

Advertising and culture. Theoretical perspectives.
Edited by Mary Cross. Westport: Praeger. 1996. xii
+ 136 pp. Hb: \$49.95. ISBN 0 275 95351 3.

This book explores certain aspects of contemporary American culture, sometimes referred to as 'post-modern'. The influence of advertising is explored in ten articles by twelve authors, most of them (seven, including the editor) from the Farleigh Dickinson University. This helps in the creation of a reasonably well rounded volume, with many shared references and points of departure (Baudrillard, Lyotard, etc.). While there are no anthropologists directly involved in it, the book as a whole presents an interesting attempt to outline certain aspects of contemporary culture. In this review, I will mention just some of the articles published in this book, and then proceed with some critical remarks.

Perhaps the title should have been 'Advertising and popular culture', since the aspects that the contributors deal with have primarily to do with the impact of advertising through the mass media, especially television (although the term *culture* is not defined in the book, it is taken as something self-evident and obvious). Thus, Mary Cross starts her article 'Reading television texts: The postmodern language of advertising', with the statement that 'Advertising is ... the language of capitalism' (p. 1). However, terms like *language* and *capitalism* should be understood in a specifically American context: mediated through the cyclopic eye of the television. Of course, this does include a certain amount of generalisation and inconsistency that I will come back to later.

Perhaps the most interesting contribution for anthropologists is Elise Salem Manganaro's 'When foreign sells: exotica in American TV ads of the eighties and nineties', a very astute analysis of the exoticising of the other in a specific context. Martin Green's 'Some versions of the pastoral: myth in advertising: advertising as myth', explores strategies that advertising employs for the 'recuperation' of the 'original world'. Although not quoted in the article, one is reminded here of the Eliade's concept

of the 'myth of eternal return', a human wish to get back to the 'original world', the 'world of the beginning' (or the Australian Aboriginal 'Dreamtime') where everything was in harmony and humans were living happily forever. Two more articles, 'The selling of gender identity' by Judith Waters and George Ellis and 'The betrayal of the media', by Chester St. H. Mills and Rebecca A. Chaisson, explore the use and appropriation of gender, racial, and other stereotypes to express different advertising messages.

The last two articles mentioned, while pointing out the significant shaping function of gender stereotypes, do not take issue with the specific language which advertising uses in appropriating and using such stereotypes. For example, an important question, such as why it is that advertising 'works' for women – despite all the sexism – is not addressed. In this regard, I think that a reference to Vestergaard and Schröder's *The language of advertising* would have been very helpful. Advertising can help dispel certain gender stereotypes too; for example, some recent ads (for Levi 501s) have successfully deconstructed and inverted the usual bias that 'the silent majority' holds against transvestites and homosexuals, presenting them as just as 'normal' or 'ordinary' as anyone else. Furthermore, what about the undermining of sexual self-confidence, which advertisers increasingly use, whatever the targeted gender? These positive aspects of playing with stereotypes are not explored in the book.

Unfortunately, the contributors do not always define some of the key terms they use, such as *advertising* and *post-modernism*. The first is implicitly taken as a symbol, and more precisely, a symbol in the Augustinian sense ('*aliquid stat pro aliquo*'), while there is some confusion when it comes to the latter (the most frequently quoted 'authorities', Baudrillard and Lyotard, have mutually incompatible and exclusive understandings of what 'post-modernism' is or should be). Furthermore, the aforementioned article 'Some versions of the pastoral: myth in advertising: Advertising as myth', does not offer

any definition of 'myth'. There is a reference to Frazer's *Golden Bough*, but this work is not mentioned in either the bibliography of this article, or in the general bibliography at the end of the book. Furthermore, the reference to *Mythologiques* as 'the major postmodernist study of myth' (p. 44) is quite surprising (the work as a whole is not mentioned in either bibliography as well). To say that Claude Lévi-Strauss *influenced* some later scholars with his *structuralism* is one thing, but to determine his major work as an example of *post-modernism* (and to do it in such a way as to present this as something self-evident), is quite another.

Even with such imprecisions, this is an important book. It deals with some of the most intriguing aspects of contemporary culture, and by putting them in a specific (American) context, it also presents some interesting contributions for an ethnography of the mass media. It is a good contribution to the study of what Marc Augé calls 'non-places' – products of modern technology which interact with our lives on a daily basis, shaping our cultures in ways that are not always obvious or self-evident.

References

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The construction of the viewer. Media ethnography and the anthropology of audiences. Proceedings from NAFA 3. Edited by Peter I. Crawford and Sigurjon Baldur Hafsteinsson. Højbjerg Intervention Press. 1996. 310 pp. Pb: ISBN 87 89825 06 3.

This book reflects the newly developing anthropological interest in audience research. It consists of sixteen essays, a mixture of papers presented at the 1993 Reykjavik conference of the Nordic Film Association and other invited contributions.

The different essays address the creative relationship between media texts and audiences. Like many working in this field, there is an awareness among the book's contributors of the need to develop more finely tuned approaches to

this question. Research has for too long been trapped within an old dualistic model. It is one which has alternately simplified and de-humanised the viewer through an emphasis on the overwhelming power of media and its strategies of persuasion; or it has romanticised the viewer, conferring a seemingly boundless capacity for resistance which refuses to engage with the objective realities of power and politics. It is the complexity of the relationship between media production and reception which now forms the focus of critical attention.

Although this is a relatively new area within visual anthropology, it is clear from the book's first section, 'Media Ethnography', that people working in related disciplines have been developing methods of enquiry which are distinctly anthropological. But as the early essays reveal, particularly that by David Morley (an early pioneer in this field), the appropriation of ideas and methods from anthropology cannot be undertaken lightly. It necessarily involves engagement with the politics of ethnography as provoked by the *Writing culture* debate. Moreover, there are different conceptions of what media ethnography might mean; and Drotner's paper represents a particularly valuable attempt to establish its distinctive parameters.

The second section of the book, 'The anthropology of audiences', opens with an easy essay by Martinez, whose earlier work (Martinez 1990; 1992) has been critical in raising the question of the audience and the reception of ethnographic texts within anthropology. Here he seeks to develop further his analytical approach, suggesting the concept of the spectator as a means for bringing into active connection the real viewer and the ideal viewer of the media text. But as Banks points out in one of the most interesting and thoughtful contributions to the collection, anthropologists have to be cautious about uncritically borrowing tools developed in other disciplines. In his paper, 'Constructing the audience through ethnography', he emphasises the distinctiveness of ethnographic films as forms of media. He warns against the use of concepts developed primarily for the study of films, since they often result in the dehumanisation of the real human subjects with whom we work. Banks develops his thesis through a reflexive account of his own experiences as an anthropological film-maker, anchoring his conceptual explorations within a finely nuanced ethnography. By way of conclusion, he suggestively questions whether the discovery of the audience is new to anthropology after all. For he reminds us that the performative dimension of

culture is a consistent theme in the modern discipline. One only has to cast a cursory glance at the extensive writing on ritual or sacrifice to recognise that therein lies a theory of the audience.

The book's final section, 'The viewer viewed: the reception of ethnographic films', is more ethnographically focused than the first two parts. As various contributors have already noted in other places in the volume, the audience is still largely conceptualised as an ethnographic object, indeed as 'the other'; and, as such, it remains an undifferentiated and unknown category. But the papers presented here by Jhala, Liebes and Adra reveal the beginnings of new ethnographic enquiry.

How real audiences respond to film and television is, of course, unpredictable and highly varied. This is one of the challenges which now face anthropologists wherever they work, for the role of the media in peoples' lives cannot be excluded from any contemporary analysis. The question is, of course, how may the media be theorised and how may they be methodologically approached by anthropologists. *The construction of the viewer* represents an important attempt to address these concerns. The book raises many key issues; it challenges conventional assumptions; and it critically exposes concepts and categories of analysis. It will be of use to students, teachers and anyone interested in developing a distinctively anthropological approach to the media.

The construction of the viewer, as essentially a collection of conference papers, has its limitations. But, instead of complaining about its repetitions, overlaps and redundancies, I conclude that its unevenness and fragmented form should be interpreted as an expression of its substance. The book rather resembles television. Following Raymond Williams, I would go with the 'flow' – though we have to imagine the advertisements ourselves.

References

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***Environmentalism and cultural theory. Exploring the role of anthropology in environmental discourse.* By Kay Milton. London and New York: Routledge. 1996. ix + 266 pp. Hb: £45 ISBN 0 415 11529. Pb.: £13.99 ISBN 0 415 11530 2.**

Ever since the opening of the environmentalist debate about the separation of society and nature in western society, there has been an expectation that anthropology has some special insight, and through its studies of hunters and gatherers, some inner knowledge of sustainable environment. Even if anthropologists were not very good at producing definitive data, the extent to which shamanistic practices actually regulated environment through direct feedback cycles and the general idea that non-industrial cultures are kind to the environment seemed part of anthropological evidence and thus supported environmentalist belief that there are viable alternatives to a destructive industrial economy.

Professional anthropology has been slow to respond to environmentalist expectations, and to take up issues of global degradation of the environment, for a number of reasons examined in this important review of the interrelationship of anthropological visions of culture and environmental discourse.

