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Mireille Rosello, *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2001. 211 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 US (cl). ISBN: 0-8047-4232-4. \$24.95 US (pb). ISBN: 0-8047-4267-7.

Review by David H. Slavin, Rice University.

This timely book anticipated the wave of anti-immigrant reactions revealed by the spring elections in France and other European Union (EU) states. Rosello explores the interaction of cultural mores of hospitality with immigration policies towards migrants from France's former colonies in West and North Africa. As in an earlier work on stereotypes,^[1] Rosello selects narrative cinema, novels, philosophy, fables, and several political *affaires* which reflect misunderstandings and conflicting values between French hosts and North African "guests." Her current work explores these issues in relationship to "hospitality," demonstrating how host-guest conventions are shaped by gender as well as race and how host-guest relations are misinterpreted and redefined based on inequalities of power. Confusion arises in the discourse of hospitality, she says, because it is imbricated with economic issues of imported labor and political issues of social control. In moments of misunderstanding, when host or guest feels mistreated or abused, when one party reacts with excessive or insufficient hospitality or gratitude according to the other, cultural politics gives way to immigration policy. Stereotyping and distrust of the subordinated groups are expressed in France and other EU states through flexing the state's coercive muscle power, such as recent threats by the EU to cut off aid if poor countries don't restrict emigration.

Rosello explores a different theme in each of the five chapters: first, how the state restricts and controls private hospitality while pretending to model itself after it; second, the perverse consequences of universalizing one idealized form of hospitality; third, new forms of hospitality dictated by cross-cultural contact of postcolonial situations; fourth, moving beyond law to language, culture, literature, and how hosts act as teachers; fifth, private and domestic aspects of hospitality. She employs familiar cultural studies methods, drawing readers her insights by juxtaposing current events and social commentary in film and novels such as Didier van Cauwelaert's *Un Aller Simple* ("A One-way Ticket"). This 1994 Goncourt prizewinner tells a tale of Aziz, a young man of indeterminate origin, orphaned as a child, grudgingly adopted and raised by Gypsies. They procure a forged Moroccan identity card for him because it's cheaper than a French one, hence his name. Caught by French police and deported under regulations introduced in 1993 by Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, he is sent to a village that existed only in the imagination of the forger, an elegant satire of the absurdities of Pasqua's policies.

Two other literary texts elaborate on the social contradictions of immigrant life. The travel narrative/guide book written by writer-publisher François Maspero and photographer Anaïk Frantz, *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*, describes a trip to the Paris *banlieues* and makes the point that Paris is as remote to their residents as rural farmworkers once were to nineteenth-century city dwellers. From interviews and autobiographical reminiscences in Yamina Benguigui's *Mémoires d'immigrés*, Rosello selects a particular recollection of failed hospitality based on a cultural misunderstanding. Benguigui's mother asks her to bring a plate of little cakes to a (European) neighbors. Part of the feast of Aïd, marking the end of Ramadan, these gifts are made in the name of a dead relative, but the neighbor

rejects them with a curt, "I don't know that uncle of yours." The rebuff reflects not only European ignorance but the privilege Europeans have to remain ignorant.

The films Rosello scrutinizes are part of a growing body of works on immigrants in France. *Salut cousin!* by director Merzak Allouache retells a fable by Jean de la Fontaine, "The Town Rat and the Country Rat" (1668), with a twist. The country rat, Alilo, learns that the sweet life he has tasted must be lived in constant fear of the cat, but instead of returning home he finds himself settled in Paris although he fully intended to spend only a few days delivering "trabendo" (contraband). Meanwhile his cousin, Mok, a second-generation *beur*, is deported, another absurd inversion such as van Cauwelaert explored in *Un Aller Simple*.

Another acclaimed film, *La Promesse* (1996), a dark tale from Belgian directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, explores the intricate and inextricable bonds that tie illegal immigrants and their "legal" employers to each other. Roger employs illegals to build his house, and a man from Burkina Faso, Hamidou, is injured. By refusing to take him to a hospital for fear of legal complications, Roger causes Hamidou's death. Before he dies, Hamidou extracts from Roger's son Igor a promise to take care of his wife Assita and infant child. Roger forces Igor to help hide the body, interring it in the concrete foundation. His loyalties torn, Igor helps Assita, but hides Hamidou's real fate from her until the end of the film. The revelation profoundly transforms the relationship between them. I will return to this theme later.

