

Book Reviews

Maria del Carmen Boza. *Scattering the Ashes*. (Tempe: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingue, 1998). 387 pp., \$ 15.00 paper.

Because of the relatively recent Elian Gonzalez political controversy, whether he should be returned to Cuba to be with his father and grandparents or be allowed to stay in the US, Maria del Carmen Boza's book is timely. Elian's mother drowned while fleeing Cuba for the same political and socio-economic reasons that Boza's parents did, except that Boza's parents arrived in Miami by airplane in 1960.

Boza's book unfurls around the burial of her father who committed suicide. This major event allows Boza to be vivid and expressive as she encapsulates Cuban immigrants' life in the US. This is done by interweaving political/social factors in the dynamics of the strained relationships between the US and Cuba, the attempts at replicating Cuban traditions, and the glorification of Cuban historical events. Boza describes her mother's explanation of her father's suicide, the preparations for his funeral, the funeral and the anniversary of his death, while using second-by-second descriptive accounts to highlight her childhood Cuban school and neighborhood experiences. This book vividly explains the power of Cuban exiles' love/hate emotions for their homeland as Boza explains that her father committed suicide on May 19, 1989, and died on May 20, 1989, with the first date commemorating the death of Jose Martí and the second Cuba's Independence Day. Boza's father chose Martí as his hero since they were both exiles in countries where the languages spoken were foreign to them, and they were both journalists.

This book is lengthy with a slow-paced narrative that

recounts Boza's past in Cuba and Florida, and readers may surmise that Boza's writings are autobiographical in nature. In an effort to analyze her struggles coming to grips with her adulthood, her Cuban identity, and her relationship with her parents, readers learn of her visits to various psychiatrists. The poignant account of Cubans' relationships in Florida ranges from Boza's discussing her father's friends, members of the Colegio de Periodistas, the Cuban journalists' association, who paid for his wake, to her extended family who are now socially distant from her. Readers also learn of Boza being spoiled by her father in Cuba and her mother's jealousy of that relationship. In Miami her father is disappointed with her academic pursuits. This culminates in a strained adult relationship between Boza and her parents, made evident when her parents are not invited to her nuptials. At times readers may respond to Boza with enormous empathy, at other times with extreme impatience, but through it all the reality of her experiences are indubitable. Boza makes the point that regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity, it is evident that respect, compassion, and love are what all humans desire most.

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Rey Chow. *Ethics after Idealism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998). 264 pp., \$29.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

I am largely sympathetic to Rey Chow's stated purpose of bringing together cultural studies with critical theory. Chow is critical of the gap that has been created between the two. She accuses critical theorists of believing that theory is superior to cultural studies and suggests racialization is implicit in this claim. But her real ire is reserved for cultural theorists who, in the name of recognizing and celebrating "otherness," reject theory and idealize and thus reify non-Western cultures. She argues that we need to portray non-Western cultures with the same kind of complexity and theoretical analysis as Western cultures. This means that we have to be able to take a risk and