

“subaltern tactics” (p. 57). Yet Smith’s series of case studies invites the question: Which dances were effective protests?

The sheer variety of dances included here has some advantages, such as showing how contexts of racial mixing shaped dance over a long period, but it also has drawbacks. Some case studies seem out of place. Smith offers a detailed reading of the blackface minstrelsy in Spike Lee’s *Bamboozled* (2000), comparing it with dance in Malcolm X’s *Autobiography* (1965) because both demonstrate “dance-based cross-racial attraction,” but Smith does not explore the distinct contexts and audiences for these texts (p. 103). Other examples also lack detail. While Smith breaks down the dance steps of the Lindy Hop in conjunction with musical lyrics and a tin whistle in *A Day at the Races*, his discussion of Malcolm X’s dancing lacks detail. He notes that Malcolm X’s balletic white partner drew attention to the duo, but Smith does not describe how their contrasting styles might have worked together. In addition, although Smith considers sexual objectification in Sir Mix-a-Lot’s “Baby Got Back” (1992), he does not draw this layer of gendered analysis into his discussion of Josephine Baker. For the most part, this cultural history presents dance as simply resistance, not as a contradictory practice—transgressive in some ways, but in other ways aligned with dominant values.

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African Americans and Africa: A New History. By Nemata Amelia Ibitayo Blyden. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv, 266. \$28.00, ISBN 978-0-300-19866-9.)

Africa looms large in the imagination of many black Americans. Yet from 1619 to the present, the ways African diasporic identities have coexisted with American ones have been fluid and contested. Nemata Amelia Ibitayo Blyden’s expansive and readable *African Americans and Africa: A New History* explores the varied ideas, perceptions, and attitudes about Africa that have influenced African Americans and how these concepts shaped “what they called themselves historically” (p. 11). The result is a concise volume that serves as an introduction to the complex history of black identity in the United States and as a survey of the broad scholarship that opens doors for future research.

Blyden is an ideal guide for this journey. As the child of an African immigrant and a black American, her family story frames her interrogation of the hyphenated African American identity. Blyden finds, rather than a narrative of rising or declining identification with Africa, that attraction to an oft-idealized ancestral homeland ebbed and flowed in response to domestic race relations. Survival and improvement were the primary goals, with African heritage providing a communal rallying cry. Dreams of returning to an Africa free of prejudice provided refuge during periods of fraught race relations, as evidenced in nineteenth-century colonizationism and Garveyism. Yet as these frequently debated examples demonstrate, rarely did black communities cohere around a single identity or mission. Blyden’s strength lies in her ability to capture the diverse ways African Americans sought to “(re)connect with Africa” while negotiating their positions within United States society (p. 81).

This duality shaped African American perceptions of the African continent and its peoples. Enslaved persons adapted inherited traditions, and intellectuals from George Washington Williams to W. E. B. Du Bois drew on black heritage to inspire pride. Nonetheless, African American visions of Africa were filtered through the prism of the white-dominated media. Metropolitan, educated Africans who lived in the United States challenged negative stereotypes of a backward continent but could not overturn them. As a result, uplift and civilization remained components of African American internationalism until decolonization reversed the power dynamics of the black diaspora. Blyden thus highlights ideas of Africa as inspiration for both pride and projects in the United States, while illustrating the discrete cultural perspectives that have historically separated black Americans and Africans.

Blyden provides a valuable synthesis using the latest scholarship to expand on her earlier work on transatlantic black identity in the nineteenth century. She is an excellent writer with an eye for the telling story or quotation, making the book ideal for classroom use. Experts on African American engagement with Africa will recognize much of the information, but Blyden does yeoman's work in unifying discrete historiographies to highlight comparisons and lasting trends across five hundred years of history. For example, the "mix of pride and hesitation" produced by African identification within the dominant white American culture becomes a repeating theme, which links the post-Revolution decades of the eighteenth century to the post-civil rights era of the 1970s and 1980s (p. 196). Yet Blyden is careful to avoid emphasizing a singular perspective, capturing both historical and scholarly debates on African American identity. My major critique is that this approach occasionally mentions historical and historiographical contradictions—inconsistent settlement patterns of recent African immigrants or Carol Anderson's reassessment of the NAACP during the Cold War—without exploring them in detail. Blyden could have more effectively intervened in these debates by analyzing or disentangling these seeming dichotomies within the *longue durée* of transnational identity politics and ambiguous diasporic relations, potentially pushing scholarship in new directions as a result. These quibbles aside, *African Americans and Africa* is an important book, which provides a much-needed and accessible primer on African American identity in a global context.

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Inventing Disaster: The Culture of Calamity from the Jamestown Colony to the Johnstown Flood. By Cynthia A. Kierner. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019. Pp. xvi, 285. \$34.95, ISBN 978-1-4696-5251-1.)

In *Inventing Disaster: The Culture of Calamity from the Jamestown Colony to the Johnstown Flood*, Cynthia A. Kierner argues that our modern relationship to disasters—the way we understand their causes, how we provide relief to their victims, and our desire to try and prevent them—is just that, modern. Kierner's central thesis is that we have arrived at our contemporary culture of disaster through the revolution in analytical thought known as the Enlightenment. For scholars of history versed in the eighteenth-century development of the natural