Postcolonial Hospitality reflects strengths and limitations common to cultural studies. It is based on extracts from works that are themselves extracted from a vast array of cultural texts. And, of course, a reviewer can do little more than extract again, oversimplifying the author's subtle and supple analysis. The "representation problem," that is, how the texts reflect public opinion and how they contribute to shaping popular attitudes, poses a challenge to cultural criticism and history. In Rosello's case, this text-context dialectic is less a question of whether a text can stand on its own, for she is clearly contextualizing, than of whether her particular texts interface with the socio-political context she provides. Rosello cleverly, perceptively, often brilliantly juxtaposes texts and politics in ways that add up to more than the sum of the parts. But I perceive a need for a "unified field theory" (to use the expression that denotes the holy grail of particle physics and cosmology) to combine the "quarks" of gender-race-class and to locate a middle range of analysis between hospitality and the grand scheme of things.

Postcolonial analysis gives race, gender, and class a central place in understanding culture, but treats them as separate factors. But this factoring often leads to clumsy and dogmatic readings, especially of the text-context issue. Rosello is anything but clumsy, yet there is an unevenness in the attention she gives to each of the factors and how they legitimate or undermine cultural hegemony and authority. The triad needs an intermediate level of analysis of social control to weld the components into a useful tool to critique specific contexts such as stereotypes, immigration, hospitality, etc. The rest of this review suggests an approach to the search for a unified theory and how it would strengthen contemporary cultural criticism of modern, racially stratified societies. Specifically, it attempts a synthesis of the concepts of Gramsci's hegemony, Theodore W. Allen's white skin privilege, and Gerda Lerner's gender and suggests taking into consideration the role of the "white worker" to aid in the explorations of immigration.

The characteristics of racial inequality within a working class, privilege and subordination, lead to peculiar behavior by the privileged. They accept exploitation and transfers of wealth passively yet retaliate massively when threats to privilege arise. They act as deputies of ruling elites, and the deputization concept derives from the history of gender, particularly Gerda Lerner's *Creation of Patriarchy*, which describes the role elite women have played as stand-ins for male relatives.[2] When they introduce race, those who use gender analysis methods tend to ignore the privileged yet exploited

strata, the "white worker." Critical Race Theory also ignores the white worker as the main agent of social control.[3] Theodore William Allen's *The Invention of the White Race*, however, starts from the premise that race is not only a social construct but a construct of social control, of privilege rather than simply identity. In this two-volume study of the origins of racial slavery in seventeenth-century Virginia, Allen sees the propertied class's "invention" as a stratum whose condition of privilege is to serve as deputies as well as workers. They police their own ranks as well as those of subordinated peoples of color and suppress class solidarity, which is inimical to their privileges and hence to their status as whites.[4] Allen's and Lerner's views on deputization lead me to some conclusions about Rosello's work on hospitality.

In her first chapter, Rosello discusses the occupation of the Church of Saint-Bernard in Paris by *sans papiers* in late 1996, their arrest on 4 February 1997, and the subsequent trial of Jacqueline Deltombe, a French woman, convicted of harboring an illegal alien, Tony M'Bongo of Zaire, under the Pasqua Law of 24 August 1993. Regarding the Deltombe case, she evaluates commentaries by public intellectuals such as Jacques Derrida, Patrick Weil, Gerard Noiriel, Tahar Ben Jelloun, and the protest of fifty-nine French film directors of the Pasqua Law, in which they "confessed" to having committed the same offense. Tens of thousands of ordinary people added their names, with *Libération* publishing a daily list. As historical precedent, Rosello invokes Zola on Dreyfus and the Manifesto of the 121 in November 1960, the declaration of resistance to the Algerian war signed by leading intellectuals which encouraged draft resistance and active support of the Front de Libération Nationale. Inexplicably, she relegates to a footnote the declaration of 343 prominent women (*Le Nouvel observateur*, 5 April 1971) who "confessed" to having had illegal abortions. In the context of the Deltombe affair, however, there is good reason to sideline the abortion protest. It was a vehicle for protest by the subordinated, rather than a form of protest that transcended the privilege barrier.

