

to his later public life in which he is portrayed as a “hopeful prophet” (p. 91).

Dilbeck wants readers to observe that Douglass’s thoughts on slavery were theologically framed and essentially prophetic. For instance, Douglass often used religious polemics against slavery; he drew a clear distinction between the nature of white Christianity and the religion of Jesus; and he “crafted his own theodicy” so that God’s mysterious ways were justified despite the evil of humanity (p. 18). Douglass’s religious life began in pious Methodism and ended in a kind of nonaffiliated theism, in which he saw God’s role in human progress as foundational rather than immediate in providence. In 1870 Douglass controversially questioned Christians thanking God alone for their progress, stating that credit should also be given to “good men—who are God in the flesh” (p. 145).

In fuller biographical scope, calling Douglass “America’s prophet” is unconvincing. Notwithstanding its deep religious elements, his story is also a narrative of celebrity and exceptionalism. Even Dilbeck acknowledges that in Douglass’s later years, “financial prosperity inevitably raised new tensions in his work as a leader of his race” (p. 127). He long identified with his own oratorical notion of the self-made man, and this perspective seems to have held sway over him. He may not have betrayed John Brown by refusing to join his Harper’s Ferry raid in 1859, but there was a measure of self-interest in his later apologetic (delivered at Storer College in 1881) that he could live—not die—for the slave. Nearly thirty years later, Douglass again withdrew from crisis, opposing black flight from post-Reconstruction injustice and violence. In 1880 he made the pitiful argument that blacks should remain in the South because the “colored race is a remarkably home-loving race” (Frederick Douglass, “The Negro Exodus from the Gulf States,” *Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly*, Jan. 1880, p. 42).

Douglass’s story is larger than life, as were his achievements. Yet his prophetic side must be juxtaposed with the “American respectability” he bequeathed to the nation as a man of politics and power (p. 63). Was Douglass a prophet or a prince? Prophets often are rejected and martyred, as were Brown and Martin Luther King Jr., the latter having been popularized only by revision. Douglass required no

revision to be celebrated. As proven by three autobiographies, he already had accomplished this by the time of his death.

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*Race, Place, and Memory: Deep Currents in Wilmington, North Carolina.* By Margaret M. Mulrooney. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018. xvi, 355 pp. \$95.00.)

In *Race, Place, and Memory* Margaret M. Mulrooney adopts Manning Marable’s dictum that fostering a “historically-grounded conversation” about race and racialization processes is central to understanding America’s past (p. 7). Mulrooney’s case study of Wilmington, North Carolina, also sheds light on the difficulties of pursuing these conversations. The city’s celebratory narrative of good race relations in a progressive city belies its heritage of racial violence. Mulrooney writes: “On the surface, the city possesses a tranquil appearance and a timeless quality, but these traits have, in fact, been carefully constructed to hide deeper truths” (p. 11).

The “Wilmington Revolution of 1898,” alternately identified and contested as a race riot, a massacre, and a municipal *coup d’état*, lies at the center of conflicting understandings of Wilmington’s past and present. White supremacists torched a black newspaper office, marched on city hall, and overthrew the lawfully elected Republican-fusion government by forcing black and white officials to resign in the only *coup d’état* in American history. Carefully planned and executed by powerful elites, the insurgency restored elite white Democrats to political power and economic dominance. The massacre, exile, and intimidation of African Americans disrupted a thriving black middle class and decimated the population of what had been North Carolina’s largest city. Deeper truths about these events surfaced twenty years ago, surrounding public commemoration activities related to the centennial of the 1898 coup. City leaders, who championed Wilmington’s twentieth-century redevelopment and promoted the city as a destination for tourists

and transplanted retirees, found themselves navigating contested ideas about the past and disagreements about a suitable commemoration. Descendants of white elite families disavowed any project that cast their forefathers in a negative light, and descendants of marginalized black working-class families wanted their stories told, complicating efforts at telling the full story and working toward justice and healing. Mulrooney argues: “We must understand how place-based memories shaped racial and civic identities in the past and how representations of those identities in public continue to influence race relations in the present” (p. 6).

Coming to terms with a difficult past and searching for authentic representations of the past confounds commemoration activities in many American cities affected by “historical amnesia.” Mulrooney’s work incorporates multidisciplinary understandings of the constructions of race, place, and commemoration. Stressing the value of public history in her chronological treatment of Wilmington, she skillfully uses primary and secondary sources to trace the prerevolutionary antecedents of the 1898 violence, to elaborate the events of that year, and to make connections to subsequent acts of racial injustice. She also discusses her role as a public historian with a one-year appointment at the University of North Carolina Wilmington during commemoration planning. Mulrooney struggles at times to combine her theoretical understandings of race and place with her particularistic chronology of events; however, the book is a well-researched and well-documented must-read for anyone interested in the history of race and place, and it provides an invaluable resource for understanding Wilmington.

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*Redemption and Revolution: American and Chinese New Women in the Early Twentieth Century.* By Motoe Sasaki. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016. x, 225 pp. \$45.00.)

Motoe Sasaki’s *Redemption and Revolution*

examines the ideological backdrop to the interactions between white Protestant American women working as missionaries in China, who identified as New Women, and the native Chinese women they aimed to train for professional lives in education, medicine, and science. Missionaries believed that China’s struggles to achieve “modernity” could be seen in the retrograde cultural attitudes that the Chinese elite held about the social roles of women. As Sasaki argues, American missionaries were surprised to discover that many Chinese women were already committed to winning a form of “independent personhood,” expressed through the idea of *xin nüxing*, “the vernacular term for the New Woman” (pp. 3, 87). Their sense of superiority disrupted, American missionaries instead came to empathize with Chinese pupils who were pursuing a model of feminism intended to empower all (Christian) adherents. White American missionary women, after all, had fought their own battles to justify and explain why it was acceptable for them to forego marriage and reproductive labor in the United States to undertake dangerous work abroad.

Following the 1911 revolution in China, which ended Qing Dynasty rule, Chinese New Women assumed central places in the nation-building projects that missionaries helped initiate. The view that missionary work had succeeded, however, would be short-lived. With the postwar collapse of the Wilsonian platform calling for universal national self-determination and an end to colonial rule, by the mid-1920s American missionaries found themselves recast as imperial agents whose Christianity and foreign allegiances threatened Chinese political and cultural sovereignty. American missionaries were shocked to be lumped together with multinational corporations and politicians as the foreign enemy. Sasaki quotes Elsie Riek, a faculty member at Hwa Nan College in Fuzhou, expressing frustration at the fact that the Chinese public could not “distinguish between us and those who come to exploit the country”—a distinction not as defined as Riek supposed (p. 119). As Sasaki highlights in her conclusion, both Communist China and the United States have been incapable of recalling the nuanced and complicated legacy of partnerships between American missionaries and