

# Promised Lands: Modernity, Utopia and Emancipation in the Black Atlantic



This text sketches a critical account of the location of black intellectuals in the modern world following the end of racial slavery. The book explores the reactions of black writers to modernity's colour-coded promises, demonstrating the value of a politicized post-modernism in re-reading black cultural politics and political culture. The lives and writings of key African Americans such as Martin Delany, W.E.B. Dubois, Frederick Douglass and Richard Wright are examined in the light of their experiences outside the US in Europe and Africa. Gilroy provides an extensive discussion of black vernacular cultures, especially music. Moving beyond debates about modernity that confine it to Europe, *Promised Lands* views the black Atlantic as a transnational alternative to black political theory based, often by default, on conceptions of the nation imported from European letters. The black Atlantic is a hetero-cultural formation in which routes count for as much as roots and travelling and displacement are more usual than permanent fixity. This text should be of interest to students and teachers of English Cultural Studies and African and American Studies, as Gilroy presents a thorough indictment of their institutionalized ethnocentrism and inability to see beyond the structures of cultural nationalism and the borders of the nation state.

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