

in the Netherlands resemble the islands. “Anti-black racism isn’t as virulent and violent as it is in the United States, but it still is an enduring and pervasive factor” (71). Further, “I have become a thinker who focuses on the ways urban popular culture and everyday conviviality contribute to and complicate a wider acceptance of the multiculturalizing of the Kingdom of the Netherlands” (73). This leads to a critique of capitalism and a clear assertion that gender and race have always been woven into the fabric of capitalism but also an argument that “the black nationalist projects of the United States were ill-suited to Dutch realities” (122).

A hopeful energy runs as an undercurrent through this book, offering, through popular culture, an analysis of multicultural convivialities and decolonial ways of being in the world. This stands as exemplary for the changing conceptions of how “race” is understood. It is this politics of hope and hopefulness that culminates in a beautiful meditation on time—since time is all we have in moving toward change.

This radical hopefulness is also where my inquiry resides. The relational way of being in the world that Guadeloupe offers through ethnographic research is an exception to the rule, found in some small enclaves of society, and practiced by a fraction. I am critical of how this way of being, on which a hope for a nonracialist world is hinged, can effect material change beyond the rich theorizing this book engages. What happens when the radical hope that courses through the book is not in practice outside the presented pockets? If this hope is founded on relational practices that are moribund, what happens to held divisions and attempts at nonracialist ways of being? I would be interested in a critical discussion on how the tenets of the book hold in the face capitalist pressure and under the real strain of individualism (de Sousa Santos 2015; Escobar 2016).

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## The Dances Are Changing

The Black Lives Matter campaign following the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of US police garnered a landslide of global support to combat racism, invisible and institutionalized. Meanwhile, and somewhat paradoxically, essentialist racial categories that ground human identities in skin, hair, blood, or genes have also made a comeback. In the face of this, one of the big challenges is how to do anti-racism *and* uphold nonracialism, for it seems the *anti* and the *non* do not always smoothly dance together. How do we combat anti-black<sup>1</sup> racism without ossifying racial identities and divisions? How do we undo race without unwittingly undermining our own and others’ efforts to tackle racial injustice and violence? Francio Guadeloupe’s long-standing commitment to driving an anti-racist scholarship and an anti-racist ethics of living “that do not conceptually reintroduce our colonially inherited racial divisions of white people versus black people” now finds expression in his new and admirable book *Black Man in the Netherlands*. A surprising title for those of us long familiar with his defending his right to not always primarily speak as a *black* man, but we soon learn to take this title as a quote from his brown- and pink-skinned North American colleagues, to whose question how it feels to

be a black man in the Netherlands this book is an elaborate, critical, and brave answer. But perhaps more than addressing a North American audience of critical race scholars, the work is a call to “all inhabitants of the Dutch kingdom to dwell and act in decolonial ways.”

Decoloniality takes many, sometimes contradictory paths. There are calls and efforts to decolonize centered on activist movements, think tanks, universities, museums, and other institutions. This work attracts public attention and is effecting important, even if sometimes slow changes. Guadeloupe directs our attention elsewhere, to what he calls “the small acts of decoloniality in convivial spaces.” It is here, he argues, in the urban popular culture created by ordinary people living together in the multicultural neighborhoods of the Netherlands, that we can discern powerful expressions of everyday decoloniality at work. These expressions may not immediately be recognized as such and might even be dismissed as “apolitical,” “capitalist commercialism,” or, when performed by others than the “ethnic owners,” as “cultural appropriation.” But it is here, Guadeloupe contends, that we can learn from the “ordinary men and women of all hues who despite their prejudices are perpetually deconstructing in their own ways the continuing relevance of assessing self and other in the colonial categories of racial superiors and inferiors or as cultural incompatibles.” In their everyday performances of an urban Blackness that is malleable and inclusive, a different Netherlands is taking shape. Those of us seeking “to dwell in life with decolonial eyes” have as much to learn from Sabah and Naima, Clyde and Jairzinho, Miss Annette and Oma Bea, Koen and Judmar as we have from C. L. R. James, Édouard Glissant, Paul Gilroy, Achille Mbembe, and the many other Caribbean and African thinkers who animate Guadeloupe’s book.

