

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-ism* 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.

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MANDY BUNTEN-WALBERG is a Ph.D. student in Queen’s University’s School of Environmental Studies, where she is developing her dissertation research, entitled *Chiropteran Ethics and the Queer, Contagious Intimacies of COVID-19*. She is a graduate of York University’s Master of Environmental Studies program, where she explored how humans might learn from other animals as teachers, leaders, and visionaries of their own liberation. She is hopelessly devoted to her cat companion, Murphy, and she seeks to support all human and more-than-human persons through veganism, theory, and activism that pursues total liberation (though she admittedly has a long way to go and a lot to learn).

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

By ROBYN MAYNARD. Fernwood, 2016. \$25.00 CAD

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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 hos-

tility 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-

tions for centuries. Although *Policing Black Lives* traces the realities of anti-Blackness in Canada, Maynard asserts that Black and Indigenous oppression are historically and currently connected and, where relevant, she draws parallels and distinctions between the forms of state violence that target these communities. We can look forward to Maynard's insights on the entangled legacy of Black and Indigenous histories and struggles in her 2022 publication, with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, titled *Rehearsals for Living*.

One of the many strengths of *Policing Black Lives* is its ability to demonstrate how the matrix of domination is structured on several levels. The chapter, "Law Enforcement Violence Against Black Women: Naming their Names, Telling their Stories," shares the individual stories of Black women who experienced abuse at the hands of law enforcement officials in recent years. Maynard retells the story of a 26-year-old Black transgender woman, Chevranna Abdi, who died in police custody in 2003. The media coverage of Abdi's highly suspicious death, while in the custody of Hamilton police, was framed by her HIV status, race, and gender identity. Specifically, news outlets referred to Abdi as an "HIV-positive transsexual"

and "either a prostitute or a drug dealer," and her death as a "drug-fueled melee." Through Abdi's story, Maynard demonstrates how "Black transgender women often live at the intersection of both the societal demonization of Black women and a societal hostility toward transgender persons." Here, she illustrates how the interlocking systems of race, gender, and class oppression are part of an overarching structure of domination within Canada. As Patricia Hill Collins reminds us, this structure penetrates many layers: personal biography; group or community context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions.

Likely owing to her experiences doing outreach, advocacy, and organizing within marginalized and criminalized communities, Maynard's bibliography brings together traditional academic monographs alongside reports from community organizations and social movements on the ground. Histories of resistance are threaded throughout the volume and are the focus of her final chapter, titled "From Woke to Free: Imagining Black Futures." Maynard explains that although stories of Black refusal, subversion, creativity, and resistance are not the focus of *Policing Black Lives*, she hopes that in recognizing the

structural conditions of Black suffering we will be better placed to challenge them.

By demonstrating in painstaking detail the ways the state—federal and provincial governments; government-funded programs such as schools, and social and child services; and the enforcement wings of state institutions—acts to defend and maintain inequitable social, racial, and economic divisions, *Policing Black Lives* is a significant contribution and important entry point for those interested in racial formation in Canada. Maynard's prose is accessible and her book provides vivid, unsettling historical context for nearly four hundred years of anti-Black racist practices.

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RACHEL LOBO is a Ph.D. candidate in York University's Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change. Her research examines how archival spaces can effectively serve communities and create historical agency. Specifically, she is interested in how photographic archives can sustain histories of political struggle and foster the exchange of intergenerational knowledge. In September 2022, Rachel will begin a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship with the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto.

## The Invention of Nature: Alexander Von Humboldt's New World

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

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REVIEWED BY SCOTT LILICO

*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* fo-

cuses 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.