

BOOK REVIEWS

ALFRED GELL, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998. xv, 272 pp., Illustrations, Bibliography, Index. £15.99.

Alfred Gell's latest and unfortunately last attempt to tackle art from an anthropological perspective deserves careful attention from any serious scholar concerned with the somewhat tenuous relationship between the arts and anthropology. *Art and Agency*, published posthumously, was very much work in progress, as Nick Thomas outlines in his foreword. This, of course, rings with double meaning (a fact Gell would no doubt have enjoyed), in that Gell's general approach to art was in continual development, just as the book itself reads as somewhat incomplete. For obvious reasons, this renders the book difficult to review. I will seek to summarize Gell's general argument while not shying away from areas I feel would have needed more careful thought.

Throughout the work, Gell maintains his discomfort with the notion of aesthetics as an applicable anthropological concept, but extends his earlier concept of art as technology into a more generalizable approach to art as an 'index of agency'. In a commendable shift away from strictly symbolic interpretations of art, Gell moves towards establishing a connection between art and everyday political and social activity. As he writes: 'in place of symbolic communication, I place all the emphasis on *agency, intention, causation, result, and transformation*. I view art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it' (p. 6, emphasis in original). Situating art in a nexus of human relations, Gell theorizes art objects as extensions of human agency, which are endowed by their creators with certain amounts of social power. For Gell this is expressed in his 'rough definition' of the anthropological theory of art: 'social relations in the vicinity of objects mediating social agency' (p. 7).

All of this is neatly summed up in the first two chapters devoted to defining the problem as he sees it and to defining his rather innovative terminology. Chapters three to five proceed to deconstruct that terminology by creating a complex set of scenarios for each aspect of interaction between artists, their works, their inspirations, and their audience (in Gell's terms respectively: Artist, Index, Prototype, and Recipient). These scenarios, some of which are given greater emphasis than others, support the more general statements about the process of artistic agency outlined in the first two chapters.

Chapter six, which deals with decorative art, begins a transition from abstract theory to more specific areas of application for Gell's ideas by connecting Gell's theory of agency with the problems of non-representational design in the anthropology of art. Chapters seven and eight, however, come as more complete breaks from the flow of the argument, examining idolatry and artistic style respectively. By far the lengthiest chapters in the work, they are presumably intended to present the ethnographic data to support the general theory, but unfortunately they do more to distract the reader from

the points Gell is trying to make. This is especially important in light of Gell's numerous asides to his presumed non-anthropologist readership. But what makes these chapters and the evidence they put forward more troubling is their overwhelming emphasis on parts of Asia and the Pacific. No doubt inspired by Gell's own expertise in these areas, this ethnographic bias and its repeated comparison with the institution of fine art in the United States and Europe has the unintentional effect of highlighting an East/West split that detracts from the encompassing anthropological theory of art the work attempts to provide.

As Gell argues in the conclusion, 'art is a cognitive process writ large' (p. 258), but one wonders if his anthropological theory is not the product of his own cognitive process writ over the data presented. Throughout his argument, Gell employs rather Western, Platonic views of 'prototypes' in the process of art production, leading inevitably to an emphasis on the art object, which in his formulation can include the human body. This denies the primacy of the creative process and emphasizes a Cartesian disembodiment of social actors. This renders the anthropological approach to creative practice and expressive forms a strictly Western enterprise concerned with strictly Western categories and analytically inapplicable outside a Western context. But Gell does apply it outside the 'West', even if that application is restricted to the 'East'. The thrust of his argument is left curiously silent in regard to those areas (increasingly all areas) which overlap. As style becomes commodified and distributed in an increasingly global economy, how do the notions of artist, index, prototype, and recipient work themselves out? Part of the answer lies in recognizing the autonomy of these distinct terms in many circumstances, such that the agency of an art product does not always involve a connection to a human, cognitive progenitor.

Tragically, Gell himself cannot answer these criticisms, and as Nick Thomas makes clear in the foreword, he would no doubt have refined many of his ideas before the final draft. Nor should these criticisms detract from the importance of Gell's contribution to the ongoing debate within anthropology concerning the role of art and aesthetics. Gell has always been integral to this debate, and this final work will ensure his place in the thick of it for some time to come.

RUSSELL LEIGH SHARMAN

NORMAN E. WHITTEN and ARLENE TORRES (eds.), *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean, Volumes I and II*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1998. 520 pp. and 557 pp., Illustrations, Bibliography, Index. \$24.95 each volume.

