

Locating Race: Global Sites of Post-Colonial Citizenship Malini Johar Schueller (2009). New York: SUNY Press. 247 pages. ISBN: 978-0-7914-7682-6

How does one make sense of race in view of the universalism that underpins popular theories on globalization, cosmopolitanism, and postcolonialism? Malini Johar Schueller's latest book offers a bold and thoughtful discussion on this question. Written as a critical response to liberal theorists who increasingly declare notions of race and imperialism to be outdated (p.7), she contemplates an impressive number of wide-ranging sites that variously illustrate what she describes as "the unholy alliance of imperialism abroad and racism at home" (p. 3). Opening her book with a reflection on hurricane Katrina, Schueller points out that the responses to this disaster reveal the symbiosis of structural racism and imperialism and "powerfully remind us of the existence of 'internal colonies'" (p.124). In her conclusion, Schueller offers up the example of Rachel Corrie – a young American member of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) who was run over by an Israeli military bulldozer in Palestine in 2003 while she was trying to prevent the demolition of a Palestinian home. Schueller explains that because Corrie was represented as having 'crossed over' to being on the side of Palestinians, her death failed to incite empathy in the USA.

With these bookended examples, and the chapter length sites that are explored in much greater depth, Schueller's ambitious project succeeds at highlighting the dangers of postmodernist disavowals of racial hierarchies, and defends the utility of continuing to think of race as a central axis in contemporary societies. While *Locating Race* builds on other works that examine race vis-à-vis globalization (Bhattacharyya, Gabriel, & Small 2002; Winant 2001), it makes its own significant contributions. Most notably, it demonstrates the "tactical ways in which postcolonial theory and critical race studies can come together" (p. 2). Moreover, while being clear that her use of the "post" in postcolonialism does not imply that colonialism is no longer a daily reality for indigenous populations, Schueller explores the potential of what she calls "post-colonial citizenship" to capture and invoke the possibilities for activism "in ways that purely national conceptions of citizenship or postcolonial solidarities do not" (p. 4). In so doing, she extends her discussion beyond the theoretical to inform how racialized power may be disrupted at a practical level.

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, the book is divided into three sections, each of which contains two chapters. Part 1, entitled "Racial erasure in global theory," is primarily theoretical in focus and revisits the contentious concepts of the politics of location and universalism first through the works of postcolonial theorists (namely Bhabha, Appadurai, and Spivak), and second, through the ways in which white feminist theorists have attempted to attend to 'difference'. Although I was persuaded by Schueller's articulation of these theoretical accounts, I thought that the chapter on white feminist theories could have been strengthened through the incorporation of more recent critical feminist scholarship on questions of universalism and difference. In particular, I am thinking of Sunera Thobani's (2007) work on post 9/11 feminist responses to the 'war on terror' in which she illustrates the insidious ways in which such responses

inadvertently reposition whiteness as innocent of imperialist histories and present complicities.¹

Part 2 focuses on specific sites of cultural production. Chapter four examines questions of migration in three texts authored by post 1965 immigrants of the Indian diaspora in the US, to reveal both the ways in which they are shaped through the mainstream *orientalist* understandings of race, and the interplay of race and class within such narratives. One of the texts explored here is the novel *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee. Schueller's analysis of this novel reveals, among other things, the ways in which a new underclass is created by global capitalism and how racial-cultural recognition is necessary for socioeconomic mobility (p. 124). Chapter five explores the provocative artwork of Tseng Kwong Chi who dresses in a Mao suit and photographs himself in front of popular western tourist sites including the World Trade Centre, Checkpoint Charlie, and the Eiffel Tower. The attention Schueller pays to this self-portrait series entitled *East Meets West* certainly invites contemplation on racialized conceptions and experiences of travel and movement.

It is the third part of Schueller's book, entitled "Possibilities for post-colonial citizenship," that is likely to be of most interest to readers of this journal, especially those of us who seek to educate through anti-racist and anti-imperialist frameworks. It offers pedagogically very useful material that could be used in classes as an exemplary model of a nuanced critical race analysis. Most significantly, it effectively demonstrates the mutual dependencies between gender, race, citizenship and nationalism within colonialism and imperialism. Schueller explains that one of her objectives in this section is "to analyze the ways in which particular, antiracist resistances appeal to specific constituencies and forge larger, subaltern connections through this particularity" (p.124). To this end, she focuses on Assata Shakur's *Autobiography* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* not only because these two authors are highly significant political figures who identify with and speak on behalf of their respective communities (p.124) but more importantly because, as Schueller puts it, "both establish connections between what has been and now by blasting open the continuum of history" (p.132).