One reason for hesitancy is that many changes introduced in the name of environmental conservation have been insensitive to local cultures. Several notable studies – Wenzel's study of the Canadian Inuit being one – have shown how the rhetoric of sustainability became confused with the political aims of non-governmental organisations and began to destroy subsistence economies. Second, anthropological evidence suggests that the notion of 'primitive ecological wisdom' – that is the belief that many isolated non-industrial societies have a 'natural' propensity for living sustainably within their environment – is a myth. To the contrary, cross-cultural comparison reveals a variety of ways in which non-industrial peoples look at their environment. Some societies value the environment for its immediate return and some take a protective role towards it. Some look at their environment as being vulnerable, and some as resilient.

Nevertheless, Milton argues, anthropology has a long way to go in establishing its position in environmental discourse. Often as not, images of culture imported into social scientific thinking on environmental issues are drawn from other disciplines. Anthropology's definitions of 'culture' make the discipline ill-equipped to deal with the

various environmentalist perspectives. Ecological anthropology was, until the 1960s, dominated by the view that environmental factors determine cultural characteristics – biological processes and an unrefined Darwinism were the inspiration for this approach. Or, as is the case with Marvin Harris, anthropologists held that all cultural features are adaptive. It was possible to trace group organization, ritual practices, and belief systems as cultural adaptations of environmental factors through uses of technology. At the same time, the ecosystem approach developed by ecologists in the 1940s, and eventually adopted by a few bold anthropologists such as Rappaport in the 1960s, initially held little place for culture in the anthropological sense.

Prevailing models and methods in post-structuralist anthropology also provide little hope for rapprochement with environmentalism. Some aspects of cognitive anthropology, particularly ethnoecology, are promising. But the assumptions of the social constructivists in anthropology are of limited value says Milton. According to the constructivists, all reality is learned through meanings derived from participation in human society. Constructivists ignore the possible existence of a biological world without cultural construction; they simply do not acknowledge the possibility that culture consists of both constructed and unconstructed meanings, of both metaphorised and unmetaphorised reality. Thus they deny any role for the environment itself, and are unsympathetic to any ecocentric perspective.

The book is an attempt to clarify anthropology's position. To accomplish this is no small task and the author has had to cast a very wide net. Theoretical ground that is even vaguely 'ecological' – when it comes to discussing interrelationships between nature and culture – is remarkably thin within conventional anthropological literature (Ingold and a few others being notable exceptions). For all the influence of Mary Douglas outside the discipline, inside anthropology the strong influence of Durkheim makes Douglas' discussion of culture and environmental risk an unwelcome survival from a previous era of anthropological thinking. The one anthropologist who might have saved Milton from the embarrassment of a theoretical void, Gregory Bateson, is not mentioned. Given the consideration of the Gaia theory in this book, it would have been worth considering why Bateson's 'ecology of mind' is frequently placed in tandem with notions of Gaia – especially in North America; and also why Bateson's ecosystem approach is a foundation

on which the German environmental sociologist Niklas Luhmann built his theories of recursiveness in ecological understanding.

Milton is forced to turn to an alternative discussion, spending a great deal of time on definitional issues of culture, human ecology, globalisation and environmental discourse. In one way theoretical adversities yield pragmatic strengths. For anyone considering teaching a course in ecology, culture and anthropology, this book is a boon. Diverse issues are brought into correspondence with each other and the author's definitional approach yields consistency in interpretation. In particular, Milton argues that culture is not a residual category. The sustainable development ethic is cultural. It is based on a western cultural understanding that people have the power to manage their environment through the application of scientific knowledge. Yet environmentalists often support both a single global management ethic and claims for cultural diversity, which suggests that globalists are confused about autonomy in culture. At the same time, anthropologists need to change their definitions and stop treating culture only in terms of a bounded unit. They need to embrace a notion of discourse within culture – an area of communication which can be treated as more or less unbounded, globally. Following up her previous volume of edited essays on environmentalism, Milton establishes that the concept of discourse has a distinct advantage over the concept of culture when it comes to analysing global processes in relation to social identity or place of origin, for the character of discourse is to flow across cultural boundaries and become transcultural.

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***Images of contemporary Iceland. Everyday lives and global contexts.* Edited by Gísli Pálsson and E. Paul Durrenberger. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. 1996. viii + 274 pp. Hb.: ISBN 0 87745 528 7.**

This book is the outcome of a workshop held in Iowa City in 1993, the subject being ethnographic research on modern Iceland. It contains essays by Icelanders and non-Icelanders who have been working in the area.

The book is divided into three parts, each reflecting an important focus of the workshop, and

more generally of the anthropological research being done in Iceland. The first part, as its title reveals, is concerned with 'Contested images of nature', dealing with topics such as the whale issue, where Brydon discusses whaling in terms of the Icelanders' understanding of nature, human identity and the moral value of community, as well as nationalist sentiment. N. Einarsson discusses environmental perceptions among small-scale fishers and whalers in Iceland and what shapes their thinking about the marine resources they utilise for their living. Pálsson's and Helgason's essay deals with changes in Icelandic fishing associated with the introduction of a new system of resource management, a quota system, focusing on contested notions of equity, nation and productive efficiency. These changes have brought about privileges to some Icelanders, while undermining others, and have been much debated.

In the second part of the book, 'Nation and gender', Skaptadóttir analyses women's position in Icelandic fishing villages, with a focus on the three domains of ideas, the division of labour, and general identities. Björnsdóttir's essay deals with the Icelandic presidency, which, she argues, has from the outset had two different but complementary dimensions – a political/masculine one and a cultural/maternal one. The latter, she argues came to the foreground in the late 1960s, even before Finnbogadóttir became president. In Gurdin's essay, there is a discussion of how domestic violence involves the interface between public and private patriarchies and public and private motherhood. Patriarchy, she argues, is both larger than, and located within, families, but it can be separated analytically to examine the relationship between the family and the state, the private and the public.

The third part of the book is concerned with the subject of 'Nature and nation'. Vasey notes that the image of Iceland's pre-modern human ecology is of a population on the margin of survival. He examines the demographic substance behind the idea that pre-modern Iceland's mortality was exceptionally high. Iceland's demographic regimes, he argues, from the time of the 1703 census to the present day, are unmistakably European. Durrenberger's essay is concerned with the Icelandic emphasis on the notion of the autonomous individual at the expense of conceptualisation of the social, particularly as is evident in denials of class as a social phenomenon. This, he argues, is a consequence of an ideology developed by a farming elite to perpetuate its advantaged position in a political economy that

evolved as a dimension of Iceland's peripheral status and Danish policy. Sizemore and Walker examine the tradition of literacy in Iceland and the role this concept has continued to play over the centuries in society, culture and national identity. They argue that two aspects of literacy act on and influence each other, literacy practices and literacy identity.

Finally, M. Einarsson's essay deals with tourism and the image of modern Iceland. His main concern is the ethnicity of the Icelanders and their identity as a modern nation. He notes that modern tourism in Iceland provides Icelanders with a national image through what Roland Barthes called the 'rhetoric of the image' and the travellers' accounts of Iceland, abundant from the nineteenth century, have played a role in the identity formation among Icelanders.

In the introduction to the book, Durrenberger and Pálsson note that the image Iceland presents of a homogeneous island population with a long, well-recorded history – an apparently ideal subject for anthropologists looking for neat boundaries, self-contained cultures and natural laboratories, is challenged by the essays in this book. The essays, they argue, emphasise the flow of cultural constructs in a holistic global world. While much work on Iceland by social scientists and others in the past has focused on the bounded, self-contained society, anthropological research on modern Iceland perhaps leads the way in shifting this focus, bringing new dimensions to research on Icelandic society in general. This is one of the most important contributions of the essays in this book.

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***Education and identity in rural France. The politics of schooling.* By Deborah Reed-Danahay. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996. xiii + 237 pp. Hb.: £37.50. ISBN 0 521 483123.**

Schools, Reed-Danahay tells us in this fine ethnography of the mutual influence of families and schools in a small and remote Auvergnat farming community of the Massif Central, are not just about education. They are important sites of identity production: places where relationships between family, community and state are constructed and negotiated.

Schools have spread literacy skills, dominant languages, social stratification and cultural homogenisation, and, as many historians and

sociologists have demonstrated, they have played a central role in the formation of national identity in modern nation-states. But even in the case of France's highly centralised education system, which embodies the national culture and has been completely identified with the state since – at least – the Third Republic, schools do not operate as mere transmission machines for the state. They are used by local people as part of their long-term strategies to ensure the reproduction of their kindreds and rural communities.

By focusing on farm children (rather than on the urban middle class subjects of so much of the education literature), Reed-Danahay is able to show that social mobility is not always the primary concern of parents. In the village she studied, parents send their children to schools so they learn the skills needed for efficient modern farming. Their prime desire is that the future generation keep the family farms and fields, and continue to live an Auvergnat peasant way of life. The school is instrumental in this not only because it is where useful things such as bookkeeping are taught, but also because it is essential to the survival of the village as a viable community.

The primary school is an important expression of locality precisely because French remote communities are not autonomous collectivities. Both a symbol of communal identity and a symbol of outside forms of power, the school constitutes the contested interface between the national and the local – class – culture. And, as the author convincingly argues in chapter 7, this contest is imbued with local meanings. Despite the constraints of such a highly stratified education system, and despite the lack of legal space for parents to exercise control over the institution, villagers influence the school. For example, they use school issues to conduct their own factionalist intra-village fighting. At the village level, therefore, the politics of schooling are not shaped by state hegemony or national issues such as government funding to private education, but rather by local struggles over the socio-economic future of the area.

