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REFERENCES

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- 1 The volume, the result of a conference at Aix Marseille Université, is an ambitious venture that foregrounds a still uncharted area of research: the crossroads between race, ethnicity and the complicated field of publishing in its diverse stages. The back cover blurb describes the project as “contributions on culturally marginalized literatures in America from the perspective of print culture.” True to this, the theme of the volume is indeed original and a glance at the table of contents reveals the interdisciplinary character of the collection: historiography, bilingualism and ethnicity, gender studies, textual studies. While most essays in the collection offer us interesting readings of this obscure area of study, there are a few articles that seem to lack vigor and nerve, mainly due to their topics and analyses. On the whole, the scope of race and ethnicity seem somewhat limited with the main focus of most essays on African Americans. The connections and comparisons that could have been drawn with other ethnic and racial groups, white ethnicity included, could have led to thought provoking conclusions.

In the introductory chapter the editor, Cécile Cottenet justifies the significance of the book by bringing to the fore the dark waters where minority literatures, book history, textual scholarship and genetic criticism meet. With race and ethnicity still influencing publishing, the editor convincingly argues for the scarcity of research in book history, print culture and ethnic studies. Cottenet stresses the need to employ book history “focusing on the publisher/author relationship in context” (7) and the “stifling effect of such white publishers on African American authors” (8). The editor distinguishes several factors that need to be taken into consideration, related to the readership and the constraints imposed on the authors. Moreover, the editor argues for the projection of genetic studies in relation to postcolonial studies and the new models from which to view ‘other’ authors in “the age of globalized and globalizing markets” (13).

In the first part of the volume dedicated to historiography, Claire Parfait discusses the early American historian William Cooper Nell connecting African American culture and book history. Parfait highlights the key role of such historians and the triple challenge involved “to the existing order, to mainstream history, and to the status African Americans had been given in American society” (31). As she retraces Nell’s biography, the author underscores his being the first to systematically record the traces of forgotten African American patriots. Well-read and analytical, Parfait does a good job at presenting this obscure historian and his work. In her solid argumentation, she points to Nell’s feat, managing to become mainstream for his era, favorably reviewed in both North and South, and recommended by several papers. Nell’s case as a self-published author who had to go in debt to have his work published, proves some of the difficulties African American authors faced in this early period.

The ensuing chapter by Cheryl Knott focuses on Eliza Atkins Gleason, a pioneer African American woman of the mid twentieth century. Building up on previous works, Gleason through her doctoral dissertation turned into book, *The Southern Negro and the Public Library* (1941), demonstrated the need for desegregation of libraries, acknowledging the need for change in the public library problem. Knott succinctly traces the course of Gleason’s book, its reception, reviews and overall impact. As the author rightly claims, however, “it is impossible to say

definitively that Gleason's work had an immediate impact of the hearts and minds of Southern librarians and local government officials" (72). Following the contributor, Gleason's work needs to be considered as a realistic account of the state of public libraries, recommending changes in the spirit of equality and democracy.

Manuel Brito's contribution in the second part of the book, dedicated to bilingualism and ethnic identity, gives a new perspective to the volume, that of Latino Studies. The author explores the link between editors of Chicano literature and "a strong sense of agency and presence in the United States" (79). In another piece on the course of lesser voiced literatures, the author recounts the expansion of Hispanic literature through its emergence in publishing, historiography and university curricula. Among his arguments, Brito adds the foundation of several professional organizations promoting Chicano studies in the late 1970s and 1980s, a step generally considered vital for the development of this ethnic field.

The following chapter "Franco-American Writers: Invisible Authors in the Global Literary Market" adds the third ethnic group of the volume, Franco-American writers, whom the author of the chapter, Peggy Pacini, calls "victims of an increasingly global market in cultural goods" (95). Through this enlightening and quite original piece of study, the author pinpoints the reasons restricting the popularity of Franco-American literature. Pacini attempts to give the problematic definition of this ethnic literature which lacks connections to other literatures and has a questionable authenticity. Considered as Francophone authors when they write in French, and excluded from any ethnic literature when they write in English, Franco-American authors escape all categorization. Instead, they are sometimes classified as regional authors coming from Maine. They also often face financial problems with their books only rarely becoming best-sellers. The contributor includes the major factors that shape the status of these authors: their special connection with their own social group, a restricted and specific readership, their oscillating identity, neither French nor English. Pacini critically and historically regards the marketplace for such works; she mentions their past dependence on journalism, the emergence of important pens like Kerouac who wrote in English, the protective framework of the ethnic revival in the 1970s and the few institutions that sustain the growth of this literature. Pacini

concludes this engaging chapter connecting this particular ethnic identity to writing: acting as interpreters of [their] microcosm" (108) these authors rely on personal narratives to express themselves and their anthologies "as a means of memorialization" (110).

