to literal nonhuman animals [and by] developing a new relationship to ‘the animal’ as a social category” (Aph Ko). Thus, the Ko sisters’ collection undertakes the revolutionary task of offering new and meaningful frameworks for understanding entangled oppressions and for realizing liberatory futures.

_Aphro-ism_ is not only subversive in terms of content, but it is also stylistically subversive as it does away with popular conventions in writing and publishing. More than just a collection of theoretical and political essays, Aph and Syl Ko intend _Aphro-isms_ to “read like an intellectual journal between two sisters” (Aph Ko). Indeed, their deeply supportive sibling relationship infuses this collection with a tone of solidarity, support, and care. Although Aph and Syl Ko’s essays were undoubtedly carefully written and selected for this collection, they are not airbrushed into a state of unblemished flawlessness. Instead, Aph and Syl Ko honour and showcase their growth and change in thought over time, and they celebrate contradiction among their essays. The essays vary in topic, length, and style. As Aph Ko points out, “[s]ome articles are more academic whereas others are filled with plain, unapologetic rage.” The result is a deliberately personal, dynamic, conversational, and accessible collection. Aph and Syl Ko’s stylistic choices, in combination with their visionary content, make _Aphro-ism_ a fundamentally important text to engage with. _Aphro-ism_ offers important insights for all readers, regardless of one’s positionality or familiarity with decolonial, feminist, or vegan theory.

Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present

_By ROBYN MAYNARD._ Fernwood, 2016. $25.00 CAD

_REVIEWED BY RACHEL LOBO_

Organizer and academic Robyn Maynard begins the first chapter of her award-winning, national bestseller _Policing Black Lives_ with a quote by African American activist, William Wells Brown: “[t]he more I see of Canada, the more I am convinced of a deep-rooted hatred of the Negro here.” This was Brown’s observation after visiting southwestern Ontario in 1861—a time in Canadian history mythologized as showcasing the nation’s so-called benevolence and tolerance. Brown’s visit occurred between the passing of the _Fugitive Slave Act_ of 1850 and the beginning of the American Civil War (1861–1865)—a period when the largest number of freedom runners entered Canada to find reprieve from subjugation, bondage, and brutal racial violence. However, as Brown’s quote illustrates, freedom runners—like Black migrants and Canadian-born Black people—could escape neither the reality of devaluation, nor the state-sanctioned and popular hostility that was enacted on all Black lives in Canada. For Maynard, “the image of Canada as a safe haven from racial intolerance was then, as it remains today, complex, multilayered, ambivalent and equivocal.” Building on decades of Black liberation activism and scholarship, _Policing Black Lives_ offers an important corrective, combating the “social amnesia” behind Canada’s veneer of multiculturalism and tolerance. Maynard’s work firmly situates state-sanctioned violence and the concerted neglect of Black people within Canada’s history.

In Maynard’s words, the main focus of _Policing Black Lives_ is to make anti-Blackness “legible” for activists, policymakers, students, and concerned community members. Specifically, she believes that there is a paucity of literature that addresses “in one place” how state policies and institutional practices shape the experiences and material conditions of Black life in Canada. By placing the “enormous, unparalleled power” of the state at the centre of analysis, Maynard’s study illustrates how domination is structured at the systemic level of social institutions, rather than a matter of individual pathology. Understanding the rationale and cultural mechanisms of endemic anti-Black racism is, therefore, central to any understanding of Canadian history.

Maynard traces the genealogy of anti-Blackness in Canada, beginning her study with the global and historical roots of the devaluation of Black lives that started in 1444, with the transatlantic slave trade, and sketching out the historical contours of anti-Black racism as it developed in Canada. This analysis unpacks the practices of slavery in seventeenth-century New France and eighteenth-century Nova Scotia; nation-wide segregation that ran parallel to practices in Jim Crow America; unequal access to the economy, education, and housing; and heightened exposure to police surveillance. Here, Maynard reminds readers that Canada’s colonization was premised upon an explicitly white supremacist racial hierarchy that required careful engineering, through both a violent settlement project and racial slavery. The conditions of Indigenous and Black life today can be traced to this initial project; its logic has been embedded in state practices and institu-
The Invention of Nature:
Alexander Von Humboldt’s New World

By ANDREA WULF. Alfred A. Knopf-Penguin Random House, 2015. $35.00 USD

REVIEWED BY SCOTT LILLICO

The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt’s New World takes the reader on a historical journey through the life of Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), an ecologist quite famous in his time and an influence on modern understandings of ecology and science. The author, Andrea Wulf—a historian in London—illustrates pockets of history, bringing meaning to Humboldt’s experiences. The Invention of Nature focuses not only on Humboldt’s life story, but also on well-known figures in history who he interacted with, including the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Charles Darwin, Queen Victoria, Napoleon Bonaparte, and other leaders, politicians, scientists, and explorers of Humboldt’s age.

While Humboldt struggled through a politically contentious time amongst the European powers, we presently live in an environmentally contentious time where anthropogenic climate change affects our ecological and political systems, and threatens society with uncertain futures. Between Canada’s lack of proportional representation in government, the wake of the former reality television star United States President, and Britain exiting the European Union, democracy is being challenged and environments seem like a low priority.

When he was young, Humboldt displayed a strong wanderlust for adventure, studying Captain James Cook’s expeditions. In London, after attending the University of Göttingen, Humboldt met Joseph Banks, the botanist who accompanied James Cook on his first journey around the world. Humboldt’s mother insisted that he study to become a government official, an idea he detested, yet he abided by her wishes initially.

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