What makes this book so innovative and interesting is that it is about education *and* identity. It therefore offers a new perspective on the classic issues of communication, reproduction and power. Reed-Danahay's basic argument is that if the ethnographer is to assess the impact of schooling with any accuracy, s/he must study the school from without as much as from within, and pay at least as much attention to local perceptions and practices as to official discourses.

In the village where she worked, teachers are

perceived as outsiders, i.e. state agents who hold a series of stereotypical assumptions about the 'backward' and 'traditional' locals. The school curriculum is understood as inculcating bourgeois values, bourgeois gender roles and models of behaviour alien to the local culture. But even after more than a hundred years of schooling in the area, these Auvergnat villagers have not been transformed into French middle-class citizens. They continue to see in the school a middle-class social form whose influence they hope to contain, and a source of power which they actively resist and manipulate.

The author is at her best when she discussed local kinship idioms (such as the evocative expression 'les nôtres'), kindred reciprocity, neighbourhood solidarity, strategic local endogamy and life-cycle rituals through which local identity and social life are reinforced. She spots with a talented ethnographic eye everyday routines such as acts of *débrouillardise* through which the outside world – and especially state institutions – is exploited in a manner recognisably French, but also definitely Auvergnat. For the social identity children acquire at school and within their families is at once French and Auvergnat. Children grow to be Auvergnat neither because they live in a traditional region untouched by modernity, nor because militants of politico-cultural organisations tell them and their parents to remain Auvergnat. In Reed-Danahay's words, 'one is Auvergnat because one is French' (p. 43). Regional identity takes shape in the course of everyday life, through living and working on the farm, milking cows, eating local food and sharing meals with kin.

Education and identity in rural France, while examining the role played by schools in social reproduction, takes the reader outside the genre of classroom ethnography and away from sociological discussions of educational policies. Here history informs cultural analysis and the discontinuity between home and school culture is not seen as hindering resistance.

This well documented and richly referenced work offers a good comparative discussion of European regionalism. More importantly, it initiates a new style of anthropology of education, and calls for new ethnographies of schooling which would go beyond a reifying focus on either individual power manipulation strategies, or the hegemonic power of centralised and impersonal institutions.

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Tradition and modernity in the Mediterranean. The wedding as symbolic struggle. By Vassos Argyrou. **Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 101.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996. x + 210 pp. Hb.: £30. ISBN 0 521 560950.

Argyrou offers a vivid and readable picture of his own society of origin, Greek Cypriot, its divisions, preoccupations and values, with a focus provided by changing weddings. The grounding is the village wedding of the 1930s, presented as a Van Gennepian rite of passage extended over several days of ritualised events and including the celebration of virginity successfully overcome. Since then the event has abbreviated to a single day and lost the concern with virginity, but numbers invited have swollen and a new style of wedding has been added. He calls this the 'champagne' wedding, a regimented event held around the swimming pool of a luxury hotel for guests numbered in their thousands. To explain the general change he looks chiefly to transformed relationships between young people, female and male, and their parents in the changed economy of the island. There is not the same need for an extensive rite of passage in the new circumstances as there was in the old, and weddings have become 'primarily the locus of symbolic class struggles' (p. 11).

The 'polarisation' of village and champagne weddings he uses to ground a meditation on Cypriots in their own society and in the world beyond, seen in terms of an array of oppositions: town and village, middle class and working class, modernity and tradition, dominant and dominated, Europeaness and Cypriotness, western and Other. His own 'ethical disposition' identifies him with the underdog throughout. The meditation ranges theoretically and is generally effective and stimulating on issues of wider relevance than the understanding of the particular history of this one Mediterranean island.

1930s weddings are therefore used as the baseline for change, but there are problems of evidence. The documentation apparently available is slight. What is provided is not a carefully researched and nuanced account but, despite hints of important variation, an homogenised sketch of past events set against differentiated and often directly observed, contemporary events. Even these, however, are presented as polarised types, with only occasional interest in 'weddings in the middle' which fit neither. The categories are not tested by any attempt to allocate numbers to them.

The manipulation of stereotypes is more salient in the analysis than is systematic enquiry into the changing forms of weddings actually held. The role of evidence in the analysis is therefore already problematic and this is exacerbated by the author's technique for presenting his documentation. He offers vivid and sharply circumstantial accounts of events and interactions within which he places himself. His feelings and personal moral responses, and his participation, are as directly presented as the doings and sayings of others. This may appear to represent an appropriate contemporary reflexivity, but the sense of transparency is soon undermined. He declares that he is painting 'a composite picture, so to speak, of several celebrations of the same kind', in which it is only 'most people who appear in the following pages [who] are real' (p. 114). To what extent, one is left wondering, is the author himself amongst the real people? The validity of evidence in ethnographic writing is always a little more problematic when it is necessary to disguise the parties to the fieldwork transaction for their own protection, but seldom are doubts raised as directly as here.

This is then a stimulating and attractive book. Whether it is a reliable one is more difficult to know.

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Blood revenge. Family honor, mediation and outcasting. By Joseph Ginat. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press. 1996. xvii + 272 pp. Hb.: £45. ISBN 1 898723 184.

This book is a revised and much enlarged second edition of the author's *Blood disputes among Bedouin and rural Arabs in Israel* (1987). The first edition was based on information gathered during the decade 1973–83; the present work adds material gathered during another ten years, 1986–96. Where the first edition contained 48 case histories, the new one has 71. All but one or two of the disputes occurred in Israel, either among Bedouin or among Arab villagers; most of them seem to have happened after 1970.

Data of the kind presented here – which cover Arab communities in every part of Israel – could obviously not have been collected by the classical method of anthropological field research, that is,

by living for a long time in a single small community. In the first edition, Ginat said virtually nothing about how his data were collected; one of the improvements in the new one is that he has an appendix entitled 'Fieldwork and informants'. As Ginat describes it, he gathered his information partly by means of interviews with the parties concerned or with other knowledgeable persons, and partly by being present on occasions when the participants in a dispute were discussing this or that issue. His reports show that on occasion he himself took an active part in the proceedings, and it seems that he also obtained information from the police (p. 41). What Ginat does not mention is that during the first decade of his fieldwork he worked as an official – eventually a very senior official – of the Israeli government, and one who specifically dealt with Arab affairs. This can hardly have failed to affect the way in which he obtained information, and it would have been advisable to discuss the matter.

Unfortunately Ginat's rich case material must be treated with caution. It is always a difficult matter to tell how reliable an anthropologist is in reporting the facts, but there are, nevertheless, certain tests that one can apply. One is to examine how careful the author is about various matters of detail that can easily be checked. Ginat does not come out well on this test. There are a number of small mistakes in the bibliography of his book, many of the Arabic words that appear in the work are not accurately transcribed and there are certain inconsistencies in the text.

It is also evident that Ginat does not understand the customary law of the Bedouin well enough to be able to produce wholly reliable case histories. This appears strikingly in his treatment of one of the most characteristic features of Bedouin law in the area, the guaranty. In sharp contrast to what happens in our own legal system, among the Bedouin of this region a contract between two parties is normally not a bipartite but a tripartite transaction, since in addition to the promisor and the promisee there is also a guarantor (*kafil*, pl. *kufala*). The guarantor pledges his honor ('*ird*) to the promisee on behalf of the promisor. So it is that in case history IX, when the parties draw up a written agreement about the conditions under which one party will undergo the ordeal (*bish'a*), the agreement (of which the author provides a photograph) specifies that the terms are 'in the honour of the guarantors' (*fi 'ird al-kufala*). A great deal of law is enfolded in these three short words. They mean (among other things) that if the promisor does not do what he has promised to do,

then the promisee has the means to ensure that the guarantors either perform themselves or (if this is not possible) offer appropriate compensation. The guarantors have taken upon themselves obligations of the most solemn kind known to the Bedouin: if they fail to fulfil their obligations, then they will forfeit their honour. The whole contract has legal force only by virtue of the guarantors; without them the agreement would be no more than an informal understanding between the parties.

Ginat says nothing of all this: he simply translates *fi 'ird al-kufala* as 'before [i.e., in the presence of] the witness' (p. 39). Now the institution of a witness (*shahid* pl. *shuhud*) is familiar to the Bedouin; in fact the contract that Ginat translates on p. 120, and of which he also supplies a photograph, does have witnesses (the semi-literate person who drew up the document calls them *shuhada*). But the functions of guarantor and witness are totally different. Ginat himself seems to have been aware of some difficulties in translating *kafil* as 'witness', since on p. 62 he correctly translates it as 'guarantor' (though the obligations of the guarantor are wrongly described there), while on p. 120 he renders *kufala* as 'co-lia-ble group members'.

The author's misunderstanding of this and other institutions of Bedouin law is strange, for they have been fully explained in the literature, even in works cited by Ginat himself. And here it must be said that the bibliography, though lengthy, is at least as notable for what it omits as for what it contains. It is essentially limited to works in English and Hebrew. It ignores, therefore, not only useful studies in German and French that bear on the subject, but (worse still) virtually the whole of the large and often valuable Arabic literature (the only Arabic works listed are two books from the 1930s by 'Arif al-'Arif). Even in the coverage of the English and Hebrew literature there are remarkable gaps: the author could have learnt much, for instance, from Sasson Bar-Zvi's Hebrew book on Bedouin law (1991).

