

## Book Reviews

Shatema Threadcraft, *The Black Female Body and the Body Politic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). 224 pp. Hardcover \$39.95.

In *Intimate Justice*, Shatema Threadcraft argues that Black women have been subject to racial domination through violence and inequality, and as such a theory of corrective justice must account for Black women's experiences within American history. Thus, Threadcraft seeks to answer the question: how does freedom and corrective justice serve the embodied Black female subject? The book includes a critique of the male-centrism of political thought including Afro-modern theorists like DuBois and Mills. Further, the book documents the ways Black women have suffered injustice and pursued freedom throughout history. Centering on Black women allows Threadcraft to complicate our understanding of the body politic and the framing of citizenship as embodied by men. Ultimately, Threadcraft concludes that a theory of corrective racial justice takes into account not only material inequality, but also creates opportunity for Black women to use their intimate capacities to serve themselves.

Threadcraft builds this work through the use of historical and literary narrative, also giving careful attention to the formulation of political thought in regard to justice. The history of Black women in America contradicts much of the conclusions drawn from more male-centric theories of justice and freedom. Writers like Morrison, Harper, and Angela Davis note that enslaved women suffered systematic sexual assault. Yet, as Threadcraft writes, most Afro-Modern political thought references the Black political body as male, citing Frederick Douglass for an example. His claiming himself as a Black man linked his violent physical confrontation with White supremacy to heroic and political steps toward freedom (37). In *Intimate Justice* Threadcraft asks: what does it look like when Black women get free?

For example, Threadcraft notes how the meaning of freedom differed for Harriet Jacobs, who documented her life in the book *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*. Writing from the perspective of a Black woman, Jacobs wrote what Threadcraft describes as a "privatized slave narrative" by stylizing it after the sentimental fiction popular among women at the time (50). In her book Jacobs expounds on the sexual harassment, assault, and complex experience with maternity she faced as a slave. Jacobs saw sexual liberation as part of her freedom and aspired to ensure her children did not suffer under slavery. Slavery took away Black women's power to make meaning of themselves and their family's lives. Yet women like Jacobs still pursued freedom. However, without taking into account the unique circumstances faced by

Black women, we misunderstand what freedom really means, as Threadcraft writes: “Freedom for Black women from such severe violations of negative liberty as rape will require positive liberty style support to deconstruct and then reconstruct the meaning of Black womanhood [including transforming Black urban space]” (68).

According to Threadcraft, structural racism affects Black women in particular ways and they need the streets and public space to become safe spaces. Black men have a responsibility not to exacerbate women’s burdens by making the street a place of gender subordination where girls are forced to focus on sex: “Intimate racial justice demands that men never add to the undue burdens Black women face, and requires them to refrain from sexualizing and objectifying women in ways that constraint their self-determination.” (132) Ultimately, rather than engage in street harassment, Black men and boys should empower women with resources from the wider community.

The primary strength of Threadcraft’s argument is the use of a Black feminist lens to expand our understanding of freedom and justice. In particular, she addresses the notion of the intimate sphere and the ways Black women have not only historically served to facilitate the White intimate sphere, but also have not received the opportunity to develop their own. For example, Threadcraft notes how Black women faced opposition when they attempted to adopt Victorian ideals of marriage and motherhood after leaving the fields in the post-slavery era. Society broadly opposed Black women withdrawing from the labour market as they perceived Black women as existing only to tend to the needs of White bodies. For instance, the Freedman’s Bureau reported in an 1869 pamphlet that Black women leaving the field had negatively affected cotton production in the South. To that end, freed women were mocked for attempting to embrace social beliefs about femininity, as both White supremacists and abolitionists opposed Black women staying in the home (69–74).

*Intimate Justice* builds on arguments about race and theories of justice by calling attention to the gendered dynamics of the “dark ghetto.” Once gender is taken into account, Threadcraft notes new terrains of injustice due to lack of intimate justice. This includes how child protective services disproportionately affects Black mothers and how Black women experience street harassment: “Thus, a comprehensive theory of justice must attend to “intimate justice,” to sexual practices, reproductive relations, caregiving, and caretaking that shape individual capacities and identities, including “choices” to engage in violent or nonviolent behavior” (123). However, while Threadcraft does make note of the murder of Sakia Gunn, a self-identified lesbian, due to same-race street harassment, much of the argument in *Intimate Justice* relies on an understanding of women as cisgender. This begs the question of whether the criticisms and suggestions Threadcraft notes are applicable to Black transgender women as well.

As a result of the legacy of the violation of Black women, Threadcraft suggests the creation of local, Black-female led offices that act as service centers

for victims and also provide cultural and representational support for Black women. Such spaces could help change the meaning of Black womanhood by uplifting the art and creative contributions of Black women, allowing them to define themselves. Overall, Threadcraft concludes that corrective racial justice must give Black people bodily health and integrity. Additionally, corrective racial justice includes the opportunity to cultivate emotional attachments and allows them their material labour to their own advantage. This includes securing Black spaces and attending to the intersectionality of bodily integrity, thus recognizing that Black women and White women face different issues.

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**Brock Millman, *Polarity, Patriotism, and Dissent in Great War Canada, 1914–1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016). 336 pp. Paperback \$34.95.**

The Great War marked not only one of the most turbulent periods in Canadian history, but also one of the most repressive and coercive. Censorship, internment, discriminatory prosecutions, and conscription were seemingly more characteristic of the German autocracy than they were of Canadian democracy. Yet, under the leadership of Robert Borden the federal government resorted to these authoritarian measures. Brock Millman's study, *Polarity, Patriotism, and Dissent in Great War Canada, 1914–1919*, contextualizes the motives behind these measures and sympathizes with the Borden government's rationale to pursue them.

Millman develops his argument by focusing on how the Borden government balanced polarizing interests within Canada's diverse social and political landscape. Drawing evidence primarily from English language newspapers and government documents, Millman examines the agendas and activities among a multitude of social groups, including Great War veterans, fraternal lodges, religious institutions, women's clubs, and ethno-cultural communities. It is not surprising to learn that the Borden government favoured the interests of British Canadians (the "patriots"). The patriots were not only the base of Conservative political support but, more importantly, they shouldered the greatest burden of the war effort. In exchange for their continued support, the patriots expected the government to coerce wartime sacrifices from others, especially non-British communities. They also expected suspicious ethnic groups to be subjected to mechanisms of control and surveillance. Borden's government was willing to fulfill these demands but, as Millman emphasizes, they did so strategically in order not to intensify civil strife.

The limits of repression and balance between polarizing civil interests becomes clear in Millman's evidence. For example, German and Eastern European saboteurs were found targeting Canadian railroads and factories. Although these at-