the quiz is Childress's point that people in academia increasingly work under precarious conditions because the entire structure of support for academia is itself contingent on multiple levels. Precarious and declining public funding makes institutions more dependent on contingent donation or grant programs, as well as contingent tuition revenues. Students struggling to carry individualized responsibility for the costs of study as well as healthcare and other essentials for life end up in a contingent relation to their own education, coming and going or migrating between institutions. Small wonder that the faculty who do the work that is nominally at the core of this system are pressed into equally nomadic and temporary arrangements.

Childress brands this as a systemic failure, at once disappointingly short of what a society that wants to be educated or enlightened should aspire to, and on par for the zeitgeist. Likening college teaching to the gig economy, Childress echoes the observation made by others—that there is no shortage whatsoever of intellectual work to be done, but rather a scarcity of what Marc Bousquet

termed "the bundle of tenure, dignity, scholarship, and a living wage" that is conventionally known as a "job" (2008, 40). The portion of intellectual workers who enjoy the full benefits and rewards of the work—not only compensation and stability, but, Childress notes, the opportunity to participate in and shape the formation of disciplines, public deliberation on matters of concern, and the development of students—has shrunk in the increasingly entrenched divide between elite professionals and the para-professional mass.

The particular jeremiad of a fall of the faculty that Childress offers is convincing and recognizable. The dismay embedded in its narrative is also akin to what Sekile Nzinga characterizes as somewhat naive in *Lean Semesters: How Higher Education Reproduces Inequity.* In a nondismissive critique of critical university studies, Nzinga notes that a narrative of crisis at times misrepresents the novelty of unsustainable academic working conditions. Citing Felicia Carr from more than twenty years ago, Nzinga observes that it can seem as if exploitation and contingency become a "crisis" for academia only when they hit home for the white, bourgeois men who historically have populated the intellectual profession disproportionately. Working conditions that are "less than professional" are not only familiar to women of color academics, Nzinga argues, but however concerning and harmful the trajectory of academic work is, it is *particularly* so for women of color, due to their social position. Drawing extensively on interviews among women of color academics as well as larger-scale data sets as Childress does, Nzinga develops a valuable contribution toward understanding the condition of academic labor. A key intervention is to note that the women faculty she talked to experienced both *contractual* contingency in that they had no guarantee or stability for their work or compensation and *structural* contingency, in the sense that their presence and involvement in knowledge work was never treated as indispensable. In fact, Nzinga argues, because of their social position at large, not only the specific terms of their contracts, women of color academics can always easily be dismissed or nudged out of academic work.

The most devastating and crucial finding from this analysis concerns the economics of study as a life pursuit. Critical university studies generally acknowledges that the decline of public investment in intellectual institutions has shifted a greater share of the financial burden of study onto individual students, leading to the looming presence of debt in most educational paths (Ross 2012). While indebtedness has become a general feature of an intellectual life, however, it is particularly burdensome on scholars of color and on women. Nzinga cites statistical tendencies showing that Black women are less likely than peers to receive direct grants or fellowships for graduate study and carry the greatest debt of any group as a result. Despite this unequal distribution of the responsibilized funding regime of higher education, Black women enter higher education institutions in increasing numbers, doubling in the past 20 years.

Nzinga's interpretation of this situation is direct: that in a neoliberal form, the university is a "hyper-producer of inequity" (2), a function that she examines primarily by tracing how institutions embedded in the current financialized

dynamics of hierarchical social structures end up compounding social oppressions. A toxic mixture of personalized debt and professional contingency impose a de facto scarcity on the opportunity to be a scholar. Only those who undergo great sacrifice may do the work, but contrary to our market folklore, reward does not necessarily follow risk and sacrifice. Thus Nzinga proposes that critical accounts must confront the "graduate school to food stamp pathways" (8) that are far from being anomalous.

Nzinga explains that not only does the effect of debt fall disproportionately on women of color, its destructiveness is compounded by the fact that education has historically been seen as a path for self-improvement and social mobility. The structural position of Black women in higher education is that of a "credential-seeking class," as education has been one of the sources of credentials that convey authority otherwise denied in society. This makes Black women "vulnerable but highly motivated consumers" (37). As such, they bear the brunt of measures that precaritize graduate education, such as the federal desubsidization of Stafford loans for graduate study in 2012. Historical and cultural attachments to the hope offered by education have led more women of color into debt situations that make the academic work that their education prepared them for unsustainable.

In one story that is particularly wrenching, a respondent describes her difficulty in celebrating the achievement and status of completing a Ph.D., as it became clear that the massive debt and poor compensation associated with that accomplishment would prevent her from supporting her children's pursuit of higher education, despite their evident ability and interest. In this example, it is clear that not only does the disproportionate effect of financialized and neoliberal higher education on women of color produce downward social mobility, in a perversion of the image of uplift, but the effect is also intergenerational.