As both memoir and ethnography of urban popular culture, the book is an ode to music and dance, in particular to the decolonial work of creolization present in the various Black Atlantic music—salsa, meringue, hip-

hop, R&B, reggae, dancehall, bachata, soca, zouk, and so on. It is an ode to the connections people forge through such music and dance styles, connections that cross identities often believed to be natural or inborn, such as racial or ethnic ones. Dance is an evocative entry into thinking about questions of race, racism, and anti-racism, because, like race, it is produced and circulates through people’s embodied encounters (cf. Ahmed 2000). Unlike race, however, which tends to fix people to the bodies they happen to live in, dance is always the body in movement, the body becoming. As such, thinking with dance offers an openness, a moment of freedom from the fixity of phenotype, a space for critique. At the same time, taking dance as an entry into race also calls up the historical reduction of sub-Saharan Africans and their descendants to their physical capacities—as extractable or entertaining bodies—and the colonial coding of particular dancing styles as signs of African/*n*\* savagery. We also see recurrent racist stereotypes of black people being naturally good dancers or the objectification of black female sexuality that critics might see in hip-hop. The dancing body is a site through which power is both enacted and subverted, race done and undone.

Guadeloupe emphasizes the latter potential of popular dance, showing how, in their performance of urban Blackness, Dutch youth of various hues blur the boundaries of received definitions of who or what is black or white and who or what is Dutch or foreign and find the freedom “to decide what and who they want to be.” Theirs is an inclusive Blackness, a bodily performance of style identity troubling racial divides. And it is “becoming just as real as the older ethnoracial identities” ascribed to phenotypic appearance. For yes, these too are an everyday reality for the brown-skinned among them. Against the reality of present-day Dutch racism (Essed and Hoving 2014), the book offers a hopeful reading of the mundane, intimate, and convivial ways in which “more and more brown- and pink-skinned Dutch are imagining and

seeking to live in a world where nonracialism should be the norm.” Recognizing popular music and dance as alternative sources of critique, it charts how urban Black artists and their fans are effectively changing, creolizing, and thereby decolonizing the Dutch cultural imaginary.

His own experience, in the Caribbean and the Netherlands alike, of everyday living with—and transcending—ethnic difference as an ordinary and inescapable fact of life makes Guadeloupe think of the Netherlands as a Caribbean island. One question concerns the place of Africa/ns on this “Dutch Caribbean island.” While the *présence Africaine* is of course evident in the creolized Black Atlantic music and dance styles of the urban scene, another African presence is far less pronounced in Guadeloupe’s account: the growing numbers and coming of age of a generation of Dutch who trace their roots to Ghana, Nigeria, Eritrea, Rwanda, and other African countries through their parents’ (or, increasingly, grandparents’) migration to Europe. They now form a substantial part of the so-called Afro-Dutch population. Their artistic-aesthetic expressions, often bearing witness to a living connection to Africa, are making an imprint on Dutch multiculturalism. Guadeloupe refers in passing to Azonto, a Ghanaian popular dance style that is now fully part of the urban scene in the Netherlands and, like the Afro-Antillean and Afro-Surinamese styles, has an impact far beyond the communities associated with it. This is a relatively recent development, and it raises interesting questions about the changing place of Africa/ns in urban popular culture and the shifting articulations between blackness/Blackness and Africanness.