Drawing on the example of Shakur in chapter six, Schueller makes very evident her central thesis: the necessity of 'locating race' by examining the specificities of how groups are oppressed and resist both at the level of the nation-state and through transnational networks. In examining Shakur's own accounts of her fascinating trajectory – involvement with the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army, being charged with murder, incarceration and escape from prison, and subsequent life in exile in Cuba – Schueller convincingly argues for the need to challenge postmodern narratives of hybridity, fluidity and liminality. Rather, readers come to see that many significant insights on national and transnational revolutionary projects can be gleaned by considering the material conditions of racial oppression as they manifest through Shakur's life. As Schueller explains, "at one level, Shakur is interested in demonstrating the representativeness of her life as a black woman as she encounters the realities of segregation, racism, sexism, and black poverty. Such conditions, it is implied, are prime for the fomenting of a larger revolutionary consciousness" (p. 132) Indeed, from this chapter we learn that given Shakur's insistence that her political exile in Cuba be recognized as part of a history of slavery, her exile can clearly therefore not "be read through the generalized discourses of liminality or border crossing" (p.142).

The most impressive aspect of Schueller's analysis lies in its determination to grapple with the thorniest of issues related to race, imperialism and resistance. Without a doubt, this is gutsy scholarship that manages to avoid the facile prescriptive tone that can be found in the work of many of its contemporaries. This is perhaps most evident in chapter seven where she offers an analysis of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. Silko is a self-described mixed Laguna, Pueblo, Mexican, and white race author whose acclaimed writings variously address complex issues of justice for indigenous people, including land reclamation and coalitions between racially oppressed groups. *Almanac of the Dead*, which takes place in the American Southwest and Central America, moves in time from the present, to the past, and incorporates mythological storytelling and prophecy to explore the social, the moral, and the spiritual effects of colonialism. In her examination of this novel, Schueller takes on the exploration of post-race politics and the possibilities for cross-racial coalitions. While others have erroneously, if not problematically, interpreted Silko's vision of transracial solidarity alliances as being spiritually driven, Schueller sharply dismisses such readings to show instead that it is a vision that both depends on and derives its energy from "specific affective, material, and political histories" (p.161). Put differently, Schueller makes clear that Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* does not espouse a post-racial politics but rather illustrates the importance of the particularity of different racial politics in forging cross-racial networks.

Although Silko's text is primarily concerned with coalitions between racially oppressed (or subaltern) groups, its message resonates more broadly for considering the possibilities of solidarity across vastly asymmetrical relations in racialized power. Schueller's incisive reading of Silko's text was especially illuminating for my own work which has examined the deployment of whiteness as a racialized privilege in transnational solidarity activism, including the ISM and the case of Rachel Corrie (see Mahrouse 2009, 2008). In particular, Schueller's insistence on locating race against the fictive universalism of globalization theories strongly suggests the importance of noticing the relations of power in white solidarity practices. This point is elaborated further in the conclusion of her book where in considering Corrie's activism as a form of political miscegenation Schueller maintains that race was not transcended though it, but rather points towards the precariousness of trading with race privilege in an era of fiercely-racialized nationalisms.

Impressive in its interdisciplinarity and thoroughness, this is a highly relevant text for those interested in questions of pedagogy and/or cultural inquiry. Schueller's book explores enables an honest and grounded exploration on both the possibilities and the limits of resistance in antiracism activism and scholarship – questions that are vital significance to our students, given the politics of our era.

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Notes

¹ For example, examining Judith Butler's book *Precarious Life*, Thobani draws attention to the fact that Butler's text is primarily a discussion of shared vulnerability, Thobani's point is that despite the fact that

Butler cautions against the assumption of a universally shared human condition, her analysis nevertheless repeatedly and explicitly reproduces it. (pp. 176-177)

References

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