

Explorations in Sights and Sounds

As good as Daniel's analysis is, he does neglect the role of they were having in organizing and gaining recognition as bargaining agents.

Of course, the labor unions also played a role in preventing the urbanization of Afro-Americans. This is particularly apparent in San Francisco, which had one of the strongest labor movements in the nation. When an open shop prevailed in the 1920s, San Francisco's Black population (like Los Angeles's, where unions were particularly weak) increased enormously (42).

Daniels appears to be anti-labor, while he does indicate unions, along with the municipal political system and federal mandates, played a great role in increasing the number of Blacks hired in San Francisco just before and during World War II. Still, he should have emphasized that industrialists and business owners often preserved their supply of cheap labor by pitting ethnic groups against one another and by playing on prejudice.

Despite these problems, Daniels has written a very good book, which causes the reader, as Nathan Irvin Huggins writes in his foreword, to "rethink community formation in the United States" (xv). Daniels has proven that Black San Franciscans saw themselves as urban pioneers who shared in the building of the city while keeping their ethnic identity.

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doris davenport. *Voodoo Chile - Slight Return: Poems.* (Cornelia, GA: Soque Street Press, 1991) 84 pp., \$10.00 paper.

doris davenport's poetry collection, *Voodoo Chile - Slight Return*, firmly connects her to the southern African roots that she embraces. The poems speak from the perspective of a world-traveled feminist as well as a concerned humanist. davenport's poetry moves between being so caustic they singe, to an almost light-hearted, humorous tone. In both extremes, davenport's underlining motive seems to be to expose ills and ridicule contradictions inherent in the society.

Throughout this two-section collection of poems, davenport's integrity is evident. While there is no single poem that embodies her craft or particular perspective, the poem, "Interlude" aptly summarizes the poet's intent throughout this collection.

storyteller, you need - you

to tell a good
story, to be a good
got to have - a good
listener. ("Help me to tell it,
somebody.") (55)

The success of this poem is threefold: it is succinct; it reveals urgency; and it dialogues with the audience. Clearly, davenport's poetics is informed by call and response, an African ethos that is still evident in African American churches, theater productions, and music. As in those settings where dialogue between presenter and audience is natural, davenport's "Interlude" solicits a response from readers. This feeling of engagement is evident in almost all of the poems. Readers are pulled in through identification, especially in "Poem for a Varnette Honeywood Painting (The Beating Poem)." Because many African American readers are familiar with the saying "You gone git a whuppin, now," they can identify fully with the scenario that this poem presents, and davenport's vivid descriptions heighten the portrayal.

davenport's use of language recalls Ntozake Shange's poetry, but her beat is slightly different. Like Shange, davenport elevates African American speech so that the rhythm and the vernacular leap from the pages. This quality is most striking in the poem "Miz Anna - On Death." The voice is older and comes off as being more down to earth, more rural. davenport combines a serious subject with humor.

Some folk up & die
some folk, though,
you can't kill.
like Lean's husband. (31)

While the story is familiar, the telling is new, the perspective unique yet the characters are real.

davenport uses the familiar with a twist that prompts anger and charges of blasphemy in some believers, as in the poem "naw. ain't no balm in gilead, & Sears is sold out too (a poem about the original rapist, child abuser-misogynist...)." In this poem, as the title suggests, davenport conflates many seemingly unrelated issues that ultimately strongly condemn the Judeo-Christian inscription of Jesus's birth. The poem begins with a plea, "just think about it:," then the tone and language shift to any angry, confrontational one:

poor jesus. in a dry-
ass temple & as if
that ain't bad enuf, when
he cam outside, all the other
kids, being kids, said
"there go jesus-the-bastard whose

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momma so crazy she think a
angel did it to her nanananananananaaaaaa" (48)

In this poem, as is the case with a few others, the narrator's tone and attitude change markedly throughout the poem, so that by the end, one is left speechless. Silence is the only appropriate response.

davenport's poems are powerful; the language is raw and free. davenport takes readers on a journey through untraveled regions and introduces ideas that will cause many to question the very foundation of their moral beliefs. *Voodoo Chile - Slight Return: Poems* is a bold collection of poems that explores old terrain with new insights, and offers new and vibrant interpretations of some subjects readers might hold sacred. doris davenport wrings and stretches language. As with her line-break, where a foot never ends a thought, but rather requires that readers move to the next line, davenport titillates and seduces readers with her often provocative ideas. This collection of poems is appropriately titled and celebrates the endless possibilities of poetics.

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Brian W. Dippie. *George Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990) 553 pp., \$50.00.

Although Americans in the 1990's often argue whether an artist's or researcher's work merits public funding, many agree that we should fund both the arts and scientific inquiry in nearly all their diverse forms. But the basic question of patronage remains. Federal and private funding of arts and science-related work were much in question over a hundred years ago, when the artist George Catlin requested that the United States government purchase his American Indian collection.

For decades following, it was the same story. Even though other artists and researchers (Schoolcraft, Eastman, Squirer) obtained funding, Catlin's hope for support remained unrequited. Try as he might, all attempts at obtaining government patronage failed. It was not until 1874, two years after his death, that the painter's daughter, Sarah, donated Catlin's lifework and artifact collection to the Smithsonian when, once again, money for the purchase could not be found in the federal budget.

The life of the painter from Pennsylvania, and those of the artists, ethnologists, antiquarians, Indian specialists, scientists, and others of various stripe for whom he fought for over forty years, has