

Ting-Toomey, Stella. "Managing Intercultural Conflicts Effectively." *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*. 7th ed. Eds. Porter, Richard E., Larry A Samovar. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1999. 362-64.

BOOK REVIEWS

Jane M. Gaines, *Fire and Desire: Mixed-Race Movies in the Silent Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 359 pp., \$19.

Jane M. Gaines has written an important book on the topic of race movies and race relations in early American cinema. Using eclectic analyses that range from W.E.B. DuBois' insights on "double consciousness," to queer theory, Gaines is able to critically examine issues of mixed race people and race mixing in silent films. She wonderfully reworks some theories until they yield beneficial interpretations. For example, Gaines argues against the blanket use of psychoanalysis as a tool to comprehend African American Experience, including cinema, because, she says, "Historically psychoanalysis had no cognizance of black people nor was any attempt made to understand them" (75). According to her film theory has been exclusively psychoanalytic in recent years to the exclusion of almost any other alter-

native methodologies.

First, Gaines questions the validity of race classifications, although she recognizes the expansiveness of the myth of race. She then tackles the subject of "passing" and doubts whether or not anyone can truly become, like the title of James Weldon Johnson's novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. Further, Gaines examines the paradox of light skinned Blacks in the films of Oscar Micheaux, whose purpose was to venerate "Blackness" but who employed actors who "looked white" for those roles.

Gaines, who is an accomplished film historian, provides the reader with both interesting and detailed insights into race films. She clearly demonstrates that early black films, dubbed "outsider cinema," did not arise as a reaction against D.W.Griffith's racially hostile *Birth of a Nation*, originated years earlier. She points out that protests by the NAACP against *Birth of a Nation* were bound to fail because they were attacking the image and not racism itself. She also cites the censoring of thirteen films of Oscar Micheaux, which posed no threat to the public order.

When New York censors rejected Micheaux's *A Son of Satan* (1924), the reason was the death of a hooded leader. In Virginia the same work was censored because the principal character, a villain, had his criminality attributed to his white lineage and not to his black one. Virginia censors also did not like references to miscegenation and race riots both of which were real events in American history (234).

From *What Happened in the Tunnel* (1903) with the silver screen's first interracial kiss (accidental and humorous, of course) to the later works of Micheaux, Gaines does an excellent job of "exposing the sexual practices of an earlier century." (272) The fact that many actors "looked white," she argues, only confirms the obvious. Interracial sex, whether consensual or forced, would have been comprehensible to the mostly black audience. She also describes *A Florida Enchantment* (1915) in which another accidental interracial screen kiss also almost occurs. That one, however, featured a black woman and a white woman.

Gaines offers the reader insights into a very important film, long thought lost, *Within Our Gates* (1920). Retitled *La Negra*, Micheaux's second feature film that focused on the topic of

lynching was eventually returned to the United States from the Spanish National Archive. Reflecting the infamous “Red Summer” of 1919 that began in Chicago, the tale is about two innocent black men who are lynched for the murder of a white man. Historically the cause of lynching of black men focused on alleged illicit sex between them and white women; however the established reason for most lynchings was economic, and its participants were white men, women and children. Micheaux cross-cut scenes of lynching in the film with the attempted rape of a black woman by a white man. During the struggle the man rips some of the woman’s clothes revealing a birthmark on her breast. That is when he realizes that he molested his daughter, born to a black woman. The paralleling of rape and lynching, both the implied and genuine interracial sex, plus the historic implications of both proved to be too intense for black and white audiences, causing the film to be censored in many cities.

Gaines is seeking “a better recipe for mutuality, a theory or theories that offer us a way around the dichotomized antagonism of gendered as well as raced relations...” (267). Race movies are not just copies of Hollywood films but subversive works juxtaposing hypocrisy and misinterpretation with race and racism.

Reviewed by: George H. Junne, Jr.
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Marilyn Halter, *Shopping for Identity: The Marketing of Ethnicity*. New York: Schocken Books 2000. 225pp., \$23 cloth.

Marilyn Halter has written an informative book on the interaction between the marketplace and ethnic identity in the United States. Her book fills an important gap in ethnic studies literature. While research abounds on the role the marketplace has played in the Americanization of immigrants, few scholars have researched its role in the maintenance of ethnic identity.

The marketplace in Halter’s view is highly responsive to the