



Black Celebrity

Contemporary Representations of Postbellum Athletes and Artists

by Emily Ruth Rutter

DESCRIPTION

Black Celebrity examines representations of postbellum black athletes and artist-entertainers by novelists Caryl Phillips and Jeffery Renard Allen and poets Kevin Young, Frank X Walker, Adrian Matejka, and Tyehimba Jess. Inhabiting the perspectives of boxer Jack Johnson and musicians “Blind Tom” Wiggins and Sissieretta Jones, along with several others, these writers retrain readers’ attention away from athletes’ and entertainers’ overdetermined bodies and toward their complex inner lives. Phillips, Allen, Young, Walker, Matejka, and Jess especially plumb the emotional archive of desire, anxiety, pain, and defiance engendered by the racial hypervisibility and depersonalization that has long characterized black stardom. In the process, these novelists and poets and, in turn, the present book revise understandings of black celebrity history while evincing the through-lines between the postbellum era and our own time.

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