



A review of *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions* edited by LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant, Tamura A. Lomax, and Carol B. Duncan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp.277, ISBN: 978-1-137-42955-1) by Sharon Wallace (Sharruth@hotmail.com), Department of English, Wayne County Community College District.

LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant, Tamura A. Lomax, and Carol B. Duncan, have compiled a composite of compelling articles that analyze critically Tyler Perry's Productions, through the responsiveness of womanist and Black Feminist theory. The editors hope that, "whether one is interested in film studies, religion, womanist/Black feminist thought, or just generally curious about how scholars might respond to

Tyler Perry, that anyone who picks up this anthology will experience and interpret Perry's productions as a comprehensive and complex body of work" (12). The essays in *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions* are "Tyler Perry Reads Scripture" by Nyasha Junior, "Signifying Love and Embodied Relationality: Toward a Womanist Theological Anthropology" by Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Jesus Will Fix It, After While: The Purpose and Role of Gospel Music in Tyler Perry Production" by Lisa M. Allen-McLaurin, "Screening God" by Andrea C. White, "A People That Would Take Care of Ourselves: Tyler Perry's Vision of community and Gender Relations" by Yolande M. S. Tomlinson, "It Ain't Where You Comin' from, Honey: Class, Social Mobility, and Marriage in Tyler Perry's *Madea's Family Reunion*" by Carol B. Duncan, "Mad Black Bitches and Ladylike Saints: Representations of African American Womanhood in Tyler Perry Films" by Tamura A. Lomax, "(Re) Mediating Black Womanhood: Tyler Perry, Black Feminist Cultural Criticism, and the Politics of Legitimation" by Whitney Peoples, "Pause, Auntie Momma! Reading Religion in Tyler Perry's Fat Drag" by LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant, "*Madea vs. Medea*: Agape and the Militarist or Murderous Maternal" by Joy James, "Tyler Perry and the (Mis)Representation of Religious Morality" by Terrion L. Williamson, "Do You Want to Be Well?" The Gospel Play, Womanist Theology, and Tyler Perry's Artistic Project" by Robert J. Patterson, and "Talking Back and Taking My "Amens" with Me: Tyler Perry and the Narrative Colonization of Black Women's Stories" by Brittney Cooper. The authors' expertise reside in interdisciplinary fields of study, they represent "an amalgamation of Black scholars whose expertise includes literary criticism, film studies, anthropology, cultural studies, theological studies, ethics, performance studies, and religion . . . scholars who represent multiple generations of scholarship as well as wide-ranging perspectives of womanist and Black feminist thought" (Manigault-Bryant, Lomax, Duncan 8).

The authors achieve the editor's purpose for the book and their argument through a microscopic examination of Perry's productions that explores the spectacle of stereotypical representations of Black womanhood, girls, men, and Black culture. The interdisciplinary analysis provides the readers with a wholistic examination and interpretation of Perry's productions, regardless of what lens we contemplate, film studies, religion, or womanist/Black feminist thought.

Readers of this book will find it useful for discerning the content of Perry's films and the characters within the film. Also the scholars' theoretical approach powerfully investigates the satire beyond the laughter that occurs on the surface of the storylines. Additionally the authors expose the exploitation and devaluation of Black womanhood as well as the sexist identification of Black females through the creation of Perry's patriarchal/tradition view of Black womanhood.

In general, the editors accomplish their purpose to expose the misrepresentation of Black women and girls as well as Black life. More importantly, the editors asserts that, "Our, is to bring the parts of Perry's work that reflect troubling aspects of sexism, paternalism, misogyny, homophobic, and what could be perceived as racism, to the forefronts even as we laud his cultural value and in contestable success" (5).

*Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Perry's Productions* succeeds its aim to bring forward a clearer understanding of his productions. The authors bring into focus the concepts of racism, sexism, homophobic, paternalism, and misogyny populate Perry's productions and how these tenets unceasingly cripple Black women and girls, as well as Black men and boys. The cultural workers acknowledge his success and contribution to the Black community. With that being said, they provide a close analysis, with serious consideration of Perry's traditional and religious beliefs which permeates the storylines in his film, stage, television, and music productions.

The cultural observers give the reader an in depth analysis and front row seat to the meaning behind the damaging symbols of Perry's caricatures of Black womanhood and his lampooning portrait of Black life. At the same time, they recognize his important role in the Black community and remarkable achievements. The scholars give Perry's productions a close viewing that expose readers to a critique that unveils the injurious appearance of racism, sexism, misogyny, sexism, paternalism, and homophobic. This is one of many strengths in *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's productions*. The book informs the audience to look beyond the representations on the stage and critically think what the characters and storyline symbolizes beyond the appearance of simply entertainment. A weakness of the book is the extensive and repetitive analysis on religion in the early chapters of the text. Cultural critics may push the readers to anger and challenge them to critically think Perry's of think beyond the entertainment factor of the productions. A look deeper into what messages the stereotypical images and plotlines are broadcasting to the Black community and society also would be helpful.

An excellent part of the book is the substantial detail analysis of Perry's productions which exposes the reader to a deeper view of the filmmakers work. However, the detail examination of Perry's productions circulates repetitive critiques. *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions* is recommendable book for scholars and readers. It enlightens the reader to look through multiple lens in order to understand the allegory of the symbolic use conventional characters throughout the film.

Another strength of the book is its value to readers and scholar alike who love film and are interested in understanding and understand how to read a film in addition to viewing it. *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions* is the first to offer a critical discussion of Perry's productions and certainly this is a well written and research analysis that will encourage other writers and readers to explore not only Perry's productions but other filmmakers as well through a deeper reading. However, there are shortcomings and limitations in *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions*. The authors' were remiss in their examination to compare and contrast Perry's productions with productions from other writers/filmmakers.