

Overall, Lisa Philips Valentine's book is a useful tool not only for those who are interested in discourse and sociolinguistics, but for those who are interested in indigenous language vitality in Canada. The more we understand the micro-dynamics of a language use in communication, and its relationship to social networks, the more we can appreciate the forces of preservation and adaptation.

### Women Writing Culture

Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon, eds.

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. xiii + 457 pp. \$48.00 (cloth), \$16.95 (paper)

### Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests and Power

Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk and Beverly Stoeltje, eds.

New York: Routledge, 1996. vii + 256 pp. \$55.95 (cloth), \$17.95 (paper)

Reviewer: Naomi M. McPherson

Okanagan University College

Editors Behar and Gordon claim their initial impetus for this project was a feminist response to *Writing Culture* (University of California Press, 1986) which had made a clarion call for a more innovative, experimental and reflexive ethnography, yet had excluded mention of the work of women anthropologists (past and present) because their writing "failed to fit the requirement of being feminist and textually innovative" (Behar, p. 7). The 23 chapters in *Women Writing Culture* accomplish much more than a mere retort to *Writing Culture* by addressing various crises in anthropology and feminism and presenting them in ethnographic writing that is both creative and critical. The three contributions in Part One, "Beyond Self and Other," exemplify innovative forms of women's ethnographic writing. Kondo's use of the dramatic form to explore and push at the boundaries of representation, privilege and politics among women of colour is beautifully conceived, yet, like any play, is probably more powerfully experienced in the theatre than as text/script. Writing autobiographically, Behar anguishes over questions of identity and ethics in the anthropological representation of the Other when the othered is one's self/family. Narayan's narrative account of Charity—woman, anthropologist, academic, wife, writer—who is besieged by her male students, her husband, the androcentric canon in anthropology, even the academy itself, to become one or to become the "Other" is a moving depiction of being a woman writing culture. The eight articles in Part Two, "Another History, Another Canon," constitute the real heart of this volume inasmuch as they reclaim and celebrate women doing and writing anthropology against the grain of a male-centred discipline. Here we are given fresh insight into the lives and works of women such as Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Ruth Landes and E.C. Parsons and some less familiar, such as Mourning Dove, "an experimental writer ahead of her time, [a] trickster who paid a heavy price for her deep play at the boundaries of gender, culture, and truth" (Finn, p. 143). We read too of Ella Cara Deloria who worked for years as research assistant and informant to Boas, but could not get her innovative fusion of fiction and ethnography published in her lifetime. Cole captures the essence of this section by pointing out the imperative to re-read these women's lives and works, not only for their "innovative and non-canonical styles of writing" and "substantive and theoretical contributions," but also to recognize how the hegemonic practices which marginalized these women and their

work “continue to effectively erase much current theoretical work on race and gender” (p. 181). The question raised by the five essays in Part Three, “Does Anthropology Have a Sex?,” must be answered in the affirmative, and that sex is male. Writing theory, the foundation of any discipline, is “celebrated as an art (as opposed to the craft of ethnography) and coded masculine,” and “fieldwork can be coded masculine, heroic, adventurous” (Lutz pp. 255, 256). Anthropological wives were/are incorporated into their husbands’ work and their participation in field work is not acknowledged; wives are muted, subsumed and merged with the husband’s identity (Tedlock, p. 270). Despite an ideological assertion that feminist revision does embrace men who wish to see reality in engendered terms, Newton and Stacey explore how feminist theory often “ms.represents” an essentialized and generalized Male Other, thus making it exceedingly difficult for feminists to establish political alliances with those progressive men. It is, indeed, time for mainstream feminism to make the shift from “identity politics to politics across identities” (p. 289). If such a shift is not made, then Dubois, a graduate student of anthropology and the only male contributor here, is correct to assume his story has already been written by an engendered anthropology ironically closed to a “more gendered understanding of male social theory . . . in terms of sexuality, desire, and the different meanings and articulations of rebellion against a home culture” (p. 309). Lewin reviews the possibility for lesbian ethnography and concludes that, while insider status can lend a particular consciousness to a research project, being a lesbian “did little to enhance rapport” (p. 331) with lesbian mothers, since it was her status as a non-mother and a researcher that were the critical aspects of her identity in the community. This is a wonderfully provocative section, challenging the reader to move beyond accepted analytic categories and tired dichotomies. This momentum is carried forward in the five essays of Part Four, “Traveling Feminists,” that focus on borders, boundaries, margins and interstices, forcing the reader and the anthropological endeavour to move beyond the false dichotomies of Self/Other, us/them, West/the Rest. In this section creative ethnography takes the form of autobiography, life history, poetics, narrative and collaborative writing to move the analysis and the reader away from simplistic analytic categories to an appreciation of the complex interplay among gender, class, race and identity as politics.

