
This book focuses on the Gisu, an egalitarian society of 500,000 people living near Mt Elgon in Uganda. Suzette Heald addresses the subject of male identity and violent performance in a society that cultivated male assertiveness and violent self-expression to a point where its ‘social usefulness’ became problematic. In this valuable ethnography, based on her many years of fieldwork, she documents the Gisu’s experience in vivid and meticulous detail, and gives largely competent interpretations of morality, violent action and the construction of gender identity. The book also provides an engaging and often dramatic account, thereby drawing the reader into general anthropological discussions on the issues of ‘sex, violence and ritual’.

The book is based mostly on previously published articles and chapters, which are revised and extended here. Two of the nine chapters, the introduction and the final one, ‘Tribal rites and tribal rights’, are new. The chapters do fit together, but occasionally the connecting argument is lacking. The three themes mentioned in the subtitle of the book do not really figure in chapters 5, 6 and 7. The book might also have been strengthened by the inclusion of more case material: statements, descriptions, brief life stories or people’s own reflections on their actions. Although there are some such passages, they are few and far between. Also somewhat surprising is the total lack of tables, maps, figures and photographs.

The first three chapters address the most conspicuous and important public ritual in Gisu society: circumcision (imblau), a very painful but socially and psychologically highly significant – indeed defining – moment for Gisu males, ‘making them into men’. Heald’s treatment of this ritual, its context, meanings and psychological ramifications, is very thorough and fascinating. The complexity and the transforming impacts of circumcision are brought out convincingly, as is the moral ambivalence of a group that defines itself in terms of a ‘capacity [albeit controlled] for violence’.

Heald’s analysis is appealing because of her deep interest in the psychological aspects of the ritual. She takes up arguments and theories from psychology in an attempt to explain the transformative impact of circumcision on men, thus exploring the creation of violent and controlled gender roles among Gisu males. Her account of the emotional-cum-social state called lirima presents the culture-specific ideal of masculinity among the Gisu and thereby illustrates the difficulty of easily generalising about ‘universal’ human emotions and feelings across cultures, without denying their presence in some form. Heald uses psychology to get at the subjective aspects of culture and ritual, repeatedly stressing the need for phenomenological or hermeneutic approaches.

The chapter on divinatory failure explores the socially very marginal role and status of diviners, who have no general community role or power and are only consulted by individuals in cases of personal problems, as a kind of ‘self-help’. Heald emphasises the elements of scepticism, even agnosticism, generated by the divination system itself. The ‘failure’ she talks about is that of the frequent lack of credibility and of unanimity among those consulted, reinforcing the status of powerlessness of the diviners. Against the common Evans-Pritchardian view of ‘accommodating’ scepticism, the Gisu divination system, rooted firmly in the concreteness of daily life, is seen as producing it. It seems that in this chapter Heald regards the social characteristics of Gisu society as having greater explanatory potential than the psychological ones. In this chapter above all I found the lack of more telling case material somewhat disappointing. In the excellent chapter on joking and
avoidance relations the author treats Gisu moral categories and connects them to the Gisu kinship system. The morality of these relations is marked by the idea of ‘restraint’. The licence allowed in the joking relationship is predicated upon the idea that any vengeance (after insult and abuse) is forsworn.

The penultimate chapter of the book is more polemical, dealing with the thesis of an ‘African sexuality’ (as opposed to an Eurasian one) proposed by the demographers J. and P. Caldwell. Heald defies the generalising thesis on the basis of the Gisu case and also offers general criticism on its central assumptions.

The very interesting last chapter on tribal rites and tribal rights opens with Heald reflecting on general matters of history, identity and ethnicity, leaving aside somewhat the issues of sex, violence and ritual. She provides some much-needed additional commentary on the wider context of developments in Gisu society within Uganda, and on the long-standing historical and cultural connections of Gisu with neighbouring societies. She discusses the Gisu ideas of identity and continuity, which centre upon ‘ancestral powers or forces’ (kimisambwa), but not in terms of a static ‘tradition’. Additionally, the chapter deals with ‘tribal relations’ in Uganda and East Africa, a category very much alive in the minds of people and a category that provokes critical reflection on group and individual identity and on the possible choices of people vis-à-vis their ethnic or tribal background. In the second part of this chapter, the author returns to the issue of Gisu gender divisions and masculinity, discussing the often-asserted link between sexuality and aggression. For Heald, in the Gisu circumcision ritual the element of sexual dominance is played down in favour of the ‘military aspect’. There is no simple direct link between masculinity display, sexual aggression and domination. The circumcision ritual does play a role in creating the ‘tribal order’, which is seen as a masculine order (p. 163). This in itself may ultimately reinforce gender oppositions in the wider context of social problems, competition over resources etc.

