

Nele Sawallisch, *Fugitive Borders: Black Canadian Cross-Border Literature at Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 218 pp.

The book cover of *Fugitive Borders: Black Canadian Cross-Border Literature at Mid-Nineteenth Century* beautifully reflects the content of this study of “textual community building” in emergent “Black North America across national borders” (9). A line runs from the top to the bottom of the cover, designed by Maria Arndt, and splits the page into two equally sized parts, one white, the other black. Yet, the line is not clear-cut but allows the black color of the right side to spill ever so slightly over into the left. Readers of *Fugitive Borders* may understand the blurred line as a temporarily permeable border (14, 29) between Canada and the United States that Nele Sawallisch sees running through autobiographical narratives from the 1850s. The line also visualizes the genre-crossing nature of the life narratives that—as the four case studies show—play with and exceed the tradition of the American slave narrative. The white and black spheres on the cover thus also point to the ways in which the narratives under examination complicate one-sided or oversimplified genre categories and national frameworks that prove too narrow to understand their representations of Black life, flight, and community building across the Canadian-U.S. border.

The compelling study, published in transcript’s American Cultural Studies series in 2018, analyzes how the autobiographical narratives by the Black North American writers Samuel Ringgold Ward, Richard Warren, Thomas Smallwood, and Austin Steward evaluate enslaved, fugitive, and free(d) life across the border. Sawallisch persuasively locates her first monograph, originally submitted as a dissertation in American Studies at the University of Mainz, Germany, at the intersections of Black Canadian Studies and the hemispheric study of North American history and literature in the nineteenth century. Drawing on Afua Cooper’s concept of the “fluid frontier,” Sawallisch describes the border between the northern American states and Canada West (roughly today’s Ontario) as a “contact zone” and the narratives that address mobility in this zone as “cross-border texts” (29, 33).

After chapter one provides an overview of the state of the art in the cultural and literary historiography of Black Canada in the nineteenth century, chapters two to five are each dedicated to the analysis of one narrative through the lens of a key concept the narrative develops. A concise discussion of transnational, cross-border theoretical approaches in chapter one allows Sawallisch to successfully explore the ways in which the narratives actively contribute to the formation of a genealogy of Black Canadian and Black cross-border life that defies national and genre boundaries. A more elaborate explication of the methodology with which Sawallisch approaches her primary texts would have further increased the analyses’ persuasiveness. Nonetheless, the thorough close readings draw much needed attention to the ways in which the narratives are located and inscribe themselves into different geographies and discourses during a central period in North American history that had with the Fugitive Slave Act and the emergence of the Civil War “dramatic effects on British North American-U.S. relations, Canada West’s role in the black freedom struggle, and [...] the production of black life narratives” (18). The chapters concentrate on the different textual strategies that enabled the writers to tell their own and other Black peoples’ complex stories of enslavement, flight, and their pursuit of free(d) lives, offering alternative “allegiance and a sense of belonging” beyond the national frameworks of either of the two White settler nations (17). What joins all four narratives, Sawallisch convincingly argues, are their multidirec-

tional flights and migrations across North America (and to a lesser degree Great Britain and the Caribbean) that contribute to their “myth-making” and in some cases subversion of “Canada as the Promised Land” (19). *Fugitive Borders* clearly shows how the narratives participate in the formation and representation of emerging Black male leadership, cross-border communities, and abolitionist politics. The study also illustrates how the narratives draw on and at the same time exceed the tradition of the American slave narrative towards a broader understanding of Black life writing in the nineteenth century that foregrounds the “instability” of categories such as ‘American slave narrative’ versus ‘Canadian slave narrative’ and the genre lines between the slave narrative, autobiography, and other genres (21).

