

collection is a sometimes pleasant, often sobering, mostly interesting experience for the general reader, a veritable gold mine for the regional historian, and an important contribution to the bitter-sweet tale of this continent's settler invasion.

Note

1. "The Darling Downs occupy a triangle of lightly timbered, fertile open plains bounded by the axes of Dalby, Toowoomba and Warwick with allowances for southerly and westerly extensions. They lie behind the Great Dividing Range — a 600 metre high chain of volcanically created peaks — about 130 kilometres west of the Queensland capital of Brisbane. The eastern Downs feature massive outcrops of isolated rock formations — sugarloafs — marking the boundaries of long shallow valleys. The plains fall gently westward along the Condamine River basin to fade away into the western plains of the Darling River catchment area" (French 2).

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## FRAMING FIELDS

- Gale MacLachlan and Ian Reid, *Framing and Interpretation*. Melbourne UP, 1994. 130pp.
- Sneja Gunew, *Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Studies*. Melbourne UP, 1994. 158pp.

You are now reading the introduction to this review. You know that a review is a critical reading of a work or works, and that it will in all likelihood say positive and negative things about the subject text. You know that there will not be a reference to the reviewer's own hygiene standards nor will there be a murder on the second page of the review. There is already a "frame" in place through which to read this review and make meaning from it; or to put it in the active sense that the authors of *Framing and Interpretation* prefer, you are actively (though perhaps unconsciously) engaged in framing this text through generic preconceptions. *Framing and Interpretation* seeks to explain how generic expectations and a whole

network of other frames operate in producing meanings.

The tracking of the term frame is indeed difficult as different disciplines have used it in a variety of ways. Gale MacLachlan and Ian Reid helpfully begin *Framing and Interpretation* by introducing the reader to their own terminology and through the book differentiate this from the way in which "framing" has been used by other theorists. They firstly note that the whole notion of framing revolves around modern theory's repudiation of the notion that texts have an "essential" meaning which can be discovered through some hermeneutic process. It is a pity that the historical background to the anti-essentialist stance of theory is not even briefly discussed in a more user friendly introduction. A work which aims to be a survey, and a first chapter which is a summary of the idea of the frame, should be able to include an elementary discussion of the theoretical advances that enable concepts of framing.

The art gallery is an obvious place to find frames. Derrida's essay "The Parergon" argues that the "frame" is not a stable entity in some way policing the border between "inside" and "outside" a painting. Like any border situation the picture frame actually problematises the notions of inside and outside. While MacLachlan and Reid note that art books and catalogues rarely include the frame in their reproduction of the picture (19), they determine the ways in which

paintings are read, whether they are imitating a window frame for realist art or in minimal presence or complete absence enabling modernist art to display its two dimensionality and lack of painterly guile. Generally naturalised into invisibility, occasionally framing can draw attention to itself, such as where the figures in a painting are cropped. The difference between unbounded reality and a limited aesthetic realm are emphasised and framing is shown to be an aesthetic choice. But of course the works of art are themselves framed by what MacLachlan and Reid call circumtextual matter, including the gallery itself. Bicycle parts and urinals become objects for aesthetic contemplation because they are framed within a gallery, charging them with aesthetic meaning. There are some who refuse to use this frame and see such *objects d'art* as essentially urinals and nothing more; the authors point out that "frame disputes" of this nature are not uncommon (84-86).

From works of art the book moves into a discussion of the anthropological and psychological uses of the concept of framing. Central here is the work of the anthropologist Gregory Bateson and psychologist Erving Goffman, whose *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience* (1974) is dealt with in considerable detail. As MacLachlan and Reid point out, Goffman's emphasis on the individual's framing techniques results in a politically conservative approach; he does not take into account for example institutional

frames that would alternately construct homosexuality as a "sin," a "crime," a "disease" or genetically coded "orientation" (59–60). These are the frames which are most obviously liable to change through political and institutional pressures. The next section of *Framing Interpretations* briefly examines the role of framing in Artificial Intelligence, education and general cognitive science. The initial point of the book is found to be true in respect of Artificial Intelligence — that there is in ordinary human intelligence a formidable array of generic, real world and other frames brought into play to operate on a text in the generation of meaning. Even as computer technology increases exponentially the promise of a linguistically competent artificial interlocutor recedes.

Those troubled by urinals as art may also have difficulties with written texts. There is the strong formalist urge to argue that poetry is definable through its inner qualities. Yet it is easy enough to break up a page of instructions from your new washing machine into lines which resemble poetry and which indeed may be indistinguishable from poetry. In fact they *will* be poetry if read this way. Both Stanley Fish and Jonathan Culler have argued against the formalist view of poetry. Rather poetry is constituted as poetry by the framework brought to it. This generic framework is not the arbitrary whim of the reader or the gallery visitor of course — it is prompted by the arrangement on the page or the

pedestal on which the urinal is placed. Literary texts in particular play with frames. One of the most obvious examples are the misleading prefaces frequently found in eighteenth century literature. Daniel DeFoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) begins with a misleading statement of the truth of the story to follow; fiction creeps into the authoritative preface thus dissolving the "outside" and "inside" of the fiction.