An obvious point for further discussion is whether the contemporary Gisu experience of crisis, or at least of the profound dilemmas (and perhaps contradictions) of male identity or masculinity, is unique or not. Although few peoples would perhaps aim at such a deliberate cultural creation of an attitude of male (controlled) violence and potential for aggression (lirima), the answer is no. This opens up a challenge for more comparative studies of the issue in African contexts and elsewhere. Social organisational characteristics such as kinship norms and practices, division of labour, and socialisation of the young would perhaps need to be addressed more systematically.

A key impression that one retains after reading this book is that the Gisu – if we can see this book as reflecting how they live today – are a society in crisis and disarray, who nevertheless are negotiating and reforming their traditions and history and grasping for new meanings in a changing world they are struggling to adapt to. Heald has succeeded in vividly and engagingly representing this people and its dilemmas and in underlining the need for good cultural analysis of African societies generally.

JON ABBINK
African Studies Centre, Leiden and Free University, Amsterdam

Pour une anthropologie de l’interlocution. 

l’histoire de cet ouvrage est étroitement liée à celle de l’EASA puisque c’est au cours d’un atelier tenu à Coimbra en 1990 lors du premier congrès de l’association que les réflexions et contacts furent initiés. La dynamique de travail était lancée et différentes étapes d’un parcours de réflexion mûri pendant dix ans sont réunis dans cette collections d’essais.

L’ensemble des contributions est orienté vers un but précisé: considérer les pratiques discursives et les contextes d’énonciation comme des aspects centraux de la construction/production du savoir anthropologique. Ils s’agit donc évidemment et en premier lieu d’un objectif intellectuel mais également d’un acte de ‘politique
épistémologique’ indissociable de son contexte de publication.

L’introduction est en deux parties. Dans le premier texte, Jean-Louis Siran utilise son propre parcours personnel et intellectual pour mettre en relief l’importance des ‘rhetoriques du quotidien’ (qui parle à qui, et selon quel enjeu?). L’écriture est fine, très personnelle, presque intime. En contrepoint, le texte de Bertrand Masquelier propose une revue des débats épistémologiques et de la littérature concernant le sujet (en grande partie anglo-saxonne) avant de présenter les contributions des quatorze différents auteurs.

Un dialogue néo-socratique, une heuristique du malentendu, des jeux de devinettes, l’énonciation proverbiale ou des proverbes imprimés sur tissu: chacun des auteurs se réfère qui à un monde fictionnel, qui à des contextes ethnographiques africains ou océaniens, et tresse un argument réflexif dont émerge clairement l’objet de la première des trois parties de l’ouvrage, explicitement intitulée ‘enjeux critiques’. La deuxième partie amène à repenser l’opposition courante entre texte et contexte à l’aide des notions opérationnelles d’énoncé, d’énonciation et de situation d’interlocution. La diversité des contributions permet ici encore un éclairage réflexif sur la construction du savoir anthropologique, tant au niveau de la pratique de terrain qu’à celui de la production textuelle. La dernière partie regroupe des articles s’intéressant à des domaines souvent négligés comme la dispute ou l’échec de stratégies rhétoriques. Loin de noyer le lecteur dans des détails descriptifs, les perspectives retenues permettent, au-delà des contextes spécifiques, de rendre intelligibles certains modes d’action par lesquels les pratiques sociales sont engendrées et reconfigurées dans leurs environnements respectifs.

Si donc le contexte et la performativité sont au cœur des problématiques traitées, la seule focalisation sur les pratiques langagières est peut-être à regretter: la parole est toujours incarnée, le travail de terrain aussi. Il est possible d’envisager une praxéologie plus globale dont la parole n’est qu’un aspect, bien entendu essentiel. Significatif est à cet égard l’article de David Parkin qui s’intéresse aux proverbes imprimés sur les tissus kanga portés par les femmes Swahili dans une perspective principalement sémantique.