The third part of the book embraces gender studies. Claudine Raynaud's chapter on Zora Neale Hurston envisages the African American stereotypes that the publishing world worked with. Raynaud talks about Hurston's desire for a more realistic projection of race relations at the end of WWII. A sworn enemy of the voice of victimhood for African Americans, Hurston avoided 'essentializing' race. She opted to emphasize the diverse social classes with a preference for works with middle class African Americans. These views Raynaud sees as catalytic for Hurston's relations with publishers. At the same time, the contributor states the diverse compromises Hurston had to make to see her works published. Characterized by authenticity and "the essence of black folk culture" (130) as her critics claim, Hurston cauterized the distorted depiction of black life, coming from both white and black authors. Raynaud ends by underwriting Hurston's insistence on black patriotism, her anticommunism, the centrality of female protagonists and their liberated female sexuality.

Matilde Martín González's chapter revolves around the presses working with minority women's books and the former's overall contribution to the foregrounding of lesser known ethnic groups. This chapter constitutes an account of the history of the Kitchen Table, Third Woman Press and Aunt Lute Books. It projects their role for the emergence of literature of women of color. As the author maintains in her conclusion, once published, most writers moved from their marginalized status into commercial and university presses. González affirms again the belief that presses publishing experiences of previously voiceless women enriched the canon immensely.

In the last part of the volume, entitled "Re-visiting the Canon," John K. Young centers on Jean Toomer's modernist journal *The Double Dealer* published between 1921 and 1926, a venue of publication for Toomer's often misjudged *Cane*. The journal sought "to represent the South and the broader national modernist movement, and to place white and black literatures in dialogues as part of its revision of Southern culture" (173). The author regards the journal and its influence on *Cane* as a work published in pieces in

it. The journal's contribution to its readers was important, as it offered a taste of transnational modernism and acquainted the readership with influential authors like Faulkner, Anderson and Langston Hughes. Following the author's train of thought, the magazine ought to be considered as a "literary network" which shows "alternate modes of reception, repurposing the magazine and its texts within their differently defined cultural spheres" (187, 188). This suggests a way of reading Cane as "the product of a 'mixed' periodical publishing history" (188).

Max Cavitch's chapter on Phyllis Wheatley utilizes literary history and paratextual analysis to unveil the changes the original poems have been subjected to in their editions over two hundred years. Largely used for abolitionist purposes in the antebellum years, Wheatley's poetry was primarily employed to "eliminate prejudice against black character" (218). Cavitch carefully goes through Wheatley's publication with other African American authors to shed light on the reasons and purposes behind their combining and binding together. This absorbing chapter ends with an extensive reference to Henry Louis Gates's book on Wheatley, *The Trials of Phyllis Wheatley*. Based on trauma theory, Cavitch brilliantly offers a new approach to reading using Gates as a case study.

Laurence Cossu-Beaumont deals with the role of Book Clubs, basically Book-of-the Month Club and Oprah's Book Club through the cases of Richard Wright and Toni Morrison respectively. Specifically, the contributor opts for these two cases to point towards the inclusion of African Americans into mainstream culture and their turning into a consumable commodity. While comparatively viewing book clubs, the author observes the lack of racial theme in both cases as well as the widening of readership. The irony behind a famous TV persona like Oprah Winfrey promoting the reading experience cannot go unnoticed. Finally, the author comments on the compromises both authors, Wright and Morrison, had to make; she mentions censorship and cuts, which, however, as Cossu-Beaumont admits lead to a booming popularity and empowerment of both African American authors.

Finally, in the "Epilogue", Samuel Blumenfeld narrates his personal success story in the world of publishing. Working for a French house in the 1990s, he discovered a lost generation of African American crime authors. The author recalls how he discovered this

forgotten group of writers and emphasizes the difficulties the latter faced trying to get their works in print in the 1970s. With their genre often despised and characterized as sub-literature, such writers were not taken seriously back then. Their style was put down as “too raw, too rough, and not too violent to be considered valuable” (240). The books, often misunderstood due to their daring front covers, were also wrongly promoted, and, as expected, did not sell well. Blumenfeld’s chapter with its anecdotal character manages to end the volume on an entertaining note.

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