

In addition to the tremendous detail provided throughout, “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*” on the American Stage and Screen as a whole illustrates the degree to which “Tom Mania” pervaded American popular culture. The on-the-ground detail of the volume as well as its clear situation of the play in a variety of historical and entertainment contexts make it essential reading for anyone who teaches this play or who seeks to make new historical or analytical investigations of the relationship between *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and American culture.

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Black Medea: Adaptations in Modern Plays. Edited by Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. Contemporary Global Art Series. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2013; pp. ix + 368. \$119.99 cloth, \$39.99 e-book.

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Medea plays typically present their heroine from a feminist perspective and/or as racial, ethnic, cultural, or sexual outsider. The six plays in Kevin Wetmore’s anthology *Black Medea: Adaptations in Modern Plays* situate their black Medeas in specific historical contexts through which their authors engage with contemporary politics of race, gender, and class in America. Wetmore supplies a brief introduction to each play and, for all but one, an interview with its author.

Two of the plays are set against a background of revolution while also reflecting contemporary race relations in America. *African Medea* (1968) by Jim Magnuson is set on the west coast of Africa in the early-nineteenth century during a time of revolt against the white colonialists. Medea, an African princess and sorceress, has married Jason, a Portuguese slave trader. She poisons Jason’s new bride, daughter of the Portuguese governor, and then kills her own sons in part because of their white blood. Medea plans to escape to a “land of hope,” “where the air you breathe is free” (43, 45), but tragically will end up on a slave ship to America. In 1968 the play powerfully resonated with the struggle for civil rights. In a 2001 revival, however, it was received as more feminist than postcolonial. This change underscores the importance of context in determining the kind of cultural work that an adaptation can perform. *Black Medea* (1976) by Ernest Ferlita, S.J. is set following the Haitian Revolution. Madeleine, a princess of African descent, and her French husband, Jerome, have fled from Haiti to New Orleans. Madeleine is proficient in voodoo, through which Colonel Croydon, the Creon figure, fears she might foment revolution in New Orleans. When Jason marries Croydon’s daughter, Madeleine calls on the African serpent god Damballah (substituting for the Greek gods) to aid in her revenge, which she compares with the Haitian revolution: “In Haiti, when the law denied us justice, we started a revolution” (99).

Whereas both of these plays follow the structure of Euripides’ play, Silas Jones’s *American Medea* (1995) departs significantly. In fact, Jones emphasizes

that his play is not an adaptation of Euripides but is itself another version of the myth. In *American Medea* Jason and his elderly Ethiopian wife, with their white son, Alexander, and their black son, Imhotep, are guests at Mount Vernon in the late 1700s. Jason and his sons initially stress their Greek identity, but gradually Alexander comes to see Imhotep as a racial other. The tragic trajectory of separation leading to the violent deaths of Alexander and Imhotep represents the racial divide in contemporary America. But Medea herself does not kill them, for “African mothers do not kill their children” (279). Medea has been obliged to live in the slave quarters, but she still has the Golden Fleece, the “Cloak of Knowledge,” representing the knowledge that Greece “stole” from Africa (276), and she wants to return it to Colchis. Wetmore notes the play’s double theme: Jones both scourges America’s contradictory embrace of freedom and slavery and presents “an Afrocentric approach to ancient history, displaying the primacy of North Africa over Greece” (289).

Though these three plays focus primarily on interracial politics, in Steve Carter’s *Pecong* (1990), set on an imaginary Caribbean island during Carnival, the emphasis is feminist and intraracial rather than revolutionary, and the tone is more comic. Though Mediyah, a dark-skinned voodoo priestess, helps Jason win the annual Pecong contest (something like “playing the dozens”) and carries his twin sons, he abandons her for Sweet Bella, Creon Pandit’s light-skinned daughter. Granny Root, comically cynical and the vengeful force behind the play’s action, uses Mediyah to take vengeance on Creon Pandit, as well as Jason, because he impregnated but refused to marry Mediyah’s dark-skinned mother. The play emphasizes female solidarity and triumph, as Mediyah curses Jason to crawl on his belly like a snake and goes off with Granny Root.

Similar feminist values are at stake in *There Are Women Waiting: The Tragedy of Medea Jackson* (1992) by Edris Cooper, which is set in contemporary San Francisco and considers social class as well as gender and race. Medea is a streetwise African American of a lower social class than her Jason, also black, whom she helps in dealing drugs. Jason abandons her for a richer white girl, whom Medea kills with a gift of drug-laced underwear. She then kills her sons and dies at the end of the play either by suicide or by police bullets. The play was produced by the Medea Project organized by Rhodessa Jones in her work with incarcerated women at the San Francisco County Jail. Performed by the all-female inmates, the play works to empower a population of women, many of them abused by men, by enabling them to tell their own stories.

Medea, Queen of Colchester (2003) by Marianne McDonald foregrounds intersections between race and sexuality. This work stays closest to Euripides’ structure, though the story is quite different. McDonald, a Greek scholar, alternates Medea’s encounters with Creon, Jason, and Aegeus figures with rap-style equivalents of the choric odes. Medea is a Cape Coloured gay drag queen now working in Las Vegas. As Wetmore notes, she is multiply liminal, a “hybrid figure” (294). When her boyfriend James leaves her for a rich casino owner’s daughter, Medea takes her revenge, explicitly connecting what James has done to her with what white men “have done to Africa for centuries” (331). She escapes at the end (in a modern flying chariot, a helicopter) to a new job in South Africa.

The anthology is a welcome addition to the growing library of Medea plays. My only cavil is that there are quite a few typographical errors in some of the play-texts, especially confusing when the characters are speaking in dialect. Nonetheless, we should be grateful to Wetmore for making readily available for study and further performances a fascinating group of plays, only three of which have been published previously. The volume will prove valuable to scholars and students of adaptation theory, classical reception, African American drama, and racial hybridity.

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Understanding Blackness through Performance: Contemporary Arts and the Representation of Identity. Edited by Anne Crémieux, Xavier Lemoine, and Jean-Paul Rocchi. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013; pp. 282. \$95 cloth, \$90 e-book.

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Understanding Blackness through Performance illuminates the field of black performance scholarship by focusing an international lens on ethnic cultural phenomena. The project minimizes its analysis of stage and concert performance and, instead, uses blackness as a theoretical lens for discussions about identity formations across disciplines. The volume's subtitle, *Contemporary Arts and the Representation of Identity*, supports the editors' interests in utilizing contemporary arts, broadly defined, as a springboard for discussion of representations. All three of the editors teach in European American Studies departments and, consequently, the artists and theorists they illuminate span language boundaries and national borders.

The contributing authors explore how issues of class, gender, and sexuality impact articulations of blackness. Performance and film aesthetics provide springboards for some authors' discussions of shifting representations of black identities, whereas other authors deconstruct popular music (in particular, hip-hop), complicating prevailing perceptions of the genre as a way of inscribing blackness. Several of the authors theorize queerness in art and performance practice, offering new perspectives on traditional art forms. The volume is divided into four parts loosely representing differing approaches to theorizing identity.

Part I, "Being Black, Black Embodying: The Power of Auto-ethnography," discusses how embodiment and auto-ethnography inform the study of black subjects. Myron Beasley tracks a theoretical biography of his self-development as a scholar and the (dis)narratives he encounters as he comes to realize how public performance of his own identity situates him. Toniesha L. Taylor offers a series of open questions recounting memories of her early encounters with drag performance. Finally, Gayle Baldwin recognizes both her dislocation and her queer commonality with curious bodies when she immerses herself as a white ethnographer