Sawallisch’s case studies are most convincing in their discussion of the narrators’ representations of themselves as Black border-crossing actors and formerly enslaved fugitives when closely interwoven with a thorough analysis of the narrative styles and structures that convey their arguments within and against the slave narrative tradition. The first case study, for instance, focuses on the role the church plays in the cross-border community building of *Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of Rev. Richard Warren (A Fugitive Slave)* (1856). Sawallisch analyzes Warren’s *Narrative* as offering a “bottom-up insight into black community work as a traveling preacher in Canada West, the organization of the Black Methodist church in the province, as well as its cross-border network” (11). She further reveals how Warren gains “narrative control” over his story by developing “an eclectic textual mix” that combines the slave narrative with the “spiritual autobiography, and other religious genres” (39, 38). Including elements of the religious hymn, the sermon, and the church record (45, 56), the author argues, allows Warren to create a “romanticized” notion of Canada West “as a safe haven for black fugitives” (18) that emphasizes not only “physical but spiritual freedom” (38).

The second case study focuses on the ways in which *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood (Coloured Man)* (1851) creates a “radical political genealogy” through a “cross-border allegiance” with the freeborn Black American abolitionist David Walker (12). Sawallisch illustrates how Walker’s *Appeal* from 1829 is not only the sole “outside voice” in Smallwood’s *Narrative*. It also functions as an important “subtext” (93) that enables Smallwood to “claim a position as both an activist and leader in Canada West’s black community” (18, cf. ch. 3.5). As close readings of the beginning of the narrative (ch. 3.1) and its preface (ch. 3.2) show, making this claim goes hand in hand with strategic appropriation of formal elements of the slave narrative (66).

Samuel Ringgold Ward’s *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro* (1855) and his notion of the “self-made man in the guise of the heroic fugitive and black gentlemanhood” (102) take center stage in the next case study. In this chapter, Sawallisch explores the ways in which Ward moves away from the slave narrative tradition to draft a romanticized notion of not simply “black Canadian citizens but black British subjects” (141) through a mix of “autobiography, travel report, and anti-slavery narrative” (104; emphasis in original). In a similar way, Sawallisch contends, Austin Steward’s *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman* (1857) draws on the traditions of the slave narrative, the novel, and travel accounts to build “a bottom-up genealogy” (18). As Sawallisch argues persuasively in chapter 5.1, Steward includes “homages, portraits, or elegies” of his daughter and father in order to secure his communal and familial genealogy (158, 161). He then strategically contrasts them with “(anti-)elegies” of the downfall and obliteration of his legal owner’s family and his opponent in the Wilberforce settle-

ment (162, 169). The brief close readings of Stewards' "mosaic stories" grouped together under topics such as "Rebellion and Violence" and "Fugitives" (172–79) further point to the ways in which Steward uses and bends slave narrative topoi, such as the role of the "amanuensis" which he adopts himself in order to embed stories of other fugitives into his own autobiographical narrative (178). The brief discussion of Steward's representation of Indigenous characters whose "presence," Sawallisch argues, may suggest "possible alliance for non-white settlers in white Canada," however, would have profited from a more in-depth engagement with the history of Black American-Indigenous relations in the nineteenth century and their recent critical examination in the increasingly intersecting fields of Black Studies and Indigenous Studies (179; see Day; King).

In "Beyond Douglass and Jacobs," John Ernest criticizes slave narrative research and teaching that conceives of Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass as the ultimate "exceptional-representative" female and male slave narrative writers who represent chattel slavery in North America 'authentically,' while leaving a large and diverse body of narratives understudied (219). From a Canadian Studies perspective, the same can be said of Josiah Henson who—as Heike Paul has shown—has become a mythical "foundational figure" representative "of those 30,000 to 50,000 fugitive slaves who made their way to Canada in the mid-19th century" (Paul 261, 262–65). Sawallisch's studies of Ward's, Warren's, Smallwood's, and Steward's writings are a welcome reaction to Ernest's critique. Leaving the well-known border-crossing slave narratives of Henson (1849), William Wells Brown (1847), and Henry Bibb (1849) aside, the case studies purposefully engage lesser-known narratives that have been mostly overlooked in both the Canadian literary canon and the study of slave narratives—not least because they exceed their dominant genre, national, and stylistic frameworks.

