



The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative (Oxford Handbooks)

John Ernest

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Given the rise of new interdisciplinary and methodological approaches to African American and Black Atlantic studies, *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative* will offer a fresh, wide-ranging assessment of this major American literary genre. The volume will begin with articles that consider the fundamental concerns of gender, sexuality, community, and the Christian ethos of suffering and redemption that are central to any understanding of slave narratives. The chapters that follow will interrogate the various agendas behind the production of both pre- and post-Emancipation narratives and take up the various interpretive problems they pose. Strategic omissions and veiled gestures were often necessary in these life accounts as they revealed disturbing, too-painful truths, far beyond what white audiences were prepared to hear. While touching upon the familiar canonical autobiographies of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, the Handbook will pay more attention to the under-studied narratives of Josiah Henson, Sojourner Truth, William Grimes, Henry Box Brown, and other often-overlooked accounts. In addition to the literary autobiographies of bondage, the volume will anatomize the powerful WPA recordings of interviews with former slaves during the late 1930s. With essays on the genre's imaginative afterlife, its final essays will chart the emergence and development of neoslave narratives, most notably in Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Octavia Butler's provocative science fiction novel, *Kindred*. In short, the Handbook will provide a long-overdue assessment of the state of the genre and the vital scholarship that continues to grow around it, work that is offering some of the most provocative analysis emerging out of the literary studies discipline as a whole.

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