

ably reluctant to reveal directly to anyone else. He even wonders if Ross might just have been "making . . . up" these "revelations" and using him "to discredit his past, to shed scurrilous light on him posthumously—so that the future might judge him less a Puritan than it might otherwise be inclined to" (39), although as the memoir progresses that appears to be less and less a likely possibility. If Ross did fabricate these things, then his own autobiography would stand as an even greater fiction than his first novel. Indeed, as Fraser demonstrates, life and literature are knit together more closely in Ross's case than might previously have been suspected.

False fronts are no surprise to those familiar with Ross's fiction, and Fraser fashions some telling parallels between Ross's front and that of one of his most famous characters: he declares that the most significant false front of *As For Me and My House* is in fact that which covers Philip Bentley's homosexuality, the one front that Mrs. Bentley cannot admit directly to her diary, although subtle and not so subtle clues abound throughout the novel. Philip's fiercely protective love for Steve, the young boy the Bentleys adopt for a time and his strong attachment to the son they adopt from Judith at the end of the novel sound some ominous overtones not generally acknowledged by a "herd of critics" (55) more bent on proving Mrs. Bentley's unreliability as narrator than on seeing her as a convenient disguise and distraction enabling Ross to write himself into his own novelistic fantasy through the carefully crafted persona of Philip Bentley. Through references not just to *As For Me and My House* but to several of Ross's other published and unpublished fictional works, Fraser traces a pattern of his subject's concealed sexual identity furtively expressed through recurring character types.

Through Fraser's analysis of Ross's fiction and his life, what finally emerges is a disturbing yet sympathetic portrait of a man who had never really known love and who unfortunately sought it in loveless encounters in New York Turkish baths, along the Chicago lakeshore, in a Spanish cinema, and in a variety of similar settings, managing to maintain his false sexual front through those many years, while archly expressing the truth through fictional personae. It is an intriguing account, but one whose relevance is, ironically, nevertheless based on the necessity of our accepting Ross's reliability as the narrator of the tale of himself and his body.

NEIL QUERENGESSER



John C. Hawley, ed. *Cross-Addressing: Resistance, Literature and Cultural Borders*. New York: State U of New York P, 1996. Pp. x, 309. \$21.95.

Is the "postcolonial subject" an adequate way to describe the position in which the oppressed find themselves *after* colonialism but during global imperialism? Indeed, to whom does "postcolonial" refer? How

are vastly different and culturally heterogeneous individuals and groups or both able to situate themselves within the relatively recent postcolonial identity constructed for them? And further, how do individuals define themselves who must locate themselves in between a plurality of cultural identities?

The discomfort raised by such questions may strike my reader: this is a discomfort created by the relativism of the project. I claim that this anxiety is not produced by the disruption of a comfortable, homogeneous position, as is commonly thought, but by the neutralization of domination. *Cross-Addressing*, as might be apparent in the title, concerns itself almost entirely with the position of the in-between, indeterminate, heterogeneous zone of being in late capitalism, a heterogeneity which has come to signify the most oppressed subjectivity, and therefore the most liberatory, in the competition for victimized positions. For instance, a symptom of this competition is presented by one of the critics: Bernice Zamora's "Against Extinction: The Native American and Indo-Hispanic Literary Discourse" addresses the violation of the environment, the violation of tribal people's link to the feminine principle, and the brutality committed against women's bodies in particular. At the same time, and in direct opposition to the inclusive gestures made by the editor of the volume, she unabashedly ranks the tribal victimization—"the soul that has lived under siege"—as having "undergone horrors more atrocious than the holocaust" (131). This may well be, but, while one can admire the passion and political commitment articulated by Zamora, the point I want to make is that this type of ranking of oppression or the severity of a violent historical act is ethically troublesome. This ranking also represents one of the ruptures in this volume or perhaps we could see it as one of the vortices in the many discontinuous streams that are yoked together to create, what the editor, John C. Hawley, refers to as the "concern for inclusion" (7) in the investigations of hybridity. Fifteen essays, which focus on a variety of cultural positions of the subjects of the papers and the interpreting critics, are included in this volume. On the one hand, the reader could see this as a gesture of "inclusion"; on the other, one might question the relativism as little more than the common liberal gesture made by those who wish to dominate and control oppressed voices by placing them all under the single term, hybrid, which furthermore only signifies a new norm.

