

BSP | Black Studies Papers | ISSN 2198-7920 | www.bsp.uni-bremen.de

To cite this article: Junker, Carsten, and Marie-Luise Löffler. "Editors' Note." *Black Studies Papers* 2.1 (2016): 1-3. Web.

To link to this article: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:46-00105246-15>

Abstract: This editors' note introduces the second issue of *Black Studies Papers*, entitled *Current Perspectives in Transnational Black Studies*.

Keywords: *Black Studies Papers*, Black Studies, transnational

Authors: Carsten Junker and Marie-Luise Löffler are the founders and editors of *Black Studies Papers*. Junker is currently Visiting Professor filling in for the Chair of American Literary Studies at Universität Leipzig, Germany. He obtained his doctorate in North American Literature and Culture from the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2009, and completed a study on the poetics of early abolition in the United States around 1800 at the Universität Bremen in 2015. Löffler is a member of the department of Languages and Literatures (English-Speaking Cultures) at the Universität Bremen. She is currently working on a post-doctoral project entitled *The Past and Present of Post-racial Discourses in the United States*, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). She received her PhD from the American Studies Department, Universität Leipzig, in 2012, with a dissertation focusing on contemporary African American women's vampire fiction.

Editors' Note

Carsten Junker and Marie-Luise Löffler

We are delighted to present a diverse range of contributions in this second issue of *Black Studies Papers*, entitled *Current Perspectives in Transnational Black Studies*. In contrast to a theme-driven approach—which underlies the structure of our first issue *Slavery Revisited*—we sought to assemble a collection of pieces that attempts to highlight the breadth and complexity of theoretical positions and methodological approaches that stand for the concept of the journal and for the field at large.

In this respect, this issue brings together work by both, established and emerging scholars from various geographical locations, surveying current trends of Black Studies from perspectives anchored in literary, cultural, historical, political, as well as sociological scholarship. As such, the essays assembled here accentuate Black Studies as a field that reaches beyond a separation between multiple foci of study. Black Studies thus emerges as an endeavor that, at its core, is multi, inter-, and transdisciplinary, while at the same time marking a distinct position in academia and beyond. Weaving together political and reflexive work, it echoes and influences social, geopolitical and local conflicts, as well as provides an intellectual space not only for diverse but frequently contentious debate.

As the wide range of contributions highlights, Black Studies does not merely retrace and take up the recent call for a “transnational turn” (Jay) in humanities scholarship but sets eminent impulses for transnational inquiry—a dynamic which goes back to the establishment of Black Studies programs in the 1960s that in turn followed political movements such as the civil rights movement, the Black power movement, and mid-twentieth century pan-African decolonization movements. Now like then, Black Studies provides a framework for investigations of themes and texts that transcend borders, be they national, historical, intellectual. This, by the way, also includes the ongoing discussion of commonalities of, and differences between Black, African America, Africana and Black Diaspora

Studies and similar fields of research dedicated to examining Black diasporan repercussions and manifestations in a wider world. Some pieces presented here address decidedly transnational materializations of both geopolitical conflicts and theorizing, others examine more specifically localized formalizations of African American literature and cinema.

In particular, this issue contains the following perspectives: it opens with an interview by Frank Wilderson (University of California, Irvine) – conducted by Samira Spatzek and Paula von Gleich (Universität Bremen) – in which he elaborates on the state of Black Studies both in the U.S. and Germany, particularly in terms of the significance of Afro-pessimist approaches within the American and European context, also referring to potential implications of Afro-pessimism for Black activism as well as the Black Lives Matter movement. Wilderson's interview is followed by a dialogic contribution between Sabine Broeck (Universität Bremen) and Khalil Saucier (Rhode Island College) in which they discuss historically situated notions of Black social death and white empathy in a contemporary context of forced Black migration.

Going further, Souleymane Ba (Université de Montpellier) discusses Colson Whitehead's *The Intuitionist* and *Zone One* with respect to its Afrofuturistic tenets. As Ba argues, Whitehead's novels – while featuring postracial sentiments similar to such writers as Percival Everett and Paul Beatty – nevertheless diverge from their work by undermining notions of racial solidarity and highlighting the disintegration of communities. Drawing on Afro-pessimist approaches as well as feminist film theory, Sebastian Weier (Universität des Saarlandes) proposes an approach to the study of film which takes into consideration and calls for the disruption of habituated forms of anti-Black cinematic consumption in which white spectators are implicated. Looking at conceptualizations of 'sisterhood,' Katharina Gerund (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) turns to an often-neglected body of texts – black sorority novels. Examining in particular Tajuana Butler's *Sorority Sisters* (1998), Gerund delineates how this novel constructs notions of friendship and sisterhood as individually and communally empowering for black women while, at the same time, mobilizing a controlling discursive system. Yannick M. Blec (Université Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée) proposes a new take on William Melvin Kelley's largely forgotten fiction by drawing on an Africana existentialist and phenomenological approach. As he asserts, Kelley's stories interrogate what constitutes the self as an existing Black body filled with individual and community essence. In the final contribution of this issue, Christian Schmidt (Universität Bayreuth) turns to Percival Everett's *I Am Not Sidney Poitier*, reading it as a multi-level (self-)parody. As Schmidt argues, approaching Everett's text through this analytical lens facilitates a discussion of the manifold ways that this postblack novel plays with and

reaches beyond restrictive expectations of African American fiction as it continuously circles around its own textuality and evades direct confrontations of issues such as race and racism.

With this issue, we would like to also take the opportunity to thank a multitude of scholars and colleagues from all over the world who have helped us make this journal possible and whose support has been invaluable along the way. All of their words of encouragement, pieces of advice as well as technical and editorial support which we have received continuously in the past three years, have made a great difference in our work. Without this network of both young and established researchers within the field of Black Studies and beyond, this journal would not be.

Reference

Jay, Paul. *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2010. Print.