The grim effects of the austere academy go beyond graduate study into the professional work of credentialed academics. Noting that Black women are more likely than other groups to be adjunct lecturers, Nzinga interrogates the situation of adjuncts as a key illustration of how contingency is not only contractual, but also structurally compounded by the status of Black women. Low pay for college teaching may be rationalized administratively by a reduction of contractual duties, but these distinctions are lost on students, who turn to their teachers for degree advising, career mentoring, general life advice, letters of reference, and other labor that is specifically uncompensated. Where permanent or tenured faculty members may be expected to take on some of this beyond-the-classroom work as part of their salaried responsibility, students are more likely to seek such support from those with whom they have the most contact hours. There is, in this way, a kind of automatic speed-up embedded in the kernelization of academic work into bifurcated teaching and research roles. The historical continuity of imposing "maternalized labor" on Black women without commensurate compensation is not lost on Nzinga. The question of contingency is not only one of compensation and tenure, though: Nzinga also

notes that contingent positions often involve less regulated hiring processes, making them more informal, capricious, and subject to social capital networks. This has particular significance for institutions that struggle to live up to their expressed commitments to diversification and equity—contingency can provide a convenient way to alter the demographics of an institution's workforce without touching the structural relations embedded in it.

Nzinga supports the argument that academia produces and compounds inequity and deep contingency for Black women with abundant detail, making the book an essential take on the state of intellectual professions. The devastating bottom line is that social status in an unequal society makes it more possible to mistreat some people than others. Moreover, in the expansion of increasingly brutal neoliberal norms for the financialized organization of knowledge institutions and the credentialing of intellectual workers, the question is often, How much can people be mistreated? Through Nzinga's analysis we see Black women who are accomplished scholars and often also essential caregivers attempting to make social contributions and do what they love, finding themselves with more education, but "with less money, greater debt, food insecurity, no health care, and less child care than their male and white counterparts" (108). Despite the slim thread of possibility to imagine a non-neoliberal university, Nzinga insists that higher education institutions must actively counter inequity with comprehensive approaches, since they have been active agents in the processes that produce and compound it, rather than passive victims.

Nzinga's account diverges from the jeremiad genre since the subjects of its narrative would be hard pressed to locate the good times from which higher education has fallen. Their loss, instead, is within the temporality of a potentially better future. The respondents in Nzinga's book do not generally traffic in the fanciful aspects of what Meyerhoff calls the romance of education; they are perhaps as likely to feel unsurprised disappointment when the academy does not live up to an image of enlightenment and uplift as they are to join the indignation that runs through Childress's account. If they had allowed themselves some optimism, they probably knew it could be potentially cruel.

Attempting to avoid romance altogether, Meyerhoff goes farther than to critique the university in its present neoliberal form in *Beyond Education: Radical Studying for Another World.* His first, central move is to redraw the terrain of the politics of knowledge institutions. For Meyerhoff, the critical project is not so much how to expand access to education and the autonomy of educational practitioners, but to question "education" itself as a desired end or beneficial process. As an analytic, he introduces "modes of study," a category in which education as represented by universities and schools is one among many that have also existed or are imaginable. A mode of study, Meyerhoff proposes, is not mere methodology, although it does involve habits and normative concepts about gathering and interpreting information to produce and engage with knowledge. A mode of study also gathers people and produces subjects into specific kinds of relations. Adding a brief mention of actor-network theory

to recognize that systems, objects, and nonhuman life also have active roles in these relations, Meyerhoff concludes that modes of study are no less than world-making projects. On this basis he sets out to historicize the specific kind of world-making that is entailed in what has come to be called "education" within Western-dominated society, and to recount efforts at building different modes of study.

Like in all of the works under review here, Meyerhoff's discontent with the present state of knowledge institutions is shaped by first-hand experience with their damaging aspects: the book opens with Meyerhoff's concurring with Sara Ahmed's account of having "snapped" from frustration with institutional structure and culture. For Ahmed, this resulted in a very public resignation from university employment that became part of a multivolume analysis of university power dynamics. Meyerhoff concurs with the frustration and harmful effects of institutions, as succinctly stated in the title of a blog that provides some of his research material, *Academia Is Killing My Friends*. Both Meyerhoff and Ahmed, in the book reviewed below, note that this level of despair is not metaphorical, as both report unrelated incidents in which individuals trapped in a destructive relationship to educational institutions ended their own lives.

Meyerhoff opens, however, with another story of someone "snapping," that of Cory Menafee, an African American service worker at Yale University, who smashed a stained-glass window depicting enslaved people at work. Menafee offers an example of critique coming from a different mode of study than that for which Yale is one of the paradigmatic institutions, a mode of study that is responsive to the effects of continuing historical violence. As Menafee suggested, in evaluating his critical act one should consider how it felt for Black people to see their own dehumanization represented in such an exalted place.

The concept of modes of study is highly promising. Study as a category of intellectual work has a precedent in Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's use of "Black study" to name a practice that is not fully contained by the institutional aims and operations of a university (2013). More than "learning" or "research" that bring to mind predictable or instrumental ends, as well as the constructive image of joining a shared knowledge project with some level of a consensual basis, study conveys the actually existing contingency of many intellectual practices—such as those conducted by subjects with an ambivalent, subjugated, deferred, or tentative relation to the institutional context. Study does not necessarily involve building onto an edifice that someone else started, or conforming to the boundaries of reason established within hierarchical social relations.