As Hawley puts it in his introduction to this collection of essays, the primary concern is the "heightened consciousness that we hope to discuss . . . that painful sensitivity forced upon those who stand irrevocably in two worlds" (9). It appears that while the painful sensitivity is forced upon the dual consciousness, Hawley also wants to claim that, quoting Richard A. Schweder, "we are multiple from the start" (1), and one assumes he intends this multiplicity to be formative for all people, including the oppressors. Concomitantly, one is drawn to the

editor's removal of the element of choice from this painful, anxiety-ridden cultural schizophrenia. This erasure of free-will is surely at odds with the majority of essays in the volume which explore the various subject and interpreting positions, which, as Mayfair Mei-Hui Yang notes in "Chinese-US Border Crossings," can best be considered through the deployment of Abdul JanMohamed's theorization of "four types of modern border crossings between the Third World and the West: those of exile, immigrant, colonialist, and scholar/anthropologist" (230). Evidently, these four categories within the signifying system of postcolonial migrant border-crossing all at least minimally imply an element of choice: no category, for instance, exists for the exploited in the metropole of the First World, and the complicit nature of oppression is thereby stressed, perhaps too much so.

Yang's article is symptomatic of the problems with *Cross-Addressing*; a common levelling of position has to occur between the interpreter and the subject of the text and this must be done by interrupting the traditional binaries, which have to be created and mystified in the first instance. Yang situates herself "as neither insider nor outsider, both subject and object of knowledge" and therefore proposes to decentre the traditional binaries of centre and periphery; in her subject matter, the metropole and periphery are addressed through the consideration of "West or of Chinese tradition." But she fails to notice that if these binaries of East and West are no longer secure, or if they ever were (perhaps they were more of a mystification of the North and South, as theorized by Samir Amin in *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World*), then Yang cannot, with any accuracy, make the claim, as she does, that "the adoption of Western social evolutionism, Marxism, or a discourse of modernity led to wholesale rejection and self-inflicted destruction of Chinese culture" (222). In Yang's case, since China had engaged in its own "Western" imperialism before its specific type of Marxism—Maoism—the arbitrary lines drawn between a pure "Chinese culture" and (a Western) Marxism, constitute a wholly inadequate basis upon which to theorize "the border crossings of anthropological subjectivity" (230). Yang does briefly note that something was awry in China before Marxism, but such is the type of eclectic critique characteristic of this volume of essays; a thorough examination of resistance literature needs to consider the social and economic relations involved in the choice of exile or immigration, or not, in order to draw a homology in the anthropological subjectivity and her desire to "go native" in an act of empathetic "will[ing] her own homelessness" (232). Like Yang, other authors make numerous, if subtle, unelaborated cuts at Marxism (that is, "Western" thought); for instance, Roger Bromley's essay, which is intended to conclude and sum-up the concerns of the volume (though partially, of course), situates Amin's *Eurocentrism* in opposition to "a universalist Marxist alternative" (278), a master narrative. The "failure" of Eurocentrism (has it "failed"?) and the "fall" of

communism (Eastern Europe) signify for Bromley little more than a disruption in syntax, which is actually the most revolutionary act, the anti-mimetic gesture. Since Amin is a well-known Marxist thinker, we might find this interpretation of *Eurocentrism* somewhat humorous, and Amin might even find somewhat disturbing the effort to parallel his strategy of delinking with the Bakhtinian carnival and dialogical method of writing (see Bromley 279).