Azonto frequently came up in my own research with young Ghanaian Dutch people in and from Amsterdam Southeast, home to the city’s most prominent black population (mainly of Afro-Surinamese and Ghanaian descent) (de Witte 2019). Their experiences offer a complementary perspective on urban Black culture. Many Ghanaian Dutch told me

how growing up in Southeast in the 1990s, it was, indeed, cool to be Black. The sources of that coolness were the US and the Caribbean: hip-hop culture, basketball, reggae. But the paradoxical flip side of urban Black cool was a derogatory attitude toward African immigrants and their children. Being African was far from cool. Africans were called *bokoe* (from the Dutch *bokking*, a type of smoked herring, bloater in English), a Surinamese ethnic slur rooted in long-standing colonial racist stereotypes and carrying all kinds of pejorative connotations of Africans as uncivilized, backward, wild, smelly, dirty, and ugly. There were remarks about African poverty and hunger and questions about what they were doing here “as an African.” A distinction between black Dutch from the former Dutch colonies in the Caribbean and Africans, who did not belong to the country, was palpable. Many Ghanaian Dutch youths I spoke with recounted how the double racism they faced growing up in a white-dominated country *and* in a black Surinamese-dominated neighborhood made their Ghanaian background a source of unease or even shame. Some would try to pass for Surinamese or Jamaican, keeping silent about their parents’ home country. This was not “convivial code-switching” but social survival by those put lowest in a local hierarchy of ethnicities.

The global circulation and popularity of Azonto and other urban African music and dance styles have significantly changed this neighborhood’s dynamics between differently ethnicized groups. “Azonto came, and everything changed,” one Ghanaian Dutch girl said. “Now they all want to be African. Now we are one of them. Azonto has really helped that.” Thanks to the global presence of contemporary African and African European Afrobeats icons—Fuse ODG, Burna Boy, Davido, Wizkid, Tiwa Savage, R2Bees, and the like—and the prominence of Afrodance (an umbrella term for the many urban African dance styles) on the Dutch urban scene, it is now cool to be African. The dances are changing (as Barrington Levy sang long ago).

This is not Africa as origin, reverberating through the sounds and rhythms produced by the descendants of those who survived the Middle Passage. It is the soundtrack of present-day urban Africa, itself essentially creolized and influenced by the music of the Black Atlantic. It is the soundtrack of global Africa, produced by artists, including African Dutch, whose careers develop in the transnational space between Europe, Africa, and the US and whose public personae are confidently marked African. And it is contesting the marginalization of Africa and Africans as Europe's quintessential Other, prevalent among pink- and brown-skinned Dutch alike. The stories of young Ghanaian Dutch about the positive change they say a Ghanaian dance craze is effecting in their lives sensitize us to how race gets done and undone in intersection with other axes of difference and inequality, including citizenship status, (post)colonial belonging, migration trajectory, and geographic origin. And to address the specificity and complexity of Africanness as it relates to both blackness (in its common sense, phenotypical understanding) and Blackness (in Guadeloupe's understanding of the historical treatment of humans as means or waste regardless of their phenotype or ethnicity).

That being said, I find Guadeloupe's idea of the Netherlands as a Dutch Caribbean island and his analysis of the urban Blackness performed on this "island" very stimulating, for they disrupt commonplace essentialisms of race and territory. It displaces the dominant (even if often implicit) racialization of Dutch belonging as white that posits brown-skinned people as never really, or only conditionally, Dutch. And it recognizes an alternative Dutch nationhood, constituted by the country's long histories of empire and migration, that is culturally and racially plural, inclusive, and hybrid. A fundamental openness to otherness, the ability to incorporate affiliations with people of diverse ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds as part of selfhood, has long marked not only the Caribbean expe-

rience but also many African societies. In a European society in which dominant identity models persistently—and ever more forcefully—produce being and belonging in singular, exclusionary or oppositional terms, it is both innovative and urgent.

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#### ■ NOTE

1. In using "black" in its common sense, phenotypical understanding and "Black" in its politico-historical understanding I follow Guadeloupe's distinction between and usage of these terms.

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### **The Nation and Its Racial Other** Blackness, Racism, and Racial Capitalism in the Netherlands

Since the emergence of plantation capitalism in the fifteenth century, Blackness has been made the epitome of race: the dangerous specter that has always haunted western societies. Moreover, Blackness has since become the embodiment of racial difference, the most conveying sign of distinctive humanity and the striking symbol of a radical otherness that