

very personal account of the consequences of the blacklist. She and her husband, successful writers, were forced out of Hollywood and spent thirty years in exile in France. Elizabeth Frank's *Cheat and Charmer: A Novel* (2004) creatively explores the social, personal, and traumatic consequences of life in Hollywood, beginning in the 1930s, as the Red Scare unfolds. The focus is on the travail of one sister testifying against the other, a situation with only dire consequences, and no happy ending. But Buhle and Wagner try to put the best face on the blacklist. They emphasize more the survival and artistic contributions of the victims, rather than their personal sufferings, as Hollywood movies and TV programs felt their creative as well as political contributions. This is a refreshing, thought-provoking study.

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**Christine Acham, *Revolution Televised: Prime Time and the Struggle for Black Power* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).**

In her examination of television programmes which featured African Americans in the 1960s and 1970s, Christine Acham argues against the utilisation of a simple binary of “negative/positive” images and instead searches for the ways in which “African American actors and producers disrupted television’s traditional narratives about blackness and employed television as a tool of resistance against mainstream constructions of African American life” (xii). She uses a variety of genres — selected news magazines, variety shows, situation comedies, talk shows which featured African Americans — to interrogate the medium as constrained site that was often opposed in a variety of ways.

Acham begins by challenging the assertions of J. Fred MacDonald (*Blacks and White TV* [2nd ed., 1992]) and Donald Bogle (*Prime Time Blues* [2001]), who dismissed the 1970s (in particular) as a period of minstrels and jokers and posits that although “television has been used to oppress the African American population” during the Black Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, for African American producers and performers, television was “a site used to challenge hegemonic notions of race in America” (3). Making use of Kevin Gaines’ ideas about “racial uplift” (*Uplifting the Race* [1996]), W. E. B. DuBois’ concept of “double consciousness” (*The Souls of Black Folk* [1989]), and Robin Kelley’s notion of “hidden transcripts” (*Race Rebels* [1994]), Acham argues that for various segments of the African American community television represented, at one and the same time, an opportunity for more “positive” portrayals of the community (to itself and to the white community) and the broadening of “com-

munal black spaces” through a medium that delivered subterranean messages given as it tried to control black presentations and representations.

In order to place the medium in its wider historical context and the peculiar setting of the 1960s and 1970s, Acham outlines her intention “to rehistoricize, reconsider, and recuperate” (2) this source of black popular culture. She does so by presenting black humour, performance spaces, and audiences in historical perspective in order to place “television and blackness” (19) within the American historical context. Having done so, she argues that television was not a “vast wasteland” in the period, and that to deem it as such “is to ignore the participation and investment of everyday people in this cultural site, different modes of reading a text, and the presence of resistance culture within this mainstream forum” (23).

The presentation of the data offers more than an analysis of the content of particular programmes; rather, Acham tries to present genres, as well as African American performers and producers within their historical contexts. The discussions of *Black Journal*, and long-time host Tony Brown, are placed within the wider context of television news production while analyses of *Soul Train* and *The Flip Wilson Show* present black oral tradition as well as the personal histories and politics of the main personalities involved with each programme (Don Cornelius and Flip Wilson). In her assessment of situation comedies, Acham focuses on Redd Foxx (of *Sanford and Son*) as representative of a distinctive African American tradition of humour (featuring satire, self-critique, physical humour, and tall tales), as well as his existence in, and creation of, a separate black performance space before and during his television sojourn. Using Diahann Carroll (*Julia*) and Esther Rolle (*Good Times*) Acham introduces black female stars into the picture, as part of that struggle for control of representation of blackness; her discussion of Richard Pryor’s short-lived show in the 1970s analyses Pryor’s personal history, including the development of his own style of humour and his provocative television performances. In each case, Acham attempts to assess the degree to which African American producers and performers used television as a site of resistance to the largely unchanging narrative about the community (which was treated as a monolithic whole) in wider American society.

The use of television texts in the work is somewhat uneven — in places (the discussion of representations of the Black Revolution on television news) there was a focus on few programmes, while in others (*Sanford and Son* or *Good Times*) several programmes were used to illustrate the points being made. It is also not quite clear why some programmes were chosen and not others (*The Jeffersons* for example). Perhaps this was due to the availability of programmes. In some instances, the recovery of resistance to hegemonic constructions of blackness (which is admittedly the project here) might veil the extremely complex circumstances that African American television producers and per-

formers were involved in. While the section on Richard Pryor's work seems more celebratory than others, the work is accessible and pulled together quite well. It weaves together some important issues in popular culture, cultural history, and media studies; it tackles class differences in relation to concerns about representation in the African American community; it presents varying images of black womanhood and it takes to task the American claim of equal access and opportunity.

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**Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).**

And they're all made out of ticky-tacky,  
And they all look just the same.

— Malvina Reynolds, "Little Boxes" (1962).

Folksinger Malvina Reynolds's acidly critical suburban anthem succinctly expresses a widely held view, especially among left-wing intellectuals. Suburbs, especially those in the United States, the premier suburban society, represent urban sprawl and the accompanying wasteful use of resources and environmental pollution; divide middle-class citizens who can escape the central city from working-class folks who cannot; reinforce patriarchy, particularly during the post-World War II period; produce alienation and conformity; and manifest white flight and its accompanying entrapment of African Americans in decaying urban ghettos. While he does not address all points of this indictment, Andrew Wiese shows that envisioning suburbanization from an African American perspective yields markedly different assessments of urban decentralization and of the migration and civil-rights phases of African-American history. This is an important book, as Wiese expertly deploys the concepts of race, class, and gender to demonstrate both the similarities and the differences between European-American and African American suburban experiences. In addition, he persuasively argues for significant differences between African American suburbanization in the North and the South. Historians of race relations and the civil rights movement, as well as urban and suburban historians, will find here much to spark debate and to stimulate further research. In particular, issues of motivation and class should provide foci for discussion. But no matter how these issues are resolved, *Places of Their Own* will force us to reconsider the nature and meaning of twentieth-century American suburbaniza-