A ce sujet, se pose la question de savoir si, pour un ouvrage exigeant adressé à un public très spécifique, le choix de la collection Logiques Sociales de L’Harmattan, dont la richesse est l’hétérogénéité (tant en ce qui concerne les thèmes, les approches théoriques ou le degré de spécialisation), était le plus approprié.

NICOLAS YAZGI
Université de Neuchâtel


This volume appears in Berg’s ‘Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Women’ series. It is an eclectic collection of six polished-up conference papers (plus two others) that have been carefully bound together and skillfully integrated by the editors. They are divided into four sections – Embodying Care, Controlling Care, Framing Care and Nursing Care – each with an editorial introduction identifying the relations between the chapters as well as the thematic...
continuities that link the contributions. In this way, the volume’s appeal is to practitioners and experts in the selected areas such as preventative care, HIV-related care and research, and the impact of new reproductive technologies, as well as to students and lay readers who seek guidance and insight into the changing and ever complicating worlds of patient-carer and patient care/medical ethics relationships.

Broadly speaking, this is a collection that explores the ways in which healthcare models are socially constructed. From the outset, in the volume’s general introduction, the editors query the way that ‘care’ is conceptualised and practised in domestic, institutional and community-based situations. Curiously, Kohn and McKechnie position themselves not as experts in the field but as natives, as ethnographers – trained ‘outsiders’ (p. 2) able to step back from the particularities of debates to see how they have been bounded and defined. Presumably this privileged position allows them to comment – blissfully – for the informed or uninformed reader. One rationale for this interesting stance is, as the editors note, to break free from disciplinary writing for disciplinary audiences – sociologist to sociologist, nurse to nurse. Yet there is danger here in that most of the contributions are from sociologists and anthropologists themselves, albeit sociologists and anthropologists ‘looking at debates from the outside’ (p. 10). And, of course, anthropology is unique as an ‘anti-discipline’ we might add, citing Keith Hart, and as such quite exempt from their criticism?

The editors (one a social anthropologist concerned with identity, interethnic marriage and the body, the second a social scientist researching changes in sexual behaviour in relation to HIV) see this volume as interrogating three core care-assumptions: first, the naturalised vision of women as carers that has been transferred to the workplace as women have taken on paid roles as nurses, social workers and care assistants; second, assumptions made about the homogeneity and diversity of patients, which, I think, refers to the homogeneity of western biomedical models of disease, cure and care, as well as to the diversity of cures and cares meted out culturally and economically – everyone does not receive the same kind of care, nor should they necessarily expect it; and third, the idea that patients are no longer the passive recipients of care they were in days of pre-market force/consumer rights healthcare regimes.

Discussing, illustrating and tying together the way expert knowledges frame care and the ways in which care is practically realised, the other ‘outsiders’ in this volume do in fact clearly and critically interrogate these three assumptions. Judith Okely evokes the world of care with an harrowing account of caring for her dying mother, of her changing daughter/mother role, of her intimate relationship with the cared-for subject with concomitant issues of privacy and autonomy. The heart of the matter is portrayed in this heartfelt account, driving home the importance of a topic which touches us all. Frances Price’s chapter goes on to complement this narrative of care with a consideration of problems attached to multiple births, especially the biases of the medical community with respect to triplets as a result of in vitro fertilisation treatment. In both chapters, the support structures are highlighted for their personal emphases – female mothering care roles.

Subsequent sections in the volume are less poignant, but just as incisive. Tackling the control of care, Andrew Russell and Marie-Benedicte Dembour consider the rights and responsibilities of healthcare interest groups – respectively, the costs attached to the use of the contraceptive Depo-Provera (from health risks to individual wishes and political/religious interest groups), and the application of – or rather difficulty in applying – human rights in the medical care setting. The various interest groups at play in care scenarios are also dwelt upon in Helen Lambert’s chapter about disease prevention and health promotion among those at risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) because of raised blood cholesterol and in Rosemary McKechnie’s research activities mentioned above. All four chapters dramatically convey the plethora of voices and perspectives, dialogues and monologues found in the different health and medical care settings.