Ginat's book is in fact something of a minefield, and those who do not already know a fair amount about Arab customary law would do best to keep out. But the land in which the mines are planted is not barren, and readers who have the equipment necessary to enter the field without undue risk will find that it is worth their while. For example, Case History IX (pp. 37–42) is a description of a lengthy and fascinating vendetta between two Bedouin groups. Ginat notes that in most of the killings and woundings the perpetrators did not publicly reveal their identity, and he rightly

comments that this is wholly uncharacteristic of traditional Bedouin society. In a later discussion of further developments in this vendetta (Case History XVII, pp. 64–6), Ginat makes the interesting observation that in contrast to the villagers of northern Palestine, ‘Bedouin mediators do not function as a mediation committee or a *sulha* committee’, and he goes on to give an invaluable account of the workings of the village mediation committees. Ginat is sensitive to the interplay between the law and politics of the Israeli state and those of the local communities, and he observes how, in particular cases, electoral interests can speed up or slow down the process of effecting a settlement (pp. 67, 69, 70). Altogether, it is much to be hoped that Ginat will in due course give us a third edition of his book, in which the mines will have been removed from the field, leaving readers to gather in the harvest in safety.

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Joseph Ginat writes in response:

Because of the space limitations, I will refer to the main issue of the critique. Case History IX: The Talmud says: ‘[Who] with his own blemish he stigmatises [others] as unfit’ (The Talmud, Kidushim, p. 70). Stewart does not understand the Customary Law of the Bedouin, especially regarding the *bishā* (ordeal by fire). When two parties go to the *bishā* ceremony, they take a witness, called *samiyah* (hearing witness), actually an eye witness (Bar-Zvi, 1991: 32; Al Hashash, 1991: 30). Sometimes the witness is called *kafil*, i.e. guarantor, but what is meant is *samiyah* or *shabid* (witness). I have studied the *bishā* for the past six years, attending 136 ceremonies. I hold documentation of many others. In some of them the term *kafil* appears, referring to a witness. For example: two Negev Bedouin went to the *mebashā* to resolve a quarrel, accompanied by a witness, and the document they carried said their escort was *kafil*. Upon their return, the witness had to tell the relatives of both parties what he saw, in this case that the suspect was found guilty.

Researchers who know Bedouin culture are certainly familiar with the substitution of *kafil* and *shabid* with regard to the *bishā*. A serious scientist would be very careful of questioning an anthropologist’s reliability, and a decent and thorough scientist cannot make generalisations, or say that a book contains ‘mines’ without identifying them and proving that they are indeed mines.

War before civilization. The myth of the peaceful savage. By Lawrence H. Keeley. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996. xii + 245 pp. Hb.: \$25. ISBN 0 19 509112 4.

This book does for primitive militarism what Lévi-Strauss did for savage rationality. Professor Keeley makes it his business to refute, with archaeological chapter and verse, what he describes as the ‘myth’ of prehistoric peacefulness. Seemingly, there has since the Second World War been a consensus among archaeologists that warfare is a characteristic of civilised societies and that in archaic communities war was either non-existent or ritualised to a degree that made it almost harmless. Approaching the topic of primitive war from a less Rousseauan but still, Keeley argues, fundamentally mistaken viewpoint, Turney-High’s celebrated volume *Primitive war* (1949) presented a picture of primitive battles as too incompetently executed to be deadly. Not so, says Keeley. Evidence from countless archaeological sites in western Europe and the Americas in particular indicate that, within their technological and organisational limitations, many prehistoric peoples were remarkably successful in killing their neighbours. A hundred and fifty years before the arrival of Columbus in the New World, 500 men, women and children were massacred and thrown into a common grave in South Dakota, presumably by tribal enemies. Evidence for similar wholesale slaughter during the European Neolithic period has been unearthed at Talheim in Germany and Roaix in south-eastern France. According to Keeley, warfare is documented in the archaeological record of the past 10,000 years in every well studied region of the world.

It might seem hard to ignore the testimony of axe-shattered skulls and flint arrowheads embedded in human skeletal remains. Yet this is what has occurred, Keeley tells us, for most of the past half-century in archaeology. I am not so sure about his contention that anthropology has had ‘very little’ to say on the topic of primitive warfare. In my own region of Africa one can think of Evans-Pritchard on the perennial Nuer raiding of the Dinka, Roscoe on the efficient military campaigns of the Ganda, the exploits of the Zulu under Dingiswayo and Shaka, and the military expansion of the Bemba in East-Central Africa. For an anthropologist or anyone interested in the topic of changing ‘paradigms’ in social theory, Keeley’s account of the difficulties he experienced in getting funding to investigate Neolithic village fortifications in Belgium make fascinating reading.

So ingrained was his discipline's commitment to the pacific interpretation of prehistoric society that Keeley got his money only when he had changed the word 'fortification' in his grant proposal to the neutral 'enclosure'! Indeed Keeley himself admits to having lived for long under the sway of the 'pacific primitive' theory, which he continued to propagate to his students even after excavating unequivocal evidence of systematic prehistoric homicide among former residents of San Francisco Bay.

Despite his insistence on the generality of warfare in prehistoric times Keeley does not espouse the 'killer ape' theory of genetically ingrained human depravity. He recognises the existence in prehistory of peaceful communities, though he evidently sees them as the exception rather than the rule. He shows conclusively that some primitive peoples attained a higher level of homicide than some of the most militaristic states of the modern era. He also interestingly recounts the frequent occasions when 'primitive' warriors managed to defeat or even destroy 'civilised' military formations in North America, Africa and elsewhere.

This book is a welcome and necessary corrective to a misleading disciplinary myth. Yet it would be unfortunate if Keeley's scholarly work reinforced the popular view in the western world that wars have 'always' been with us. Vast areas of space and time escape Professor Keeley's scrutiny. There is virtually nothing on Australian and Asian prehistory. Nor is there any discussion of Mellaart's work on the remarkable lack of fortifications in ancient Anatolian society, or the much more extensive investigations of Gimbutas into the goddess-focused communities of pre-Indo-European central and south-eastern Europe and the Middle East, pointing to a millennial epoch of peace in that region.

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***Hierarchy and its discontents. Culture and the politics of consciousness in caste society.* By Steven M. Parish. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1996. xxiii + 270. Pb.: £16.95. ISBN 0 8122 1551 6. Hb.: £34.95. ISBN 0 8122 3313 1.**

Parish's book is in the prevalent South Asian ethnographic genre of 'critique of Dumont'. It is noteworthy within this genre for his sensitivity to

the nuances of Dumont's argument about the hierarchical nature of Indian caste society and for the shift of his critique from the structural to the psychological level where he locates Newars' lived world of ambivalence, commitment, insight, resistance, fantasy, hope and amnesia towards the social and political dominance of caste in the city of Bhaktapur.

Parish's aim is to describe the 'mind-games' that low and high caste Newars play to find meaning and value for their selves within a hierarchical cultural world that in moments of critical reflection renders them stigmatised victims or unjust agents of caste dominance. His basic premise is that south Asian caste culture includes both legitimating ideology and de-legitimising critique and that individuals living in such a society continually engage in a moral dialogue between an ideological self and a critical self in order to construct a meaningful existence and a worthy self. In this respect he directly confronts what I call the 'Frankenstein' effect of culture: human are the creators of the cultural worlds in which they live, but everyday practice naturalises that world so that we become oppressed by its apparent necessity. For Parish, it is the 'critical self' which reveals the arbitrariness of the Newar social world of caste, and it is such an awareness that breeds discontent with caste society and motivates the moral dialogues with the ideological self that members of various castes engage in to find meaning for themselves within caste society. For Parish, then, in the dialectic of structure and agency, the latter is psychological in the sense that through their mind-games, Newars actively contest and construct their cultural worlds.

In the first two substantive chapters, Parish sets up the basic moral dialectic of Newar society between hierarchy and equality. The former is portrayed in Chapter 1 via a description of the New Year festivals of Bhaktapur in which people pull two chariots carrying Bhairav and Bhadrakali through the city and eventually into the margins where the stigmatised untouchable members of the Sweeper Jat (Pore) reside. Here Parish makes the point that the procession celebrates a social system explicitly ordered in terms of hierarchy variously constituted by power, purity, knowledge and sacredness. In the second chapter, he describes the ways in which Newars of various low castes adopt a critical approach to this stigmatising hierarchical ordering and rethink the nature of their society through discursive affirmations of the equality of all humans. Here he makes two important points. First, while Newars talk about the equality, they

‘do not possess an ideology of equality analogous to those found in the modern western world’ (p. 44); and, second, they are fundamentally ambivalent about caste with assertions of equality often combined with re-assertions of hierarchical differences. Chapter 3 is an extended critique of Dumont in which Parish argues that Newars can and do live in a hierarchically-ordered society without being *Homo hierarchicus*: that is, without their whole society, all their relationships and their experiences being exhausted by a single truth of purity and impurity. Instead, within a Newar culture of inequality his concern is to account for the emergence of human agency in the form of a critical self as the locus of resistance and the re-imagining of society. His general point is that Newar society – and all complex societies – is not totalising, monolithic, rational and coherent as portrayed by Dumont’s *Homo hierarchicus* but is constituted by a positional, context-specific multiplicity of partially dissonant perspectives and rationalities animated by a dialectic of ideology and critique. While otherwise exemplary in his understanding of Dumont’s argument, throughout the book Parish uses the terms inequality and hierarchy interchangeably and without comment.