While somewhat overwhelming in the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical issues it addresses, this collection succeeds in presenting complex and innovative processes of doing and writing ethnography through the eyes and experiences of women, past and present. The sheer diversity of the textual form will make some parts of this enjoyable book resonate more than others, depending on what a reader brings to and reads from each text, but no one who reads this book can, in good faith, ignore the challenge to engage in debate about the anthropological canon. The collection is well organized thematically, although the lack of a separate bibliography is regrettable in a volume of this size and scope, and the editors and contributors are to be congratulated for a major achievement. This volume is highly recommended for senior undergraduate and graduate classes in anthropology and women’s studies and to anyone who aspires to write culture.

If *Women Writing Culture* explores the multiplicity of ways in which women write culture, *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage* explores the manner in which culture is inscribed on (primarily) female bodies and contested in events variously labelled beauty contests, pageants, queen rallies, festivals and folkloric performances. Whatever the euphemism, icons of femininity are paraded on a range of catwalks, from the elaborate stages of the Miss World contests to the makeshift stages of the transvestite

beauty contests of the Philippines to the lobby of the Lhasa Holiday Inn in Tibet. Potential readers who might be inclined to dismiss the topic as fluff (as I was tempted to do) would do well to consider the book's central thesis that "Beauty contests are places where cultural meanings are produced, consumed, and rejected, where local and global, ethnic and national, national and international cultures and structures of power are engaged in their most trivial but vital aspects" (p. 8). The thesis is developed and elaborated through a variety of theoretical models. Stoeltje's analysis of the Texas Snake Charmer Queen contest as "a ritual response to changing gender relations" (p. 14) makes the young contestant's descent into a snake pit to demonstrate her ability to handle rattlesnakes a powerful metaphor. Lavenda rejects a ritual model as too rigid and favours a "play frame" that permits contestants and sponsors alike in the Minnesotan debutante event to claim they are engaging in fantasy rather than false consciousness. Within Cordoban festivals, a "rhetoric of difference" declares the Queen of the Patios as representative of feminine identity and morality, while exposing the discrepancy of "the ideal Cordoban woman and the reality of daily life for Cordoban woman" (Sanders and Pink, p. 59). Moskalenko's participant observer status in the 1989 Moscow beauty competition offers another interesting perspective on "difference," here between feminine beauty and womanhood in Russia, where beauty has never been contested and being beautiful is "very close to being 'bad'" (p. 64).