According to the editors of Extending the boundaries of care, it is only right to end the volume with a section on ‘care within the context of nursing’. Thus we are presented with Vangie Bergum’s ethics of presence, a
thesis that because nurses are there with their patients, they must mediate and act as advocates on their behalf.

The second chapter in this section again focuses upon such enactment. Also by a nursing professional, it examines how nurses gain ‘professional closeness’ with their patients who start off as strangers (p. 181). Significantly, Jan Savage here brings together her ethnographic study of nursing with David Schneider’s study of American kinship to show that when faced with the dilemma posed by having to manage patients as ‘other’, nurses often transform patients into a group whose members are viewed as ‘close’ or ‘the same’, manipulating the boundaries between public and private.

Given the editors’ brief initial thoughts and outlines of assumptions about care, and their critique of sociologists’ and nurses’ writings, it was interesting (to repeat my initial reaction) to read a range of anthropologically inspired pieces by sociologists, anthropologists, and lastly nurses – the last of which read as the most forcibly anthropological. As a whole, however, the volume may not necessarily speak well of care, the caring and the cared.

JONATHAN SKINNER
University of Abertay Dundee


The central focus of Jonathan Friedman’s System, structure and contradiction. The evolution of Asiatic social formations is the internal properties, working and transformations of the tribal system of the Kachin. In Friedman’s own words the Kachin system in his theoretical model is conceived of as a reproductive totality whose properties generate a process of hierarchisation leading from a competitive but egalitarian structure to a conical-clan formation whose properties are discussed in terms of Marx’s notion of Asiatic social formations (p. 31). Friedman also briefly considers this system in relation to the neighbouring upland tribal societies of the Naga, Chin and Wa and the lowland Shan and other Asian state systems. Friedman locates these structural changes in two ecological contexts: upland swidden farming and lowland hydraulic agriculture.

A substantial amount of the material in this, the second edition of the book, was first produced nearly thirty years ago. In the intervening period Friedman has rethought his theoretical model and, as part of this process, has been engaged in several exchanges with his critics. He enjoyed, for example, a particularly acrimonious dispute with Edmund Leach to which he refers in his preface.

Friedman’s study was first published by the Nationalmuset in Copenhagen in 1979; it was based on his 1972 PhD thesis presented at Columbia University. During the eight years between his doctoral work and the first appearance of the thesis in published form, Friedman had produced several shorter papers setting down significant elements in the development and re-evaluation of his ideas and had also received a number of criticisms of his original manuscript. By 1979 he was moved to declare boldly in his preface to the first edition that he was no longer in agreement with the kind of model represented in the thesis (p. 31), though he decided to let much of his 1972 manuscript stand. He satisfied himself by explaining the nature of his revised thinking and analysis in the preface with an accompanying response to his critics.

It is of no surprise that in the introductory sentences of the preface to the 1998 edition, Friedman, in his usual self-critical tone, states that it is arguable that his book ought not to be republished because the structural Marxism it represents is no longer explicitly practised in anthropology (p. 11). Despite Friedman’s apparent doubts about the usefulness of a second edition, AltaMira Press was convinced of its value. The original 1979 text is retained with the addition of a substantial new 19-page preface and a second appendix that comprises a reprint of Friedman’s critical article published in 1987 in Critique of Anthropology on David Nugent’s interpretation of Kachin political systems. However, it is a pity that the errors in the
first edition have been left to stand and that the opportunity has been missed to improve the presentation of the book and to make it easier for the reader to follow the main arguments. Several bibliographical mistakes and omissions and typographical errors in the main text remain. Despite the frequent references to Leach’s Political systems of Highland Burma and the use of Leach’s map of ecological zones in the Kachin Hills area (pp. 98, 218), nowhere does the book appear in Friedman’s bibliography, although Leach’s unpublished 1946 doctoral thesis does. Given the complexity and density of Friedman’s argument and the overpowering use of diagrams, graphs, tables, equations and mathematical calculations, it is surprising and disappointing that there is no key or guide to these. Nor is there an overall index.