The bulk of essays do indeed seem to be concerned with a type of spiritual homelessness, which certainly exists in Americanized individualism—as does the objective, material category of the homeless. Still, the use of JanMohamed's phrase "homelessness-as-home" (Yang and Bromley) to ground the state of intellectual malaise alongside the sociological concept of "habitus" (Yang) most recently made famous in its Bourdieusian configuration (which we should note is not credited or elaborated), is not particular to a postcolonial subject, unless that subject position generally signifies the specific anxiety of the petite-bourgeoisie in its capitalist development. Indeed, the designation of an "emergent postcolonial self" (15) made by Lyn McCredden in her article "Toward a Critical Solidarity: (Inter)change in Australian Aboriginal Writing," is curious: while beginning her article by questioning the accuracy of the status of postcoloniality for the white critic and the common element of condescension (13) present in the white critic's writing on "the monolith 'Aboriginal Literature,'" she wants to subvert the traditional binaries of "colonizer and colonized" (15). What is intended by "emergent" is far from clear, since McCredden characterizes the "Western polarizations [of] spiritual/material [as] being tested in the emerging discourses." She perhaps forgets the category of spiritual materialism characteristic of early "Western" materialists and falls into, by fiat as it were, a pure association of a holistic primitivism and immediacy with the oppressed. In McCredden's case, the word "atavistic," the compulsively regressive, is perhaps more accurate than "emergent."

McCredden's paper represents the overwhelmingly liberal tone of *Cross-Addressing: Resistance Literature and Cultural Borders*, which searches for an "imaginative forgiveness" (31) given to the perpetrator by the victim; the implication is that we can no longer make such categorical distinctions. But an old question must be posed before we too quickly celebrate in our imaginary reconciliations and little redemptions; that is, does the perpetrator warrant forgiveness? Along with Teresa Ebert, I am drawn to question this type of sentimentalization of exploitation and the question becomes not whether the victim is complicit with the victimizer, but rather, whether this type of sentimentalization is complicit with imperialism? (see Ebert 297), which, according to Ebert, "occludes an explanatory critique (as guidelines for praxis), replacing it with empathy" (297). Explanation is needed, rather than pure description of this intellectual anxiety about the fragmented; in

order to subvert binaries those binaries must still exist and therefore a socioeconomic explanation for their existence seems necessary.

There are essays in this collection that aim at considering the element of class and exploitation in the willing of an identity; for instance, Nejd Yaziji ("Exile and Politics of (Self) Representation: The Narrative of Bounded Space and Action in Sahar Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns*") seeks to understand the economic complexities involved in the celebrationist approach to a national Palestinian identity. In this essay, we see the uniqueness of Palestine's case. Yaziji is able to bring forth the problem involved in a pure discussion of cultural identity as opposed to socioeconomic identity; in fact the two cannot be separated, which does not mean that every subject who is unable to choose a cultural identity is the exploited or oppressed subject of history, as Yaziji seems to imply. Yaziji notes that the homogenous category of a Palestinian identity may be inadequate, however, since there is an economic hierarchy within that category between the landed Palestinian workers (99). What the attention to socioeconomic factors signifies is that, more often, we find it inadequate to theorize consciousness through the singular position of the cultural, and we thus need to make alliances through the intersectoral points of socioeconomic relations while moving through the cultural.

We make decisions concerning which side we are on in the struggle for liberation, and the errant literati depicted in the majority of essays must certainly be viewed as a middle-class striving to define its position in relation to global capitalism. *Cross-Addressing: Resistance Literature and Cultural Borders* clarifies the problem with the in-between space of the rigorously non-identical: if this category is so relativized, do we not now have to assert the possibility that the situational consciousness of flux has come to be almost as reductive as our old transcendental position of the knowing subject? Some groundwork has been laid by this book to create a bridge for the in-between and the genuinely exploited, but it should be clear that one cannot be perpetrator and ally unless one is satisfied with the role of chameleon.

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