Rosello notes an element of elitism in the discourse accompanying the message of solidarity with Deltombe. It implied a distinction between desirable guests, such as film artists and intellectuals, and undesirable, unskilled aliens. But she leaves out the other implication of the protest, namely that the protesters refused to be deputized. Yet despite the uproar, the appeals court upheld the conviction. In other words, the state reserved the right to coerce its citizens into acting as its unofficial deputies, in effect a postcolonial corollary to the Antebellum South's slave patrols. Official coercion towards citizens operates in tandem with unofficial, *de facto* stereotyping and profiling of illegals as people of color. This gray area is the sphere in which official and unofficial society are constructing white supremacy and the white race.[5]

If this analogy seems stretched thin, let me connect the dots. The heirs of the slave patrols in the post-Reconstruction South were the Klan and other paramilitary nightriders who enforced the Black Codes that kept African Americans in a state of semi-slavery and debt peonage. The Third Republic's Algerian Native Codes paralleled the contemporary statutes in the US South and also deputized all "white" Europeans to stop and challenge any unsupervised native on the road. Thus, the obligation to act as gender or race deputy shores up the privileges of the dominant group and marks members as eligible for privilege within the social hierarchy. In the case of Jacqueline Deltombe, while there were certainly tens of thousands of French citizens who bristled at the impositions of the state, others undoubtedly accepted such authorization with alacrity. Thus, the process of attaching a racial code to citizenship that began under the Third Republic, when the subordinate race resided mainly outside the gates of "civilization," continues today in more intensified form now that the North African poor are the enemy within.

In Merzak Allouache's 1996 film, *Salut cousin!*, Algerian country rat, Alilo, visits his Parisian *beur* cousin, Mok, for the first time and discovers that "cats" make the rich urban life much less secure than his humble life at home. French immigration policies force him to switch places with Mok, who is deported although he has never set foot in Algeria and speaks only French. Rosello builds her analysis of this film from tiny details, pointillistic semiotics that perceptively highlights language and symbols such as

Mok's goldfish and Alilo's suitcase. A wider context of citizenship and race then forms a recognizable overall picture. Mok presents himself to Alilo as culturally competent and fully adapted to French society. But his *façade* hides the fact that he is nowhere near as integrated as he thinks. He tries to impose assimilation on his cousin, yet as the Deltombe case suggests, he misunderstands the duties of the role of deputy. Although arrogantly intolerant of Alilo's ways, Mok never would turn over his *trabendo*-bearing cousin to the police, and hence his deportation makes an absurd sense in a racially profiled world of first- and second-class citizenship: one "Arab" is as guilty or deportable as another.

In a later chapter, Rosello juxtaposes Renoir's *Boudou sauvé des eaux* (1936) with a short story by Sembene Ousmane, "*La noire de ...*" ("Black Girl," 1959) to elucidate distorted hospitality when women appear to be in charge. In both plots, however, the women are stand-ins, and Lerner's analysis seems more useful than Rosello's references to Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and "not-quite-not-male." In both stories, the households contain multiple women serving a patriarch sexually and domestically. Precapitalist atavisms are embedded in bourgeois domesticity. Diouana, whom "*Monsieur*" and "*Madame*" bring from West Africa to the Côte d'Azur, is a household slave who is "part of the family," i.e., she sleeps and eats with the children. "*Monsieur*" participates not at all in the domestic drama; "*Madame*" is his deputy, exploiting Diouana's culinary skills to raise her family's, i.e., her husband's, social standing on the Riviera. Rosello notes the merging of precapitalist and postcolonial forms of exploitation, without exploring historically what distinguishes Diouana from the other servants, wage laborers with the rights of citizens who get to go home at night. Isolated and at the mercy of her host-mistress-jailer, Diouana kills herself, a suicide that is the only form of "strike" she can organize. Though her employers' travesty of hospitality is the proximate cause of her death, the European servants had abandoned her, and her suicide is a consequence of their refusal to act in solidarity with her.

Rosello's interpretive investigation culminates with *La Promesse*. Immigrant characters in this film affect Europeans' lives; their interactions are a two-way and a path to solidarity. This unusual variation on the immigrant theme bears deeper scrutiny. Possibly it expresses the "Americanization" of European society, i.e. the ingestion of people of color and the rise of a racial privilege structure for working-class Europeans that is displacing class as a primary loyalty. If so, the intense politico-moral dilemma young Igor faces is a product of his status as privileged-yet-exploited "white worker."

