

Book Review: Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015. ISBN: 978-0812993547 (Hardcover). 152 Pages. \$14.40.

Reviewed by Gary L. Grizzle¹

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In his recent book, *Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates tenders his views on race in America in the form of a letter to his son regarding their shared dismay at the unpunished 2014 police shooting of Michael Brown in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri. Over the course of this meandering work, Coates recounts his childhood in Baltimore; his intellectual development at Howard University; the death of a former college schoolmate at the hands of the police; his heart wrenching visit with the mother of this victim of police brutality; and how he has come to understand the society in which these events have taken place.

Between the World and Me has clearly struck a chord with readers, having spent 31 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list for nonfiction. It has also generated a great deal of attention in the mainstream media, though oddly not in scholarly journals as of yet, with critical responses ranging from celebration, to consternation, to condemnation, to every possible combination of the three. That this work both is both popular and divisive is no surprise given the unevenness of Coates' account, some of which is stellar, and some of which is lamentable.

What is stellar in Coates' account is his depiction of the history of race in America and its impact on citizens, both black and white. While this depiction is long on proclamation and short on documentation, as befits such a personal missive, it nevertheless expresses an understanding of our racial history that is shared by Coates and a host of others, including scholars of many stripes.

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