

## Book Reviews

**Vered Amit-Talai and Caroline Knowles (eds). *Re-Situating Identities: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*. (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 1996). 313 pp., \$21.95.**

While the lead title of this book, *Re-Situating Identities*, is entirely on target, the subtitle, *The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*, is far off the mark. The book is primarily about identity. It has precious little to do with politics. This might be apparent from the contributors, whom the editors identify as sociologists, anthropologists, and cultural theorists. There is not a political scientist among them. The omission, however, is not necessarily indicative of an absence of politics, because sociologists, anthropologists, and cultural theorists often write good politics. That is not the case in this instance. Though the editors make allusions to the politics of scholars and postmodernists and though there are references to politics in some of the articles, this book is not a study of politics.

*Re-Situating Identities* contains a general introduction and four parts, each of which has its own introduction. The titles of the four parts are: I, Race and Racism; II, The Politics of Identity; III, Memory and Histories; and IV, Nationalism and Transnationalism. Contributing to the twelve chapter discussions are the editors, each of whom has authored a chapter, and twelve other scholars; two of the chapters are co-authored. Most of the scholars (10) are based in Canada or the U.K. The other four have appointments in the U.S. The editors indicate that the work examines race, ethnicity and culture primarily in the three sites: Canada, the U.K., and the U.S., but it is largely an examination of the subjects in Canada and the U.K. There is one article specifically about a case in the U.S., but there is also one specifically about a case in Germany. Most of the articles are case studies. Two are specifically literature reviews of discrete subjects.

The weakest parts of the book are those contributed by the editors. Their general introduction and the introductions to each part are extraordinarily abstract and obscure. Deeply steeped in post modernist vocabulary, they are all but incomprehensible. Additionally, the two articles they contribute are among the weakest in the collection. Apart from being "conceptually. . .provocative," there seems little rationale for combining these twelve articles together in a single volume, just as there appears to be little commonality among the articles in each of the four parts. There is also a weakness in the overall conceptualization of the work. The lead article, by Robert Miles and Rudy Torres, goes to great lengths to abjure the concept of race as an analytical construct in the social sciences, yet the book's subtitle enshrines "Race" as one of its key terms.

Most of the articles examine some aspect of identity: national, ethnic, gender, religious, regional, cultural, local, and/or various combinations of them. On these points many of the articles reveal insights or develop conceptualizations that are strikingly acute. Chapter 3 and the last two parts of the book are particularly strong in this respect.

Despite its substantial weaknesses, the book is an important one. It should be read by Ethnic Studies scholars, especially in the U.S. It broadens one's exposure to important scholarship taking place outside the U.S. (most of the articles have substantial bibliographies). It is a fusillade against the parochialism of U.S. scholarship. The articles abound with brilliant insights, fresh perspectives and neglected subjects of investigation.

*Re-Situating Identities* is an astounding revelation of the illumination that different vantage points can bring to the profound complexities of the human condition.

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**Arjun Appadurai. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 1996). 229 pp., \$18.95 paper.**

*Modernity at Large* is a collection of essays (most of which are reprinted from other sources, e.g., *Public Culture*) that link the themes of modernity and globalization to contemporary everyday social practice, and to group individual identity construction and expression. Appadurai takes up the conditions of modernity which for him include science as a dominant ideology, obsession with technological development, colonial social relations, and the primacy of national communities. Weaving these conditions with issues of globalization, which he defines as instantaneous worldwide telecommunications (phone, fax, and internet), in-