Much has been written recently about the concept of blackness as a category of experience, and to what extent that experience is universal, or at least circum-Atlantic. Often this entails little more than a generalized account of popular culture in the United States or parts of Europe which is then presumed to reflect a universal black consciousness. A more specifically anthropological approach would recognize the importance of ethnographic particularity to grasp more fully the difference and sameness of black experience in various disparate contexts. This is especially important when that

experience is situated in the particular cultural history of Latin America and the Caribbean as opposed to Anglo-North America or Western Europe. Norman Whitten and Arlene Torres offer just such an anthropological corrective in their invaluable two-volume anthology, *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

The work is invaluable for bringing together a stunning variety of scholarly contributions to the study of black experience outside the domain of mainstream popular culture. Each volume includes a short chapter written by one of the editors introducing the essays to follow, which are divided between Central America, the northern South American Lowlands, and the Andes in the first volume, and eastern South America and the Caribbean in the second. Anyone who has done preliminary reading in the subject will no doubt question some of the selections, and as reprints from earlier publications, the essays may provide little new material for the specialist. However, bringing together Roy Bryce-Laporte, Michael Taussig, Sally Price, M. G. Smith and Kevin Yelvington, to name just a few, will prove useful to both specialists and non-specialists. This is especially true in light of essays by Latin American academics like Nina de Friedemann and Diego Quiroga, whose works are difficult to obtain in translation. Overall the anthology fulfils the goal of the editors outlined in the preface: 'to provide readers with a set of chapters that range from early groundbreaking pieces to exemplars of contemporary Afro-Americanist scholarship of the late 1990s' (p. viii).

The one original contribution deserves a slightly more detailed review. Both volumes open with the same introductory chapter co-authored by editors Whitten and Torres. The introduction, along with the shorter introductory chapters which preview the essays of each volume, are offered as an 'extended essay on blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean' (p. ix). Here Whitten and Torres attempt to orient the reader to the issues involved by situating black experience in a nationalist context and as part of ethnic blocs. Inherent in these ethnic blocs are the powers of identity and representation which come into play when non-white, usually indigenous or black people 'are ethnically disfranchised from full participation in the dominant society' (p. 8). Whitten and Torres focus on the concept of *negritude* as 'the positive features of blackness among people classed as, or self-identifying as, "black"' (p. 7), which, within an ethnic-bloc context, is 'profoundly populist and rejecting of non-blackness as a criterion for sophisticated self-awareness' (p. 9). Since its appearance in the literature of Aimé Césaire, *negritude* has been deftly aimed at the political arena, where identity is deployed in the rhetoric of self-identification. This is particularly important in a national context where identity is created and applied by the élite. The resultant myth of a 'racial democracy', where all racial distinction is subsumed by the ideology of *mestizaje*, or intermixture, denies non-élite, usually non-white groups access to the mechanisms of self-identification.

Whitten and Torres place the dynamic of blackness, and more specifically *negritude*, in the context of a socio-political movement toward self-determination. Two prominent Afro-Latin American proponents of a politicized blackness stated that their 'movements were not "against the state"'. Rather, they sought to create ethnic space for blackness as a creative cultural quality within their respective nations' (p. 34). Still, Whitten and Torres 'anticipate that black-based ethnic-bloc formations will use the ideology of *negritude* and, in so doing, will be perceived as a threat to nationalist sovereignty and nationalist territoriality' (p. 8).

The editors are successful to a certain extent in orientating the reader to the issues involved, but as one reads through the host of essays to follow, it is apparent that there is no single way of approaching the material. Whitten and Torres take a decidedly, and at times appropriately, political stance in regard to black experience in Latin America and the Caribbean, but other contributors demonstrate the power of alternative avenues of experience, such as religious performance in David Guss's essay on the Dia de San Juan or creative expression in Yvonne Daniel's essay on the rumba. Still, the introduction is a valiant attempt to tackle a complicated subject, and, if nothing else, offers an excellent short history of black identity politics in the region. In the context of the essays which make up the rest of the two volumes, Whitten and Torres offer a refreshingly accessible format for work which has long stood on the sidelines of an increasingly vociferous debate on the identity politics of the African diaspora.

RUSSELL LEIGH SHARMAN

BARBARA BENDER, *Stonehenge: Making Space*, Oxford: Berg 1998. xiv, 254 pp., Bibliography, Index, Illustrations. £39.99 / £14.99.

Barbara Bender's book on Stonehenge is billed as 'an imaginative exploration of a place that has fascinated, intrigued and perplexed visitors for centuries'. It is certainly the case that imagination is to the fore in this volume. Bender teases us through multiple readings of Stonehenge, of text, of place and histories, using contrasting styles and voices to challenge the authorities of various explanatory narratives of the past and present of Stonehenge. She also charts her own disillusion with the more staid elements of the archaeological academic world and the politics of heritage, and lays open her own biography centrally to the text. The resulting book is a complex enquiry into the significance of the place for different people in different times, which simultaneously challenges our knowledge about what those significances might be or have been.

Read from the viewpoint of an academic, the book has two focal pillars of argument. The first, in the form of two papers reprinted from *Man*, concerns a discussion of theories of landscape (Hoskins, Williams, etc.), and a comparison of various archaeological theories about the 'origins' and eras of Stonehenge. The second 'pillar' is a reprint of a chapter from Bender's edited collection, *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives* (1993), which has a more contemporary concern with the current significances and politics of management of Stonehenge. Elaborating these more academic chapters is a series of less didactic texts, including an illustrated self-examination, dialogues and conversations with other authors, and a multi-vocal account of a travelling exhibition which Bender curated (collaboratively with various campaigners) concerning issues of the policing of and access to Stonehenge. In addition to her dialogues with others, the style of the introduction, for example, is also dialogic, as Bender interrogates herself on her own conclusions, debating with herself as to her versions of her own past(s). However, it is not until towards the end of the book (pp. 153, 166) that she makes more explicit her reaction to authority in authoring both exhibition and book, citing Clifford and Spivak as influences on the styles she has chosen. There are

some disconcerting elements, such as a tendency early on in the volume to cherry-pick ethnographic material (notable in references to the famous Zafimanary) to support archaeological theories (a tendency Bender herself criticizes later, at p. 152), and her confessed contradictions make for occasionally uneasy reading.