The shortcomings of Friedman’s original thesis are obvious and the author draws attention to most of them. As he notes, he was preoccupied with structures and processes to the neglect of personal agency, experience and motivation; he preferred highly formalised theorising that was somewhat detached from particular historical and ethnographic contexts. Moreover, his use of a relatively complex structural Marxist model was presented at times in impenetrable technical jargon. Nevertheless, Friedman’s original thesis and his modifications to it in the 1979 preface were certainly thought-provoking, and they excited much critical interest, including, as Friedman says, the wide circulation by Leach of a rather long and personal attack on both an early article and the manuscript itself (p. 11).

In my view Friedman’s book certainly deserves a second edition. As he himself observes, its mode of analysis provided the basis for the development of what has come to be called global anthropology, with its concern among other things to understand cycles of societal growth and decay, and the structural interactions and changes produced by processes of social reproduction. It has had some influence not only in the discipline of anthropology but also among archaeologists and historians. For me the importance of the study derives from its presentation of a very different explanation and understanding of the Kachin tribal system of Highland Burma than that provided in Edmund Leach’s classic monograph. Yet in contrast to the popularity of Leach’s study, Friedman’s work has still not really had the wider attention in anthropology that it so obviously deserves, despite generating considerable interest in the late 1970s and the 1980s. Its style was hardly user-friendly nor did it appear to succeed in capturing the reader’s imagination in quite the same way that Leach’s authoritative, and at times flamboyant, narrative did. These problems persist in the second edition of the book.

VICTOR T. KING
University of Hull


Originating in the United States, whiteness as an area of study has been heralded as a breakthrough for understanding and examining race and the racialisation of identity and hierarchy. In this context ‘whiteness’ refers to a recognition that racialised identities cannot be examined or understood in and of themselves but only in the context of the invisible, unmarked and naturalised norm of an unracial whiteness in relation to which other identities become raced and marked.

Whiteness. The communication of social identity is an edited collection that brings together a number of key issues within the study of whiteness. Two common themes run through the volume. The first is a shared commitment to using whiteness as an approach within the study of race. The second is the development of a shared approach to whiteness that hinges on insights from the field of communications studies.

The volume comprises fourteen chapters. There are two introductory chapters. Johnson’s introduction should prove to be of great value to the interested reader or researcher. Its short but comprehensive overview of whiteness as an area of study is extensively references and accompanied by a selected bibliography. More disappointingly, Nakayama and Martin’s overview represents some of the basic foundations of whiteness as
an areas of study and displays an almost complete insensitivity to issues of power, hierarchy and hegemony. The remainder of the volume is characterised by similar highs and lows.

Amongst the highs is Marty’s exploration of anti-racist rhetoric. Marty evaluates Wendell Berry’s stories of childhood, using Berry’s own conditions for rhetorical accountability. Marty shows how, despite his humanistic and anti-racist commitments, Berry is unable to recognise the complicity of his own slave owning family in systems of racism, slavery and violence. Marty contributes to developing and understanding of how committed anti-racists can, with the best intentions, inadvertently develop and use rhetorics that obscure an understanding of racial discrimination and violence and militate against the activist’s ability to intervene in these systems and practices. Mary’s blend of careful critical analysis and concern for its application in the context of anti-racist practice is characteristic of some of the best writing on whiteness.

Martin, Krizek, Nakayama and Bradford contest the commonplace assumption within ethnic monitoring practices that the category ‘white’ is equivalent to other ethnic and racial categories. They show that recognising whiteness as an aspect of identity is a matter of choice for white people. They identify general patterns in white peoples’ self labelling preferences that have implications for understanding their position in relation to ethnic and racial labels and the preferred constitution of white as an ahistorical and decontextualised category.

The chapters by Shome and Shu Lee highlight the situational constitution of whiteness. Drawing on her own experiences in India and America of social positioning and possibility, Shome argues for the examination of whiteness as it is constituted in the interlocking axes of power, spatial location, and history. Shu Lee examines the specific associations and references that black and white carry in Mandarin. Shu Lee then goes on to examine the different ways in which these various associations apply to men and women and the implications that they carry for social participation, relationships and positionings.

Focusing empirically on ideas of what constitutes a good (white) girl, Moon offers a subtle examination of the role of discourses of appropriate etiquette, good manners, demeanour and disposition in practices of discrimination and hierarchy building. More generally, this chapter demonstrates how discourses that appear ostensibly to have little to do with race often have racial implications.

