Kamille Gentles-Peart, *Romance with Voluptuousness: Caribbean Women and Thick Bodies in the United States*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. 210 pp.
(Cloth US\$45.00)

Both the lyrics and video of J-Lo and Iggy Azalea's 2014 hit "Booty" celebrate the voluptuous body aesthetic of the Afro-Caribbean women who are the subject of *Romance with Voluptuousness*. Here, this aesthetic clearly competes for mainstream space with the thin white feminine ideal of the United States. That this aesthetic, divorced from black women's bodies, is part of the commercialization and profit-making strategies of these performers signals the timeliness of Kamille Gentles-Peart's critical eye on the thick, black Caribbean woman's body, and race, gender, and body politics in the United States. A decade after Andrea Shaw's foundational work on the gendered politics of fatness and blackness (*The Embodiment of Disobedience* [2006]), which highlighted the relevance of scholarly attention to literary and cultural representations of the fat black woman's body, *Romance with Voluptuousness* promises a contemporary analysis of Afro-Caribbean women's relationship to this aesthetic in the context of a white supremacist United States.

Drawing on qualitative interviews with a cross-generational sample of Afro-Caribbean women as well as her own experiences, Gentles-Peart skillfully illuminates black Caribbean women's embodied navigation and negotiation of race-gender in the United States. Her book works best in its attention to diasporic citizenship. She convincingly proposes embodied cultural citizenship as a means of understanding Afro-Caribbean women's experiences and strategies of belonging, and highlights key distinctions between the strategies of first- and second-generation migrant women contributing to a differentiated understanding of diaspora. Her conceptualization of the "permanent foreigner" and "flexible identity" are valuable frameworks for understandings of migration.

It is with both contemporary U.S. politics and contemporary black feminist analyses that *Romance With Voluptuousness* is most dissonant. In the context of the rise of an emboldened and visible white nationalism in the United States and Europe, the framework of "color blind racism," which Gentles-Peart claims operates both in the Caribbean and the United States, appears to distort more than it reveals. Her conclusion that Afro-Caribbean immigrant women in the United States "perpetuate their marginalization" (p. 160) by internalizing the ideal of the voluptuous body strikes a discordant note with contemporary racism in the United States and powerful analyses of race articulated in popular movements and by black feminist thinkers. If thick bodies result in negative physical and socioeconomic capital for black women, but the reverse

for non-black pop and reality stars, doesn't the claim that black women are complicit in their own economic marginalization betray a naïve racial politics?

Gentles-Peart locates the origins of the voluptuous ideal in racist and colonialist representations of black women's bodies as monstrous and excessive. This historicization muddies key distinctions between contemporary Caribbean meanings of "thick" and white supremacist notions of black female animality and nonfemininity. The frames of reference center a hegemonic racist discourse of the body and resistance to it, without considering the possibility of an entirely different locus for (and set of meanings of) black women's aesthetic practices. While she readily acknowledges the ambiguous meaning of thick, she could do more to account for the ways in which its definition is ever-changing in the Caribbean. For thick simultaneously registers the bodies idealized in the dancehall, the increasing imperative for toned thick bodies achieved through weight lifting in the gym as part of neoliberal entrepreneurship of the self, the mainstreaming and hence whitening of thickness in U.S. popular culture, and the intersections of race, color, body size, and class in determining the carnival body. Here, the more culturally relevant "thick ideal" may become equally unattainable without technological intervention as it morphs into a requirement for "waist anorexic and then your ass is colossal" as African American rapper Big Sean put it. None of these can be separated from the voluptuous aesthetic that Gilles-Peart explores. She appears to anticipate this criticism by countering unconvincingly that the U.S. mainstream is interested in a single body part—the butt—and not in the thick aesthetic. If we think of Miley Cyrus's use of thick black women's bodies to signal her own sexual coming of age, this "eating of the other" (bell hooks's formulation) necessitates a more nuanced understanding of race, gender, and sexuality in direct conversation with well-established black feminist critiques. In this sense, the much needed focus on women's own body narratives would have been enhanced by a keen analytical eye on popular culture and black feminist thought.

Romance With Voluptuousness will prove indispensable to students of gender studies, cultural studies, black studies, and emerging subfields such as fat studies. Its publication signals a need for more fleshy accounts of Caribbean women's aesthetic practices of self-fashioning that take seriously, as Gentles-Peart does, women's relationship to their bodies, selves, technologies, and communities as they navigate a racist-sexist (and heterosexist) cultural and economic landscape. It is a timely publication ripe for critical engagement.

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