The resulting volume is therefore a curious mix of styles and intentions. As a biography of over a decade of involvement with Stonehenge's appropriators (of various kinds) and of changing political sensibilities, the book reflects the multi-faceted life of an academic who uses ethnography as a research method. Although it is not altogether clear whether the combinations of styles she chooses actually 'work' together as a book, it is easy to see how this reflects the difficulties any of us face in holding together all our selves from different contexts. As for many ethnographers, does a life juggled between academia, field site, home, etc., add up to a cohesive whole? How do we manage the lack of narrative order in our fieldwork? It is more common to translate the mess of knowledge into narrative forms, but when those forms of knowledge are competing with each other for legitimacy (and its powerful consequences), and when the histories we try to incorporate are also in competition, this becomes more difficult. Latour, for example, uses a fictional form to create a narrative out of conflicting versions of histories (in *Aramis*, 1996), others use extended quotations, and so forth. Contemporary efforts at de-centring ethnography use the technology of the Internet to create open, dialogic spaces for the creation of new, unfixed texts, challenging the stability of standard textual representations. A book, however, is more blatantly authored. Bender includes a suggestion at the end of the volume that readers contact her through the publisher to add their comments or enter into dialogue with her. This does make a point about the closure of the printed text, although I find it slightly disingenuous to imply that this makes the book more dialogic, unless she is hoping to reprint it including the further dialogues (which one can suppose would present quite a problem of management in itself). However, Bender presents a welcome challenge to didactic authority, putting into practice some of the debates over authorship of recent years, and thus presenting a challenge to academic writers, despite the limits to printed texts that must be acknowledged. Integral to this approach is a desire to engage with 'the field', rather than to separate it into a discrete time-space—truly a politically and socially 'committed' (and 'interested') approach to social-science research.

This is a book that can be read in many ways. It is mainly a very accessible read, with 'something for everyone', including surveys of archaeological debates, political agit-prop, and lashings of illustrations (cartoons, photographs, maps, etc.). At times, when the writing seems rather to belabour the point about histories being interpretations (a point most of my students already seem to take for granted), one remembers that she is writing for audiences who need to see this written, for the sake of their politics and/or identities: that is, some of the contributions to the book are there for political reasons (i.e. the authority that the published text carries for its contents). At other times, the self-exposure of the criticism that some of her interlocutors have for her work treads a fine line between bravery and arrogance (i.e., she has made the criticism explicit rather than 'correcting' her work to hide its faults), making explicit the construction of the text itself, and declaring her loyalties, faults, and beliefs.

The sum of the parts becomes a jumble of styles that create an accessible, entertaining, and thought-provoking read, but which might also appear to be quite a quick

way to write a book, in its inclusion of some work prepared earlier, some transcriptions of other people's interpretations, and some biography. This would be a cheap criticism that ignores a real attempt to create a text that is open and (self-)questioning, attempting to find a space for multiple voices, albeit filtered through an author's editing. The important thing is that the book is innovative, accessible, and amusing. Whether it contributes to many debates or none at all probably depends on the reader. Certainly there are references to debates on the concepts and management of heritage, museums, and exhibitions, and on the use and appropriation of history. It provides us with a valuable experiment in representation that is accessible enough to get students thinking, and to force us to rethink the way we produce texts of our own.

SIMONE ABRAM

SHOBHITA JAIN and RHODA REDDOCK (eds.), *Women Plantation Workers: International Experiences* (Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Women; series editors Shirley Ardener and Jackie Waldren), Oxford and New York: Berg 1998. xv, 186pp., Index, References, Tables, Plates. £35.00 / £14.99.

The editors of this volume of essays are to be congratulated for focusing on an area of women's work, plantation labour, which has received relatively little academic attention, in contrast to the many studies of women in industrial or domestic settings. As Sidney Mintz observes in the preface (p. ix): 'Plantations have bad reputations; they are linked to colonialism, to the economic and social exploitation of non-white peoples, and to exhausting and badly paid manual labour.' These essays are divided between historical and contemporary accounts of women plantation workers in tropical and subtropical areas of the world. They cover the Caribbean (Mathurin-Mair, Reddock, and Shepherd), India (Jain), Sri Lanka (Kurian), the Philippines (Lopez-Gonzaga), and Cameroon (Konings). Addressing the interrelationship of gender with race, class, and caste, the contributors note that the plantation system was created in tandem with colonial expansion into tropical areas from the sixteenth century onwards. As the demand for sugar, tea, and other commodities grew, so did the need for labour, much of which was provided by women.

