

Miettinen's analysis of the ambivalences of the geopolitical renderings of superhero comics, open to both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic readings, reaches far beyond shorthand descriptions of superheroes as national icons, as fascist symbols, or as representatives of media violence.

#### Reference

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid, and Simon Dalby. "Introduction: Rethinking geopolitics: towards a critical geopolitics." In Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby (eds), *Rethinking Geopolitics*. London: Routledge, 1998, 1–15.

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Youngquist, Paul, ed. *Race, Romanticism and the Atlantic*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 267 pages, ISBN: 978-0-7546-6927-2, \$104.95 (£60)

*Race, Romanticism and the Atlantic* explores the African presence in Romantic literature and culture. Divided into three parts—"Differences", "Resistances" and "Crossings"—the collection discusses topics as diverse as racism, the stage, single mothers, holiday festivals, rebellion and poetry. The nine essays highlight the crucial contributions of diasporic people to British cultural production by challenging accepted descriptions of Romanticism as the product of a national culture and by focusing on the enslaved themselves rather than the discourse of masters.

The collection also complicates received notions of race during the Romantic era, demonstrating that the concept is a "muddled distinction" (2) that hides a more complicated truth: what is, for example, the link between liberty and subjection? How should we understand the perverse historical fact that the Romantic era saw both the abolition of the African slave trade and the development of a biological racism that dehumanized Africans in the British Empire and laid the foundations of the eugenics of the Holocaust? Only when the discourse of mastery is combined with that of the enslaved themselves, as in *Race, Romanticism and the Atlantic*, can one begin to answer these questions.

Three axioms form the basis of *Race, Romanticism and the Atlantic*: the slave trade provides a material occasion for the rise of race as a marker of human difference; during the eighteenth century and much of the Romantic era, race was an ambiguous marker, a diffuse rhetoric of human differences;

and race is a means of waging war that provides the circumstances for a discourse of human difference. Society during the Romantic era was characterized by a polarization of “us and them”, “black and white”. Together, the three axioms provide the conditions for the emergence of racism out of “race”. War and colonialism are thus at the centre of Romanticism in all its complexity and multiplicity. Romanticism is not simply a black/white polarity but an array of “color”, a polychrome in the English-speaking world incorporating countries as diverse as Sierra Leone, Jamaica, Senegal, Nova Scotia and England.

A particularly original contribution to the collection is Debbie Lee’s essay “Black Single Mothers in Romantic History and Literature” (part III), which traces the heritage of the single mother back to the “lone mother” of eighteenth-century Britain. Focusing on black mothers, Lee highlights the strength, endurance and solidarity of the lone mother who, despite her name, was rarely alone because she was often part of an institution or a community of women devoted to securing life and justice. The social fact of this solidarity forms the basis of Lee’s reading of such familiar Romantic poems as Blake’s “Little Black Boy”, which she interprets as a tribute to the matrilineal strength of West African society. Black mothers should be seen as heroines who stoically resist suffering in solitude.

Collectively, the nine essays collected in *Race, Romanticism and the Atlantic* pay tribute to the potent African presence in the culture of the Romantic era, highlighting the importance of the memory of slavery and the extraordinary creativity of the enslaved. Copiously annotated and illustrated, with a comprehensive index and Works Cited list, *Race, Romanticism and the Atlantic* unites research from both sides of the Atlantic and challenges the traditional academic emphasis upon periodization and canonization, thereby constituting an important and original contribution to the Ashgate series in nineteenth-century transatlantic studies.

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