By relativizing education as a historically specific mode of study, and not the only one, Meyerhoff is able to identify it as being a supplement to world-making projects already critically understood to have harmful effects—modernist, colonial, capitalist, statist, white-supremacist, and heteropatriarchal world-making. The inability of what Meyerhoff generalizes as "the education system" to account for all the harm such projects entail is a result of "an epistemology of educated ignorance" (5): the active dismissal or turning away from information,

people, and relations that ought to be part of a mode of study if it is to adequately engage the world as made and the possibility of making it. As alternatives to the educational mode, Meyerhoff names African American blues epistemology and Indigenous knowledge that engages with nonhuman life. These examples bear useful contrast to the dominant educational system under Meyerhoff's critique, but there is little elaboration of their characteristics. What is involved in these modes of study? What do people do within them? How do they curate information so that it takes on the cultural weight of knowledge? What kinds of roles and relations exist within them and how do they interact? Deliberate and in-depth engagement with alternate modes of study would ground this argument in more concrete terms, but within the scale of the book, Meyerhoff's gestures toward long-existing alternatives serve mainly to characterize the education system by contrast.

Much of the book is devoted to a critical genealogy of key moments in the history of Western education to unpack the embedded tendencies of its structure. These include a vertical imaginary of "rising" through education to higher forms of living, a romantic narrative of heroically overcoming obstacles, relations of separation between students as producers and the means of study, techniques of governance built on obedience and authority, zero-point epistemology enshrining expert knowledge, and a binary affective economy of credit and debt. The last is a dynamic of honor and shame that materializes in grades and degrees and is co-constitutive with a binary sorting of subjects in ways that associate them with either value (the graduate) or waste (the dropout). Meyerhoff makes a convincing case that specific historical moments like the European peasant wars and the English revolution influenced the formation and consolidation of these characteristics, such as the verticalist conception of study, in which individuals were meant to advance on a ladder of enlightenment via graded and grouped steps.

The genealogical method is fascinating and highly generative for noticing how current, dominant modes of study retain traces of hierarchies and power agendas with deep roots, indeed. It also brings to light lesser-known attempts to build different modes of study, such as the beguine communities in which European women sought space for their own work and study, which became contingently fraught in a dynamic between autonomy from the church and accusations of heresy. These sketches are compelling, but they can risk reification. Once we accept the idea that an emergent mode of study was thoroughly embedded in the social relations and dynamics of its specific conjuncture of circumstances, it is tempting to treat present formations as if they had leapt ahead centuries, untouched by the specific circumstances of all the conjunctures in between. In the case of the educational mode of study, Meyerhoff establishes that a verticalist concept of education was closely bound up with foundational moments in capitalist modernity as a world-making project. It would then follow that subjugated alternate modes figured as "Others" to education would be horizontalist or nonhierarchical. But are they? This is one area in which

a deeper dive into some of the existing, alternative modes of study with long histories alongside and outside the dominant mode might be fruitful. Is hierarchy also present within blues epistemology or Indigenous more-than-humanism? Are there differentiations within the worlds made by these modes of study based on elderhood, or experience, or varying degrees of craft practice? Not only are these interesting empirical questions about variations in modes of study, they also raise questions in turn about the ways and extent to which Meyerhoff's critique itself may be a practice of the dominant mode of study; perhaps it is a reliance on taxonomy divided by binary distinctions between verticalist and other constructions of learning that are not "of" the educational mode.

Meyerhoff does turn to alternatives, but the focus is on efforts originating within the educational mode of study to move beyond it. A chapter based on interviews and personal experience, in which Meyerhoff shares authorship with Erin Dyke, recounts the project of founding experimental colleges, or "EXCO" in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. It is significant that these organizing efforts arose within institutions fully invested in the educational mode of study—the model for the EXCO projects that Meyerhoff describes came from Oberlin College and was taken up by students at Macalester College in St. Paul, later joined by students from the University of Minnesota. The initial impetus for the EXCO projects arose out of activism to preserve Macalester's "need-blind" admission policies. In other words, these alternative spaces of study emerged from a struggle over the fundamental issue of access. The key question would seem to be, access to what? It was surely not just space, or alternative institutions could move to inhabit municipal buildings, churches, or other physical spaces (which they surely have done). The aim was also not entirely to escape professors and the pedagogical authority that they represented, since the presence and knowledge of those intellectual workers was part of what needed to be redistributed.

In some ways, the experimental, alternate universities that Meyerhoff and his collaborators describe participating in reveal some of the contradictions bound up in a system that simultaneously valorizes and encloses certain knowledges and intellectual practices behind the financial walls of tuition and debt, as well as other cultural, social, and physical barriers. The aim of the emergent institutions was at least initially to breach those barriers. So what was it, exactly, of value that institutions were hoarding? Meyerhoff's account of the struggle to establish and practice different modes of study conveys the difficulty and frustration involved in negotiating contradictory relations to the dominant educational mode. This was often embodied in the relationship between those who had access to the dominant institutions but were trying to redistribute it, and others excluded from dominant institutions to begin with.

Some of the ways in which critical projects to reconfigure study were frustrated make sense in terms of these differing relations to the organization of knowledge. For instance, a priority for EXCO organizers was to dismantle pedagogical hierarchies, and even in relatively instrumental fields of information such as computer programming and bicycle mechanics, Meyerhoff described

the aim as being for "participants and facilitators [to] co-produce knowledge and skills that they find useful for a job or improvements in their lives" (164). The idea of learning together is both attractive and familiar to those of us who appreciate and even revere a seminar space of reading and discussion, but I wonder if co-learning has the same romance for others, who may feel that not knowing a programming language is preventing them from gainful employment. Where instrumental knowledge is something that one person has and you do not, you might not be enthused by their suggestion that you are going to share the labor of deciding what it is.

