

female action heroes with their male counterparts, drawing distinctions between how they relate to their external worlds and to their own bodies. One of the most provocative distinctions she draws, and the one most explored, is the concept of borders. For Heinecken, the woman warrior “is the borderland,” while male heroes simply “exist” there (134).

Because this book is so slim (156 pages), Heinecken is hard-pressed to work out all of her ideas, and this is unfortunate. One of her most promising concepts, linking the domination of woman warriors in our cultural landscape to a postfeminist ideology, simply cannot be developed in the brief five pages devoted to it. The book would have been stronger with more attention to her theoretical propositions, but Heinecken still contributes important new insights into the meaning of heroic identity in woman-centered texts. Anyone with the slightest curiosity about the current popularity of tough women and their subversive potential will find this book enlightening. Scholars who study these figures may not find enough new ideas, but the lack of jargon, coupled with her straightforward prose, makes it ideal for undergraduate courses in women’s studies and popular culture. The excellent close-readings and historical contexts will also provide a helpful model for students and scholars entering the field.

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Everything but the Burden: What White People Are Taking from Black Culture. Ed. Greg Tate. New York: Harlem Moon/Broadway Books, 2003.

If the great problem of the twentieth century has been the problem of the color line, then a century later, the only color that seems to matter is green. In *Everything but the Burden*, Greg Tate and his team of writers take on various aspects of American popular culture, from Muhammad Ali to Pablo Picasso and imperialism, interracial sex, cornrows, pimpology, thugging, capitalistic exploitation, and racial transvestitism. As the title suggests, the underpinning thread of the text is that the only aspect of black culture that whites cannot appropriate is the burden of being black. This burden gives black culture

its creative edge. This collection of essays, interviews, plays, and poetry embodies Ralph Ellison's idea that whatever the American is, he or she is always also somehow black.

Macroscopically, this book unpacks the black/white baggage of American popular culture. It engages historical criticism, semiotics, mythology, cultural studies, ethnography, psychoanalysis, and critical race theories to examine the ways in which black culture has been consumed and transformed into marketable commodities. The book opens with a brilliant, almost lyrically written introduction by its editor, *Village Voice* columnist Greg Tate, which situates and defines the text within contemporary conversations on race, culture, and communication. Tate explains that the text should be read as both a "Foucauldian panopticon-styled" (9) response to Rudyard Kipling's poem *The White Man's Burden* (1899), H. T. Johnson's *The Black Man's Burden* (1899), and Norman Mailer's *The White Negro* (1957). It is the latest installment in the African American canon begun by DuBois, Hughes, Faulkner, Gates, Morrison, Melville, Hurston, and West. The writers' mission is two-pronged. First, they fix their gazes on white America's paradoxical fascination and disgust with all things black. Second, they discuss their findings to open new avenues for conversations regarding race, image, and communication. The key themes running through each piece are cultural appropriation, white racial blindness, and the lived experience of racism. The question posed is: What are we seeing when we look at mediated images and cultural artifacts? The provocative answer is black marketability. Specifically, the point is that African Americans are simultaneously the primary arbiters of taste and primary objects of distaste in American popular culture. The book does not paint African Americans as victims, but as active capitalists in a society whose simultaneous worship and odium renders them at best confused, and at worst, schizophrenic.

Overall, the form of the text argues for its function. Within the African American postmodern context of postsoul, its fusion of high theory, aesthetics, and quotidian experience goes against the essentialist assumption of a shared black experience along racial lines. Limitations of this analysis are that it does not traverse the binary world that it deconstructs. Further, it does not offer prescriptions for preventing cultural (mis)appropriation. What it does, however, is interrogate the implications of ripping blackness from its aesthetic, rhetorical, and historical contexts under the rubrics of popular entertainment, cultural

studies, and economics. Tate asserts that Americans must confront, interrogate, and discuss race in order to transcend it. Taken as a whole, the text concludes by suggesting that we look for mobile, transitory points of resistance and gaps within which identity is formed and expressed in day-to-day experience.

Although getting beyond the black/white binary is beyond the scope of this book, it remains a worthwhile read for academic and popular audiences. *Everything but the Burden* asserts that popular culture is fodder for critical thinking. This critical thinking can lead the reader beyond the two-dimensional world of mediated images and into the three-dimensional laboratory of everyday life.

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Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture Between the World Wars. Joel Dinerstein. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003.

Joel Dinerstein, who teaches English at Ithaca College in New York, describes this book as “an inquiry into the strategies and symbols that sustained national identity in a period of rapid social, technological and cultural change.” He argues that African Americans, by integrating “their artistic and aesthetic traditions with those of the colonial powers they came in contact with . . . constructed a functional culture for industrial society” (24). Tracing the evolution of African American music from work songs to the jazz and swing in the 1930s that reflected the tempo of life in the cultural arena and the workplace, he insists that African Americans created jazz and swing to give humans agency in a mechanical age. In his opinion, the black legacy—rather than that of German, Irish, Native American, Jewish, Chinese, or other ethnic groups—gained dominance and has prevailed because, just as work songs reflected the rhythm of agricultural labor in the slave society, “African-Americans had matched the *motor activity* of their cultural forms to the *motorized society*” (279; author emphasis). The train became the icon of that society as the children of former slaves found work in northern cities. The jazz train became the musical representation of mechanized rhythms. The evolution of the train from the first

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