

African Studies Quarterly

Volume 8, Issue 2

Spring 2005

Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals. Anthony Bogues, ed. Routledge: New York, 2003. 260pp.

Black Heretics, Black Prophets offers the Southern African reader a fascinating insight into the historical interpretations and contemporary potential of black radical political thought. The book focuses on black radical thought as a source of alternative knowledge on and paradigms of black experience and has the deconstructionist flavour of Appiah's *My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* and Serequeberhan's *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*.

The book is divided into two distinct but interdependent sections. The first section explores heresy or the challenge of orthodoxy and the creation of new critical discourses in black radical thought. The second section focuses on the 'prophets', those who produced a redemptive discourse. In this, Bogues argues people would be called to action and reminded of their condition (19). Drawing inspiration from diverse sources: the slave Cugoano, the woman Wells-Barnett, the revisionists James and Du Bois, the revolutionary Rodney, the statesman Nyerere and musician Marley – Bogues challenges contemporary and particularly Eurocentric thinking about the purpose and contributions of African political thought. Bogues avoids essentializing African politics and thought by exposing the complexities and diversity of black intellectual tradition.

Black Heretics, Black Prophets also provides a sharp counterpoint to Kitching's recent discussions of the value of African studies (Kitching 2000 & 2003), particularly in Kitching's references to the state of Africa and African studies. Bogues' book speaks to African and African diaspora scholars and elites, some of who (contrary to Kitching's arguments) are in favour of humanism and democratic political transformation. One of Bogues' potent arguments, which I think Afro-pessimists have missed, is that those reviewing the contributions of Black radical political thinkers have tended to cast "the thought of black thinkers as primarily derivative...[of] already accepted systems of thought." (2). Throughout the book, Bogues challenges this view of Africa and its intellectuals, showing the diverse ways in which Black political thinkers have in their writing and political acts transcended context and contributed to new forms of knowledge and ways of thinking.

To provide the evidence for his argument, Bogues seeks the moments at which "rupture" occurs in the thinking of Black radicals. The moment at which thought supersedes context and is therefore no longer informed or constrained by it. The evidence arrives in his discussion of the words of those who are "objects amongst objects": slaves, women and the colonised. By doing this, Bogues offers a departure from the writings of those authors who deal with these objects amongst objects as products (of oppression and colonisation) rather than as producers.

In his consideration of the political thought of Quobna Cugoano, for example, he notes the radical humanism in the slave's interpretation of fundamental rights. For Cugoano "slavery and servitude in any form are not compatible with civilized human society...[and] the fundamental natural right was the right of the individual to be free and equal, not in relationship to government but in relationship to other human beings" (43-45).

Bogues also reflects on political thought and practice as "an engaged critical social enterprise" (67) and an "expression of profound cognitive capacities." (6). In his analysis of Ida B. Wells-Barnett's work, he shows how she challenged powerful stereotypes of domestic responsibility, black male and female sexuality and the notion of civilization in the segregated South. However, throughout the book, Bogues emphasizes the importance of new epistemologies not only to radicalism but also to revolution. This is evident in his reflection on Nyerere's search for an emic understanding and transformation of Tanzanian society and Walter Rodney's focus on authentic liberation.

In my opinion, the best part in this book is Bogues' discussion of Rastafari (153-85), not only because here he reflects on the significance of Rastafari to redemptive and revolutionary politics in both Africa and the African diaspora, but also because he provides an exceptionally detailed analysis of black radical thought in the Caribbean and discusses the ways in which these thoughts are conceived and developed outside "the recognized episteme" (184). One disappointment in this book is Bogues' failure to explore in greater detail (and earlier on in the text), the significance of memory as a tool for both heretics and prophets in the production of radical thought. On several occasions he discusses heretics (in particular) as though the inspirations for their alternative paradigms are solely derived from the 'present.' It leaves the reader with an important question – what role did memory (not only derived from the experience of slavery or colonialism) play in shaping black radical thought? In Africa today (and in the African diaspora communities of the Indian Ocean region), the evocation of memory occupies an important place in subaltern politics and provides an alternative knowledge-making 'space' in the production of black radical thought. Having said that, for the African reader, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets* is uplifting and politically engaging. As a young southern African woman, I have encountered mostly Western scholarship and have deep experience of colonization. However, I finished Bogues' book with a renewed sense of hope about the potential epistemological and political linkages between Africa and its diaspora. For me, this book challenged Mamadou Diouf's statement that African studies scholars in the West "are writing for themselves" (Diouf in Postel 2003).

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