
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Thomas J. Csordas, *Language, Charisma and Creativity: The Ritual Life of a Religious Movement*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, xxii + 320 pages, \$40.00 (cloth).

Reviewer: *Paul Antze*
York University

In his first book, *The Sacred Self* (University of California Press, 1994), Thomas Csordas offered a detailed phenomenological analysis of healing practices among members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States. In the present work he takes up a larger and more vexing set of questions about the Charismatic movement as a whole. How are we to understand a "movement" that is both acephalous and authoritarian, that makes equal virtues of spontaneity and control, that preaches "retreat from the world" while its members lead relatively conventional lives? How can its strict rules of conduct be reconciled with ecstatic practices like speaking in tongues? How does "charisma" operate in the absence of a charismatic leader? For Csordas such questions are of more than local interest. Taken seriously, in fact, they serve to challenge some fundamental anthropological assumptions—about social movements, postmodernity, charisma, religious innovation, performativity and the creative possibilities of ritual, to name just a few. Because Csordas takes them very seriously indeed, his book is an ethnography, but it is also something more—a series of critical but very fruitful conversations with theorists ranging from Max Weber and Irving Hallowell to Pierre Bourdieu, Johannes Fabian, Maurice Bloch and Stanley Tambiah.

The book falls into three parts, moving from basic questions about the Charismatic movement and the evolution of its practices to a subtler array of problems involving language, performance and creativity. The first part examines the movement's history and its place in contemporary culture. Here Csordas notes important affinities between Catholic Pentecostalism and other emerging "religions of the self" in India, Japan and Africa. In this and other respects, he argues, the movement vividly reflects the "breakdown of boundaries between symbolic forms" and the "montage of transposable spiritualities" that have become hallmarks of postmodern culture.

In the second part, Csordas examines the process driving the steadily growing intensity and complexity of life in

Charismatic communities since the late 1960s, a process that has yielded both a high degree of commitment and an enormous diversity of visions within the movement. He argues that the dynamic behind this transformation can be understood discursively as one of "rhetorical involution"—a complex interplay between what Bourdieu called ritualization of practice and a second process that Csordas calls "radicalization of charisma."

This discussion then sets the stage for a fascinating theoretical chapter on the anthropology of charisma. Here Csordas makes a persuasive case for rejecting the personalistic theory bequeathed by Weber in favour of the discursive approach pioneered by Johannes Fabian. From this standpoint, as Csordas puts it, "charisma is rhetoric," and the task of understanding specific cases becomes a matter of seeing just how they are enacted, both discursively and practically.

Csordas takes up this challenge in the final and most original part of the book, which examines the ritual performance of charisma among Catholic Pentecostals with special attention to the weightiest of ritual genres, "prophetic utterance." In a dense and extremely rich discussion, Csordas examines the ways in which the Charismatic vocabulary of motives and the illocutionary force of prophetic speech serve to construct a "sacred self" while providing strong incitements to radicalization.

This is an important book. While perhaps too difficult for most undergraduates, it would be an excellent choice for graduate courses dealing with ritual, social movements rhetoric or the anthropology of religion.

Desley Deacon, *Elsie Clews Parsons: Inventing Modern Life*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, xvi + 520 pages, \$29.95 (cloth).

Reviewer: *Sally Cole*
Concordia University

Born in 1874 into elite New York circles to summer at Newport and follow a rigorous round of "calling" when in New York, Elsie Clews Parsons died in 1941, the first woman to be elected President of the American Anthropological Association. It was the discovery of anthropology, Elsie wrote, that

had saved her from despair and cynicism. In *Elsie Clews Parsons: Inventing Modern Life*, Desley Deacon, Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, describes Elsie's migration from a life of enforced leisure in "a civilization that had played itself out" to a life of social commitment and scholarship in anthropology.

Elsie early understood that her disentanglement from her own family and caste was symptomatic of a wider "rebellion of the daughters" against the patriarchal conventions and patterns of privilege of the 19th century. As a student at Barnard College soon after it opened in 1889, she was introduced to another New York, one that was the site of radical branches of the women's movement and the heartland of an industrializing, urbanizing, diversifying America. Parsons studied sociology and became involved in the closely linked, settlement house social-reform movement, working among immigrants on the Lower East Side. Intellectually, she was inspired by French sociologist Gabriel Tarde's theory of "social imitation." In contrast to the organic determinism of 19th-century thinkers like Herbert Spencer, Tarde emphasized individual freedom and creativity in the "invention of the future," thus offering Parsons "the sturdy intellectual rationale she needed to insist on living life her own way" (p. 35) and the hope that a truly "modern" society could be created in the new century. The possibility—and the responsibility—of inventing a new way of life through the example of her own was the guiding principle in every subsequent decision she made. After completing her doctoral dissertation in 1900 and following six years of courtship and three years of "intimate friendship," she agreed to marry the politically active young lawyer (and later congressman) Herbert Parsons with the understood goal of experimenting with and modernizing the institutions of marriage and motherhood. Desley Deacon's intimate portrait of the travails of this marriage is detailed and touching and is in itself a major contribution to the ethnography of the family in 20th-century America.

After visiting the American southwest in 1910, Parsons met Pliny Goddard, then director of the American Museum of Natural History, and through him she met the young men who were revolutionizing the new science of anthropology: Alexander Goldenweiser, Robert Lowie, Paul Radin, Alfred Kroeber and Edward Sapir, all of whom had been students of Franz Boas at Columbia and, with the exception of Kroeber, were of Jewish immigrant families. Rejecting 19th-century classification, generalization, evolutionism and metaphysical speculation, the new science they were charting was positivist and empiricist, emphasized experience as the source of knowledge, and documented diversity rather than uniformity in culture, a project Parsons found close to her own.

