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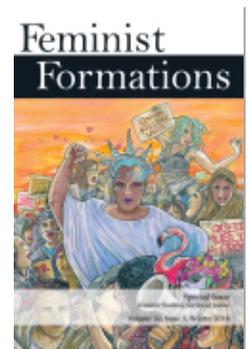
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*Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in  
Black Women's Speculative Fiction* by Sami Schalk (review)

Moya Bailey

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algorithms. Sometimes shortly following a particularly egregious case, salience and order are slightly recalibrated. For instance, the link between pornography and Black girls is toned down a little, for a limited time. I am reminded of a lecture Lisa Nakamura, author of *Race in Cyberspace*, once gave to one of my classes. She said, “The entire Internet is built on a thin layer of ice over the huge industry of pornography.” We owe the pornography industry for the ability to make online ordering easy and private. The price we pay for the ability to order privately is the loss of our private information to the Googles of the world. Thanks to monopoly capitalism, there are not many Googles, but that feels like an empty form of relief.

Noble ends the book with an interview with Kandis, a hairdresser in a university town. Twin forces of abandoning the goal of diversification of the university and the shift to online advertising have meant that Kandis has had to shift from word of mouth advertising to Yelp. However, Kandis astutely realizes that she cannot navigate Yelp practices without paying large advertising fees, which she cannot afford. Ending the book with this case study of an actual Black woman brings home the theoretical structure of the book. Noble begs for public policy that protects everyone, especially for the most vulnerable. This is not an easy fix—there is no App for that. Indeed, the entire book is a cautionary tale, exhorting us to contextualize “new” communication technologies in relation to a long history of racialized and gendered continuities. Usage of such scientific terms as “algorithms” masks the continuation of oppressive structures. A Black feminist perspective succeeds in elucidating the racial and gender biases of so-called neutral search engines.

**Angharad N. Valdivia** is a research professor of communications and media studies at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. She has published widely on media studies as a field and on issues of transnational gender and popular culture, with current attention paid to Latinas in mainstream media, especially girls and Disney.

*Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women’s Speculative Fiction* by Sami Schalk. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018, 180 pp., \$71.02 hardcover, \$23.49 paper.

Moya Bailey

*Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women’s Speculative Fiction* is the inaugural monograph from Dr. Sami Schalk. Schalk brilliantly weaves Black feminism and disability studies together by examining the profound speculative fiction of Black women writers. Through chapter-long treatments of Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* and Parable series, Phyllis Alesia Perry’s

*Stigmata*, N. K. Jemisin's *The Broken Kingdoms*, Shawntelle Madison's *Coveted Series*, and Nalo Hopkinson's *Sister Mine*, Schalk makes a compelling case for how we could read these speculative texts as the vanguard for bridging what are thought to be two disparate theoretical traditions.

Schalk traces her titular use of the term “bodyminds” to feminist disability scholar Margaret Price. *Bodyminds* addresses the inseparable nature of our minds and bodies, troubling the Western Cartesian split. *Bodyminds* is an important concept that helps describe the ways Black women science fiction writers construct characters and disability in their works. Similarly, “(dis)ability” allows for more nuance in addressing themes throughout Schalk's selected sci-fi texts, which include disability, ability, and hyperability. (Dis)ability provides a helpful frame that acknowledges the fluidity of ability in these Black women's writing. Schalk uses intersectionality and crip theory as two specific analytical tools for understanding these works.

The book is set up such that each chapter is coherent on its own, though there are threads that run through all four. Beginning with an introduction of the theoretical and thematic considerations of each examined text, Schalk gives readers a preview of the significant perspectives relevant to the example of science fiction at the heart of each chapter. Schalk ends each chapter with a pithy conclusion that helps readers understand the ways that Black feminism and disability studies shaped her theorizing of the text. This practice shows Schalk's anticipation of her book being utilized in undergraduate classrooms and her commitment to accessibility in both theory and practice. By allowing each chapter to do its own work, readers can zero in on specific themes or authors addressed in *Bodyminds Reimagined*.

