

science and religious rituals, as well as its (hard-core) excesses and its accessibility through a market system. Ironically, the same conditions make it less and less satisfying.

In the Western mind, sexuality and death are linked, replacing the older connection between human sexuality and life (that is, the fertility of the land). In every encounter with pornography or erotica, we experience the imminence of death. Thanatos more than eros, Arcand says, draws us back to it, no matter how aesthetically debased the particular book, picture, lyric or film may be.

Arcand traces pornography back to early pre-Christian fertility cults, but emphasizes its modern form and the stages of development. In 18th- and 19th-century pornography, seduction was a common theme; in the 20th century, seduction yields to the fast fix. Something is lost, but it fits our lifestyle better than stories of secret trysts, deceptions and a slow, leisurely *glissement* toward consummation.

There is a kind of circularity in Arcand's analysis that often makes it difficult to follow. In addition, there is an equilibrium bias that runs throughout the study; there are too many equivalences. Yet serious scholars will find in his emphasis on modernity a rich theoretical schema for future research. He has brought us through the first stage with great clarity, subtlety, insight and finesse.

Welshness Performed: Welsh Concepts of Person and Society

Carol Trosset

Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993. x + 183 pp. \$35.00 (cloth)

Reviewer: Sharon R. Roseman

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

This excellent monograph focusses on Welsh concepts of personhood and social order. In tackling this complex subject, Trosset incorporates approaches used for the study of ideology, practice theory and ethnopsychology. Furthermore, readers gain an in-depth understanding of ethnic and language politics in Wales. The field research on which the work is based was carried out in many different locales, ranging from small, northern villages to the southern city of Cardiff. Her familiarity with Wales as a whole has allowed Trosset to present an ethnography of a nation rather than of a particular community or communities. Also noteworthy is a methodological approach, inspired by the writings of Georges Devereux and Paul Riesman, whereby the anthropologist uses her or his subjectivity as the key tool in coming to an understanding of the cultural assumptions and experiences of those studied. This approach is made explicit throughout the volume, as personal narratives are interspersed with more objective analyses of Welsh behaviour, values, ideas and styles of interaction.

Key concepts of "what it means to be a person in society" (p. 3) are treated in separate chapters, but each new notion builds upon earlier ones. For instance, in chapter 2, Trosset suggests that society is stratified according to individual's relative participation in "Welsh" activities. The most important component of "Welshness" is to be a Welsh speaker; others include going to non-conformist chapel and being able to sing well. Although they live in dispersed locales throughout the nation, Welsh speakers are said to belong to the community of "Welsh-Wales." In the following chapter she continues to employ this concept of cultural stratification when she analyzes sectarian

thinking, and shows that the Welsh-English distinction is “usually framed, and often experienced, in terms of *internal* divisions within Wales” (p. 56, emphasis in original).

An important emphasis in the book is that ethnicity is both a discourse and a series of experiences. One way in which Welsh individuals’ experience of their ethnicity is demonstrated is through a discussion of their participation in a range of performance events. Perhaps the most important of these are the local and national *Eisteddfodau* (festivals where musicians and poets perform competitively). This focus on performance provides a context for the author’s exploration of the conflict between opposing cultural self-images. The Welsh devalue the social and class hierarchy that they label “English,” and think of themselves as living in an egalitarian society. This image will often be framed in terms of downplaying the competitive and judgmental aspects of performances of Welsh music and poetry, so that people will say “taking part is the important thing” (p. 106). An opposing view and recognition of the significance attached to winning competitions is expressed with the statement “everyone in Wales is an adjudicator” (p. 106).

This study is a significant addition to the ethnography of Western Europe, to anthropological studies of language and ethnic politics and to research on personhood, emotions and performance. It will be of particular interest to those who work in non-state nations where the maintenance of a minority language is a focal point for self-definition and cultural activism.

The Possessed and the Dispossessed: Spirits, Identity and Power in a Madagascar Migrant Town

Lesley A. Sharp

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. 345 pp. N.p.

Reviewer: Adeline Masquelier

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This stimulating account of spirit possession in Madagascar’s Sambirano Valley begins with familiar premises: that individual, social or even cultural identities are never static or monolithic, but rather are fluid, malleable and multilayered; that the body provides a readily accessible medium for dealing with social contradictions; and that, rather than confining itself to sacred practice, ritual is a determinant force in society.

The ostensible object of the book is to describe the role and significance of spirit possession—of which the most important form is *tromba*—in mediating problems associated with Malagasy women’s experience of urban life and migrant labour in a plantation economy. This does not mean, however, that participation in *tromba* implies marginality. That much is suggested by the title: the “possessed,” who enjoy a legitimate and profitable lifestyle as mediums, are contrasted to the truly “dispossessed,” who have opted out of mediumship. Unlike ethnographies that portray female mediumship as providing only temporary or symbolic relief from the pressures of the workplace or the tensions of marital life, Sharp analyzes *tromba* as a crucial component of Sakalava culture that permanently empowers its participants.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 provides a social, historical and political-economic backdrop for the analysis of *tromba*. Part 2 discusses how mediumship is implicated in local conceptions of identity, community and history. Part 3 explores