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The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade. By CHRISTOPHER L. MILLER. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008. Pp. xvi + 571. £60, hardback (ISBN 978-0-8223-4127-7); £14.99, paperback (ISBN 978-0-8223-4151-2).

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Christopher Miller is a well-known scholar, specializing in French literature in its relations with African and Francophone Caribbean. His *French Atlantic Triangle* is a very useful study of the impact of the slave trade on the cultures of France, from the eighteenth century to the present. Miller does not aim to be exhaustive: he focuses on a few fictional testimonies and just ten authors: Olympe de Gouges, Madame de Staël, Duras, Prosper Mérimée, Eugène Sue, Baron Roger, Edouard Corbière, Césaire, Glissant, and Condé. This is nevertheless a very meticulous work (with no less than 130 pages of notes), whose first and main interest is to bring together three distinctive fields: historical knowledge, French metropolitan literature (mainly abolitionist, but not exclusively, since Corbière's *Le négrier* is also part of the corpus), and testimonies 'from below', especially francophone African and Caribbean writings on the slave trade. Miller is very attentive to the various reformulations of the representations of the slave trade and Africa. For example, *Tamango* by Mérimée is not only analysed in its nineteenth-century historical context but also in its more current reading in literature as well as in cinema. Finally, Miller is an excellent writer. He uses words like an artist and describes the imaginative world that he analyses as an impressionist painter could portray landscapes, by progressive, cumulative, and interrelated touches.

The historian may be more sceptical about this book. Miller mixes data from recent research with some unclear interpretations, errors, and problematic judgments. His vision of the French Enlightenment would have profited from Jean Ehrard's *Lumières et esclavage* (2008) and his insights based on the analysis of a few fictional works cannot be straightforwardly extended to a whole French abolitionist movement whose ties with Romanticism still remain to be explored. For instance, it seems highly problematic to state that 'many of the philosophers' remained 'complicit with the trade in slaves' (p. 68) or that French abolitionism was only a 'translation' from the British movement because of its 'anemic nature' (p. x). It is also an exaggeration to criticize the 'silences' of French historiography before 1998, since French historians did not wait for the sudden and violent resurgence of memories linked with the slave trade to do their work. On the other hand, we can only agree with Miller's last words: history cannot be repaired, 'the past is not a perfect allegory or template for the present; time and space can't be collapsed' (p. 388). Only debates and studies can allow us to transcend traumatic memories. That is the very reason why a book such as Miller's is useful and necessary.

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