Chapter 1, “Metaphor and Materiality: Disability and Neo – Slave Narratives,” uses Octavia Butler's *Kindred* to address the question of disability as metaphor in science fiction. Schalk examines the material conditions of the main protagonist Dana's acquired disability, and she critiques the binary frame that allows disability to be only metaphor or impairment. Schalk effectively reconfigures this dualism by pointing out Butler's own savvy ending, which does not allow for disability to be collapsed into an either/or. Schalk brings into relief the multifaceted nature of (dis)ability as captured through Dana's own meaning making about her impairment.

In chapter 2, Schalk subverts the centrifugal force of physical disability at the center of disability studies by expressly addressing mental disability. “Whose Reality Is It Anyway? Deconstructing Able- Mindedness” takes a close look at the protagonist Lizzie in the work *Stigmata* by Phyllis Alesia Perry. Lizzie is labeled “crazy” because no one around her can fathom a reality in which she experiences and manifests on her body her great-great grandmother's traumas of enslavement and her grandmother's resulting traumas. Schalk follows Lizzie's lead to a place where her reality is no longer pathologized, but understood. In the context of an able-minded world that refuses to account for the generational

effect of enslavement on the bodymind, Lizzie forges her own path. (Dis)ability becomes an opportunity for intergenerational matrilineal healing.

Schalk takes on the hyperempathy of the character Lauren Olamina in Octavia Butler's *Parable* series in chapter 3, "The Future of Bodyminds, Bodyminds of the Future." In Butler's not-so-distant dystopian future, Lauren Olamina has hyperempathy syndrome, which means she feels other beings' pain and pleasure. Hyperempathy has been examined by literary scholars before, but few if any do it with the nuance that Schalk's analysis provides. Hyperempathy is finally legible as disability—one that is both helpful and hurtful to Lauren, keeping it far from the hyperability that some previous scholarship attempts to attach to the concept.

"Defamiliarizing (Dis)ability, Race, Gender, and Sexuality" is the only chapter that address three texts by three different authors. Schalk argues that the three authors N. K. Jemisin, Shawntelle Madison, and Nalo Hopkinson use their science fiction narratives to defamiliarize audiences with their traditional understandings of (dis)ability, race, gender, and sexuality, through alien and other worldliness to help them understand the hegemonic components of our own cultures in relation to these categories. By comparing these three texts, Schalk allows her own audience to gain a better understanding of the ways in which Black women science fiction writers trouble the assumed boundaries of genre and content in science fiction.

Schalk's text is groundbreaking in a way that she actually names in the introduction. During a conversation with famed disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Schalk decided to shift gears at Garland-Thomson's behest, because "no one is doing work on [science fiction]." Schalk rejoins with "And so it is," marking her agreement to take on the charged issue (viii). What I appreciate most about the text is that it offers a novel way to look at Black women science fiction writers and makes their work legible as literature that should be taken seriously not only because of the beautiful worldmaking in the texts but also because of the kinds of theoretical contributions that are only discernible through the intersectional theoretical framework applied by Schalk.

Schalk's book is an important bridge between Black women's science fiction and disability theorizing. Her work requires a reconceptualization of the boundaries of disability studies and African American literature as well. My one wish was for the text to be a little longer. I wanted more vivid excerpts from the science fiction pieces mentioned in the book, but I suppose that just means I have more reading to do.

*Dr. Moya Bailey's work focuses on marginalized groups' use of digital media to promote social justice as acts of self-affirmation and health promotion. She is interested in how race, gender, and sexuality are represented in media and medicine. She currently curates the #transformDH Tumblr initiative in Digital Humanities. She is also the digital alchemist for the Octavia E. Butler Legacy Network. She is an*

*assistant professor in the Department of Cultures, Societies, and Global Studies and the program in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Northeastern University. She can be reached at [m.bailey@northeastern.edu](mailto:m.bailey@northeastern.edu).*

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