

tional organization in 1921, many of the ideological and political threads of the vegetarian movement continued to be important in American foodways. Readers will see strong continuities with contemporary food movements: the close association of food with morality, an ambivalent relationship with science, and fear of pollution and adulteration. Those who want to reform today's industrial food system could find many useful cautionary tales here.

Written in workmanlike prose, the book maintains a steady linear narrative, and Shprintzen rarely follows tangents, even as the movement repeatedly fragments and the figure of the vegetarian loses its danger and singularity. This approach lets the reader do the work of connecting the vegetarian movement with the other forms of social and political reform

that swept the U. S. during this period. If vegetarianism was a counter-movement, a form of resistance, we need to know more about what its adherents were reacting to, in a period when the American food economy was transformed by industry, urbanization, and new forms of marketing and retailing. The book rushes too quickly past other issues—utopianism, the increasingly public nature of the human body, and the changing class and gender valences of dietary practice. Nevertheless, this book provides an important piece of the puzzle of Americans and their food.

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### *Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery*

By Katrina Dyonne Thompson

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014. Pp. 242. Notes, index. Clothbound, \$85.00; paperbound, \$28.00.)

Toward the end of Phillip Seitz's brief though brilliant book, *Slavery in Philadelphia* (2014), the author writes: "By turning the light on enslaved peoples' agency rather than their victimization, we made an important distinction between helplessness and the fight for freedom" (p. 117). Katrina Dyonne Thompson achieves the same end in *Ring Shout, Wheel About*.

Building on the limited work that interrogates performance as a barometer of culture, and referencing the extensive literature that deals with other aspects of American slavery (economic, pseudo-scientific, theological), the author utilizes the performance of enslaved African Americans as the measure for understanding slave society. In keeping with her theme, her

chapter titles include “The Script,” “Casting,” “Onstage,” “Backstage,” and so on. With music and dance the subjects of her research, Thompson reifies the perspective of cultural anthropologists and ethnographers who for decades have advanced the idea that performance holds the clue to deep-structure understanding of humankind and human institutions.

Thompson opens the book with the words of her 105-year-old great aunt who recounted to her “a clear memory of her mother’s and grandmother’s stories of slavery and encouraged me to research the intricacies of the lives and culture of my history” (p. ix). Her purposes are clear—to examine “the way racial stereotypes were created and forced upon African Americans” and to show that, for enslaved Africans, “the performing arts strategically bestrode agency and subjugation” (p. 103).

With a deft but steady gaze, Thompson piles on facts to document her case and reaches her conclusions with an evocative writing style as taut as her subject matter. The introduction alone offers depth and detail on this “peculiar institution,” characterized by Condoleezza Rice as “America’s birth defect.” As the saying goes, the devil is in the details, and the ensuing chapters bombard us with factual, anecdotal, and analytical observations that support Thompson’s purposes and make this work an important new addition to race and identity studies, American history, African American history, and performance studies. Finally, her bibliographical notes chronicle a history

of slave literature (theory, narrative, history) from the nineteenth century through the new millennium.

This is as much a book about white privilege as black slavery. Throughout the work, Thompson exposes white fear of black power and helps the reader to understand how the power of music and dance—hearkening back to esteemed African traditions of war dances and spiritually empowering music—gave white Americans pause. Her epilogue, “The Show Must Go On,” addresses issues faced today by the likes of comedian Dave Chappelle and filmmaker Spike Lee, both aware of being “balanced on the thin line between parody and racial stereotypes” (p. 193).

The book’s table of contents lacks a list of illustrations, and the score of fine primary renderings should have been acknowledged. This omission, along with a handful of typographical errors, fails to mar the overall high quality of the author’s work. In this twenty-first-century nowhere-near-post-racist era, works like Thompson’s belong to a growing canon of literature that requires Americans to reexamine not only our culture, but also ourselves.

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