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Page 460 of 635

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African diasporas in the new and old worlds: consciousness and imagination, ed. by Geneviève Fabre and Klaus Benesch. Rodopi, 2005 (c2004). 358p bibl afp (Cross/Cultures, 69) ISBN 9042008709 pbk, \$45.00

The application of the concept of "diaspora" to peoples of African origin began in the mid-1960s and it became an indispensable element of African American and Caribbean studies in the early 1990s. Debates about the African diaspora are now a critical component of the ongoing reconceptualization of transatlantic modernity. The 13 articles and two addenda that comprise this volume vary in range and quality but together contribute significantly to the current debate about the role of cultural production in the African diaspora. The three essays in the opening section, "Thinking Diaspora," are particularly strong, but several of the narrower studies in the three main sections that follow are also useful. Cumulatively, the essays contribute to a continuing reevaluation of modernity and modernism as, respectively, social and aesthetic movements in the African diaspora and of Pan-Africanism as well. This volume joins a literature that includes Joseph Harris's foundational *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (CH, Dec'83; 2nd ed., 1993); Brent Edwards's outstanding *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (CH, Oct'03, 41-0753); Winston James's *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia* (1998); and Ronald Walters's unjustly neglected *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora* (CH, Feb'94, 31-3425). **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. — K. T^ol^olyan, Wesleyan University

CDTs: African and African American Studies

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ZAA

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A Quarterly of Language, Literature and Culture

Eveline Kilian

Charles Dickens' London and the 18th-Century Tradition of Realism

Elisabeth Hurth

The Poet and the Mystic:
Ralph Waldo Emerson and Jakob Böhme

Bettina Hofmann

Uncle Tom's Cabin in Germany:
A Children's Classic

Christoph Heyl

Whodunnit und *who are we?*
Schottische Identität in Ian Rankins Kriminalroman *Fleshmarket Close*

Dieter Riemenschneider

Glocality and its (Dis)contents:
The Future of English Language Literatures Studies

Buchbesprechungen

Königshausen & Neumann

Geneviève Fabre and Klaus Benesch, eds. *African Diasporas in the New and Old Worlds: Consciousness and Imagination*. Cross / Cultures, 69. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004. 358 pp. Pb. € 36.00. ISBN 90-420-0870-9.

"The term 'diaspora,'" write the editors of this study in their introduction, "has finally emerged as a promising, powerful new idea [...] in the humanities, the social sciences, and cultural studies, among other fields [...]." And indeed, Fabre and Benesch's volume appears at a time in which a paradigm change – from the rhetoric of the postcolonial to the concept of the diasporic – seems to be taking place. After all, the globalized world order with its phenomena of cosmopolitan identification, transnational life-styles and labor migration cannot be explained exclusively with respect to colonial systems

of rule and their decline, and diaspora studies with their emphasis on diasporic communities, subjectivities and self-fashioning seem to provide a complementary analytical tool for the contemporary situation and its historical ramifications.

The volume at hand approaches the African diaspora, and it does so in historical depth, by giving scope to various formations and constellations of black cultures worldwide. As many references within the volume exemplify, to approach the black diaspora these days is to engage with Paul Gilroy's work, in particular his idea of a 'black Atlantic' culture triggered by but not deducible to the triangular slave trade. The first two theoretical contributions to the volume – by Brent Hayes Edwards and by David Palumbo-Liu (both originally 2001) – take Gilroy's study as a point of departure for their own reflections on the black diaspora. Edwards's paper on the 'uses' of diaspora – which appeared before in *Social Text* – criticizes the inflationary use of Gilroy's term in recent scholarship especially in the US, arguing that it imposes "an assumption of geographical specificity (what we might term a 'hemispheric' limit) and a 'racial' context on a field that might be much more broad and more various" (28). Instead, Edwards opts for the terminology of the diasporic, precisely because it calls up a Jewish history of dispersal and suffering and thus lends scope to "a complex past of forced migrations and racialization – what Earl Lewis has called a history of 'overlapping diasporas'" (31). Edwards's warning coincides well with Palumbo-Liu's insight that "while Gilroy opens his book [*Against Race*] with a universal species being, his conclusion is focused on a particular conception of 'blackness' that re-specifies race, rather than moves beyond it" (55). Thus, both contributions identify what may well be the most dangerous propensity of diaspora studies – the unacknowledged reifi-

cation of racial and racializing categories of identification, and thus the assumption of a (transhistorical and transregional) common denominator for the experience of 'blackness.' Unfortunately, one contribution to the edited volume seems to exemplify rather than counter this problematic tendency: as an appendix to the volume Phyllis B. Bischoff put together an annotated bibliography of "black diasporan autobiography," without elaborating on her grounds for comparison or her criteria of selection (one entry for all of China, two for Latin America, and six (!) for Germany).

Yet such criticism should not distract from the indubitable achievements of the volume. The historical studies, in particular, are innovative and original. Sylvia Frey's reflections on the transnational scope of the evangelical movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which, as she shows, "quickly metamorphized into a uniquely African-American strain of religion that was symbiotically linked to the larger American evangelical culture, but radically separate from it" (83) present a fascinating case study for diasporic interaction, especially when she focuses on the activity and self-fashioning of African-American missionaries in nineteenth-century Africa. Likewise, Sujaya Dhanvantari's research of the transnational role and reception of *La Marseillaise* discloses a fascinating history of transnational re-writing and diasporic appropriation.

Most of the book's contributions focus on literary and artistic representations of a diasporic situation, and in curious compliance with Winston James's critical observation that in diaspora studies "the experience of one particular national or regional group of the African diaspora, usually that of the USA (which is most atypical) is often extrapolated to the rest," they focus almost exclusively on African American experiences. Interesting as

these studies are (among them Klaus Benesch's brilliant essay on the work of William Demby and the enactment of his black American expatriate perspective, and Iris Schmeisser's rich reflections on 'Ethiopianism and Egyptomania' in the Harlem Renaissance), they can only hint at the wealth of material at hand once diaspora cultures worldwide are approached from a comparative perspective. The theoretical essays raise the question whether the terminology of diaspora can carry us beyond racializing assessments – and the case studies on history, literature, and art in this volume clearly answer this question in the affirmative. One can only hope for more critical work along the same lines.

Ruth Mayer (Hannover)

Oliver Scheiding. *Geschichte und Fiktion: Zum Funktionswandel des frühen amerikanischen Romans*. Beiträge zur englischen und amerikanischen Literatur, 20. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003. 281pp. Pb. € 38.00. ISBN 3-506-70831-7.

While Scheiding's publication list covers a wide range of historical periods and genres, one of his main fields of expertise is clearly early American literature. The present study, his *Habilitationsschrift*, analyses the changing function of the early American novel using five canonized texts as its corpus: William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* (1794-1815), Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797), Susanna Haswell Rowson's *Reuben and Rachel* (1798), and Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* (1799). According to Scheiding, it was not the classical texts of the *American Renaissance*, but early American novels which were crucial for the development of a national literature. Questioning the estab-