In chapters 4 and 5 Parish shifts to the psychological level by taking us into the ‘minds’ of Newars as they struggle to bring meaning and value to their lives. He reveals the complexity and subtlety of their ambivalence to hierarchy, describing how people of untouchable caste disguise their identities and tell stories that reveal the arbitrariness of the hierarchy. He argues that just as there is a critical self revealing the arbitrariness of caste life, so there is dialectically a ‘political unconscious’ suppressing this insight that allows Newars to live the life of caste without conscious moral dilemmas. This leads to the theme of chapter 5 where Parish confronts the first premise of Marxism: ‘... life involves before everything else eating and drinking ... the first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs’ (Marx 1966: 160). Lower caste Newars must live the caste system in order to eat. In this context he introduces another dimension of the Newar mind-game: the dialectic of holism (i.e. caste as a natural, moral, sacred and therefore inherent order) and necessity (i.e. caste as arbitrary but ‘the only real alternative to disorder’ [p. 143]). As in the previous chapter, he speculates on how Newars of various castes work through this dialectic based upon a collection of their equivocal explanations and defences of caste. In the final ethnographic chapter, Parish widens the scope of his argument by

surveying some of the principal ethnographies on untouchable castes in India and how they, like the untouchable Newar jats in Bhaktapur, build a life within the stigma of low caste status.

There are two concluding chapters: a conclusion and a postscript. In the former, Parish suggests that a dialectic of hierarchy and equality permeates not just Newar society. They are possibilities of relatedness that are ‘transcultural categories ... always available to human minds’ (p. 219) and culturally constructed – something like Casey’s description of ‘concrete universals’ in that they are ‘operative in contingent circumstances and [have] no life apart from those circumstances’ (1997: 29). In the postscript, Parish explores the psychology of caste hegemony and the sense of self that emerges through the way in which Newars move between knowing and failing to know their social system, between insight and blindness, between resistance and collusion, between the critical self and the ideological self.

Overall, the book is an insightful and sensitive account of the psychological life-world of caste. Its principal strength is the way in which Parish celebrates the multiplicities and ambiguities of experience of everyday life in caste society. His account strikes a responsive chord with my research experience among Parbatiya castes in a more rural village in the Kathmandu valley. It makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of caste in Nepal as well as to expanding ethnography beyond monolithic truths.

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***Spirited women. Gender, religion and cultural identity in the Nepal Himalaya.* By J. C. Watkins. New York: Columbia University Press. 1996. xi + 347 pp. Pb.: \$18.50. ISBN 0 231 10215 1.**

Communities of highland Nepal have long engaged in wide-ranging Asian trade networks. The people

of Nyeshang, to the north side of the Annapurna Himal, are one example. In this essentially hermeneutic study, Watkins seeks to examine factors promoting equalitarian relations between the sexes in this community. It is not easy to determine how far she has succeeded in this; for, as she states in her main methodological remark on the difficulties of studying a somewhat mobile population: 'rather than agonize over the preliminary stuff – the defining, the mapping, the planning ... I skipped all that and just started moving – on foot or horseback, by bus or plane – guided by the simple belief that if it [the notion of community] made "sense" to them, then it would eventually make sense to me' (p. 21). The aim is worthy. Yet the outcome of this approach is a *mélange* of impressionistic observations and anecdotes which, if generally informative and occasionally perceptive, repeatedly disappoints through its lack of rigour and its journalistic style.

Using as an historical source autobiographical narratives drawn mainly from women both in Nyeshang and in some of the major cities of South-east Asia, the author offers an absorbing and interesting outline of recent historical changes in the patterns of subsistence and of mercantile networks. To some degree trading was an activity of the agricultural off-season, but the members of some households extended their travels as far as Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Hong Kong. Self-advancement seems to have been promoted in a society based on equality of opportunity for aggrandisement. While family-based trading appears to have become displaced gradually by a more professional corporate mercantilism, the relations between the sexes seem to have shown a persistently flexible and egalitarian quality.

Permanent urban migration resulted in a fall by nearly one third in the Nyeshang population between 1971 and 1988. However, frequent travel and a strong endogamous tendency have fostered ties with relatives and a somewhat exclusive sense of community across large distances. Nevertheless, the author argues that there have been substantial effects of male trade-related absenteeism on marriage patterns, and on the extent to which the Nyeshang social order is supported principally by networks among women.

In general, the account is written in a rather colloquial style which has the sole virtue of making it abundantly clear when the author's value judgements impinge upon her ethnographic analysis. There are two prominent examples of this.

First, Watkins makes a number of comparisons between Nyeshangte and Brahmin-Chhetri marital relationships which are uniformly hostile to the latter, referring for example to 'the nightmarish reality of domestic relations in some Hindu communities' (p. 124). Secondly, she adopts a remarkably patronising tone towards Nyeshangte men: many are in a 'perpetual state of adolescence' (p. 313); and from her cursory attention to this side of the equation she concludes with a rhetorical flourish: 'In short, what we find from the male point of view is a sort of apologetics – what can you expect if you have Chengiz Khan, the Tibetan cavalry, and the deer hunter imprinted in your genes?' (p. 204). In brief, she does not seek to understand before condemning by insinuation, and thereby betrays her own intellectual immaturity.

Watkins gives useful space to describing women's appreciation of Buddhist theory and participation in local practice in Nyeshang, remarking on the nostalgia felt by urban migrants in this respect. Thus, she illuminates the significance of communal reciprocity through annual rites of redistribution (*thonje*) and atonement (*Smyung nas*), and highlights the place of femininity in Buddhist imagery. It is all the more disappointing, therefore, time and time again to meet Watkins' apparently stubborn adherence to a curiously prejudiced blend of American feminist ideology and sexual stereotyping which she seems to read into her ethnographic data. Thus, she even *defines* what she calls 'gender ideologies' to be 'statements about women and images of the feminine' (p. 194). This cannot be ideology about 'gender', simply ideology about 'women' or 'femininity'. Such an approach may serve a local status-seeking function in the tribe of street-wise feminists in America, but it does not serve the interests of anthropological scholarship.

One may be forgiven for thinking that Watkins finds her own personal views in some way validated by her ethnographic experience, just as Victorian observers saw their own sense of inherent superiority vindicated by living conditions and practices in the world outside Europe. One may conclude therefore that the exercise has been largely tautological. This reviewer would have been happier to see an impartial and moderate account of relations between the sexes in the constituent ethnic groups of Nyeshang, together with some discussion of the concept of 'ethnic identity' in this group. A more systematic, sensitive and disinterested comparison with the Hinduist peoples, for long cast somehow as the less worthy

of anthropological inquiry, would have been highly desirable and remains to be written.

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Development among Africa's migratory pastoralists
By Aggrey Ayuen Majok and Calvin W. Schwabe.
Westport, Connecticut and London: Bergin and
Garvey. 1996. pp. xiii + 284. ISBN 0 89789 477 4.

Aggrey Majok, a Dinka, was formerly Director of Veterinary Services for the southern region of the Sudan and is now chairman of the Department of Clinical Veterinary Studies at the University of Zimbabwe. Calvin Schwabe is an international authority on tropical veterinary medicine. Both authors have devoted their lives to the better care of African cattle.

This clearly written book is a result of decades of scientific enquiry, humane concern and practical activity. The authors argue that northern-type interventions, colonial and post-colonial, have done much more harm than good and that they are inappropriate for the development of 'Africa's proud pastoral millions'. Simply, the pastoralists themselves are the real experts. Their unique combinations of knowledge and skills enable them to subsist in areas which could not support any other system of food production. Migratory pastoralism has proven itself to be the most efficient way of utilising arid and semi-arid lands. But today, as a consequence of oppressive and ill-conceived external interventions, African pastoralists are on the edge of suffering 'the unenviable fates of Japan's Ainu, Australia's aborigines, the Western Hemisphere's native inhabitants and other unempowered peoples'.

The book first disposes of the ignorant, arrogant and inappropriate arguments that have been made against traditional pastoralism, both by free-marketeers and collectivists and by simple-minded modernisers. The authors then demonstrate the strengths of traditional pastoralism through accounts of its different modes among Maasai, Turkana, Somali and, in particular, the Dinka. They stress, however difficult it is for the northerners to grasp, that the economic strengths of pastoral modes of production lie in the fact that livestock are not isolable economic assets that can be treated as if they were simply lumps of butcher's meat on the hoof. Stock are not reared and cherished just to provide cheap meat for city

dwellers or export earnings for politicians to fritter away. To the pastoralists themselves, milk – as food or as a product to be exchanged for grain – is of greater economic importance than meat. Most importantly, livestock production is 'a profound cultural activity' that touches every part of social and religious life. As Evans-Pritchard pointed out nearly sixty years ago, the social idiom of pastoralists is a bovine idiom. Development agents who do not learn that idiom must always remain both unknowing and unheard. All this is familiar enough to social anthropologists but still needs stating to the 'practical' men who determine policy.

Majok and Schwabe are not sentimental hankers after a golden past. They want pastoralists, as do the pastoralists themselves, to benefit from medicines, education and technology but 'in ways that are not culturally harmful', that can be co-ordinated with local strengths and that can clearly be seen by the local populations to be beneficial. The only way forward, they argue, is through continuing local consultation and empowerment, and using the few development resources available with great economy. It is stupid to spend \$100 on medicines for a \$25 cow!