As the monograph shows, the narratives "inscribe themselves in different black lineages, literary and intellectual traditions, whose upholding and remembering creates a narrative of pride and strength of black communities that resisted undoing by slavery or racial prejudice" (17). In following these "lineages" in their formation across the U.S.-Canadian border, *Fugitive Borders* paves the way for further studies that may dedicate their attention to the role other borders and localities beyond Canada West and the northern American states play in this body of autobiographical writing. Moreover, Sawallisch's focus on Black male writing clearly poses questions about Black women's cross-border writing at mid-nineteenth century. Sawallisch's side reference to Mary Ann Shadd Cary's editorial work and the slave testimonies of Sophia Pooley and Lavina Wormeny seem promising leads for an exploration of the genderedness of physical and textual community-building in Black North America in the nineteenth century (15).

Providing dearly needed close readings of understudied cross-border narratives, *Fugitive Borders* offers important insights for scholars and students of nineteenth-century Canadian and U.S.-American literature and history. Approaching the texts from a nuanced combination of (Black) Canadian and hemispheric North American Studies perspectives and accounting for the narratives' form as well as their relevance for Black North American historiography, *Fugitive Borders* shows how Black cross-border life writing at mid-nineteenth century speaks of the history of slavery and the experiences of the formerly enslaved and fugitive with idiosyncratic voices. Undoubtedly, readers of *Fugitive Borders* will want to hear, understand, and learn more from them.

PAULA VON GLEICH (Universität Bremen)

Works Cited

- Day, Iyko. "Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiblackness, and Settler Colonial Critique." *Critical Ethnic Studies* 2.1 (2015): 102-21. Print.
- Ernest, John. "Beyond Douglass and Jacobs." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. Ed. Audrey A. Fisch. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. 218-31. Print.
- King, Tiffany Lethabo. *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2019. Print.
- Paul, Heike. "Remembering the Fugitive as a Foundational Figure? The (Black) Canadian Narrative Revisited." *Pirates, Drifters, Fugitives: Figures of Mobility in the US and Beyond*. Ed. Heike Paul, Alexandra Ganser, and Katharina Gerund. Heidelberg: Winter, 2012. 259-78. Print.

PDF | On Dec 1, 2018, Gabriel Finkelstein published Review of Laura Meneghello, Jacob Moleschott's "A Transnational Biography: Science, Politics, and Popularization in Nineteenth-Century Europe, Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2017 | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. Popularization in Nineteenth-Century Europe. 490 pp., bibl. Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2017. \$55 (paper). ISBN 9783837639704. The history of ideas has generally remained a story of origins. This certainly holds true for scientism, a nineteenth-century movement that points as much to our own condition of disenchantment. as it does to any previous contest with the Church. But as Carl Becker and Karl Löwith pointed out long ago. Day 19. Day 20. 8000Day 21. Nele Sawallisch, Fugitive Borders: Black Canadian Cross-border Literature at Mid-Nineteenth Century (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2019, \$55.00/â,44.99). Pp. 218. isbn978 3 8376 4502 6. Published online by Cambridge University Press: 05 November 2019. Nele Sawallisch, Fugitive Borders: Black Canadian Cross-border Literature at Mid-Nineteenth Century (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2019, \$55.00/â,44.99). Pp. 218. isbn978 3 8376 4502 6. Volume 53, Issue 4. Even so, the COVID-19 operation is unlike any other event to take place in modern history because the results of this event are affecting people in every single nation on the planet and will continue to for years to come. The launch of The Great Reset was supported by Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum; England's Prince Charles; Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN; and Kristalina Georgieva of the International Monetary Fund. The kick-off was truly an international event with the participation of Ma Jun, the chairman of the Green Finance Committee at the China Society for Finance and Banking and a member of the Monetary Policy Committee of the People's Bank of China.