Positive contributions such as these notwithstanding, Nakayama and Martin’s volume is beset by problems. Several of the chapters do little more than repeat the calls, claims and insights of earlier work on whiteness. In some cases, and most irritatingly, claims to new findings are made largely on the basis of these earlier insights and without sufficient direct analysis of research material. In his chapter on environmental politics De Luca refers to the idea of white wildness without clearly giving a sense of what it refers to, let alone adequately exploring its basis in reality. Similarly, when Kapoor claims to reveal the structure of whiteness as overtly patriarchal, divisive, and neo-colonial one is left wondering exactly what it is that has been revealed. Importantly, the communications approaches deployed in a number of the chapters are problematic. In cases where communications approaches are used to examine rhetorical strategies and texts they are useful and informative. The same cannot be said about the contributions where communications approaches are used to understand social phenomena. For example, several chapters, including Moon’s, suggest, wholly erroneously, I would suggest, that discourse and language alone are constitutive of social practices.

Nakayama and Martin’s book will be useful for people interested in issues of identity, whiteness, race, and ethnicity. However, with one or two exceptions, the book contributes little by way of genuinely new insight. Moreover, while it may serve well as an introduction to communication approaches to whiteness, there are other collections that do a better job of it.

AARON TURNER
Brunel University

This book, a companion volume to *Debating cultural hybridity. Multi-cultural identities and the politics of anti-racism* (London 1997, edited by the same authors), deals with several issues related to multiculturalism in today’s Europe and to the politics that are being developed to address these new situations. It offers both theoretical essays and empirical studies that explore the multiple dimensions of multiculturalism.

But what exactly is multiculturalism? To a certain extent, multiculturalism is simply a fact: some countries, including many European ones, have become multicultural. However, this book prefers to view multiculturalism as the dynamic outcome of social and political struggles surrounding ethnic, cultural, racial or religious differences. Multiculturalism is therefore not a given situation but a social configuration that varies according to national traditions, local contexts and socio-political negotiations. It is these multi-multiculturalisms that the volume seeks to understand.

The starting point of the book is the newness of Europe in the 1990s. Labour and economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and students have created non-European minorities that challenge from below the homogeneity of nation-states. At the same time, the growing importance of the European Union represents another challenge from above to the sovereignty of European states. The end of the Cold War is another crucial event that has completely changed the equilibrium within Europe, giving Central and Eastern Europe and Islam new and important roles. The collapse of the Soviet Union has meant that Europe is again, as often in the past, directly confronted by its Islamic neighbours. This leads to a constant redefinition of European identity and of its compatibility with Islamic countries and values, illustrated for example by events in the former Yugoslavia and Turkey’s bid to join the EU. Within Europe too, Muslim minorities are perceived as the others, as a permanent challenge to European values and, negatively, as a threat to European homogeneity. Islam has thus become, both internally and externally, a crucial element in the definition of European identity.

The first two essays investigate aspects of these identity definitions. L. Kurti analyses the discourses surrounding Europe in the former Communist states. He shows how some Eastern European countries have achieved relatively greater success in terms of coming closer to EU membership and that these differences have given rise to ideas whereby such countries are represented as really European and others traditionally backward. Pseudo-historical data are used to legitimate such ideologies. T. Bjorgo focuses on Scandinavian extreme-right discourses. He shows that the classic anti-Semitic arguments relying on the idea of a Jewish conspiracy now coexist in various ways with the anti-Muslim or anti-immigrant discourses that nowadays play a larger role in people’s concerns. Different histories of the Scandinavian states, in particular as far as the Second World War is concerned, also shape these discourses. Importantly, while these discourses may vary in content, the rhetoric of extreme-right leaders switches with ease from one to another.