Meyerhoff recognizes that the critical projects of "grappling" with concepts or proposing to "forget everything we know about" a subject are viewed from certain vantage points as activities of privilege. However, this observation should be the beginning, not the end, of analysis of interaction across the boundaries of dominant modes of study. In fact, it may open ways to understand why participants in the experimental colleges found themselves falling back on practices and assumptions associated with dominant modes of education that they had discredited initially in conceiving of the EXCO project. Meyherhoff bemoans temporary resort to pedagogical authority or grading-type evaluative thinking as basically a lapse in energy or commitment to alternatives, evidence of the sticking power of normative structures. These could be, but there is probably more to learn by examining closely how the entire critical project itself is embedded in a conventional mode of study, as well as the degree to which those excluded from dominant institutions may nonetheless harbor attachment to certain things they represent. As much as Meyerhoff contributes by calling for those harmed and frustrated by universities to lose our romance with the concept of education, to conceive and build alternatives will require more consideration of what resources are enclosed or accumulated by institutions. In turn, that consideration will require diligent consideration of the perspectives of those with nonromantic but still highly motivated interest in accessing education.

Meyerhoff wraps up his call for moving beyond education to more pluralistic or liberatory modes of study by invoking abolition, a term that has been highly mobilizing for movements of study and resistance against social violence (and is also the title of the journal that Meyerhoff coedits). In this application abolition needs more specificity in terms of what, if anything, should be destroyed or retained from the modes of study that have occurred within, albeit sometimes against, universities. The need for this is only underscored by the vitality of Meyerhoff's own historical analysis that deploys his academic training and its presentation by means of a university press.

Sara Ahmed's *Complaint!* is the latest in a series of rich and incisive works that have become indispensable for understanding contemporary knowledge institutions. Ahmed's work stands out among the books under discussion here as the most deeply collaborative with interlocutors: in addition to interviews, Ahmed worked with the members of an emergent "complaint collective" who were seeking redress together for harassment or abuse they had individually

experienced. In fact, rather than pursuing interviews for perspective on her research questions, Ahmed was sought out by people who saw in her previous work potential for support and help in responding to their mistreatment by and within universities. Thus Ahmed's study of complaint grew out of a relationship much more intense and layered than that of a "sample" or focus group. It was a relationship that revealed to Ahmed the elaborate layers of what it means to "work on" complaints—a mode of study involving the rich, emergent, exhausting work of investigation, documentation, testimony, advocacy, and other tasks that produce crucial knowledge for navigating the social and cultural dynamics produced by and reproductive of hierarchy. As one gesture to the collaborative nature of the work, perhaps the most intimate sharing possible within the form of the book, members of the complaint collective wrote a conclusion that is published alongside Ahmed's.

Complaint! is the only work of the four reviewed here based in the United Kingdom and therefore responds to what are presumably slightly different circumstances in terms of social support, funding, and other characteristics of the academic context. However, the work is widely applicable as an examination of a kind of knowledge institution embedded in a long history of being built and maintained by and for white men of a particular class standing. The spectrum of institutional dynamics and personal behaviors, ranging from resistant to hostile, directed towards any people whose presence and perspective challenge these historically embedded hierarchies are of transcontextual relevance, and Ahmed's analysis is indispensable for anyone seeking to work with some relationship to ethics and justice in the U.S. academy.

Ahmed's work here, as elsewhere, is exhilarating in its steady flow of insights, owing to an unrelentingly reflexive critical practice. Ahmed's method goes far beyond simply making the researcher part of the project. Reflexivity here involves diligent unpacking not only of the phenomena under study, but of the means, processes, and language of the study itself. Frequent asides in a conversational tone like "This book offers fragments from many different testimonies. A fragment is a sharp piece of something" (48) weave the discussion in the book itself together with the subject material being dissected to make the point that both and all are part of a contested but common cultural whole. Not only does this convey that analysis is as much a part of power dynamics as that which is analyzed, a reminder to be cautious and diligent with the discourse of study itself, but it also shows how the awful power dynamics played out in abusive or exploitative relations within intellectual institutions are not to be isolated there. As Nzinga documents in a different explanatory tone, the social relations of intellectual institutions are part of a whole social mixture where abuse and exploitation are made possible and protected. Such institutions are important to understand and address if abuse and exploitation are to be countered or dismantled anywhere. The professional is political.

Ahmed presents the book as a project of "listening to complaint." She notes that within an institution, a complaint often registers as an interruption

or nuisance, a distraction from "important work elsewhere." But this work deemed important, the business as usual of an institution, is too often erasing or damaging of those who are part of the institution—productive, contributing, integral parts—but who are not the subjects the institution is accustomed to seeing itself in. Citing predecessors among women of color scholars, Ahmed notes that complaints about racism, sexism, or other oppressive operations in an institution are more easily dismissed than addressed, let alone remedied. A pivotal aspect of Ahmed's analysis is about how complaints and their response or nonresponse reveal that institutions continue to function sometimes by ceasing to function, at least in those aspects nominally responsible to address oppressive or problematic events. This is particularly incisive in light of other accounts of how the administration of organizations may be cybernetic in style if not in explicit rationale (Turner 2006). Ahmed substantiates how the management of flows of information and resources often entails the *restriction and interruption* of such flows. Thus part of the knowledge gleaned from complaint as a mode of study includes the "stoppages and blockages" of an institution. Seeing how a complaint, and the information it collects and generates, moves through the system, or not, is a matter of "institutional mechanics" for Ahmed, an invaluable concept and analytic.