While the plantation system relied heavily on the labour of women in the case of tea, and less so for sugar, the white tea-estate managers chose to denigrate the value of women's labour, regarding a woman's superior ability to perform the specialized task of plucking leaf as 'natural' and therefore unskilled and deserving of lower wages than her male counterpart. On the sugar estates the women performed heavy agricultural tasks but were viewed by the employers of indentured labour as a necessary evil, prone to cause trouble by moving from man to man in the early days. Wherever the plantations were situated, these essays make it clear that, both historically and at the present time, women plantation workers have endured lives that were harsh in the extreme. Long hours spent toiling in the fields were made worse by the added burden of housework, cooking, and child care that lasted until late at night and began again in the early morning. Living conditions in the barracks or 'lines' were overcrowded and squalid,

with often no piped water or sanitation. Wages for women were kept deliberately low and were easily docked for minor infractions of arbitrary rules laid down by supervisors.

A common thread running through these chapters is the notion of women plantation workers as 'outsiders' forced by adverse personal circumstances to leave their homes and migrate in search of work. Sometimes the women were accompanied by family members, as happened in Sri Lanka, but more often they went alone or as single mothers, as in Fiji. In the case of Indian women migrants, the majority came from the lower castes and had been driven to indenture by drought or famine, which were widespread in India in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Recruiting agents spread stories of a good life overseas, but only the desperate volunteered, and there were widely believed accounts of the forcible capture of women in some areas.

Recruitment to the tea estates of Sri Lanka differed from that to other areas in that often whole families indentured together, under the control of a *kangani* or recruiting agent. Once on the estates, Kurian shows that the indentured sought to recreate the social hierarchy of the villages they came from, but with improved status (pp. 78–79). The conservative ideology of caste-assisted plantation management in keeping women workers docile and compliant. On the other hand, the absence of caste restrictions, as occurred among the largely tribal workers on the Assam tea estates, led to a far more egalitarian work ethic between women and men. Jain notes that in Assam men would cook and wash clothes if their wives were incapacitated by illness or pregnancy (p. 123), tasks which other Indian males would have vehemently rejected.

African women in Cameroon adopted gendered strategies of informal and collective action to support demands for increased wages on the tea estates or to protest against male control and exploitation. In so doing, Konings emphasizes that, in a range of enterprises and social contexts, African women have 'persistently shown a capacity to protect their interests individually and collectively' (p. 158), and in this instance they have managed to do this, despite poverty, illiteracy, and the recent economic crisis in Cameroon.

Although indenture was not slavery, conditions on many estates in historical times approximated to it, especially since women had few alternatives to agricultural work if they were to survive. However, many of the women described in these essays showed an astonishing ability to challenge or manipulate the male domination which sought to exercise an all-embracing control over their lives. The form which such challenges took (or failed to take) often stemmed from the social and cultural roles of women in the societies they originally came from, and from which the plantations were largely separate.

GINA BUIJS

JULIE TAYLOR, *Paper Tangos*, Durham and London: Duke University Press 1998. xxi, 124 pp., Illustrations, References. £37.95 / £12.95.

In this book, Julie Taylor chooses the tango to talk about violence. Her experiences of dancing in Argentina provide the tools for perceiving the subtleties of violence in her own life, the delicate traces of absolute exclusion and lack of recourse to any legal, financial or human support. This book is written for non-Argentines and takes the author's own story as a case-study. Although intrinsically about the tango, it aims to reveal the diffuse and rarely spectacular nature of violence 'in everyday particularities and the routine practice of art' (p. 119).

The contradictory and irrational aspects of violence easily escape analytical explanation. *Paper Tangos* is a text which attempts instead to perform the techniques of terror with which it deals. 'The juxtaposition of heterogeneous fragments within a text with its own contradictions' (p. 119) turns this book into an interpretative piece of art seeking to convey a reality perceived through the senses. It takes the reader beyond the tangible and descriptive aspects of the tango, to show how this dance form 'mines certain experiences...in the context of certain lives and certain historical moments' (p. 44). European tango fans, Taylor writes, could import and style themselves with the *tanguero's* characteristic hair pomade, but 'they never got the violence quite right' (p. 67). They had not lived under the *junta's* terror.

Paper Tangos includes a flipbook of photographs—when rolling the pages off the thumb, three dancing couples perform short sequences of tango steps, and a staircase appears, from the top of which a huge pile of loose paper flutters on to the viewer. Taylor's tango is inscribed on paper in two ways: first, as a choreography of words in her own book which aims to transmit the bodily knowledge of the tango; and, secondly, metaphorically, in the letters of many Argentines written from war, jail, or exile. Like letters threatened by censorship, 'tangos are coded messages between two people with the acute awareness that this message may...be read by a third' (p. 72). Inherent in the intimacy enacted in the dancers' embrace or in the lines linking senders and receivers are expectations that this intimacy will be mediated or violated.