The next five articles describe different situations of ethnic minorities and multicultural politics in European countries. U. Melotti starts with a comparison of the French, British and German answers to immigration and of their respective failures. He then describes the situation in Italy, a country with very little experience of immigration that struggles to find solutions that do not merely repeat other countries’ mistakes. L. Yalcin-Heckmann compares the Turkish cultural associations of two towns, one in France and the other in Germany. Her description of these associations show how they are constantly threatened by the heterogeneity of the Turkish population and the consequent difficulty of finding representative spokespersons. She also shows how national traditions have differently shaped both how these associations function and their relations with local governments. A. Moustapha Diop focuses on the history of the numerous Islamic associations in the Paris region and on the divisions that contribute to Islam’s negative image. He then explains that these associations should unite, forget what is going on outside France and open themselves to French society in order to create a respected French Islamic civilisation.
P. Lewis investigates how in Bradford minorities compete with one another in the fields of local politics, race relations, education, business and religion. He insists on the importance of religion. Islam can unify Asians and the Anglican Church plays an important role in the negotiations surrounding this unification. W. Schiffauer describes how, in Germany, the state has tried to develop an Islamic religious education in schools. This case study reveals the German state's ambivalent and paternalistic approach to multiculturalism and religion. In contrast with France, religion is seen as necessary to children's education and a means of facilitating their integration with German society. However, and in contrast to Britain, where immigrants' associations have been entrusted with the task, the German authorities have taken it upon themselves to place controls on religious education.

The next two articles aim at deconstructing multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is often criticised for reifying cultural and ethnic differences. Any multicultural policy needs to rely on quite neat cultural and ethnic categories to be implemented. There is therefore an obvious risk of essentialism. A. Caglar provides a theoretical critique of bounded conceptions of culture and identity that are not only used by anthropologists but also by intellectuals, ordinary people and politicians. Such conceptions lead to an overemphasis on the ethnic dimension of identity. When we speak of German-Turks, for example, we insist on their Turkish origin and not on, say, their political convictions, religious zeal or socio-economic achievements. Caglar notes that there have been numerous critiques of cultural essentialism but that these critiques have not managed truly to escape reification. The very current concepts of cultural hybridity, creolisation or hyphenation, for example, refer to cultural mixings, but this still implies that neatly separated cultures do exist and that they somehow mix. Moreover, these critiques have not lead to the elaboration of a methodology. We still lack the ethnographic tools and concepts required to get to grips with the identities of people who do not recognise themselves as belonging to a single culture. She suggests focusing on person-objects relations to avoid predefining communities. This is what she calls the potential of consumption studies.

Similarly, focusing on a multi-ethnic community in Britain, W. Lyon demonstrates how identity terms are always context dependent. Following Barth's structural approach, she insists on the flexibility in self-identification and illustrates the difficulty of establishing clear cultural categories.

The last three articles (by G. Ben-Tovim, C. Brewin and Y. Samad) deal with more abstract issues related to what could be called the political/philosophical dimensions of multiculturalism. They compare the American and European situations and discuss Taylor's and Habermas's contributions to the debate. A crucial point that emerges is that multiculturalism challenges the distinction between the public and private spheres. According to the modern nation-state model, a person's culture, religion or community belong to the private sphere. Yet in the public sphere, this person acts, and is treated as, a citizen – that is as an abstract individual unit that is exactly equal to all other citizens. Accordingly, all institutions should be neutral and blind to colour, religion, race or ethnicity. However, multicultural politics explicitly recognises such private factors. As such, it is often argued, in extreme form multiculturalism disrupts the common values that are necessary for people to live together and ultimately threatens the very foundations of modern nations. This tension between public and private underlies the stormy debates surrounding the positive/affirmative action strategy that G. Ben-Tovim strongly supports. In his introduction, T. Modood develops these complex issues and suggests five possible forms that a multicultural state could take, depending on the absence/presence of a collective project common to all its members and on the importance of individuals versus communities.

This book provides a wealth of material, ranging from empirical case studies to theoretical considerations and therefore constitutes a precious contribution to our understanding of multiculturalism. We might, however, regret the relative absence of what could be called the economic dimension of multiculturalism. Culture, identity, religion, ethnicity, race, communities,
associations, local politics, national traditions and racism are all extensively discussed, but little attention is devoted to what is going on as far as the labour market and economy are concerned. Discrimination in the labour market, unemployment, economic precariousness and the growing importance of so-called ethnic economies play an important role in all the struggles and negotiations surrounding ethnic, racial and cultural differences in European states. Uncovering the interconnectedness of the cultural and economic dimensions of social life has long been a strength of sociology and social anthropology and should not be forgotten when researching and writing about multiculturalism.

ANTOINE PECOUD
University of Oxford