At the start of the film Igor is a picaresque figure, heir to a long lineage in European literature. A gas station attendant, he steals an elderly woman's wallet while her back is turned and has the effrontery--known only to the spectator--to console her while condemning the thievery in his part of town. Everything changes once he is thrown together with Assita, Hamidou's widow. She precipitates Igor's crisis of loyalty and his transformation. "Poor white trash" of "low moral character," he is ennobled. He becomes Huck Finn; she becomes his Jim.

Like Huck's father, Igor's father, Roger, is violent and abusive to him. Roger also recalls Jean Vignaud's anti-hero *Sarati le Terrible* (novel 1919; film 1923; film remake 1937). Sarati is a European dock boss and slum hotel keeper of Algiers who wields a formidable club to terrorize his native laborers and tenants.[6] Roger's refusal to get Hamidou to a hospital is a crime that, like the crimes of the white world in general, traverses the fine line between manslaughter and murder. When Igor overhears his father selling Assita to white slavers to get her out of the way, he "steals" her, as Huck stole Jim out of slavery. This is Igor's first break with his father, but for the rest of the film he continues to withhold the fact that Hamidou is dead. While not stooping to his father's vileness, Igor will not give up a key ingredient of white status, privileged access to information. Like deputization, this privilege comes with a price. Once he "gives it up" to Assita and tells her the truth, they become equals. He carries her suitcase, symbolically tying them in their common humanity. Igor's story parallels Huck Finn's journey with Jim. At the end of that journey Huck is forced to choose between obligation to respectable society, writing a letter to inform Jim's rightful owner of the escapee's whereabouts, and following his instinctive empathy. He makes his "existential leap," tears up the letter, and resolves to help Jim reach

free territory. The film leaves Igor and Assita in a subway station; we and they are unsure where their free territory lies.[7]

In its theme of equality between a subordinate and dominant person in race, gender, nationality, I know of only one precedent to *La Promesse* in European film, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1973), the story of a Moroccan *Gastarbeiter* working in a Munich auto plant and an older German cleaning woman who meet and fall in love and face the repressive white racism of German society in the form of his friends, her children, neighbors, storekeepers, etc., who all attempt to drive them apart.[8]

Rosello concludes the book with a suggestion of a solution to the problem of postcolonial hospitality, a "city of refuge." What this postmodern subnational arrangement might entail I found less than convincing, especially examples derived from the film *Pépé le Moko*.^[9] Nevertheless, *Postcolonial Hospitality* contributes to the immigration debate and to the interpretation of contemporary culture, within France and beyond its borders. If it reveals an intellectual gap that remains between those who study history and literature, it also reminds us that we continue to have much to learn from one another in terms of content and methodology.

NOTES

[1] Mireille Rosello, *Declining the Stereotype: Ethnicity and Representation in French Cultures* (Hanover, NH, and London: Dartmouth/University Press of New England, 1996).

[2] Gerda Lerner, *Why History Matters* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. chapters 11 & 12, pp. 146-211; Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[3] Kimberlé Crenshaw et al., eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press/Norton, 1995), esp. Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness As Property," pp. 276-91; Lani Guinier and Michael Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2002). For a summary of their book's thesis, see Guinier and Torres, "The Miner's Canary," *The Nation*, 18 February 2002, pp. 20-23.

[4] Theodore William Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol. 2, *The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America* (New York: Verso, 1997), p. 252.

[5] Theodore William Allen quotes T.J. Randolph, Jefferson's nephew, on slave patrols in "Class Struggle and the Origins of Racial Slavery," *Radical America*, vol. 9, no. 3 (May-June 1975), p.13. See also Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[6] Rosello, pp. 136-146. On Sarati, see David H. Slavin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France: White Blind Spots, Male Fantasies, Settler Myths* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2001), pp. 25-29.

[7] On Huck Finn's "existential leap" see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 57-59.

[8] Peter Iden, et al., *Fassbinder* (New York: Tanam Press, 1981), pp. 43-45, 49-52, 152-155; Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Anarchy of the Imagination*, ed. M. Toteberg (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1991), pp. 11-15, 41-45. The interment in *La Promesse* recalls a similar plot in Pietro di Donato's novel, *Christ in Concrete* (1955).

[9] Slavin, pp. 172-184.

David H. Slavin
Rice University
dslavin@rice.edu

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