There are a couple of areas in *Framing Interpretations* which cause frustration or confusion. The discussion of cinematic framing is so brief as to be dismissive; the authors are undoubtedly aware of this shortcoming. There is one point of uncertainty about the breaking of frames which is curious. The authors argue that "when frame boundaries are transgressed, the frame tends to recede into the background" (29). Though then admitting that this is perhaps not quite the case in modernist art which interrogates boundaries, they later claim that a particular type of frame breaking, self-reflexivity, is "surely intended to foreground the mediated or framed nature of cinematic (and all other experience)" (53). It seems to me that this latter claim is more generally correct and that frame breaking generally draws attention to the frame.

The coherency of the *Interpretations* series is demonstrated in Sneja Gunew's *Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Studies*. Once again, framing is ironically the centre

of attention. *Framing Marginality* brilliantly shows how the framing of "multicultural literatures" determines their significance. The 1960s saw the genesis of a governmental policy known as "multiculturalism" which, concerning itself with social justice, equity and so on constructed the migrant as "disadvantaged," a problem to be solved. This framing of issues in terms of "multiculturalism" tends to encourage celebration of migrant "low" culture, such as cooking and clothing. Gunew rightly states that this safely leaves power distribution in Australia as unchallenged as did previous assimilation policies. Thus how these issues are framed is crucial in how they are understood and what real world effects can flow from these understandings.

Gunew also demonstrates how the framing of literature as "migrant literature" creates something that is of primarily sociological or historical, rather than literary, interest. As a framework for discussion it also homogenises Vietnamese-Australian or Italo-Australian writing, which is a retrograde step when difference is the very thing one is trying to draw out (23). "Non anglo-celtic" writing is also a fraught category, predicated as it is upon an oppositional structure and the term "anglo-celtic" while used by Gunew, is less acceptable to others. Gunew's solution to this terminological (and thus framing) problem is the phrase "ethnic minority literature." I'm not sure whether this is a satisfactory solution.

Gunew asserts that the term implies that there is an "ethnic majority," and the term makes visible this majority (23-24). It seems to me the monoculturists from the "ethnic majority" are only too happy to take advantage of a term like "ethnic minority" to marginalise these groups.

*Framing Marginality* develops the necessary theoretical groundwork in a much more thorough way than *Framing and Interpretation*. The coverage of universality, alterity, english studies and post-colonial theories is an excellent background for the student of multicultural literatures. Helpful for the student also is the generous citing of the theorists of this background: Homi Bhabha, Trin T. Minh-ha, Edward Said, Elizabeth Grosz and of course Gunew herself are briefly discussed and included in the bibliography in a strategy that makes this book an essential departure point for students in this area.

Much of the discussion of the first half of *Framing Marginality* seeks to identify a deconstructive role for ethnic minority writing. This task is best undertaken after an investigation of how the majority culture constitutes itself. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991) argues that the "nation" is imaginatively constituted through the links between territory, language and a genealogy. If nationhood is constituted through discourse, rather than being an organic, natural whole

(the family is the usual metaphor), then immigrants stand in a different relation to it. Instead of being assimilable, that is, organically digestible into the whole, they add to discourses on nationhood. These additions are invariably critiques of existing discourses, both anglo-celtic and expected migrant discourses. In particular these literatures work to deconstruct the monolingualism which is mythically at the centre of Australian nationhood; a myth with which english as a discipline has often been in collusion.

One of the ways in which literature is framed is through reception. Gunew is careful to include some reviews of ethnic minority writing, to show how the dominant culture attempts to deal with or dismiss it. One of the reviews of Rosa Cappiello's *Oh Lucky Country* (1984) praises Cappiello's anger as a starting point but then admonishingly proclaims

One can only hope that she not only maintains her rage, but now sets about learning something — anything would do — of the novelist's craft. (Macklin, 1985 qtd. 95)

Not only is the book constructed as incompetent, but is already framed as a piece of confessional migrant writing, realist and first person, a frame which is limited and misleading at best.

The second half of Gunew's book is involved in reading the works of Cappiello, Antigone Kefala, Ania

Walwicz and Anna Couani. These readings, utilising motions of interpellation and subjectivity and more general feminist and psychoanalytic theories are insightful and interesting. Gunew illustrates that there is a psychic investment in myths of nationality and identity and that ethnic minority writing plays a key role in the alteration of what have been the limited characteristics of these myths. *Framing Marginality* and *Framing and Interpretation* serve as an introduction to the concept and practice of framing for student and teacher alike. Both are valuable for those interested in cultural and literary studies.

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Alexander Leggatt

### ... AND ALL IS SEMBLATIVE A WOMAN'S PART

Penny Gay, *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994. Xii + 208pp.

In the proliferation of new, or newly developed, approaches to Shakespeare in the last fifteen years two of the most valuable have been performance history and feminist criticism. At first they had little to say to each other; but more recently they have