Félix Germain & Silyane Larcher (eds.), *Black French Women and the Struggle for Equality, 1848–2016*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. xx + 270 pp. (Paper US\$40.00)

Disrupting the unremitting construction of black French women as “a nonobject of intellectual imagination” (p. xiv), *Black French Women and the Struggle for Equality, 1848–2016* attempts to write a new narrative that contravenes the invisibility and silencing of Afra-diasporic experiences. Essentially inspired by black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectional analytical framework, it exposes the way issues of class, colonization, ethnicity, gender, nation, race, space, and representation have compelled black French women to hold out against their marginalization. The book delineates the ways in which they shape(d) radical discourses that interrogate mainstream inference, challenge biased historical assumptions, and subvert normalized arbitrary attitudes, ideas, and politics. The fourteen chapters are organized around five intersecting themes: black French women’s struggle for equality in politics and society; feminist and postcolonial movements; transnational identities; body, nation, and representation; and critique of the Empire.

The anthology fosters Francophone transnational and transatlantic lenses conducive to the promotion of recognized and less known Francophone women fighting inequality in places such as Cameroon, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, hexagonal France, Martinique, precolonial Senegambia, Senegal, and the United States of America. Silyane Larcher (an historical and political sociologist) and Félix Germain (an Africana Studies scholar) have compiled a thoughtful collection of essays—ranging from literary and legal to societal and political spheres—to substantiate the manifold realms within which black French women encounter and confront discriminatory and repressive conditions. In effect, the book encompasses an original exploration of their struggles inside cooperatives, (community) associations (*Le Rassemblement Féminin*; *Union des Femmes de la Martinique*; the Democratic Union of Cameroonian Women), political organizations, feminist journals (such as *La femme dans la cité*) and literary texts (such as Fatou Diomé’s *The Belly of the Atlantic*). Within these plurifeminist spaces, readers will discover the way black French women have resisted, re-claimed and re-appropriated their emancipation, freedom, and subjectivities.

The book’s first three parts include engaging examinations of the achievements of women such as Gerty Archimède (by Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel), Emilie and Louise-Anne Alier (by Monique Milia-Marie-Luce), Jean McNair (by Tyler Stoval), and Christiane Taubira (by Stéphanie Guyon). Similarly, Silyane Larcher’s article, “The End of Silence: On the Revival of Afrofeminism

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in Contemporary France,” offers an outstanding critique of “whitriarchy,” the limitations of an aracial Occidentocentric feminism, and the ways in which Afrofeminists fight their “invisibilization” in the face of “the ethnonationalist bias of French feminist discourse” (p. 77). Part Four opens with Sarah Fila-Bakabadio’s thorough exploration of magazines such as *Elle*, *Amina*, *Culture Femme*, and *Kalibibi* (among others) to discuss “the Politics of ‘Re-presentation’ of the Black Female Body” in the media. And it winds up with an insightful essay by Robin Mitchell, in which she investigates letters that journalist and satirist Charles-Joseph Colnet authored while hiding his identity behind “the persona of a black woman,” Sarah Baartman (p. 192). At the juncture of gender, nation, and race, Mitchell’s study illustrates the ways in which white French men manipulated and misappropriated “so-called black female identities” to sustain France’s “cultural and national reinvention” (p. 185) after the Haitian Revolution and the 1848 French abolition of slavery.

Some sections provoke a much-needed conversation about contemporary feminist spheres (such as Caribbean pop music, blogs, *Café-rencontres*, Decolonial Summer Camps) in which young Afra artists (such as French Caribbean singer Jean Lycinaïs) and activist groups (such as The Mwasi Collective, November 6 Group, and Lesbians of Color) advocate for gender-fluid subjectivities and challenge heteronormative standards. In this fashion, Félix Germain’s article, “French Caribbean Feminism in the Postdepartementalisation Era,” attempts to address the baffling lack of support still found nowadays in major feminist organizations based in Martinique (and Guadeloupe). His article sheds light on their deceitful positioning, which corroborates the sustained vulnerability LGBTQ communities continue to endure in this region, where homosexuality is violently admonished.

The collection brings together issues of nationhood, citizenship, neo/colonialism, and imperialism to illustrate the compelling contributions of black French women, validating the worth and significance of actions they brought and continue to bring to their communities across boundaries and beyond mainstream taxonomies. Encompassing critical feminist discussions that demonstrate black French women’s exertions of political and cultural agency, it is a timely and resourceful study on Afra-Francophone activists, artists, and scholars who embody complex identities as well as self-agency and resistance.

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