

The American Conversation Series 2013-14
CULTURAL POLITICS * POLITICAL CULTURE
Famous Men of the Negro Race:
African-American Literature and the
Problem of Reconstruction



Amanda Claybaugh
Professor of English at Harvard University

At the turn of the twentieth century, a new generation of African-American authors came into its own. Writing in an array of genres, publishing in an array of venues, holding an array of political views, these authors were nonetheless united in their conviction that the primary purpose of literature was to defend and uplift the race. The result is an idealizing literature, committed to depicting exemplary figures from the present and recounting heroic episodes from the past. But this idealization fails when it comes to Reconstruction. Some authors are contemptuous in their depiction of the African-American men who held office during that era, while others ignore the era entirely, leaving a gap in their histories of the nineteenth century. Why is Reconstruction such a problem for African-American literature? What might this problem tell us about African-American literature more generally?

Thursday, March 20th, 2014
5:30 PM
725 Commonwealth Avenue, CAS Room 200

Free and open to the public * Refreshments to follow

For further information, please contact rabeau@bu.edu or visit www.bu.edu/amnesp

The American Conversation Series is supported by the Boston University Center for the Humanities.