

also addresses the modern queer Native critique that links Native homophobia to the intrusions of US imperial policy, and insists on the coherence of longstanding clan networks as form of peoplehood.

While Rifkin's work is a significant accomplishment in its own right, it also serves as a valuable addition to the developing body of work that combines Queer Studies and Native Studies. Recent works by Jennifer Denetdale, Quo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Gilley, Scott Lauria Morgensen, and Andrea Smith also link the operation of heteronormativity to settler colonialism and the denial of Indigenous sovereignty. In *When Did Indians Become Straight*, Rifkin critiques Queer Theory for its unacknowledged investment in settler colonialism, pointing out that queer challenges to heteroconjugality as the determining factor for the organization of resource distribution still position the settler state as the appropriate distributor of resources. Instead he advocates for a queer critique of heteronormativity that contests, rather than presumes, the existence of the nation state, and centers Indigenous peoples. While it could be argued that the book's considerable length limits its utility in the undergraduate classroom, its analytical depth and expansive scope certainly justify the extra pages. Overall, *When Did Indians Become Straight* represents a major intellectual feat and an important contribution to the fields of Native, Queer, and Literary Studies.

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H. SAMY ALIM AND GENEVA SMITHERMAN. *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). 205 pp., \$25 (paper).

In his introduction to *Articulate While Black* Michael Eric Dyson frames Barack Obama as the Orator-in-Chief and the authors would certainly agree with that assessment. Alim and Smitherman argue that in order to have an open and honest discussion about race in the United States, we must look at its linguistic dimensions; we need to *language* race, to view the racial politics of the United States through the lens of language (xviii). This book seeks to untangle *how* we talk about race and what assumptions are being made based on a speaker's use of language.

Chapter one delves into Obama's ability to styleshift or move in and out of linguistic styles – between varieties of the same language" (5). By analyzing Obama's linguistic styles during a visit to Ben's Chili Bowl, Ray's Hell Burger, campaign rallies, and his famous race speech, Alim and Smitherman highlight the ways in which the president moves be-

tween formal English and what the authors call Black Language. It was this ability which helped frame Obama as “someone who could speak directly and comfortably with folks across regions, generations, socio-economic divisions, racial and ethnic groups, and political and religious views” (5). Alim and Smitherman use the same styleshifting throughout their text: one paragraph may be heavy with academic jargon while the next paragraph uses language that would be prevalent in a conversation between two friends sitting on a stoop engaging in a Jay-Z vs. Nas debate. Chapter two engages in a meta-analysis of Obama’s language or “the talk about the way Barack Obama talks.” The authors look at how the word articulate was used to describe Obama, how he was framed as “exceptional” or even magical in the words of Rush Limbaugh, and how these narratives highlight the existence of enlightened exceptionalism. Alim and Smitherman use chapter three to discuss the “A More Perfect Union,” or “The Race Speech” as it is commonly known, and the authors do an excellent job of tracing the rhetorical and political work this speech had to perform during the 2008 election.

Though excerpts from Reverend Jeremiah Wright were played ad nauseam during the ‘08 presidential campaign, Alim and Smitherman take the opportunity to provide background information on Reverend Wright and place Wright’s remarks within the liberation theology and the Biblical jeremiadic traditions. Chapter four discusses and is literally entitled “The Fist Bump Heard ‘Round the World.” The authors trace the history of The Pound and try to understand how white mainstream America could have such a profound misunderstanding of a long-standing method of communication within black communities. The chapter looks at other methods of intra-racial communication such as snappin, i.e. playing the dozens, as well as use of what the authors call the two most popular and controversial words in Black Language: *muthafucka* and *nigga*. Alim and Smitherman discuss in what context these methods of communication are used as well as when and where they become controversial. As the authors point out, the Pound and other methods of “Black Communication *become* controversial only in a society that deprecates Blackness. If people continually deny this racially discriminatory context, mutual respect will prove to be elusive as a *muthafucka*” (125 – emphasis in original).

The final two chapters use Obama as a jumping off point to discuss larger issues in black language and culture. Chapter five delves into hip hop culture and while there is a discussion of Obama’s relationship to rap and hip hop, it deals primarily with divergent political views within the hip hop communities. The authors conduct an in-depth analysis of Young Jeezy and Nas’s track “My President” as well as the accompanying music video and differing reactions to the song. The final chapter in

the book is a scholarly love letter to African American English/Black Language. The authors highlight the grammatical complexity and stylistic flexibility of Black Language and argue that “rather than interpreting Black language behavior through the lens of Black inferiority, ignorance, or violence, these creative language practices should be utilized for educational purposes” (177). The sociolinguistic analysis in this chapter was eye-opening given the negative connotations mainstream media has associated with Black language.

Overall Alim and Smitherman provide a detailed, scholarly, yet easy to follow analysis of our racial linguistic traditions, landmines, and practices. In the introduction the authors state that they goal so to help push and problematize how we think and talk about race. They have certainly succeeded.

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