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## ALIENHOOD: CITIZENSHIP, EXILE, AND THE LOGIC OF DIFFERENCE

By Katarzyna Marciniak, 197 pages. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2006.

\$ 22.50 paper.

Alienhood as body regulation and the critique of citizenship as (white Western) privilege stand at core of Katarzyna Marciniak's book.

In the Preface, Marciniak draws on two figurations to highlight the stigmatization through regulation and legalization of the alien body/identity: (i) aliens as human beings and (ii) aliens as cinematic figurations coming from the outer space.

Throughout the book, the author positions herself in opposition to those celebratory theories of the exilic self as empowered and transnational, in other words "the cosmopolitan," "third space," "hybridity," "diasporism," "nomadism," "borderline identity," and "flexible citizenship." She sees the "destitution and trauma" (p. xiv) experienced by less privileged or under-privileged immigrants: "refugees," "migrants," and displaced people"; the deported, the stateless, and workers in sweatshops (p. 150).

She also criticizes the binary opposition First/Third World professed by much of post-colonial theory/feminism today, a reductionist view that has completely erased the "Second World" – Eastern Europe (and this despite criticism brought to the three-world system theory).

The discursive violence with which one nation constructs its categories of alienhood influences its ethnic and racial violence against these "foreign bodies," Marciniak informs us.

The Introduction, a real theoretical tour de force, talks in detail about the two exploits of the notion of alien – the human foreigner and the outer space foreigner – as exemplified by the movie *Man in Black*. An interesting point here is the recognition of the aliens’ “leaky body,” which is otherwise covered in Western bourgeois discourse as the “indiscreet body” (p. 5). In this sense, the “privileged ‘I’” perceives foreigners as polluters, while the hardcore white Western national self-perceives him/herself as being in sole possession of national purity and citizenship. But what about the non-Western American citizen – people of color, the poor, accented whites such as Americans of Eastern European descent? Marciniak gives us a sense that these too might be considered lesser-degrees-aliens, or not-fully-American-citizens, although they may legally hold American citizenship. Hence alienhood finds a third application: in the non-Western American citizen, in the heart of America. This shows how the state apparatuses of discursive violence reduce the definition of a so-called “legitimate” American citizenship to Americans of white Western European descent only, and this in spite of a much-professed multiculturalism, although “liberal” and “detached,” according to Slavoj Žižek (p. 19).

Marciniak portrays the exile as having a “quivering” body and self, which is a performative condition (p. 27). The author also presents this exilic location through contemporary literary and cinematic narratives of the “transnational exilic texts genre” coming out from Latin America and Eastern Europe (p. 26).

Thus, in chapter 1, the author looks at Gregory Nava’s 1983 film *El Norte*, which locates the U.S. border-crossing as a claustrophobic *rite de passage* for the aliens who

emerge on the U.S. side devoid of any human condition – through the sewers and into the underground, literally and as a metaphor.

While chapter 2 talks about accented bodies in Julia Alvarez's 1992 novel *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, chapter 3 brings in an Eastern European accent, a Polish-Jewish cultural identity as expressed in Eva Hoffman's 1989 novel *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*.

The last two chapters present the cinema of Eastern Europe – a source for exilic transnational texts in the U.S. – as: claustrophobic communities (Roman Polanski's 1976 film *The Tenant*) and alienhood's logic of purity as ethnic cleansing (in Milcho Manchevski's 1994 film *Before the Rain*).

Ultimately, Marciniak writes, the exilic identity does not resonate with its native origins either, as its performative self has adapted to the new home in ways that are contradictory to its point of departure in the old home.

Strong in theory, deep in its literary and cinematic analyses, this volume is valuable for scholars of English and Film Studies, as is for students of Eastern Europe and Women's/Gender Studies.

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