The logic of the authors' argument is that only a radical rethinking and restructuring of policies, by both governments and agencies, will maintain ecologically sound and economically viable traditional-style pastoralism. They recognise that this is not on the cards so they identify some palliatives: aspirin where it is really a wonder drug which is needed. For a start, they suggest that the most effective and useful interventions could be made by following the people's continuing concern for the wellbeing of their livestock. They cite Jean Buxton's observation that in colonial times 'herders who have themselves never visited a government dressing station ... bring their cattle for inoculation', and point out that the only governmental officials encouraged by the Sudan People's Liberation Army have been veterinary personnel. They proceed to argue, using convincing examples of small co-operative ventures which have worked, that veterinary services could take on wider health care responsibilities and lead 'intersectoral co-operation' with medical and other services. Certain veterinary staff are often more gentle and adept injectors than medical staff because they risk getting gored or kicked if they are clumsy.

Pastoralists need all the informed support that they can get. This book is both a practical demonstration of the viability of traditional pastoralism and a testament of faith and of hope in

its future. The scientific authority which it carries should be a help to social anthropologists, and others who have to try and persuade rangeland and ranching experts, economists, development agencies, and schooled and urbanised politicians, that pastoralists, if only they are encouraged to exercise their skills, can be national economic assets and not just tourist bait.

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***Nightsong. Performance, power and practice in South Africa.* By Veit Erlmann. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. 1996. 446 pp. Photographs, bibliography, index, discography.**

Isicathamiya is a vibrant a *cappella* vocal style sung primarily by Zulu migrant workers in South Africa's single-sex urban hostels. While rooted deeply in Nguni (Zulu, Xhosa and Swazi) vocal tradition, its history references nineteenth-century missionaries, American-style minstrel shows and early twentieth-century black American entertainment genres such as ragtime. The genre was made famous internationally by the group Ladysmith Black Mambazo, led by Joseph Shabalala, who as consultant and as contributor has a major voice in the current volume.

Nightsong is the second book by Erlmann focusing on black urban musical traditions in South Africa. While both *African stars. Studies in Black South African performance* (Chicago University Press, 1991) and *Nightsong* consider the musical environment from a broad perspective, they both have the *isicathamiya* tradition at their core. *African stars* offers an examination of these traditions from 1890 to 1939. *Nightsong* carries the subject through to 1994, the year Nelson Mandela was elected the first black president of the country, bringing ideological and practical change to the day-to-day lives of all South Africans.

Isicathamiya has received a relatively large amount of media support – choirs were recorded from the early decades of this century for broadcast and publication, and groups like Ladysmith Black Mambazo have continued to receive this support, in particular after the release of Paul Simon's controversial album *Graceland* in the mid-1980s. However, the genre's main performance context is the all-night competition held at weekends in community halls. *Isicathamiya* is 'essentially a live genre which is anchored in

small, close-knit communities whose survival depends on the ability of the performers to maintain their autonomy in self-supporting associations' (p. xxiv). Erlmann looks to the lives of these performers for an interpretation of the style. This he contextualises in terms of existing studies which most frequently encase discussions of expressive culture in relation to the distinct South African political regime of oppression. By concentrating on the performers, Erlmann emphasises that *isicathamiya* is not 'an art form of the people, *isicathamiya* is an art form of people' (p. xxi).

Nightsong thus contributes to the body of work concerned with the ethnography of performance. Referencing such works as Bernard Lortat-Jacob's *Chroniques sardes* (Julliard, 1990) and Anthony Seeger's *Why Suyá sing. A musical anthropology of an Amazonian people* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), Erlmann departs from the 'traditional' anthropological researcher: subject – informants: object paradigm. His study is an attempt to 'insert agency and performativity into anthropology' (p. xxiii).

The book divides into three sections on texts, spaces and self. In these Erlmann provides a description of the style, introduces the performers and their interacting environments, and invites Joseph Shabalala to write on the question of self-identity.

The final section of the book offers 'A select discography of *Isicathamiya*', co-authored by Rob Allingham. The list attempts to be comprehensive for recordings up to 1990. While it has certain limitations, clearly outlined in the preamble, the list is the most exhaustive to date, and provides an invaluable resource for researchers and general enthusiasts alike.

The question on many peoples' minds since 1994, the advent of the 'new South Africa' is 'What will change?' Erlmann's book leaves one with the only practical thought in this context – 'only the future will tell' (p. 316).

JANET TOPP FARGION
British Library National Sound Archive

***Traditional healers and childhood in Zimbabwe.* By Pamela Reynolds. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 1996. xxxix + 184 pp. Hb.: ISBN 0 8214 1121 7.**

The importance of knowing children has only recently been seriously recognised in social

anthropology. Pamela Reynolds extends the range of her previous ethnography of the young in this eclectic study which offers the reader narratives of illness and healing from Zimbabwe that focus particularly upon conceptions of childhood, and children's experience and understanding of suffering and evil. Drawing mainly on fieldwork conducted in 1982 and 1983 among some 60 healers in three sites in Mashonaland, while she was a fellow of the Department of Psychology, University of Zimbabwe, the author demonstrates through her ethnography of Zezuru society in the aftermath of the liberation war just how knowing children can be, both as clients of traditional healers and as healers in training.

Reynolds depicts, in a kaleidoscopic manner, different strands woven around the central theme of the importance of studying conceptions of childhood embedded in Zezuru systems of healing and of attending to children's experience of suffering, the sense they make of trauma, and the choice of appropriate therapy to help them move beyond it. The often neglected role of children in the healing process in their positions as observers, patients or acolytes is revealed as Reynolds documents a learning process which is neither formalised nor clearly demarcated but in which specialised skills and information are acquired. The study, then, is an exploration of the situated practice entailed in the acquisition of complex and flexible knowledge – though 'knowledge' in itself is not enough for one to become a diviner and healer.

Aware that autobiographies and biographies may well be in Barthes' term 'counterfeit integrations', Reynolds fruitfully explores the role of memory and the use of life histories by healers in the construction and the presentation of their selves. Childhood sickness plays an important part in giving evidence of selection by a spirit for future possession. The influential role kin may play in the identification and emergence of healers is also highlighted. Dreams for Zulu mediate between the shades and the living. Drawing upon Foucault's contention that dreams may be read as a 'technique of the self', Reynolds demonstrates how this material is available for what she terms the constitution of self and for the direction of others. Aspiring healers may use dreams to bolster their case for recognition.

The author sensitively delineates the trauma of war in which childhood is denied or foreshortened, unearthing in the process the largely unrecorded consequences of large-scale terror witnessed at first hand. Large numbers of children were employed as

messengers during the liberation war while others left Zimbabwe to train as fighters abroad. In this world turned upside down, the young played dangerous and at times powerful parts – threatened constantly by the Rhodesian security forces – and yet acquiring the power to denounce adults as 'sell-outs', often with immediate and brutal consequences for those identified. Reynolds speculates about the impact on identity the end of the war brought, when children were required to return to their assigned place in the hierarchy of age and respect. While not wishing to romanticise traditional healers and their role, she is impressed by the sensitivity with which healers attempt to deal with traumatised children and points to the innovative role diviners can play in bringing out what is problematic by giving it metaphoric form. The author documents, through her ethnography and interviews, how children are drawn into the inclusive religious life of a community and argues that, at least in this case, the emphasis is not on secrets. Children are not excluded from knowledge or participation.

In lucid mood, Reynolds draws upon Henry James' novella *The Turn of the Screw* to frame her exploration of Zezuru notions of evil and childhood as she draws out the consequences of children's exposure to evil for their construction of identity. She argues that anthropologists need to examine more carefully the interchange between children and adults as beliefs are shaped and practices established within society. This would lead to a detailed study of children who are said to be possessed in order to establish whether possession itself is best read as a loss or a gain of control. The anthropologist argues for a therapy which is embedded in the context of a particular cosmology.

In her final chapter, Reynolds examines children's knowledge of herbs, healing and healers. She reveals the extent to which many healers teach their children and the number of healers' children and other relatives who act as assistants. Again, the ethnography points to the potential that children have to reflect on social norms, especially when acting as acolytes, translating and interpreting a possessed healer's utterances.

The themes of this book are amply documented by case studies, newspaper reports, Zimbabwean and other fiction, and other sources, many of them contained in the 50 pages of appendices. Unfortunately, in this reader's copy at least, there is no index. The book ends abruptly. There is no conclusion, no drawing together of what has been discussed. In her postscript overly-defensive

introduction – even to the point of dealing with anticipated misreadings – Reynolds is at pains to stress her modest aim of producing a partial ethnography. Preferring, following Clifford, to see ethnography as fragmentary and anthropology as nomadology, the writer explains that she has deliberately resisted the temptation to appear all-knowing and to impose a pattern on her findings, though pattern one suspects there must be, if only in the choice of themes and the selection of ethnographic examples.

Throughout the text the writer has offered a reflexive approach which discusses many issues in the practice of anthropology and the writing of ethnography. For this reader, however revisionist he may appear, some pulling together of the strands would have helped to clarify the picture of suffering children and the acquisition of moral knowledge. What we are left with, however, is an intriguing set of data and insights with which the author is blazing a trail through the largely unexplored landscape of childhood in post-colonial Africa.

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Researching cultural differences in health. Edited by David Kelleher and Sheila Hillier. London: Routledge. 1996. ix + 244 pp. Pb.: \$17.95. ISBN 0 415 11183 8.

