

caesurae' of Hill's later poetry as a literal response to Williams's 'injunction' (p. 94). Ultimately, though, for Pestell, the diacritical marks are symptomatic of Hill's affinity with the later Coleridge: a view of the imagination as 'a refuge rather than a transformative power' (p. 100).

The book is nicely produced and carefully edited, although the index seems inconsistent as regards inclusion of critics quoted within the text. The depth of underlying research and the strength of argument mean that those interested in Hill's work are likely to return to this book and to engage with its ideas for a considerable time to come.

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doi:10.1093/res/hgx123

Advance Access published 26 October 2017

**TUIRE VALKEAKARI.** *Precarious Passages: The Diasporic Imagination in Contemporary Black Anglophone Fiction*. Pp. x + 232. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2017. Hardback, \$84.95.

Tuire Valkeakari's *Precarious Passages: The Diasporic Imagination in Contemporary Black Anglophone Fiction* examines how 'fiction written in English, participates in the ongoing transnational construction of black diasporic identity with the old Anglophone black Atlantic diaspora'. Valkeakari's central contention, that imagination actively contributes to the shaping of diaspora identity, is a compelling one; the case that the author makes is highly suggestive and difficult to refute, that fiction as a genre is particularly well-suited to addressing 'the ambivalences that characterise the diasporic longing of the scattered and displaced to belong'. The author reads the construction of black diasporic identity into a number of diverse historical moments which have linked the principal geographic spaces of what is typically known as the 'Black Atlantic'. The major moments in global history which are addressed here include the Middle Passage itself, the American Revolutionary War, the Second World War and Vietnam War, the 'Windrush' migratory moment linking Britain and the Caribbean, and corresponding moments of diasporic 'return' to the Caribbean. The novels discussed include examples by Charles Johnson, Caryl Phillips, Toni Morrison, Edwidge Danticat and Andrea Levy, and authors who work in the USA, Caribbean, Canadian and British settings.

The book shapes a consistent definition of the kinds of experience that it understands to constitute the African diaspora, limiting its discussion to literary contexts which are shaped by the historical backdrop of the transatlantic slave trade. The book's introduction offers a survey of relevant diaspora theory, and the way in which this introduction relates the theoretical field to varied subjects relating to black identity, African diaspora cultural memory, and the transatlantic, is quite comprehensive, and very helpful for any student or scholar of the subject of diaspora, or of African diaspora writing. The definitions of diaspora which underpin this work are drawn mainly from the influential work of Robin Cohen and Paul Gilroy (James Clifford,

Stuart Hall, and Brent Hayes Edwards are also cited as key resources). As the book proceeds, Valkeakari draws upon a wide and rich body of relevant critical knowledge to establish her study of the field, and the work's most impressive contribution is indeed to position diasporic criticism convincingly as a usable body of work. The author's particular choice of novels for discussion serves well the overarching logic of this work, and the plot-driven nature of the literary commentaries offers an interesting 'map' by which the locations, movements and cultures of its understanding of African diaspora are indicated.

The ambition and range of this work should not be underestimated, yet some of the means by which the bounds of the discussion's interests are shored up, are potentially troublesome. The author articulates very clearly the choices to restrict the discussion to Anglophone writing, and to writers belonging to an African diaspora shaped by the history of transatlantic slavery. Valkeakari works squarely within an Anglo/American-centred approach to the theory of diaspora (which is far from unique to this book), but which might be asked, especially given the intertwined relationship between diaspora and the truly transnational, the truly global, to bear greater scrutiny. The author might have applied more pressure, in this literary study, to the strictly sociological definitions of diaspora given by Cohen, and theoretically driven work by thinkers such as Arjun Appadurai and Sudesh Mishra, for example, might have been engaged with more strongly, to aid recognition of the qualitative value of disjunctive understandings of diaspora time and space, to the definition of diaspora experience. In other words, the capacity to glean value from different types of disciplinary readings of diaspora might have been better exploited here, to feed into a more textured, uneven, nuanced reading of African diaspora experience as represented by the literary. In this study, the boundaries around the definition of 'diaspora', 'African diaspora', 'black', and so on, are continually reinforced for the sake of argumentative clarity; very little attention is given to the possibilities suggested by 'unclear' boundaries or definitions as useful spaces of uncertainty, which in their own way can be used to underscore the unstable aspects of diaspora community.

The study's will towards delimiting definitions of diaspora, and away from the more indefinable, intangible and unspeakable aspects of being, which form a necessary part of an understanding of African diaspora literary legacies, is linked to a second limitation. It is noticeable that the readings of the chosen novels here, while engaged convincingly in conversation with major moments in diaspora theory, are focused primarily upon the movement of plot. The approach that this represents is indeed helpful in terms of understanding diaspora as an aesthetics of movement and travel, and in order to read the novels themselves as archetypal of a particular aspect of diaspora experience. Very little is drawn from the literary texts in terms of commentary upon approach to form, to poetics, or to the sound of the literary word; Valkeakari does not engage in any detailed way with quotation, image, or the craft of the literary text. This style of literary reading holds the text at arm's length, and denies the reader a true appreciation of the potential 'untidiness' of diaspora as a living practice, a practice of living with the cultural memory of the transatlantic slave trade, and other forced or voluntary crossings, an

often sublime experience which close readings of literary text can so effectively reach towards.

Having noted these limitations, it must be repeated that the range of scholarship that this volume represents is truly impressive at every stage, and the critical undertaking that it embodies serves as a useful and insightful summation of the field. Herein lies further potential for thinking through the relationship of the fictional to the theoretical, as a functional means of conceptualizing diaspora experience.

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doi:10.1093/res/hgx113

Advance Access published 13 October 2017