Taylor begins by discussing the world-view that she identifies as being inherent in the tango—an ethos of melancholy. She goes on to present key elements of the tango world, including dance halls; dress, music, and dance styles; the participants in tango events; and ways of learning the tango and the criteria applied to identify the qualities of performers. The tango is presented as a psychic space for contemplation and self-reflection. 'In Argentina, the tango, with its many exclusions and mirrors of exclusions, can create a space to reflect on power and on terror...to demonstrate the nobility of the human spirit by learning to bear suffering and nevertheless dance' (p. 72). Its steps embody a culturally specific perspective composed of associations, values, memories, and feelings which are personally developed by each performer. The dancers' self-assertive facade confirms Argentine identity, male dominance, and bodily control. And yet, learning the tango requires recognizing the many layers of elusive violence in daily life which render each individual basically vulnerable.

In the chapters that follow, Taylor exposes her own vulnerability in a surprisingly frank and courageous way. She lived through many years of Argentinian military dictatorships as a research student, university professor, wife and mother. She considers

moments of political terror with reference to the gendered power-play inherent in the tango and her personal experiences of violence. An irresistible passion for the tango constantly confronted her with deep-rooted fears. Submission to a dominant dancing partner stirred up sensations of panic, re-evoking tyrannical figures in her past life.

In the second half of *Paper Tangos*, three different dimensions of violence are related to the enactment and experience of exclusion, oppression, and brutality in the tango dance. First, a sociopolitical perspective considers how the military regimes of Argentine history ruptured human lives. 'Disorientation in the face of a savage order' (p. 63) is linked to the disorientation of lost love expressed in tango words and bodies. Paradoxically, Taylor adds, the dancer's embrace may act to underline both intimacy and alienation. Male and female steps are co-ordinated but not identical. Motionless torsos contrast with dancing legs. Partners and limbs are split and yet perform together.

Secondly, gender inequalities in daily life are underlined by the tango's demand for women to be nothing but their partner's shadow. The female dancer must learn to enact her own, more implicit authority: she must follow the music and her partner's interpretation, but is free to add her own steps and figures of embellishment, thereby influencing the man's lead. She has to master the rules of the *cabeceo*, the silent invitation to a dance negotiated between a man and woman. And she must learn how to hand herself over into her partner's embrace. This requires abandoning herself to her fellow dancer and, moreover, to her own body.

This final requirement confronts the dancer with a third level of violence, perhaps the most difficult to identify—the violence imposed by thoughts controlling and limiting the body. The tango, Taylor confirms, presents a means of coming to know by the senses. Experiences of violence and danger, initially learnt through bodily sensations, may be re-evoked while dancing. At the same time, dancing may stir up responses contradicting past conditioning. The author found herself marvelling at a body which did not seem her own as it bent backwards, breaking a limit fixed in her mind after years of ballet training. A recognition that our bodies may know more than we consciously perceive creates an awareness of a potentially changing and unbounded sense of the human being which may be violated by the interference of rational thought.

The outstanding feature of this book is its poetical capacity to reveal refined theoretical insights through highly subjective examples, images, and anecdotes which convey the lived and experiential dimension of the tango and its world. This quality, however, is achieved at the expense of ethnographic and historical details which might counter the occasional reductiveness of the author's sparse and concise script.

Taylor's choice of using her own encounter with Argentina and the tango as the basis of her own research may be criticized for defying all attempts at objectivity. Some sections leave the reader disoriented, and many questions which link the tango to violence remain untackled. Do modifications of the tango over time show parallel changes in the degree of violence expressed? How did the military authorities perceive the tango? Was it censored or used for propaganda or resistance? Nevertheless, Taylor's contribution is a masterpiece in capturing the intangible, providing a sense of 'how the step feels, not what the step is' (p. 107).

KAREN LUTDKE

ALEXANDER LESSER, *The Pawnee Ghost Dance Hand Game*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1997. xxii, 340 pp., Figures, Plates, Bibliography. £16.50.

Lesser's 1933 Columbia University Ph.D. thesis on games associated with a cultural revitalization movement among the Pawnee is reprinted here together with a new introduction by Alice Beck Kehoe. The title requires explanation. The Ghost Dance was a form of millenarianism which arose in northern California in the early 1870s and spread through the tribes of the Great Plains in the early 1890s. It promised the resurrection of the dead (hence 'Ghost'), the second coming of Christ, and the end of illness. Only among the western Dakota was it anything other than a doctrine of peace. A Pawnee named Frank White was largely responsible for introducing it among that tribe. He prophesied that a great wind would blow away the whites and half-breeds, and that the buffalo and the dead kinsmen would return. A hand game, on the other hand, was a form of guessing game in which one side hid objects in their hands and the other side guessed in which hands the objects were held. Hand games were a specific version of such guessing games spread over a wide area. Prior to the 1890s, the Pawnee hand games were exclusively male activities carried on under the guise of war parties, the focus of which was gambling. In the specific hand games of the Ghost Dance, women participated and gambling was absent, as was any reference to war, and the games were ceremonial with specifically religious aims. Indeed, success or failure represented evidence of strength of belief in the ghost dance doctrine.