The most contested issue in the beauty contests presented here is not beauty but identity because "what one can claim and legitimate as an identity has everything to do with what material and political resources one can lay claim to" (Cohen, p. 127). In Nicaragua, the contestant's ethnic authenticity is judged according to criteria which assert villagers' authority over a cultural heritage appropriated by mestizo revivalists. Mayan women who compete to be National Indigenous Queen of Guatemala are judged for their authenticity; thus, to be inauthentic is to be racially and culturally corrupt, even while being authentic (Mayan) is to be excluded from the politically powerful Spanish minority. Contestants in the southern Philippines are a "contemporary transformation and re-emergence of a ritual transvestite role" (Johnson, p. 90) whereby gay beauty queens become mediators who parade the boundaries of a local Muslim identity and a primarily postcolonial, American global "otherness." In the British Virgin Islands, contests for women and men reinforce gender stereotypes and represent a postcolonial identity nationally and internationally. Liberian Queen rallies are inextricably linked to concepts of progress and development, and become public arenas for negotiating political and economic power, national ideology and ethnic identity. Beauty contests in Belize are also part of a national political struggle to promote a particular ideology and to attract funds and audiences to support political events. Here contests render concepts, values and ideology as incontestable by essentializing "some kinds of difference as ethnic, biological, and immutable, and portray[ing] them as measurable and scalable characteristics, washing them with the legitimacy of objectivity" (Wilk, p. 231). Despite claims to higher purposes, Thai beauty contests exploit and oppress all Thai women with their focus on women's bodies/body parts; clearly, "a well developed feminist critique of the process of ranking women on the basis of their appearance" has yet to be written (Van Esterik, p. 205). National identity is not gendered feminine in Tibet; however, Tibetan women are both an instrument in the debate over Tibetan nationalism and representative of that debate, signifying the potential for resistance to the control of both Chinese and Western (exemplified by the Lhasa Holiday Inn) factions. In the Miss Heilala contest in Tonga, all contestants must perform a traditional solo dance that expresses the essence of Tongan cul-

ture. Judged exclusively by Tongans, in the Tongan language, according to Tongan aesthetics, this performance event forces expatriate Tongan contestants "to question the basis of their identity and to acknowledge the superiority of the local Tongan way" (Teilhet-Fisk, p. 199).

Each contributor brings considerable ethnographic detail and analytic insight to a cross-cultural phenomenon that has not received the anthropological attention it deserves. No longer dismissible as even a frivolous parade of female flesh or the exploitation of women and men, or of gender and sexuality, beauty contests are also arenas where, inscribed on women's bodies, the politics of identity and identity as politics are created and contested at local, national and international levels. Well organized and well written, with an extensive bibliography, this book compels the reader's interest. It will be particularly useful in anthropology and women's studies courses.

**Lushootseed Texts: An Introduction to Puget Salish Narrative Aesthetics**

Crisca Bierwert, ed.

Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996. viii + 325 pp. \$40.00 (cloth)

**Our Tellings: Interior Salish Stories of the Nlha7kápmx People**

Darwin Hanna and Mamie Henry, comps. and eds.

Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1996. xix + 217 pp. \$25.95 (paper)

*Reviewer:* Bruce G. Miller

University of British Columbia

There is a new wind blowing, as evidenced by these two volumes, but you have to look closely to see the details. There are two small, but telling, points just after the title page of *Lushootseed Texts*. One is this statement, in tiny print: "The texts of the Lushootseed [Puget Salish] stories are understood to be part of native cultural tradition, and therefore no claim of copyright is here made upon them." Next to that is the list of those who produced the volume, including linguists (Thomas Hess), Aboriginal intellectuals (Vi Hilbert), anthropologists (Crisca Bierwert) and others. These details speak of a powerful collaboration in the preservation of Puget Salish oral traditions and of a real effort to account for Aboriginal epistemology. Nebraska Press deserves congratulations for acceding to the request to so treat Aboriginal cultural tradition. For these and other reasons, *Lushootseed Texts* reaches a high standard in the treatment of oral materials, comparable to work by Wickwire and her collaborators with the Interior Salish and the Dauenhauer's with the Tlingit.

The first sections of the book carefully describe how the book was put together, including accounts of the storytellers, Emma Conrad, Martha Lamont and Edward Sam, whose texts were recorded in the 1950s. Hilbert, an Upper Skagit elder and scholar, notes that she wishes the oral traditions of her community to reach a wider audience. Hess provides a brief history of the documentation of the Lushootseed (Puget Salish) language and literature, including his own early work with the tapes in the 1960s. Subsequent sections by Bierwert explain how the performative aspects of storytelling are treated in the published texts and deal with complex issues of translation and orthography. The heart of the volume, however, is the seven texts, six concerning the myth period, and the very rich commentaries on them. The original Lushootseed is published on the right-hand page and the English on the left.