



4-15-1998

Book Review: Gates, E. Nathaniel. *Cultural and Literary Critiques of the Concepts of "Race."* New York: Garland, 1997.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13023/DISCLOSURE.07.17>

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Recommended Citation

Magill, David E. (1998) "Book Review: Gates, E. Nathaniel. *Cultural and Literary Critiques of the Concepts of "Race."* New York: Garland, 1997.," *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory*. Vol. 7 , Article 17.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13023/DISCLOSURE.07.17>

Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure/vol7/iss1/17>

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White Trash, as a whole, is an important contribution, despite the variable effectiveness of its "parts." One question remained relatively untouched, however. In every essay in this book, *White Trash* is described as related to "rurality" and hicks, rubes, hillbillies, etc. and their undisputed and necessary lack of urban sophistication and accompanying ignorance of urban mores which maintains both their worthlessness and position as perpetual outsiders from the middle class urban sensibility. Yet the question of rurality and rural identity is never discussed as more than an incidental point (with the exception of Barbara Ching's article), despite its continuous appearance. In the very urbanized sensibilities which drive many of these articles, the rural is theoretically untouched and critically taken-for-granted. In that sense, there is much more work on the cultural and social deconstruction of white trash to be done.

David E. Magill

Book Review

Gates, E. Nathaniel. *Cultural and Literary Critiques of the Concepts of "Race."* New York: Garland, 1997.

Most essay collections achieve what the name suggests: they collect essays together on one subject. E. Nathaniel Gates's collection, however, collects important essays on race from past and present in order to bring about new dialogue on the cultural critiques of race mounted by prominent writers and scholars of the past twenty years. Gates includes 19 essays in this volume, drawn from the fields of sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and literary criticism. He reproduces important essays by Toni Morrison, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Cornel West, as well as seminal essays by Michael Omi and Howard Winant and Lucius Outlaw, to name just a few. Each essay quotes, discusses, and rewrites other essays, producing a space of critique.

In his introduction, Gates notes "the power of metaphor to reproduce or reinforce a socialized order of dominion" (vii). He outlines the processes by which racialized order is stated linguistically and demarcated physically, neatly summarizing current views on the cultural construction of race. As Gates notes, however, "modern social history suggests that there is often a considerable lag between the abandon-

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ment of untenable scientific postulates and the evisceration of their cultural impact" (viii). With hopes of shortening this lag time, Gates constructs his volume as a means to explode racial metaphors and fallacious beliefs through critical dialogue, and as a reminder that we must "remain alert to [racialized others'] social and historical status, to their heterogeneity and dynamism" (viii).

Gates organizes the volume into undelineated sections; though he does not provide headings to link certain texts, each group of essays connects thematically around a particular topic within race studies. Gates's choices address such subjects as identity politics, community, ethnicity, and cultural theory. The collection opens with James Baldwin's "On Being White and Other Lies," followed by Richard Dyer's germinal essay "White," both considered classic essays on the cultural production of whiteness. Their juxtaposition allows a critical exchange on whiteness by a black writer and a white scholar. These essays speak to one another. The next two essays, bell hooks's "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination" and Harryette Mullen's "Optic White: Blackness and the Production of Whiteness," stand on opposite sides of the same coin. They both look at the ways in which productions of whiteness are inextricably linked to notions of blackness in a Hegelian dialectic. The third pair of essays, Michael Omi and Howard Winant's "By the Rivers of Babylon: Race in the United States" and Barry Goldberg's "Slavery, Race, and the Languages of Class: 'Wage Slaves' and White 'Niggers'" recount the historical construction of racial categories within the United States.

Gates also includes Walter Benn Michaels's essay "The No-Drop Rule" and the response it garnered, Christopher Newfield and Avery Gordon's "White Philosophy." Gates allows these articles to stand together, emphasizing the dialogue they create with one another. Another particularly interesting grouping is a set of four texts on African-American cultural theory: Elliott Butler-Evans's "Beyond Essentialism: Rethinking Afro-American Cultural Theory," David Lloyd's "Race Under Representation," Toni Morrison's "Romancing the Shadow," and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s "'What's Love Got to Do with It?': Critical Theory, Integrity, and the Black Idiom." These four essays draw from cultural, historical, and literary theory in order to theorize the African-American experience. These groupings, however, are not editorially reinforced; by not labeling, Gates allows each essay the freedom to interact with the other works. As an entirety, the book is an assemblage of voices that outlines the history of cultural productions of race and explores the ways in which this production can be critiqued and altered.

What is most interesting about Gates's editing is that he reprints his

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chosen essays as they appeared when first printed. Thus, the book is a compendium of photostats of the essays from their original publications. Gates's decision seems to come from an unwillingness to tamper with what he sees as cultural documents. In a book that seeks to "explore and critique the continuing hold of racial tropes and metaphors," Gates chooses to approach his text metonymically; the texts are reproduced, not translated in any way.

The sole critique of the volume is that it focuses on black-white relations to the exclusion of other categories; Latino, Native American, and Asian "races" are not represented well. His choice of essays, however, allows for a clear view of the multiple critiques made against "whiteness," a move which indirectly involves all minority races as the others against which whiteness is matched. Furthermore, by including the various critiques of whiteness, Gates continues the work done to expose whiteness as a cultural construct. E. Nathaniel Gates has produced an exceptional collection of essays, representing an array of approaches to the cultural construction of race. His book is important reading for anyone wishing to enter this dynamic field.

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Book Review

Passing and the Fictions of Identity. Edited by Elaine K. Ginsberg.
Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

This collection of essays aims to expand the current discourse on the phenomenon of "passing" from one which has largely focused on (black/white) race passing, into one which understands "passing" as a means of both fixing and resisting various categories of identity. As a group, the essays investigate ways in which designations of race, gender, sex, and nationality are historically—and inextricably—linked to and in the formation of both individual and cultural identity. Ginsberg notes that "the assumption underlying this volume is that critical to the process and discourse of 'passing' in American history and in the American cultural imaginary are the status and privileges associated with being white and being male" (5). Indeed, as "passing" is recognized as a means to social and political empowerment through resistance to and appropriation of a status of power, it becomes a threat to the current white, male hegemony that generates and sustains category

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