Lesser's Boasian orientation is best expressed in a late comment. 'From the standpoint taken herein functionalism in social anthropology which is divorced from time perspective is metaphysically false.' Lesser's study is historically defined. In the first chapter he traces the decline of the Pawnee through the nineteenth century, as they lost population, the hunt, warfare, and independence, until they moved from Nebraska to Oklahoma in 1876. In Lesser's interpretation, by 1892 the Pawnee had come to 'a cultural impasse, with nothing to look forward to and nothing to live by'. The Ghost Dance was thus a movement of cultural revitalization. 'The Ghost Dance renaissance expressed a desire for the joys and pleasures attendant upon the native life of former years; it was a dramatic effort to recapture the old life.' This movement brought games back into active use because they were enjoyable in their own right. 'Revivals of play were among the most important of the cultural revivals, because play was missing from life of the Pawnee in 1892.' The greater part of the book is devoted to describing the older and newer forms of the hand game and accounting for the transformations they underwent. Initially the Ghost Dance and associated game were dominated by Frank White. Eventually he lost credibility, and there followed an explosion of individual creativity, as individuals invented new variations on the game. Those that appeared to demonstrate ceremonial validity survived; others disappeared again. It was impossible demographically and situationally to carry out older rituals relating to subsistence patterns which had long disappeared, so the hand game provided a suitable alternative form of ritual expression. Other than situating the hand game within the history of a religious revival, Lesser also provides very detailed ethnographic description and analysis of the game and its varieties, while placing it in a comparative context.

Despite some occasional attempts to revive it, the Ghost Dance is currently moribund. Kehoe tells us that hand games continue, but as secular social occasions rather than the formal ceremonies characteristic of the Ghost Dance period. This study was an important contribution to the ethnographic record when it was first published and deserves to be reissued. It is a shame, though, that no one thought to provide a glossary or index.

R. H. BARNES

DOUGLAS R. PARKS, *Myths and Traditions of the Arikara Indians*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1996. xi, 405 pp., Maps, Plates, Tables, Concordance, Bibliography, Index. £38.00 / £13.95.

This book presents an abridgement of volumes 3 and 4 of Parks's *Traditional Narratives of the Arikara Indians* (1991). It begins with a revised version of the introduction first published in volume 3. Because this introduction refers to tales as they are numbered in the original edition, Parks has included a concordance at the end of the book, relating these numbers to those the stories bear in the present book. The reader will need to cope with two difficulties. The first is that, oddly, the original edition does not appear in the bibliography. The second is that in the concordance the present edition is dated 1995, although it now bears the publication date 1996.

The book divides into two sections, Parks's introduction and the selected tales in English translation. Parks had the good luck, especially, to have been able to work with Alfred Morsette, Sr, whose first language was Arikara and who had a vast knowledge of Arikara stories, songs, and culture. The bulk of the material derives from Morsette, who insisted on narrating each story twice, once in Arikara and once in English. Ten other Arikara provided stories. An indication of how fortunate we are to have been presented with this collection, research for which started with a chance encounter in 1969, is that nine of the eleven sources died in the 1970s and 1980s.

The introduction begins with cultural and historical overviews and continues with an account of previous records, a description of how Parks recorded the present stories, and sketches of the eleven narrators. He then describes Arikara oral typology, the process of translation and presentation, style, narrative structure, narrative content, and performance. Arikara distinguish between true stories and tales. Among true stories, they distinguish holy stories from non-sacred ones. Sacred stories include genesis accounts or traditions of the sacred bundles, myths, and accounts of legendary events. Non-sacred true stories provide accounts of historical events. Tales include humorous trickster Coyote and similar stories, and more serious tales about human beings. The introduction's analytic contribution lies primarily in its discussion of style, narrative structure, narrative content, and performance. Parks concludes that the fundamental purpose of oral traditions 'is to answer the human quest for knowledge about the world in which people live'.

Parks has grouped the stories by narrator and then arranged them to reflect the basic Arikara distinction between true stories and fictional tales. The section on myths

and traditions begins with a prayer, followed by accounts of ancient times, of power bestowed, of historical events (such as the Custer expedition), and of mysterious incidents. The section on tales is divided into tales of human actors and of coyote and others. There is a final concluding song. At the end of many stories, Parks lists comparative references to similar stories among other tribes.

Parks notes that this collection represents the end of the Arikara oral tradition in the native language. 'The individuals who contributed the stories here belong to the last generation who grew up speaking Arikara as their first language and were privileged to hear tribal traditions recounted as they always had been.' Importantly, this collection is the first to have been recorded in Arikara rather than just in English. The stories themselves are interesting and are well presented. Parks gives very a helpful discussion as to how they should be read by people unused to Arikara narrative conventions. The collection is to be appreciated on three levels: first, because of the intrinsic ethnographic and narrative interest of the material; secondly, as a valuable record preserving an aspect of Arikara culture which otherwise would have been lost; and thirdly, as a contribution to the general study of narratives.

R. H. BARNES

ELSIE CLEWS PARSONS, *Pueblo Indian Religion, Volumes I and II*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1996. 1275 pp., Maps, Plates, Appendix, Bibliography, Index. £23.95.