What is the relevance of culture to health? Social scientists concerned with research on health care will be aware that there has been considerable debate in Britain about the relationship between ethnic culture and health behaviour. There has been understandable suspicion of research which seeks to link minority health behaviour or health status with 'culture', on the grounds that it favours a 'culture blaming approach' which overlooks the effects of racism and economic disadvantage. Nonetheless, many health care professionals unquestionably regard culture as important. The debate has raised important issues about the nature of culture and the practical problems involved in making the concept operational in research. If we anthropologists claim a special professional competence in the study of 'culture', this debate ought to interest us all.

This book does not seek to present a unified view on this issue, but to approach it from a number of angles. Two of the contributions

address the debate about culture directly. Ahmad's article 'The trouble with culture' states the case against the concept of culture, whilst Kelleher defends research on ethnicity and culture. However, the difference between them is not as great as the polemical titles of their articles suggest since they effectively agree that culture must be seen as complex, dynamic and shifting, and that immense damage has been done by the use of stereotypical and over deterministic notions of culture. A number of other contributions explore particular health issues or particular communities and suggest that cultural difference may be relevant, but that we should not assume that differences are always more salient than commonalities. Thus Pierce and Armstrong suggest that focus group methodology enabled Afro-Caribbean respondents to articulate ideas about diabetes but express uncertainty as to how far these ideas are different from those of other groups in the population. Morgan's comparative study of high blood pressure among Afro-Caribbeans and whites reveals some differences but also many similarities between the ethnic groups in the study. Lambert and Sevak's examination of three Asian groups' perceptions of ill health suggests that differences within groups and similarities across groups may be just as important. There is a need for empirical study of all the cross-cutting commonalities and differences which pattern health beliefs and behaviours. Both this and several other studies show that people who have spent many years in, or were actually born in, Britain will have much general experience of the way health care is delivered which they share with all other British groups. There may be a quite complex interplay between these general experiences and those specific values or perceptions shared only with members of an ethnic subculture. Thus, with respect to Irish people in Britain, Kelleher and Hillier suggest that the differences in health status revealed by epidemiological data may be a product of the economic disadvantage that Irish migrants share with other working class people, exacerbated by the effects of low self esteem, and lack of confidence or security about their place in British society and polity.

One thing which stands out very clearly from the studies in this book is that while the notion of cultural difference is problematic, the notion of cultural identity is crucial. People may identify strongly with a particular group and value activities which confirm their feeling of identity without necessarily holding 'deviant' beliefs about health and illness. Kelleher and Islam's study of Bangla

Deshis indicates that, after being exposed to the media and health promotion programmes in Britain, they do not hold beliefs about diabetes or its treatment which are highly distinctive. However, they do have problems managing their diet when community activities and their own need for 'soul' satisfaction invest food with so much social and symbolic significance. Another salient point is that whatever value we give to the notion of culture in explaining differences in health status and behaviour, ethnic identity and what it means need to be taken into account in health care delivery. Anionwu found that the ethnic identity of counsellors dealing with sickle cell and thalassaemia was found to be important to clients.

None of the contributors to this volume is identified as an anthropologist (although I know that at least one of them has been trained in our discipline). Is the low profile of anthropology in this volume the result of anthropology not being seen as relevant to the issues? Have we been responsible for the treatment of culture which Ahmad identifies as 'troublesome'? This is not entirely the case since some of the studies to which Ahmad gives a positive rating have been carried out by anthropologists. In Britain, anthropologists such as Roger Ballard have demonstrated that it is possible to take different cultural values and expectations into account while also recognising the effects of structured disadvantage of one kind or another. A sophisticated view of the relevance of minority culture to health care is clearly possible. But if 'culture' is the speciality of anthropology, why is anthropology not more visible where such an approach is more needful than ever? This timely and stimulating book will repay reading by those with a general theoretical interest in the concept of culture as well as by applied anthropologists with an interest in health care and policy.

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***Ethnicity, nationalism and conflict in and after the Soviet Union. The mind aflame.* By Valery Tishkov. London: Sage; Oslo: International Peace Research Institute; United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. 1997. vii + 334 pp. Pb.: £14.95. ISBN 0 7619 5185 7.**

Valery Tishkov is an eminent Russian historian-turned-social anthropologist. He has for a long time been deeply involved in studying ethnic

nationalism and conflict in a region of the former Soviet Union, as well as in policy-making, as a former Minister of Nationalities in President Yeltsin's government. These intertwined matters are the central threads of the book under review, a fact which partly explains why Tishkov's main concern is with the interrelations among ethnic phenomena, intellectual discourse and politics in the reality of so-called post-Soviet space.

Ethnicity, nationalism and conflict in and after the Soviet Union brings together in a rather unbalanced manner three major themes: ethnicity (especially ethno-nationalism) and ethnic conflict resolution; the role of intellectuals in political discourse; and, last but not least, the exigencies of politics in conflict-riven societies. Tishkov's book is clearly policy-oriented and although it provides the reader with a perceptive insight in the understanding of such phenomena as new, post-Soviet diasporas and forced migration, or the anatomy of ethnic cleansing and violence (amply illustrated by the analyses of the Osh conflict in Central Asia, the Osset-Ingush clash and the Chechen war) it turns finally into a sustained attack on that ethnopolitics which currently results in violence and bloodshed in post-soviet space. The main thrust of the book seems to be a denunciation of ethno-nationalism as the prevailing form of doctrinal project of certain political and intellectual elites, who seek to build a state on ethnic principles and a society on national identities.

In this context, at the book's very beginning a *bête noire* appears, namely 'the scholar-turned-politician who acts within the sphere of everyday dogmatism [unable] to distinguish between mythopoetic rhetoric and real interests' (p. xv). This is a character with whom Tishkov himself refuses to be identified, even while writing about the drama of servility and the distortion of the craft of anthropological scholarship which led him to submit a letter or resignation to president Boris Yeltsin (*ibid.*).

This book might be considered, then, as a kind of manifesto which tries to resurrect Lucien Benda's 'clerk' who chastises his associates for the betrayal of their mission. For Tishkov, 'the traitors' are those post-Soviet ethnographers who advocate the primordialist visions of ethnicity that underlie the concept of the ethno-nation. According to Tishkov, these visions are well grounded in a 'Soviet concept of ethnicity' that is based on a theory of 'ethnos' that overlaps with a Marxist-Leninist theory of the nation as an ethno-social organism – a theory that served the political practice of Soviet ethnic engineering.

Tishkov's main claim is that the 'ethnos', construed as a living body which generates 'obscure pseudo-theoretical construction[s] with explicit ethnocentric, exclusivist and hatred-oriented views' (p. 10), became a central category in the intellectual and political debates of the late 1980s and 1990s. In spite of the recent political liberalisation in Russia, moreover, no serious re-evaluation has taken place.

Western specialists on post-Soviet matters fare no better in escaping bitter criticism. In particular, Tishkov reproaches those western interpretations of events and social changes in the USSR and post-USSR that focus on the 'disintegration of an empire' caused by the 'national revival' of the peoples of the former USSR. According to Tishkov, such a 'Sleeping Beauty' theory of nationalism is not workable since the social practice of ethno-nationalism has been shaped purely by ideological discourse and academic posturing. In fact, there is nothing here about 'fighting nations' capable of speaking with one voice and acting as homogeneous entities with one will (p. 45).

What Tishkov calls for is the necessity of viewing the situation in the post-Soviet space in less static and essentialist ways. He argues for an instrumentalist view of ethnicity that allows it to be seen as a 'part of the repertoire that is calculated and chosen consciously by an individual and a group in order to satisfy certain interests and to achieve certain goals' (p. 12).

Throughout his book Tishkov aims at discerning why the grievances about the old communist system have been channelled in post-Soviet societies into ethnic conflict. In doing so he reveals the role played by a number of powerful social actors who exercise individual strategies that rely on the power of ethno-nationalism: ethnic sentiments are seen as the result of the purposeful efforts of elites (p. 12).

Consequently, Tishkov suggests that it is more appropriate to specify the nature of ongoing events in the former Soviet Union as a triumph of 'the allegory of the "triumph of nations"' (p. 46) rather than the true triumph of national self-determination. Furthermore, he stresses that ethnicity, as the most accessible basis for political mobilisation and a means of controlling power and resources in a transforming society, is abused nowadays by 'those who usurp the power to speak out on behalf of the "we" – the Tatar, the Bashkir, the Chechen and other "nations"' (p. 46). Finally, and contrary to those western writers who regard the dismembering of the Soviet Union as a

manifestation of democratisation and the right to self-determination, Tishkov regards ethnic divergencies to be the basis for inflamed conflicts in post-Soviet space.

All in all, this book looks like it is written by a mission-driven intellectual – and the reason for this is clear: it *is* a missionary statement of someone who vainly hopes that in the post-communist era there may still be some safe havens, some 'ivory towers' which can be inhabited by those scholars who want to avoid partiality in considering issues like nationalism which inflame more naive minds. Unfortunately, such a view from afar seems to belong to that very mythopoetic, intellectual rhetoric which Tishkov himself so keenly castigates in his book. This is clear enough when one reads of Tishkov's own strident advocacy of a new Russian federalism (chapter 12).

Despite these reservations, this book is a great read. It will be a 'must' for all those involved in studying contemporary nationalism.

