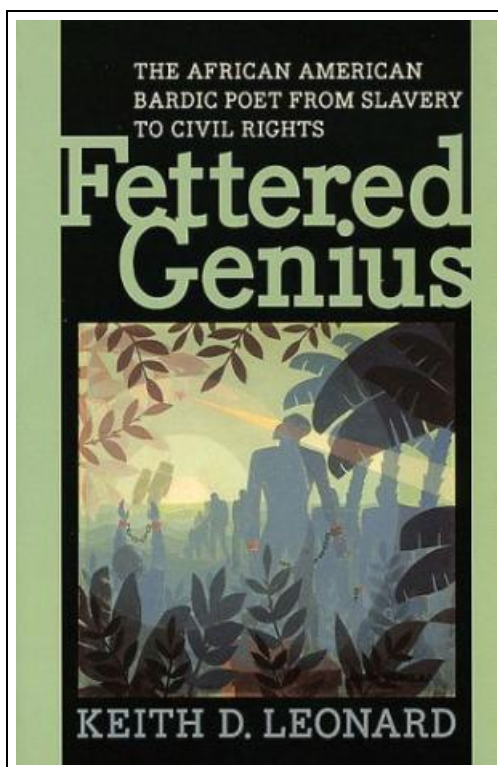


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University of Virginia Press, United States, 2005. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. In *Fettered Genius* , Keith D. Leonard identifies how African American poets use and revision of traditional poetics constituted an antiracist political agency. Comparing this practice to the use of poetic mastery by the ancient Celtic bards to resist British imperialism, Leonard shows how traditional poetics enable African American poets to insert racial experience, racial protest, and African American culture into public discourse by making them features of validated artistic expression. As with the Celtic bards, these poets artistry testified to their marginalized people s capacity for imagination and reason within and against the terms of the dominant culture. In an ambitious survey that moves from slavery to the cultural nationalism of the 1960s, Leonard examines numerous poets, placing each in the context of his or her time to demonstrate the antiracist meaning of their accomplishments. The book offers new insight on the conservatism of Phillis Wheatley, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and the genteel members of the Harlem Renaissance, how their rage for assimilation functioned to refute racist notions of difference and, paradoxically, to affirm a distinctive racial experience as valid material for poetry. Leonard also demonstrates how the more progressive and ethnically distinctive poetics of Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, Gwendolyn Brooks, Robert Hayden, and Melvin B. Tolson share some of the same ambivalence about cultural achievement as those of the earlier poets. They also have in common the self-conscious pursuit of an affirmation of the African American self through the substitution of African American vernacular language and cultural forms for traditional poetic themes and forms. The evolution of these poetics parallels the emergence of notions of ethnic identity over racial identity and, indeed, in some ways even motivated this shift. Leonard recognizes poetic mastery...

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