The mechanics of an institution embedded in an oppressive history that continues to unfold are such that testimony of harm can be neutralized through nonresponse: silence, an unopened door, or the wordless nod of an administrator to end a conversation. Facing these (non)responses, people who make complaints learn intimately how an institution functions to preserve itself and to smooth over the rough spots that rise to introduce friction to the way that it has functioned historically. Complaint, Ahmed argues, provides not only a mechanics but a phenomenology of institutions, a glimpse at how they really work. Thus Ahmed posits complaint not only as an attempt at intervention, but also as a mode of inquiry. To listen to complaint is to delve into the archive of an institution's subjugated members. Ahmed cites, as predecessors, feminists of color and Black feminist writers who have examined how universities work, an intellectual history of "counterinstitutional knowledge." This suggests a way forward for university studies that is both intellectually and politically appealing—an approach akin to Harney and Moten's concept of the undercommons (2013) and related conversations about how to exist in but not of universities, which also may take the form of being outside of but nevertheless invested in universities.

Ahmed's trove of cultural analysis, which takes us through her own professional experiences and many accounts from her collaborators, yields far too many useful concepts to list here—the power semiotics of doors, the nonperformativity of nodding, the oppressively ironic care of a warning, and the social interaction genre of "blanking" are only a few. It is compelling to consider that the task of criticism in an overwhelming context is what Ahmed calls "non-reproductive labor," or, "not doing nothing" when witness to horrible events and actions, not going along with an institution when aspects of its ordinary function

are intolerable. The aim of not going along with one's own erasure or exclusion may seem like a low bar, but by taking this stance and experience seriously, Ahmed provides an analytical apparatus capable of moving the entire field forward. Indeed, in one of the moments of generative reflexivity, Ahmed offers a plausible program for critical university studies:

> This book in being on complaint is also on the university. By saying this book is on the university, I mean something more than that the university is my research field or site. I also mean the book is about working on the university. I write this book out of a commitment to the project of rebuilding universities because I believe that universities, as places we can go to learn, not the only places but places that matter, universities as holders of many histories of learning, should be as open and accessible to as many as possible (Ahmed 2021, 64).

Although this vision holds out hope that universities may be a *location* of critical study, it is not necessarily because universities are the *source* of critical study. Many of the voices referenced here are informed by Audre Lorde's famous assertion that "the Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house" (1984). Ahmed notes that this resonating statement came in the form of a complaint, physically situated very much within the space under criticism, as part of Lorde's presentation at a feminist conference where Black and lesbian representation were confined to a single panel. Lorde's position within and against an institutional structure was a source of knowledge and a basis for study. Ahmed notes, "You learn how a structure is built when you do not fit that structure" (140). Resonating with Moten and Harney's notion of fugitivity, there is much to be gleaned from these books for building a critical practice that fights for space within universities, without aiming or desiring to "fit."

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Book Review

IDENTIFYING ROOTS: Alex Haley and the Anthropology of Scriptures. By Richard W. Newton, Jr. Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing Ltd. 2020.

Richard W. Newton, Jr., an anthropologist of scriptures, examines Alex Haley's *Roots* as a scripture of the United States. Meticulously researched and theorized, this book stands at the crossroads of American Studies, Religious Studies, and U.S. History. Newton's wordplay with *uprooting, routing,* and *taking root* refers to the complex processes of identity-making through rootedness. That is, *uprooting* as displacement, *routing* as the manifold ways an uprooted person can negotiate for validation among those "more firmly planted in the habitus" (14), and *taking root* refers to the ways that the uprooted have formed a secure and stable identity.

Instead of associating "scripture" with "religious," Newton argues that *Roots* is a quintessentially American scripture because scriptures are spaces through which people position themselves "against [the text], and interpolat[e] themselves into [the text]" (142). While Newton agrees that the rhizomic metaphor of Deleuze and Guattari better represents how meaning-making occurs, Newton focuses on the social life of scriptures, that is, what scriptures *do* for and with people. Scriptures give people the appearance of rootedness; it *rootinizes* "in that [cultural circumstances] no longer appear conspicuous" (267). In this way, Newton argues, Alex Haley's *Roots* "was not just an author's 'routes' or attempt at meaning-making, but also an offering of 'roots,' a scripture by which Americans are to know and be known" (144).

Written as stand-alone essays, each chapter is a unique contribution. Chapter 1 places Alex Haley in his own cultural and geographic context, both in the United States and in the Black Atlantic. This chapter explores the perspective of Black uplift and civil rights. In the *Autobiography of Malcolm X,* Alex Haley sets his own family rootedness against Malcolm X's interpreted uprootedness. Chapter 2 examines Alex Haley's journey to find historical evidence for *Roots.* Haley's *Roots* made the past of a Black Family the quintessential American family. Chapters 3 and 4 look beyond Alex Haley to *Roots* the scripture and its use by people within U.S. culture. Chapter 3 provides a close reading of the story (Chapter 3 could be read as a stand-alone with an excellent summary, discussion, and analysis of the book and its key figures) and posits that Haley offered identity as a way to root and solve racism in the U.S. *Roots* itself shows the process of uprooting, routing, and taking root and serves as an exemplar for those who do take root (e.g. Kizzy and Tom) and a cautionary tale for those who do not (e.g.

