Race and the Politics of Deception furthers the discourse around urban development and process. For scholars of environmental justice and environmental racism, this book creates a key bridge and addition to our understanding of the centrality of White privilege and supremacy to the contemporary color-blind implementation and regulation of industry. This work is also a great read for students new to urban studies or race and ethnic studies because it draws the clear connection between race and a history of politics and race narratives. The book is about how the strategic use of race functioned in Chester to isolate and segregate often to benefit elite residents through control of voters, profit, and property. The story of Chester, unfortunately, is not a singular one. Race and the Politics of Deception is an integral part of uncovering the geographic shaping of cities in the United States that has long been influenced by racial strategy, and in turn motivated by power and profit.

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In Blackness Is Burning: Civil Rights, Popular Culture, and the Problem of Recognition, TreAndrea M. Russworm makes a timely and necessary intervention into the problematics of black representation in popular culture and the promise/possibility of equal recognition as citizens and fully participating subjects in the US project of democracy. Demonstrating an impressive command of psychoanalysis, Russworm brings clarity to how black representation and recognition function at the level of ideology. As such, her work compels scholars across many disciplines and fields, including African American studies, political science, film and media studies, feminist studies, psychology, sociology, and philosophy, to ponder how representation and recognition have complicated black political struggle and the responses to black political struggle in the United States from the Civil Rights Era to the present.

Recognizing certain continuities in the affective and psychological registers of how racial stories have been told across decades, Russworm aims to deploy psychoanalysis as a serious lens of interpretation in the matter of blackness. She justifies this move in part by pointing out how within both popular culture and academic work, the desire to deploy psychological language to describe the black political struggle in the United States remains unexamined. Rather than deploy this language in a casual way, Russworm attempts to be accountable to psychoanalysis by using it as a method. The result is her most important contribution—the offering and explication of the term “the intersubjective view of race” (38), which stands for a well-constructed psychoanalytic process, carried out through “rituals, symbols, and cultural practices,” (42) by which black/white racial conflicts are represented as primarily interpersonal, therapeutic, and potentially transformative. This view of race, according to Russworm, is an ideological glue that melds together the politics.
of recognition and the politics of representation in a way that displaces recognition of systemic and state-related forms of violence that have marked black political life in the United States since its founding, and transfers them to an interpersonal, humanistic, and relational scale that ultimately “resolves” historical forms of anti-black violence.

Russworm examines an intelligent selection of texts from the Civil Rights Era through the post–Civil Rights Era to demonstrate how the intersubjective view of race frames black representation in popular culture. Highlighting the struggle for recognition of black humanity throughout each text, Russworm demonstrates how, whether achieved or failed, recognition is the ideological script for racial struggle narratives across the twentieth century. In the introduction and chapter 1, she primarily focuses on the films *The Defiant Ones* (1958) and *Antwone Fisher* (2002) as the basis for explicating the intersubjective view of race, as well as demonstrating the slippage between the politics of recognition and the politics of representation. Drawing on Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin, Nancy Fraser, Stuart Hall, and Herman Gray, among others, Russworm does careful and rigorous theoretical work in these first chapters, in a way that makes the often-daunting language of psychoanalysis both accessible across disciplines and enticing. These chapters, along with chapter 3, are the book’s greatest strengths.

In chapter 2, Russworm examines the work of Sidney Poitier as he reflects “black psychological expertise” as a therapeutic figure and as an object of black survival in Civil Rights Era films. Examining multiple films across Poitier’s career, Russworm challenges interpretations of Poitier’s work as either disruptive or sanitized and instead focuses on how his social problem and interracial buddy films of the mid-twentieth century serve as a stage for personalizing and psychologizing the problem of racism. Focusing primarily on processes of racial transference, recognition, and object survival (as a “Magical Negro”), Russworm utilizes Poitier’s reflections on his method acting, his recollections of his acting career, and the films themselves as a rich archive to understand how Poitier becomes a therapeutic agent for an intersubjective understanding of racial tensions. As Russworm argues, Poitier’s repertoire of therapeutic, measured, and dignified responses to white supremacist views and violence on film created a repertoire of psychological, interpersonal symbols that citizens could draw upon to “resolve” the harms of racial violence.

In chapters 3 and 4, Russworm takes on questions of gender that are central to intersectional feminist inquiries of the politics of recognition. She gives readers a fresh take on the bad black mother trope, most often epitomized by representations of mammies and welfare queens. Russworm examines how the chronic failure to recognize black women as human is a productive and profitable script for the intersubjective view of race, because it provides an origin for the psychological crises that black subjects must either survive or escape in order to become viable “subjects” ready for citizenship and personhood. Naming this trope the “baaadd black mama” (90), Russworm argues that an affective logic of harm underlies all of the familiar images of black mothers. Building on a rich body of work by black feminist thinkers including Hortense Spillers and Patricia Hill Collins, as well as critical work by Lauren Berlant, Russworm concludes that the US cultural imaginary benefits tremendously from using black maternity as a symbol for chronic (psychological) failure, and this failure serves as a justification for chronic failed recognition.
Russworm moves in chapter 4 from the chronic failure of recognition for black maternity to black masculinity’s flight from recognition in pimp tropes. Shifting from film analysis to literary analysis, Russworm examines key literary texts on pimp life from the Civil Rights Era in order to forward the thesis that black masculinity under the pimp trope “flees” the struggle for recognition in favor of anti-recognition. While this refusal has been read by some theorists as a subversive demonstration of black urban life, Russworm argues that we must attend to the psychological practices of domination and control—specifically against black women and pimps’ baaadd black mamas—that build the pimp’s deepest fantasies and fears. In the most psychoanalytically dense chapter in the book, Russworm examines how pimp narratives rely on misogynistic dehumanization, while also emphasizing a “boundarylessness” or indeterminacy as the pimp figure must master multiple subject positions (son/Mother/God/whore) in order to appear worthy of recognition. Importantly, Russworm rejects readings of this trope as potentially radical and instead resituates the pimp narrative within the broader contexts of patriarchy, racism, and capitalism that create the conditions of possibility for the black underclass.

