

BOOK REVIEWS

BRAZIEL, JANA EVANS & MANNUR, ANITA (Eds.) *Theorizing Diaspora: A reader*. Oxford Blackwell Publishing (2003). 345 pp. pb: C\$29.95; hb: C\$94.54. (ISBN- pb 063123392X, hb 0631233911).

In the study of human societies no trope has had an impact as great as Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" during the last few decades. The geopolitical world has certainly moved beyond the classificatory nation-state, and academic vocabulary has re-invented 'diaspora' to understand the social formation and cultural patterns of the present era, marked as it is by mass movement of people, an information boom and different foci of global influence. Generally 'diaspora' is used to describe deterritorialised and transnational ethnic groups and is used as a type of consciousness, a mode of cultural production and as a social form.

This edited volume, an anthology of past and more recent texts on the subject, provides critical space to delve into a whole range of emergent issues in the field of diaspora. The book is divided into four sections, namely, modernity and globalism, ethnicity and identity, sexuality and gender, and cultural production- all with a diasporic lens. However, there is no water-tight compartmentalization among the sections. The editors set the tone of the book in their introductory essay by pointing to the importance of diaspora studies at the present juncture of human civilization and chart out the future trajectory of the field.

The first section on modernity, globalism and diaspora has two seminal essays by Appadurai and Gilroy. The former delineates the different points of departure in the global cultural economy and highlights the role of imagination using his terminological discussion (ethno, techno, media, finance and media with a suffix- scape) that forms the basis for the analysis of the current global flows. The latter refutes nationalist and essentialist modes of cultural production and charts out the importance of transnational spaces by means of the African diaspora across the Atlantic to Europe and America.

The piece by Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, in the section on ethnicity and identity, looks at (Jewish) group identity as generational and not geographical, one linked with kinship and organized around shared 'spirit'. They propose the model of diaspora to replace national self-determination and also to look at the survival of various ethno-cultural groups historically. Most views on ethnicity do not focus on the process but Radhakrishnan suggests that ethnicity is always in flux and is context-specific. He articulates that the experiences of both the older and younger generations in the (Indian) diaspora can be enriched by understanding the changing realities of the home and the host society. Another valuable essay in this section is by Lowe, who interestingly look at transmission of culture both vertically from one generation to another, and horizontally between communities and across lines of gender, race and national origin. She does not consider the Asian American as a distinct group and brings in heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity in the critical vocabulary to study diasporic communities. This complex cultural change is precisely due to what Bhava calls 'third space' in conjunction with 'third place' (Oldenburg 2001).

In the section on 'Sexuality and Gender', Chow chooses to use the increasing interest in 'women' in the field of Chinese studies as a way to focus the problems of third world intellectuals in the diaspora (pp.164). She perceives the efforts of these intellectuals as using their privileged position for masked hegemony in the homeland. The arguments are novel and attempt to unmask the pseudo third-world scholars thriving in the first-world on issues from back 'home', hand in gloves with the western imperialist agenda. The next chapter by Ifekwunigwe is a feminist auto-ethnography documenting the lived experience of women in diaspora and the multiple displacements of geography and identity. The essay by Manalansan IV looks at the conditions for cultural production, circulation and reception of the international transsexual movement in home (Philippines) and host (New York) junctures.

The section on 'Cultural Identity' has the famous essay by Hall, which looks at identity, cultural practices and cultural production of the African Diaspora (primarily in the Caribbean) in the post-modern era. To Hall, identity is a sense of being as well as becoming depending on the various ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narrative of the past (pp.236). Hall conveys that the modern black cinema provides a repertoire for identification and this is true for all diasporic films. What is also significant is this piece is that reality and representation are both influenced by the discourse of power. Mercer, in his essay, uses the historical frame of diaspora culture to argue that contemporary black British cinema shows identity as heterogeneous, contradictory and hybrid. Gopinath looks at a Sinhalese novel and two Indian films to see how the desire to belong at home is

infected by gender and sexuality and argues that ‘sexuality functions not as an autonomous narrative but instead as immersed within the multiple discourses’ (pp 275). She also highlights the hegemonic nationalist discourses that are reproduced in the diaspora through the details of the Indian Day Parade in New York.

Additional readings are provided at the end of each section and the post-script by Mannur is lively, with the interfacing of cyberspace with diaspora. Nonetheless, the book focuses on cultural issues and is more an attempt to show the cultural theorization of diaspora. The volume has done preliminary work but leaves many issues unattended. For example, education (formal, informal and nonformal) influences identity negotiation and construction significantly, but none of the chosen essays in this volume addresses the education of diasporic communities. The issues in education of the second generation in the diaspora are especially important in shaping their experience of who they are. Also, the efforts of the diasporic community when adapting in the new milieu and the different socio-economic barriers therein along with the role of transnational networks are imperative and cannot be overlooked when playing with the idea for a holistic theorization of diaspora. Gender role change is another significant issue. However, the book is a good collection of some of the important essays and should interest those in cultural studies, international migration, sociology of immigrants and refugees and global changes.

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REVIEW ESSAY:

ON REFLECTING ABOUT ETHICAL KNOWLEDGE AND ACTIONS

ELIZABETH CAMPBELL. *The Ethical Teacher*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press (2003). 178 pp. \$47.95 (ISBN pb 0 335 21218 2)

In their forward to *The Ethical Teacher*, renowned reflective practitioners Andy Hargreaves and Ivor Goodson write: “The time has rarely been more opportune or more pressing to think more deeply about what professional learning, professional knowledge and professional status should look like for the new generation of teachers who will shape the next three decades of public education. . . . Curiously, though almost no attention is paid to the ethical or moral knowledge that teachers need to inform their professional judgments and guide their relations with children, colleagues and others” (pp. x-xi). Elizabeth Campbell’s book *The Ethical Teacher* is bold, courageous and provocative in confronting the question: ‘Whose values, anyway, should define what is right and what is wrong?’