This work is an enormously detailed compendium of information about the various Pueblo peoples of the Southwest of the United States, compiled by the wealthy sociologist, philanthropist, and feminist Parsons from information collected by herself and others. Apart from the record of fact and comparison, there is little analytic discussion in these volumes. The work has, however, had a significant impact on subsequent, more analytical studies, and is deemed not to have been superseded by any other book. For most readers, these volumes are most accessible as reference works. Fortunately, each volume is preceded by an introduction (by Pauline Turner Strong, vol. 1; Ramón A. Gutiérrez, vol. 2) which situates the work historically and with respect to the many controversies it has caused. As a feminist, Parsons is said to have been impressed by the power exercised by women among the Zuni. However, she was confronted with the fact that Pueblo Indians did not wish to divulge the kind of information that anthropologists are interested in. Strong attributes to her what amounts to a modernist, rationalist contempt for the Pueblo need to keep sacred knowledge secret. Parsons made only brief trips to the various communities, using single, usually paid informants, normally away from their communities where they could escape observation. Her principal informant for the Zuni was a Cherokee schoolteacher married to a man who was governor of the Pueblo from 1912 to 1917.

Her publications led to reprisals against those deemed to have been her informants. 'In the end, Parsons's "secretive method"—which was adopted by her protégé Leslie White and others—exacerbated factionalism in the Pueblos, reinforced their

self-protective secrecy, and increased their suspicion of anthropologists and other outsiders.' At Acoma a ritual dance was rescheduled so that she could not see it. At Jemez Pueblo she was confined indoors and her windows covered so that she could not see the deer dance. 'For twenty-five years Parsons laboured under the constant surveillance of "outside chiefs" and their threats to punish anyone who revealed esoteric knowledge.' However, she always obtained informants. For her pains, she was banished from Taos Pueblo and threatened with death. In Gutiérrez's interpretation, her crime was less that she divulged ritual secrets (she claimed that all that she published was common knowledge) than that she unintentionally privileged the positions of her informants within the long-standing factional disputes. Her claim was that she was providing a service for which the grandchildren of the then living Pueblo would be grateful.

Nine chapters are distributed across the two volumes. They cover ceremonial organization, spirits, cosmic notions, ritual, calendar, ceremonies, a town-by-town review, variation and borrowing, and other processes of change. As a record, this study is undoubtedly to be read with caution. However, such was her concern for the integrity of detail that she wished to record any item, no matter how apparently insignificant, on the chance that it might prove to be revealing to subsequent scholars.

R. H. BARNES

JULIE CRUIKSHANK, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1998. xxv, 211 pp., Plates, Maps, Index. £42.75.

In the early 1970s, Julie Cruikshank began to record the life stories of several Native women elders in Canada's Yukon Territory. From then until 1984, when she moved south to pursue an academic career, and as she has been able to since then, Cruikshank worked collaboratively with these women and their families, producing first a series of accounts for family and community use, and then, in 1990, the co-authored book *Life Lived Like a Story*. As well as thinking deeply about the cultural construction of biography and the intersection of personal and community histories with mythology, Cruikshank has provided a most useful example for anthropologists at this point in the discipline's history by producing work which is deeply relevant to its source community while also being theoretically engaged. Her latest volume, *The Social Life of Stories*, brings together a series of essays in the same tradition which are 'about stories and about how their meanings shift as tellers address different audiences, situations, and historical contexts' (p. xi). Typically, chapter 1 begins with two quotes, one by elder Kitty Smith, the other by Michel de Certeau, and part of Cruikshank's gift is that she manages to use them equally well and to use each to make sense of the other. The essays are indeed about stories, both traditional stories told in modern contexts (why and how their meanings shift with new contexts, and how they are used to 'make meaningful connections and provide order and continuity in a rapidly changing world')

and the stories that outsiders—museum curators, environmental scholars—tell about Native cultures in the Yukon.

They range from a consideration of the kinds and uses of narrative practice in the Yukon, to an exploration of the shifting meanings and uses of a particular mythological story and associated songs by Angela Sidney (in one case, to welcome her son home from the Second World War), to thoughts on why certain academic appropriations and decontextualizations of traditional knowledge are both problematic and powerful opportunities for indigenous peoples, to explications of the social meanings of oral narratives about the Klondike gold rush and prophecy narratives, to an examination of the only partially intersecting oral and textual narratives about the meaning of some museum artefacts. Of the elders' words, she concludes that oral narrative 'is better understood as a social activity than as a reified text, that meanings do not inhere in a story but are created in the everyday situations in which they are told'. This being so, she is scornful of a recent genre of scholarship known as TEK or traditional environmental knowledge, which takes titbits of environmental lore out of cultural context in an attempt to assemble recipes for environmental management; and rather thoughtful when considering the stories told in museums about artefacts and cultures, and about the implications of the traditional ethnographic separation of words and things when collected from indigenous communities.

This book should be of interest to anyone who thinks about the construction of narrated histories in any form, is interested in the stories told between indigenous communities and outsiders, wishes a deeply informed and thoughtful consideration of the meanings of museum artefacts, or wonders about the future of anthropology. My only regret is that Cruikshank's essay 'Getting the Words Right: Perspectives on Naming and Places in Athabaskan Oral History' (1990, *Arctic Anthropology*) was not included, so that there would be even more to this richly instructive book.

