

Notes

¹Fredrik Barth, ed. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. (Bergen-Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969).

²Maxine Hong Kingston. *A Woman Warrior*. (New York: Random House, 1975); Richard Rodriguez. *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1982).

Critique

John Hatfield's discussion of identity and ethnicity in an increasingly wider, abstract, and problematical context is an extended definition of the current dilemma. I suspect Hatfield intends to offer an essentially optimistic statement, but for many readers questions and doubts may remain, if not predominate.

For example, Hatfield's citation of Higham on the relationship between the Copernican revolution and racism reminds us that every revolution provokes reactionary impulses in the cultural and political body. Is it inevitable that the forces of revolution and transcendence will prevail? Similarly, Hatfield offers the observation that pluralism and its fragmentation of the whole and assimilation and its elimination of the parts seem unnecessarily messy and neat, respectively. Further, adversarial relationships between ethnic cultures and the "superculture" seem endemic in their interaction. But while Higham's "pluralistic integration" may be the *tertium quid*, history suggests that what usually "unites us as a nation" is less often Copernican vision than the intolerance of international antagonism and hostility—that is, war or our fear of it.

In fact, Hatfield makes us aware that culture-transcending shared experience—the enabling stuff of the ideal macro-culture—is presently identifiable only in negative terms; the "common culture" is a fiction that exists most concretely in terms of what it is not. We know that it is not the shared experience of "marketplace [American] society," the ubiquitous popular culture of the electronic media, big business, and government. We know it is not the "national superculture" life of higher

education in cahoots with all of these. Hatfield leaves us stuck with the question of how to move from the affirmative securities of local authenticity (South Boston or Chinatown, for example) to existence on a higher plane, envisioned but not experienced.

In specific terms: How, in fact, do we reverse the one-way current of the electronic superculture? How does transcendence emerge, given (for example) the “evil empire” rhetoric of eschatological nationalism and ideology? How do colleges and universities help generate the dialogue necessary to transcendence of local context and self? Will higher education vacate the marketplace of grantsmanship in its affirmation of the marketplace of ideas? The current trend seems in the opposite direction. Will the universities and colleges generate, implement, and promote strategies for multicultural discourse, and what academic or academy-related forms will they take? The habits of mind that the academy seems most anxious to nurture today are in fact those of the “real” (read “marketplace”) world of finite satisfactions.

—Neil Nakadate

Critique

To be human is to have an identity. Indeed, it is what ethnicity is about. However, as a theoretical or methodological prescription for ethnic studies, as advocated by Hatfield, identity is inadequate even within the categories he has specified. Hatfield seems to be asking theoretical analysts to do what artists, novelists, and philosophers do best because they explore the existential and phenomenological aspects of ethnic identity in depth and usually with greater authenticity. This does not mean that there is no need for self-discovery and understanding in ethnic studies. There are equally pressing non-identity issues with which ethnic studies must also deal. Ethnic studies should be concerned with economics, for instance, with power or lack thereof. It should also be concerned with the analysis of public policies that impinge on ethnic and minority groups.

Hatfield is correct in pointing out that we do not live in one cultural context in America. As a matter of fact, very few countries in the world