Review: [Untitled]

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In their essay on immigrants and established residents working in the Kansas beef-packing industry, for example, Stull and his colleagues show that the restructuring of the industry has affected interethnic relations in the plants themselves as well as in the wider community. Horton discusses how massive demographic and economic changes in the Los Angeles suburb of Monterey Park, including the enormous Asian influx and new Asian economic dominance, have affected political relations between newcomers and established residents. In a fascinating chapter on a Houston apartment complex, Hagan and Rodriguez show that during a period of economic decline, management actively sought out Central American tenants, but when the economy began to recover and there was an upturn in the housing market, exclusionary policies were instituted that had the effect of "shutting the window of opportunity for new intergroup relations" (p. 168).

Violent conflict may be sensational and attract media attention, but there is little of it in this book. Indeed, there is often a lack of interaction between newcomers and established residents, a product, Lamphere argues in her introduction, of the structuring of the labor process at work, scheduling of classes and extracurricular programs at school, and landlords' policies in apartment complexes. Grenier and Stepick speak of the multiethnic workplaces they studied in the Miami construction and apparel industries as primarily worlds of ethnic isolation, where workers tended to associate mainly on the basis of national origin, race, and language. In some of the Philadelphia schools that Goode, Schneider, and Blanc studied, relations among students were largely structured by race and ethnicity, although in other schools these boundaries were often transcended as immigrant children formed friendships with classmates from established resident families.

In all the Philadelphia schools studied, children crossed ethnic boundaries in their relationships more often than adults. In the dilapidated, ethnically diverse Chicago tenement that is the focus of Conquergood's essay, children were what he calls "threshold-crossers and boundary-blurrers" as they played together in the courtyard (p. 116). Adults of different ethnic backgrounds in the building were also drawn together, in adversity, as they cooperated to deal with the chronic state of disrepair, breakdowns, and emergencies.

In sum, Structuring Diversity is a most welcome addition to the literature on the new wave of immigration. Not confined to one city, the book shows that America's newcomers are an increasingly important presence across the country, from a small Kansas city to a Los Angeles suburb. By focusing on particular institutions, the essays are able to document the complex and intricate dynamics that develop as new immigrants and established residents react to and relate to each other. And while the accounts are rich in ethnographic detail, they highlight, at the same time, the role of larger economic and political forces in shaping interethnic relations in our increasingly multicultural society.


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Founded in 1947 by an African writer, Alioune Diop, and a French philosopher, Jacques Howett, Présence Africaine started as a journal of African and Africanist writing and culture. It quickly became a leading publisher, a cultural foundation, a shaper of cultural attitudes, and a cultural formation on its own. Authorized by the leading radical French intellectuals of the day, Présence's authors included French Africanists and anthropologists, such as Balandier and Leiris, as well as African and African diaspora writers. Présence brought to public attention leading African writers from the generation of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Richard Wright, and Cheik Anta Diop through young African writers and artists in West Africa and Paris today.

Présence chose as its mission the rehabilitation of African culture viewed from the connected perspectives of the West and newly independent African nations. Asserting the "dignity" of African cultures was a major task and program of the Présence apparatus, but it was and remains inclusive in its program, asserting, in the words of founder Alioune Diop's opening editorial, that "This journal . . . wishes to be open to the collaboration of all men of good will [white, yellow, or black] capable of helping us to define African originality and to hasten its insertion into the modern world" (p. xii).

Présence was the leading publisher of the literature of Négritude, as well as of its more Afrocentric opponents, such as Cheik Anta Diop. It inaugurated the debate over whether
African cultural advances had to be articulated in the languages and forms of the imperial West or could be captured in a language and authenticity of their own. African history and culture were debated in its pages. But it did not escape from criticism itself. Présence remains a French institution, and has been reproached for articulating its critique of cultural and economic imperialism in the terms of imperial discourse and for remaining on imperial soil. The enduring question is whether a counterhegemonic institution such as Présence can escape hegemonic discourse if it articulates its work in the language of hegemony. As long as Présence accepts hierarchical conceptions of the world, its critics state, it will reproduce cultural discrimination in the name of combating it.

All this and more is covered in the 26 contributions that make up this hefty volume. The Surrupitious Speech is divided into six sections: (1) “Text and Context,” which examines the history and contents of the journal itself, (2) “The Question of an African History,” which contains essays that discuss the contrasts between popular and academic history and the role of cultural nationalism in the formulation of concepts of African history, (3) “Alienation, Voices and Writing,” a section that explicitly addresses the issue of defining African identity in foreign contexts and using alien forms, (4) “Philosophy and the Practice of Everyday Life,” which takes up issues related to attitudes toward cultural diversity, how to translate foreign concepts from one cultural system into another, and critiques of contemporary African institutions and politics. The two concluding sections are taken up with (5) “A Dialogue on Présence Africaine” and (6) multiple “Conclusions” on such topics as the “politics of Othering,” cultural nationalism, and liberation.

There are many excellent essays in this volume; most notable among them are Anthony Appiah’s plea for an African philosophy that moves beyond the now sterile debate over whether African discourse can be dignified by the term philosophy, and Paulin Hountondji’s two essays critiquing the way in which the world system orients scientific knowledge and practice in the periphery to the metropole, and how the organization of everyday life defeats all attempts at change in West Africa. Denis-Constant Martin and Emmanuel Terray critique the exceptionalism of African studies and the failure of Marxist thinkers to use the full array of conceptual tools available to them. Kwasi Wiredu argues that criticisms of the failure to adequately translate concepts from Western to African cultural systems implicitly construct unchanging African cultures, and Elizabeth Mudimbe-Boyé examines the image of Africa in the literature of the Harlem Renaissance in a way that shows how the construction of an other is a universal phenomenon that takes its specificity from a cultural and historical locus.

This unresolved tension between the universal and the specific, at the heart of cultural and social anthropology, animated the debates contained in the pages of Présence. Christopher Miller argues that Présence inaugurated a “surrupitious speech” in which Western claims to own the universal were criticized in the very language of the Western Enlightenment inheritance. This “sterile narcissism” as Alioune Diop called it, is as much a part of the cultural environment today as it was at the end of World War II. Présence has much to teach us as we debate multiculturalism and political correctness. This extraordinary compendium should be part of the paraphernalia of anyone concerned with cultural equity and cultural institutions. Présence’s struggles and Présence’s fidelity to its ideals of cultural criticism and inclusionary practice provide models we badly need at the current moment.


ROBERT LAWLESS
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As every anthropologist knows, the Tasaday burst onto the international scene in 1971 with sensational reports from journalists and filmmakers about a “Stone Age” people living in the forest of Mindanao in the province of Cotabato. They allegedly survived only on wild food, wore leaves for clothing, and knew nothing about the outside world. Only a few scientists were allowed by the Philippine government to study the Tasaday, and then only for a few days. In 1974, the government declared the Tasaday off-limits to everyone. Then, after the fall of President Marcos in 1986, sensational reports again emerged, primarily from print and broadcast journalists, claiming that the whole thing had been a hoax and that the Tasaday did not exist. Many of the journalistic accounts emphasized that