LAURA PEERS

WAYNE WARRY, *Unfinished Dreams: Community Healing and the Reality of Aboriginal Self-Government*, Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press 1998. 262 pp, Index. £30.00 / £12.50.

It is easy for academics to talk about 'postcolonial theory' or to refer breezily to the 'postcolonial era'. In fact and on the ground, few of the indigenous communities which are engaged in the process of building new relationships with nation-states and attempting to heal the profound damage caused by colonialism can truly speak of 'post-' colonialism: they are still enmeshed in it. Wayne Warry's book *Unfinished Dreams* is an intriguing look at First Nations communities in Canada which are engaging in these processes of change. While First Nations people speak of self-determination and strive to make it happen, this is neither the same as nor as simple as the historical shift implied by the term 'post-colonialism'.

Warry originally trained as a New Guinea specialist, but was unable to find work in this field in Canada. He found himself working on contract for First Nations com-

munities and organizations, initially contributing to the design of a substance-abuse program for Native prison inmates. Through this and other work, he began to recognize the centrality of Native cultural identity, self-esteem, and self-determination in the process of community healing and retrained himself to do what he calls 'advocacy anthropology', which is related to but rather different from applied anthropology. Warry is one of the foremost of a new breed of anthropologists in North America, whose work is primarily responsive to the needs of First Nations communities and is often done on contract for them. From this perspective, as he states, the so-called 'crisis of representation' in anthropology is an academic nervous fit: a far more important crisis is anthropology's general failure to address the needs of the people it has studied, with the consequence now that many communities are beginning to close their doors to academic scholars.

Unfinished Dreams begins by painting a picture of the social and political realities in which First Nations people find themselves today, as well as the recent political history which has made self-determination a possibility for Native people; it is a chapter that every student going to do fieldwork in Native communities should read. Drawing on his work for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Warry wrote a major submission on aboriginal youth suicide for the enquiry), he goes on to describe the grim physical, mental, economic, and cultural health of Native peoples in Canada today. He then turns to aspects of community healing, detailing the development of programmes of health care, mental health and justice which have been implemented in some communities. Warry concludes with a chapter which underscores the relationship between individual and community healing, as well as the bureaucratic and cultural barriers (some of them within Native organizations) which sometimes still prevent this healing.

What fascinates me about this book is not only the haunting voices and statistics that Warry quotes, but the descriptions of the manner in which community healing programmes alter First Nations communities' relationships with Canadian governments. Self-determination, it emerges, is not something that is negotiated in a boardroom, though such developments are crucial: more often, it is the process of enabling communities to heal themselves, and the resulting crop of initiatives from within the community to improve conditions further, to take control, to take advantage of renewed life. The detail in this work is fascinating, tracing differences in approaches among First Nations communities to self-determination; the complex patterns of continuity and creative adaptation, and the courage of Native people in facing overwhelming problems that it outlines, are very powerful.

LAURA PEERS

GERALD SULLIVAN, *Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson and Highland Bali: Fieldwork Photographs of Bayung Gede, 1936-9*, Chicago etc.: The University of Chicago Press 1999. 213 pp., Plates. £31.50.

It is an unfortunate fact that, however active anthropologists may be in their fieldwork, they have eyes and, less often, ears enough to record in writing only a proportion of what goes on. What goes into print is an extract of such notes, dated in time, and biased by the inevitably limited perceptions of their writers. Those coming afterwards read such publications with care as part of historical anthropology and tend to dismiss both the observations and the conclusions as dated by the time the fieldwork is carried out. Indeed, well-published anthropologists themselves tend to dismiss their own early work, even though it may have been adequate enough by the standards of the time in which they were writing.

Except that the camera is pointed and triggered, photographs record all that the lens sees, without discrimination. The effect of this suddenly dawned on Mead and Bateson after he had taken three rolls of film of parents and children in 45 minutes. 'We looked at each other, we looked at the notes, and we looked at the pictures which Gregory had taken. Clearly we had come to a threshold. We then ordered film in bulk and the means to develop it ourselves, as we had little money.' Photography gradually developed from being a check on what they had observed to being crucial evidence. Mead herself makes the point that photography should be 'directed primarily at recording types of non-verbal behaviour where there existed neither vocabulary nor conceptualized methods of observation in which observations had to precede the codification'. They were also used to convince others of what they had seen and give them a 'visceral sense of the order of events' as well as providing clues for the ideas which they were formulating much later. The downside was that as the quantity of photographs increased, so the notes accompanying them became shorter and shorter.

What Mead and Bateson demonstrated so convincingly was that photographs are static, wide-ranging evidence which will show much more than was physically seen at the time and can be used later for further research for matters that the original photographers were not even considering. Whatever may now be the anthropological reputations of Mead and Bateson, the author's analysis of their working methods and the increasing importance to them of photography makes salutary reading, particularly the photograph of them typing out their field notes. In an archive of 28,000 still photographs, there must still be much to be mined. Those published here are a delight and stimulus to ponder over.

R. E. S. TANNER

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