Chicken George). Chapter 4 turns to a discourse analysis of popular culture, citing explicit references to Kunta Kinte in TV, film, and music, examining how specifically Black Americans took on this scriptural text to better route and root. Chapter 5 turns its examination to the field as a whole and the way scholars and theologians have used *Roots*. Importantly, this chapter argues that scriptures are not based on religion, but instead on "rootwork." Newton "contend[s] that were we to predicate 'scriptures' on naturalistic understandings—rather than the 'sui generis religion'… we would better observe the ways marginalized communities read, write, and redact themselves within the tradition of their dominators to express agency" (21).

Make no mistake, this book is not for the theoretically faint-of-heart! Richard seamlessly puts theoretical masterminds in conversation with one another—Audre Lorde and Bourdieu, Deleuze and Talal Asad, W.C. Smith and Bayart, to name only a few. His pop culture examples, from LeVar Burton to *Fresh Prince* and *Boyz n the Hood,* are read through lenses of Wimbush, Fanon, and de Certeau. But Newton is making his own unique theoretical contribution to the field of cultural studies and the meaning of scriptures in our culture. A truly *trans*-disciplinary book (as Wimbush would say), Newton's work stands at the cutting edge of American Studies and Religious Studies.

Theory does not bog down this book; instead, theory serves as a lens for understanding the work that Alex Haley's *Roots* has done and continues to do. This book will be useful for scholars in their research as well as in the classroom. I recommend this book for both undergraduates (with guidance) and graduate students interested in how people use texts to form or *rootinize* identity for themselves and others in the United States.

Rachel E. C. Beckley
University of Kansas

Book Review

GIVING BACK: Filipino America and the Politics of Diaspora Giving. By L. Joyce Zapanta Mariano. Temple University Press. 2021.

While the enduring influence of the expatriate (or balikbayan) on the Philippine nation and its economy has been a long-studied phenomenon within Filipino, Filipino American, and Philippine studies, L. Joyce Zapanta Mariano offers a new critical way to explore questions about diasporic practices as they lie within the myriad structures of the global economy. Mariano's monograph, *Giving Back: Filipino America and the Politics of Diaspora Giving*, theorizes the politics of giving as a mode for studying the complexities of Filipino American belonging to the homeland and outside of it, shifting U.S.-Philippine relations, and circuits of development under the regimes of globalization. Mariano centers the practice of "giving back" as a key feature of Filipino American diasporic communities through which diasporic subjects send remittances to the homeland as both obligation and responsibility. Challenging the unidirectional movement of this immigrant narrative, however, the concept "diaspora giving" reconceptualizes giving back as a set of processes that attempt to stabilize homeland and Filipinoness in the name of diaspora. For Mariano, both "diaspora" and "giving" are sites of multiplicity that hold several different practices, identities, and arrangements that underscore the transnationality of Filipino American attachment to the homeland. Diaspora giving identifies Filipino Americans as development actors often recruited to participate in the neoliberalizing economy of the Philippine development state.

Moving away from discourses that highlight "love" of homeland as the foundation of the remittance economy, the book disrupts the linearity of this narrative to argue that both migration and distance are themselves transnational spaces that cultivate ideas about connection and responsibility. To this end, Mariano skillfully points to the ways that Filipinoness is never a stable entity, and the interrogation of giving practices offers insight into the ways that these acts regulate and produce alternative Filipino American diasporic formations, what Mariano calls the resubjectification of Filipino Americans' roles for national development under globalization. *Giving Back* relies not upon the "policy-oriented evaluations" that measure the impact of remittances on homeland states (13). Instead, its archive follows the paths of resubjectification, using ethnography and textual analysis to trace the complexities of charity and philanthropy, which are critical operations for international and global development. Mariano historicizes charity as a colonial discourse that "brings abstract citizens together into

nations, constructing home or the domestic in relation to foreign spaces populated by the colonial other" (13). The four chapters of the book conceive of different forms of diaspora giving, turning not only to individual remittances but also to transnational anticolonial activism.

