

**German Studies
Canada Prize for
the Best MA
Thesis in German
Studies
(2019 to 2021)**

Mark Morrison-Reed

Mark Morrison-Reed's was awarded the German Studies Canada Prize for the Best MA Thesis in German Studies (2019 to 2021) for his MA paper "The Trail He Had to Follow: The Odyssey of Vincent. O. Carter" (supervised by John Noyes).

Mark's thesis deals with the writings of Vincent O. Carter, who was born in Kansas City in 1924 and died in Bern, Switzerland in 1983. Carter wrote two major books, *The Bern Book: A Record of a Voyage of the Mind* (completed 1957, published 1973), and *Such Sweet Thunder: A Novel* (completed 1963, published 2003). In choosing to live in Bern, Carter chose a life where he was always conspicuous as a black man, where he had to face racial prejudice or ignorance, or both, but where he, like so many other black Americans of his generation, sought an alternative life to what the USA had to offer. But unlike many other activists, Carter sought a radically humanist view on race, and chose ultimately the path of Eastern spiritualism.

Mark sees the *Bern Book* as dominated by the attempt to conduct what Carter calls "a social scientific study of the city Bern or of the Swiss nation." In Mark's thesis, we discover Carter's ethnography of the

Swiss: "his insights into the Swiss culture and character are ironic or humorous, often sympathetic, at times fanciful and most often astute."

What Mark Morrison-Reed's readings bring to Carter's books is a deep understanding of what it was that produced this innovative and little-read work as well as a compelling case for why we need to pay more attention to them.