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***Ethnicity. Anthropological considerations.* By Marcus Banks. London: Routledge. 1996. viii + 210 pp. ISBN 0 415 07801 6.**

Ethnicity. Anthropological considerations maintains Routledge's reputation for the publication of apposite anthropological works. Banks guides the reader through the historical usage of the term 'ethnicity' right up to the present day, with journalistic and other deployments of the word with especial reference, and rightly so, to Bosnia. Banks offers a comprehensive summary of all the major moments of ethnicity, introducing several case-studies and commenting incisively upon them. Norway, Soviet theories, the Manchester School, the United States and Britain, among others, are contexts carefully examined. Banks is always quick to demonstrate problems with theory, such as mistaking class divisions for ethnic ones, and is as speedy to record the usefulness of contributions. His survey of theorists from Barth through Gluckman to A. P. Cohen is detailed enough, while remaining admirably fair and critical.

This book summarises the theoretical stances taken on 'ethnicity' and, more politically and refreshingly, in that it pulls back the anthropological focus to include Britain, where Banks employs his anthropological gaze in an

impressive cultural critique, continuing his avowed deconstruction of 'ethnicity'. This is deeply desirable given the current popular obsession with using 'ethnicity' as the explanation *par excellence* of everything from school admissions in Dewsbury to the forced movement of people, both in former Yugoslavia ('ethnic cleansing') and in Rwanda ('ethnically motivated genocide').

Inviting discussion of alternatives, Banks concludes that '[b]ecause of a constant conflation between description and explanation in folk theory, a conflation analogous to and perhaps derived from mumbo-jumbo academic jargon, ethnicity is constantly produced as explanation: the reason why the As are slaughtering the Bs, the reason why the Cs are "clannish", "dirty", or "unreliable"'. Simultaneously, Banks points out the danger of naive academic input, and demonstrates that 'ethnicity' is still an overly powerful conceit: still a metaphor that hides more than it reveals: still a loaded term, morally and otherwise, that remains highly problematic.

This is a thought-provoking book which deserves to be widely read by all practitioners and students of anthropology, as well as by journalists and political scientists. It is a very thorough and wide-ranging review of both research and theory concerning notions relating to ethnicity.

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***Anthropological perspectives on kinship.* By Ladislav Holy. London and Chicago: Pluto Press. 1996. vi + 198 pp. Pb.: £12.99. ISBN 0 7453 0917 8.**

Though actually written during an academic visit to Oslo, this book is based on the late Ladislav Holy's kinship lectures at the University of St Andrews. The first of its seven chapters is about relatedness, since 'the logical requirement for postulating a separate domain of kinship is to define this domain as a system of social ties deriving from the recognition of genealogical relations' (p. 12). In turn, these genealogical notions derive – so most anthropologists have assumed – from cultural models of procreation.

Chapter 2 introduces some basic notions through brief reference to the classic debates surrounding them: for example, kinship and descent are discussed in relation to Fortes' contrast between the domestic and politico-jural domains, and his disagreement with Leach over

'complementary filiation'. Although it is noted that the autonomy of the domestic and public domains has recently been called into question, the next three chapters are structured around this distinction.

The first deals with kinship in the domestic domain, with particular reference to conceptual confusion surrounding the terms 'family' and 'household'. Holy argues that 'family' only has analytical value if its use is confined to culturally recognised groups containing both affinal and consanguineal relationships (p. 52), though this has often been muddled by idealised western cultural notions whereby a 'home' should contain a *co-resident* family, i.e. a household. The next two chapters deal with kinship in the public domain, covering segmentary lineages in Africa and New Guinea, and matrilineal, cognatic and 'double' descent, respectively.

Chapter 6 discusses marriage prestations, alliance theory, and the divergent meanings which marriage may assume for women and men. This final theme leads into the more contemporary discussions of the concluding chapter, based on the recent questioning – by Schneider and Strathern, among others – of the assumption that 'people everywhere ascribe cultural significance to natural facts of procreation' (p. 143). As noted above, that assumption was basic to the genealogical approach to kinship, and Holy's synthesis of recent critiques of the genealogical method, and the centrality claimed for it by writers from Rivers onwards, is one of the most interesting parts of the book.

Holy largely eschews polemic in favour of the balanced approach appropriate to a good lecture course. His own position therefore emerges more subliminally, in relation to what is included and what is left out. In this context it is instructive to compare his book with its two most obvious precursors in the British anthropological tradition, Robin Fox's *Kinship and marriage* (first published in Penguin, 1967), and the volume co-written by Alan Barnard and myself, *Research practices in the study of kinship* (London: Academic Press, 1984).

The word 'gender', for example, does not figure in Fox's index and features in Barnard and Good's purely as a componential attribute of terminology rather than as a distinct aspect of social identity. Entries under 'gender' are relatively few in Holy's book too, but the contexts are quite different; he discusses gender as an aspect of the broader notion of 'personhood', a notion completely absent from the two earlier books yet central to the way thinking about kinship has developed over the past decade. Holy points out that to reject the

genealogical assumption is also to reject the assumption that kinship forms a distinct domain in all human societies, at least in the sense previously assumed (p. 155). The result, he concludes, has been a shying away from 'kinship theory' in its old, universalising sense. All is not lost, however, since this recent focus on 'personhood' has reasserted the importance of kinship identities, but as multiple and hence also partible entities rather than the ascribed, unalterable statuses which earlier writers assumed.

The most obvious stylistic difference from the earlier books is the absence of diagrams. Holy never comments on this striking departure from previous convention, but it too may indicate a trend, for whereas Fox (1967: 36) treated kinship diagrams as largely unproblematic, Barnard and Good, though employing them equally freely, repeatedly cautioned against interpreting them too literally (1984: 7–8, 98–100). Even so, Holy's strategy evokes mixed feelings, since there are places in the text where their absence impedes comprehension. The discussion of Evans-Pritchard's diagrammatic representations of Nuer territorial-cum-lineage segmentation (p. 82) is impossible to follow without access to the diagrams themselves; likewise, marriage exchange cries out for diagrammatic representation, even if the pseudo-genealogical diagrams favoured by earlier writers are rejected as too misleading. That latter section points up another, rather more surprising, contrast with its predecessors, namely, the lack of attention to 'alliance theory' (seven pages) compared to 'descent theory' (two chapters and more).

One contrast not reducible to the crude counting of pages and index entries, but nonetheless clearly evident, is the change in emphasis from structure (in whatever sense) to process. In his introduction, paradoxically, Holy traces this change back to three arch-proponents of the structural perspective: Fortes and Jack Goody, who introduced the notion of the developmental cycle in domestic groups; and Lévi-Strauss, by virtue of his concern with the perpetuation of kinship structures through marriage systems (p. 3). While it is true that elements of diachrony were thereby introduced into predominantly synchronic approaches, these are hardly processual approaches as that term has since come to be understood, and Holy seems too generous in accrediting this theoretical sea-change to writers so firmly located within the previous tradition. Finally, another change explicitly recognised in the book is the shift in focus from empirical 'facts' to local ideas about

those facts, in other words, from an emphasis on the socio-structural towards the ethno-social or cultural.

All this makes for a provocative dissonance between the familiar, almost classical, subject matter and the far more contemporary stance taken towards that material, at least in the framing chapters.

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Socio-anthropologie du contemporain. Par P. Bouvier. Paris: Gallilée. 1995. 175 pp. Biblio. 180 FF. ISBN 2 7186 0453 0.

L'ouvrage de P. Bouvier, sociologue à grande culture anthropologique, se présente avant tout comme un livre-symptôme, ce sous deux angles: il témoigne tout d'abord d'une réflexion sur les limites de la rationalité sociologique *stricto sensu*; il rend compte à un deuxième niveau de la nécessité d'ouvrir les champs disciplinaires pour appréhender la complexité des phénomènes contemporains marqués par les dimensions contradictoires de la mondialisation et d'imaginaires ethnicisés.

L'auteur se livre dans les trois premiers chapitres à une relecture aussi intelligente que précise de la littérature anthropologique dont il confronte la pluralité des orientations et des terrains retenus à leurs conditions de production globales, sociales et politiques. Son extériorité sociologique se révèle ici un atout certain pour cerner les idéologies latentes qui entourent et traversent l'anthropologie comme connaissance scientifique institutionnalisée. Par la méditation de ce vaste parcours historique – qui met en scène la spécificité de l'anthropologie française – P. Bouvier pose les premiers jalons de la démarche socio-anthropologique dont il développe les axes et les contours dans les deux chapitres suivants. A l'origine spécialiste du travail, l'auteur propose des concepts originaux qui tentent de réunir l'objectivation et les représentations propres aux acteurs donateurs de sens singuliers voire subjectifs. Il étend de la portée épistémique de ces concepts ('construits pratico-heuristiques', 'ensembles populationnels cohérents', 'blocs socio-technologiques', 'endoréisme') dans une perspective de croisement entre la sociologie et l'anthropologie. Le souci d'éviter toute amputation heuristique de ces disciplines et la volonté de les

enrichir par des efforts mutuels marquent son approche des faits sociaux et de leur symbolisation individuelle et collective.

Dans un chapitre terminal, l'auteur se concentre sur les possibilités d'application de ses schèmes interprétatifs sur les nouveaux champs des problématiques identitaires en Europe, émergeant en particulier de l'éclatement des systèmes communistes. Ajoutons pour conclure qu'une

revue *Socio-anthropologie* a vu le jour en 1997, dans le but de concrétiser ce cheminement intellectuel qui tente de dépasser des ruptures méthodologiques, susceptibles d'être un obstacle à une retotalisation de la complexité contemporaine.

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ORSTOM, Paris