Where the Filipino American immigrant is often configured as distinct from the Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) based on the terms of citizenship and settlement, the first chapter traces the ways that these figures are mutually constituted by a political economy structured by labor migration and state development. Mariano argues that although Filipino American diasporic subjects might not see themselves as connected to other diasporic Filipino workers, both share histories and experiences of mobility and return and have been positioned to serve as key actors for national development. Mariano's work to disrupt the logics of Filipino American choice and OFW duty is imperative. It reveals that both choice and duty are embedded within the structure of feeling of neoliberalism. In Chapter 2, Mariano studies writer and organizer Ninotchka Rosca's activism to provide examples of counterhegemonic giving that does not subscribe to the logics of U.S. imperialism and global capital. In doing so, Mariano theorizes homeland "disorientation" as an analytic for locating moments of disruption within the progressive pathways of state development. Disorientation interrupts the singular orientations that Filipino Americans have toward homeland. The third chapter follows Philippine Development Foundation (PhilDev), a transnational nonprofit organization, as a model of philanthropy that frames itself as the singular vehicle for addressing suffering and precarity in the Philippines, especially in its collaboration with the Philippine state. Corporate social responsibility through PhilDev and earlier Ayala foundations regulates giving by imagining itself as "doing good" and existing outside of the contradictions of the global economy even as its growth depends upon that very framework. Throughout the chapter, Mariano traces the ways that corporate philanthropy calls upon Filipino Americans to participate in development programs. Its discourse of "community" produces the homeland and the Filipino diaspora. The final chapter focuses on FACES, a U.S.-based environmental organization that organizes against neocolonial structures in the Philippines through coalition work and diasporic solidarity networks between Filipinos in the United States and in the Philippines. FACES centers its work near the Subic Bay Naval Base, where group members learn from local groups and organizations. For Mariano, FACES is attentive to the limitations of diasporic politics, which often focuses upon navigating the law. Its work focuses on the ways that Filipino Americans are connected to the Philippines not through a shared Filipinoness but through the realities of material conditions. Its "disorienting politics" promotes responsibility, accountability, and mutuality. The book ends with a moving epilogue of the author's familial connection to the complex questions that surround love, homeland, and giving.

Giving Back is required reading for students and teachers of postcolonial studies, Ethnic Studies, and American Studies, especially scholars and organizers seeking to understand the limitations and possibilities of diaspora giving.

Josen Masangkay Diaz
University of San Diego

Book Review

DEAR SCIENCE AND OTHER STORIES. By Katherine McKittrick. Durham: Duke University Press. 2021.

In a period containing newfound drives to pursue diversity, equity, and inclusion across a breadth of academic fields, *Dear Science and Other Stories* comes as a confirmation of how DEI-centered scholarship can excel. McKittrick begins the book with a concrete, parsimonious explanation of the text's mission: to center black creatives and think through how they attend to science in their work. *Creatives*, in this context, bridges what is too-often considered 'academically gray,' considering the work of poets, musicians, and visual artists broadly. The goal of uplifting the field of black, critical race, indigeneity, and anticolonial methodologies is undoubtedly met as McKittrick seeks to articulate and advance the value of Black Studies within and outside formally academic spaces.

Critical indigeneity and race scholars in particular will get much from McKittrick's elevation of storytelling as it contributes to—and disseminates—theory-building. Indeed, McKittrick begins the text with a musing on Wynter's theorization that humans are truly *homo narrans*, a storytelling species. This centering of storytelling persists into the second and third chapters, where McKittrick challenges current practices in citation and methodology. The critique of citations as tools reproducing power relationships in knowledge systems (affecting the very process of conclusion-drawing) is something that has gained a deeper foothold in the humanities and social sciences than the hard sciences; consequently, the practical suggestions and literal restructuring of chapters that McKittrick undertakes demonstrates the importance of rethinking producers of knowledge in a concrete way. Her footnotes, in a very real sense, are just as much a part of the stories she tells as the later content. Readers finish each section with a sense that McKittrick is not telling stories in a vacuum: she is facilitating conversations between the authors she cites.

As McKittrick continues her discussion on methodology, readers settle into a fuller awareness of what it means to practice 'rebellious methodological work.' In one form, this means adjusting one's reading practice as a way to 'unlearn' racist, ableist, and sexist discipline conventions. A result of these adjustments can be the personal redevelopment of what it means to know—prompting, at its core, a challenge to the absolute Western view of what science is, or is not.

McKittrick's work consistently advances a central theme of *storytelling* as she seamlessly weaves together theory, literature, music, poetry, personal observation,

and stream-of-consciousness-like thought processes; each is like a character in a novel that comes to interact with one another, ultimately learning and growing from their interactions. She introduces examples such as the electronic-duo Drexciya (52), the story *The Kick Drum is the Fault* (122), and the work of Dionne Brand (63) to illustrate Afrocentric anti-colonial work that embodies the narrative nature of analysis and scholarly experimentation.

In concluding *Dear Science and Other Stories,* McKittrick pens a short letter to 'Science,' a summarization of her entire project. This letter also serves to remind readers that just like storytelling is an inherently community-based activity requiring tellers and listeners, scholarship—just like any important work worth doing—is a successful effort only when it is collaborative and community-minded.

Dr. Ellen A. Ahlness
Department of Veterans Affairs, Seattle

Book Review

REPUBLICAN JESUS: How the Right Has Rewritten the Gospels. By Tony Keddie. Oakland: University of California Press. 2020.

According to Genesis, God created us in His image; according to Tony Keddie, Republican politicians and preachers have created Jesus in theirs.

Keddie's basic premise in *Republican Jesus: How the Right Has Rewritten the Gospels* is nothing new. Other scholars have shown how different versions of Jesus reflect their cultural milieu: Thomas Jefferson's Enlightenment Jesus, the nineteenth century maternal Jesus, the manly Jesus from the early 20th century, the hippie Jesus of the 1960s (*Godspell*!), and so on. Keddie updates that list with a contemporary Republican Jesus who "loves borders, guns, unborn babies, and economic prosperity and hates homosexuality, taxes, welfare, and universal healthcare," in the words of the publisher's blurb.

