

FRANCESCA SOBANDE AND LAYLA-ROXANNE HILL. *BLACK OOT HERE: BLACK LIVES IN SCOTLAND*. LONDON: BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC 2022. 248 P. ISBN: 9781913441333

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In *Black oot here*, Francesca Sobande and Layla-Roxanne Hill provide a reflective account of Black people living in contemporary Scotland. Dominant throughout the book is the reconsideration of historically positivist epistemes which dehumanise Black lives through quantitative methods. Refusing to reinforce such techniques, the authors nominate diverse approaches to meaningfully engage with heterogeneous lived experiences of racism, nationhood and identity. Thus, their methodological approaches encompass an eclectic mixture of intergenerational ethnographic interviews, surveys, and analyses of photographs, media, and archived materials.

Following the introduction, chapter two attempts to fill the lacunae in Black Scottish history teachings across institutional settings. After situating the country's significant involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, attention is drawn to the momentous yet sparsely recognised practices in which Scotland remains an active agent of ongoing settler colonialism. In a similar vein, throughout this chapter is the notion of 'Scottish exceptionalism', whereby Scotland is often erroneously portrayed as an anti-racist utopia that is ideologically separate from England. Transcending this narrative, Sobande and Hill delve into the racialised origins of capitalism which permeate and inherently oppress Black people and migrants in present-day Scottish workspaces, in what might be described as the 'neoliberal aesthetic' of black representations (102). The authors postulate that the 'progress' and 'inclusion' of migrants is often masked by the very fact that their value is often tied to their worthiness in terms of economic value.

Chapter three further extends this critical lens, as the authors question the notion of 'New Scots', or the term alluding to Scotland's welcoming of refugees and asylum seekers. This book enables one to understand the disjunctions that arise when the lived realities of racialised minorities in Scotland are concealed under this novel terminology, whereby unrealistic visions of 'New Scots' are reified via elite discourses. Sobande and Hill helpfully extend their analysis to that of semantics and temporality. In considering how 'New Scots' become 'Old Scots', the reader may consider the racial politics which enable identities to transpire through these designated labels. This movement demonstrates the need for reflexivity when considering policies, to ensure that efforts are actively anti-racist, going beyond passive aestheticism. The authors engage in these very practices when writing the book by representationally drawing upon first-hand lived realities of Black people in Scotland

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rather than dominant discourses, which are predominantly reliant on terms used by non-Black individuals to delineate their experiences.

Chapter four culminates in a discussion surrounding depictions of Black people on public platforms, such as media outlets in Scotland. The analytical trajectory is continued by extending visions beyond the seemingly positive increases in the representation of Black people in recent years. Instead, Sobande and Hill shed light on the novel marketing culture, impinging on and becoming synonymous with activism. In this way, readers can depict how profit-making branding techniques are disguised under the rubric of Black representation. This framework is valuable in recognising that lasting structural changes related to racism must extend beyond the reductionistic increases in inclusion of Black lives in Scottish media. The authors make a compelling argument by problematising the nature of black politics, which similarly attempt to capitalise on the inclusion of Black people. Their analysis familiarly draws caution to celebrating the inclusion of Black women in the Scottish parliament. The sense of relief by political parties towards this fact is a testament to the tickbox activity that relies on maintaining a certain image. Thus, an important point is raised in which further discussions about Black representation are ironically limited due to inclusionary policies being tokenistic in their very nature.

Black out here is a meaningful contribution to Black Feminist literature which outlines the permeation of Black Scottish history into present-day lived realities. Scholars of these issues might find this book valuable yet haphazard, due to the meandering musings, photographs, and an abundance of ethnographic monologues. However, this unconventional academic structure is a testament to the very essence of the population under study. Namely, Black lives cannot simply be forced into historically conventional narratives, within which their stories have been insufficiently accounted for or even untold. Therefore, whilst this book is admittedly hard to follow at times, much insight is gained from the diverse range of voices heard, accompanied with a humbling reflexive recognition of its own limitations. Throughout the book, the authors recognise the persistent omission of the most marginalised Black lives, who continue to lack a voice and are unable to participate in academic spaces. Ultimately, Sobande and Hill's refusal to quantify lived experiences amalgamates in a powerful and thought-provoking text.

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