In chapter 5, Russworm examines representations of black childhood and the use of play and playfulness in Bill Cosby’s Fat Albert cartoons and his early comedy career. Examining the fluctuations of the Fat Albert cartoon from a space of black childhood’s therapeutic playfulness to a tool of class-based discipline that individualizes systemic inequality, Russworm develops what she terms Cosby’s “psychological nationalism” (222). In this rhetoric, even black children are responsible for learning to be appropriate psychological subjects that can forward the goals of black inclusion and integration. Juxtaposing Cosby’s playfully creative world in Fat Albert with the realities of poverty and state surveillance (also often represented in Fat Albert), Russworm’s final chapter drives home how the cultural imaginary of the United States maintains an idealized version of black underclass life even as the realities of systemic inequality are in plain view.

Russworm concludes Blackness Is Burning by offering a short meditation on two figures: Iyanla Vanzant (host of Iyanla: Fix My Life!) and former president Barack Obama. This discussion serves primarily to demonstrate how the intersubjective view of race prevalent in the Civil Rights Era continues in narratives around Obama, in films such as The Help (2011) and The Butler (2013), and in Vanzant’s trip to Ferguson, Missouri, around the time of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown’s killing at the hands of white police officer Darren Wilson. Russworm demonstrates clearly that the stakes for black political struggle against the systemic inequalities hidden by the cultural imaginary of the United States are as high now as they were at the peak of the Civil Rights movement.

Overall, Russworm’s book sheds significant light on how systemic inequality is recast as an interpersonal and psychological problem through specific narratives and practices in US popular culture. This intervention cannot be underestimated, because at a moment when neoliberal impetuses and consumer culture are coming to stand in for “citizenship” in myriad ways imagined and real, Russworm provides us with a way to understand how systemic inequalities are recast as individual problems within the cultural imaginary of the US nation. While the book leaves us to wonder about the impact of social media and
youth activist culture on the intersubjective view of race, Russworm creates plenty of space for others to build on these applications in the near future.

University of Michigan

LYDIA KELOW-BENNETT


Sydney Nathans, Professor Emeritus of History at Duke, has written a remarkable book that examines one Alabama plantation but yields valuable insights into an array of critical themes in African American history. A Mind to Stay: White Plantation, Black Homeland is not just a study of an antebellum plantation—it examines the people living on those 1,600 acres from 1844, when Paul Cameron bought the land, through the Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights eras and into this century. Nathans discovers surprising stories across this chronology, but the family saga has three essential elements. First, under the control of Cameron, the land was a vehicle for speculation in cotton, as were the African Americans he marched west to farm it. Second, the freed people on the plantation did not become sharecroppers, but instead bought the land during Reconstruction. Third, their descendants did not all migrate North in the twentieth century—many stayed and maintained a rural haven that still exists 175 years after their ancestors arrived in chains.

The archival and oral history research carried out by Nathans to create this micro-history also extended across decades. Nathans first visited Alabama to interview landowners on Cameron land in 1978 and he quotes oral histories he recorded in 2011. He credits Alex Haley’s 1976 book Roots with inspiring him to use oral testimony to study African American families. On his initial visit to Alabama forty years ago, he met people like Louie Rainey, born in 1906, raised by a grandmother born into slavery, and able to tell detailed oral histories going back to Paul Cameron walking his slaves overland from North Carolina. Other sources include James Lyles, born in 1896 on Cameron land purchased by his grandparents, and Alice Hargress, born in 1914 and a veteran of 1965 voting rights marches. Nathans skillfully evaluates these rich oral traditions and weaves them together with archival research from the Cameron Family Papers in the University of North Carolina’s Southern Historical Collection. The result is a fascinating analysis of generations of African American families creating and protecting a rural homeland despite great challenges.

The sweeping history that Nathans tells began when Paul Cameron used his father’s money to buy Alabama land that he managed from North Carolina as an absentee owner in an effort to join the cotton boom. Nathans uses letters between Cameron and his overseers to glimpse the enslaved people that Cameron moved between his plantations. This research yields rich insights into the ways that enslaved people experienced what Ira Berlin calls the second of four African American migrations, with the first across the Atlantic Ocean, and the second from Atlantic Coast plantations to interior cotton lands. In his prologue, Nathans shares the surprising way the book evolved from his initial plan