The book begins with "A Portrait of Republican Jesus" as shown in Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard's *Killing Jesus* (2013). Keddie describes the book as "a political allegory in which ancient characters and events are used to express the authors' modern political views on class, race, and religion." The result is "a gospel of limited government marked by anti-Semitism, white nationalism, and Christian supremacism" (33).

Describing the origins of today's Republican Jesus, Keddie notes that the Protestant Reformation and classical liberalism provided important antecedents, but he follows Kevin Kruse (in *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America,* 2015) in emphasizing the role of businessmen who enlisted religious leaders in their opposition to the New Deal. The resentment politics of the Tea Party built on that 1930s foundation and lead directly to Donald Trump and what is effectively a new version of Christianity.

The meat of the book is Part Three, in which Keddie describes the Republican Jesus's views on family values (especially abortion and LGBTQ+ issues), welfare, the separation of church and state, immigration, and the end times. Republicans use what Keddie calls the "GOP method" of biblical interpretation: they *garble* the text by mistranslating or misstating the words of the Bible; they *omit* context and cherry-pick phrases; and they *patch* this "cut-up text together with other cut-up texts into the framework of a carefully designed quilt that's backed by ignorance, stuffed with hatred, and sewn with self-interest" (10).

So, what would Jesus do? Keddie, a respected historian of early Christian history at the University of British Columbia, knows his stuff and can explain what the

scriptures *really* say about these issues. Republicans, he says, are engaging in "biblical gaslighting" (267).

Some readers will find this book useful as a way to refute conservative friends and family members (although the book comes with no guarantees that anyone will actually listen). Probably more will appreciate it as a way to understand something of our contemporary scene—like the conservative candidate for governor in Georgia who is currently campaigning with a simple slogan: "Jesus, Guns, Babies." Suddenly, it almost makes sense.

David B. Parker
Kennesaw State University

CONTRIBUTORS

Jeremy M. Carnes is a Postdoctoral Scholar at the University of Central Florida. His work is situated within both comics studies and Indigenous rhetorics and literary studies. He is the reviews editor for *Studies in American Indian Literatures* and co-editor of the forthcoming *The Futures of Cartoons Past: The Cultural Politics of X-Men: The Animated Series* (UP of Mississippi). He is currently at work on his first book, which examines comics by Indigenous creators and the affordances of comics as a visual medium for considering land-based practices and relationalities.

Ben Chappell is Professor of American Studies at the University of Kansas. He is an ethnographer of Mexican America, specializing in the politics and aesthetics of vernacular cultural forms, most recently in the book *Mexican American Fastpitch: Identity at Play in Vernacular Sport*. He founded and continues to convene the Ethnography Caucus of the American Studies Association. He is currently developing a critical university studies project, "Everything Can Be Counted/Nothing Can Be Known," as a visiting fellow at the Leibniz ScienceCampus, University of Regensburg, Germany.

Nishani Frazier is Associate Professor of History and American Studies at the University of Kansas. Nishani's recent book publication, *Harambee City: The Congress of Racial Equality in Cleveland and the Rise of Black Power Populism* (University Arkansas Press, 2017), was released with an accompanying website also titled *Harambee City. Harambee City* website is a digital project that creates a second layer of book "reading" via online access to maps, archival documents, teacher lesson plans, and oral history interviews. Dr. Frazier is currently working on two manuscripts—a digital project and text on gentrification titled *Voices of the Displaced* as well as a political history which examines the impact of Bill Clinton's Presidential Initiative on Race on the Democratic Party, then and now.

Samuel Ginsburg is an Assistant Professor of American Studies, Comparative Ethnic Studies, and Spanish at Washington State University's School of Languages, Cultures and Race. He studies twenty-first-century Caribbean, Latin American, and Latinx science fiction literatures, films, and art. His scholarly work can be found in *Latin American Research Review, Latin American Literary Review, Alambique, Mitologías Hoy*, and *Sargasso*. He is currently working on a book project on representations of bodies and technologies in recent Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican science fiction.

David B. Green Jr. is an Assistant Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. As a literary and cultural historian, Book Critic, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Practitioner, his research advances social justice education and institutional equity from a Black Queer Humanities perspective. On these topics, he has contributed to major academic journals, anthologies, and digital publication spaces and has also created, facilitated, and consulted on professional development workshops aimed at implementing equity as an institutional practice for organizations in and beyond higher education. He's currently working on his first book that connects the writings of Audre Lorde and James Baldwin to Social Justice Education.

Hannah Soyer is a writer born and living in the Midwest. Her work explores the representation of "Othered" bodies, and how the arts—in particular storytelling—can be beautiful acts of survival, resistance, and community building. She is the founder of *This Body is Worthy*, a project aimed at celebrating bodies outside of mainstream societal ideals, and *Words of Reclamation*, a space for disabled writers. She has written for nationally-acclaimed publications such as *Bustle* and *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, and her creative work has been nominated for Pushcart Prizes and featured in places such as *The Rumpus*, *Entropy*, and *Disability Visibility Project*. In addition, she is the editor of *The Ending Hasn't Happened Yet: An Anthology of Disability Poetics* from Sable Books. Her chapbook, *For When the Shapes Keep Changing*, won the 2021 OutWrite Chapbook Competition in the creative nonfiction category. Hannah is represented by Mariah Stovall at Trellis Literary Management, where her debut essay collection is currently under contract.