

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

A weekly look over the shoulders of our scholar-reviewers Zara Dinnen, lecturer in 20th- and 21st-century literature, Queen Mary University of London, is reading Simone Browne's *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Duke University Press, 2015). While he claims that he won the battle to avoid recession but failed to drive through fundamental international reform of the financial sector, history will properly judge him kindly for his global leadership during the 2008-09 crash.

FULL TEXT

A weekly look over the shoulders of our scholar-reviewers

Zara Dinnen, lecturer in 20th- and 21st-century literature, Queen Mary University of London, is reading Simone Browne's

Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness

(Duke University Press, 2015). "This book complicates Foucault's history of panopticism by 'drawing a black line through it'. Browne's research shows that surveillance has historically been imagined and practised through the history of black enslavement and captivity.

Dark Matters

is remarkable in the breadth of its historical research and expansive archive (from the architecture of transatlantic slave ships to the films of Will Smith); its interdisciplinary methodology (bringing black feminist scholarship such as bell hooks' 'black looks' into dialogue with surveillance studies); its clear and precise prose. It demonstrates that today's 'racializing surveillance' is not something new but another iteration of surveillance as always racialising. Significantly, Browne also provides a counter-history: by following the possibilities for 'fugitive acts of escape and resistance' that form part of the history of surveillance too, she shows that it is possible to escape and resist again."

Sir David Bell, vice-chancellor, University of Reading, is reading Gordon Brown's

My Life, Our Times

(Bodley Head, 2017). "Gordon Brown was Britain's most cerebral modern prime minister, and

My Life, Our Times

captures the richness and complexity of the man. He reminds us that deep policy thinking and substance matter in government, as do underpinning values and beliefs. Yet he is searingly honest about his own shortcomings. For example, he acknowledges his failings as a communicator and, obliquely, notes a tendency to the tactical rather than the strategic. While he claims that he won the battle to avoid recession but failed to drive through fundamental international reform of the financial sector, history will properly judge him kindly for his global leadership during the 2008-09 crash. Crucially, too, he demonstrates the virtue of a Labour Party being led by 'credible radicals'. Draw your own conclusion."

Harriet Dunbar-Morris, associate pro vice-chancellor, University of Portsmouth, is reading Belinda Bauer's *Rubbernecker*

(Bantam, 2013). "This tells of a young man, Patrick Fort, suffering from Asperger's, who as a medical student starts to try to solve a puzzle he discovered in his anatomy class. At the same time, it is the story of how he became a medical student to try to solve a puzzle in his own life. Told from Patrick's viewpoint, it is written in a style similar

to Mark Haddon's

Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

. But Bauer also provides two additional narrators, a man in a coma and a nurse on the coma ward, to good effect. So we get to meet Patrick the logical, single-minded, question-asker with no smooth edges; his long-suffering mother; university room- and classmates; and those on the coma ward - for the characterisation alone I would recommend this book."

DETAILS

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