The build-up to American participation in World War I solidified Parsons's commitment to anthropology. A pacifist, she viewed with horror the ease with which "preexisting patterns in American life lent themselves to this leap into militarism" (p. 183) and the increasing anti-immigrant sentiment and concern for "racial purity" and Americanization so op-

posed to her own philosophy of tolerance. She turned to anthropological field work as a practical guide to social action. Parsons spent a total of 27 years doing field work in the southwest producing dozens of articles and the massive two-volume work, *Pueblo Indian Religion* (1939). She studied African-American culture in diverse Caribbean and American contexts, and continued this commitment through her funding for research in this field, notably the work of Melville Herskovits. In Oaxaca, Mexico she became one of the first to study the complexity of Indian-Spanish cultural interaction, publishing her findings in 1936 in *Milla: Town of Souls*, a book Deacon describes as "a modernist tour de force" and, in the last years of her life, was continuing her comparative work in Ecuador, published posthumously as *Peguiche: A Study of Andean Indians*.

Desley Deacon provides an ethnography of the dynamics of gender, class and ethnicity in early 20th-century anthropology. Parsons had been slowly accepted by the masculine group in part due to the protective roles played by Goddard and Kroeber, both of whom fancied themselves in love with her for a time, and in part to her increasingly prominent role as a public intellectual in Greenwich Village circles that included her friends in the settlement house movement. Deacon links Parsons with the mavericks in anthropology through her construction of them as "secure outsiders": Elsie who was "secure by virtue of her wealth and social position, an outsider by virtue of her gender and subversive ideas" (p. 107); and the male Boasians "as immigrants with backgrounds in the European professional classes" (p. 103). As the discipline became more field work-based, a move strongly supported by Elsie, she worked against protest from her male colleagues to ensure that women were included in field parties and endeavoured, through her own example, to model how men and women might work together as colleagues and not as potential or actual sexual partners—a utopian dynamic that continues to elude the discipline at the end of the century. Although Elsie, through funding, helped women like Esther Goldfrank and Ruth Bunzel move from secretarial positions in Boas's office into field work and professional anthropology, she was, finally, not able to help them (or other women) to overcome, as Deacon documents, the "sexual innuendo, assumptions about women's place, and the old boy networks, ethnicity, and individual personality that kept talented women out of permanent academic positions" (p. 268). Throughout her life, however, Parsons remained a sensitive mentor to young anthropologists, both male and female, and financially supported the field work of uncounted anthropologists. Interestingly, Ruth Benedict was one of the few who, forced to accept her patronage, resisted a relationship with Parsons, resenting both her own lack of job (and financial) security in the discipline and Parsons' relative privilege to design her own career.

Elsie Clews Parsons is clearly a labour of love, and author Desley Deacon compassionately and carefully draws the figure of Parsons by placing the intimate details of her life against the backdrop of modernist social movements of early

20th-century American society. The Parsons Deacon constructs is a woman who followed Robert Louis Stevenson's prescription that "[t]o live out of doors with the [man] a [woman] loves is of all lives the most complete and free," a woman who found a new and simpler life on canoe trips and southwestern treks with Grant LaFarge and during anthropological fieldwork in some of the most beautiful (and instructive) places on earth. She is a loving mother and her four children emerge as important figures in Deacon's story, guiding Elsie's seasonal round and returning her love. Above all, she is a determined individualist who maintained high standards of honesty and integrity in human relationships, and who lived her life as a committed advocate and practitioner of socially responsible social science. Deacon's narrative reminds us that the social science we practise is intimately rooted in the people we are as individuals: in the quality of the relationships we nurture and in the values we hold sacred in our personal lives. The book is a must for scholars and students of the history of anthropology, women's history, American history and life writing but will have a wide appeal far beyond such disciplinary boundaries.

Richard Feinberg and Karen Ann Watson-Gegeo (eds.), *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific*, London School of Economics, Monographs on Social Anthropology, No. 66, London: Athlone Press, 1996, xvi + 416 pages, \$90.00 (cloth).

Reviewer: *Mike Evans*
University of Northern British Columbia

Leadership has long been one of the key areas of concern for scholars of the Western Pacific, and a great deal of the attention paid to the study of leadership in the Pacific has been comparative. This volume offers a collection of diverse accounts of leadership among both Austronesian and non-Austronesian peoples of Melanesia, and among some of the Polynesian peoples of the Western and Central Pacific. Like many collections produced on the Pacific, the volume is constructed to support comparative thinking, albeit from an ethnographic rather than overtly theoretical basis.

The notion that theory need grow from ethnography rather than the reverse is one with deep roots in the anthropological literature on the Pacific, and it is an approach which is well represented in the work of Raymond Firth (to whom these essays were presented in celebration of his 90th birthday). The work of Firth, together with the seminal ethnological articles on leadership in the Pacific by Marshall Sahlins ("Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5 [1963]: 285-303) and George Marcus ("Chieftainship," in *Developments in Polynesian Ethnology*, Alan Howard and Robert Borofsky, eds., University of Hawaii Press, 1989), form the axes around which the articles turn.

Individually, many of the articles in the volume stand as valuable contributions to the literature in and of themselves. But, in spite of the exhaustive review of the issues and prob-

lems of anthropological approaches to leadership offered by the editors of the volume by way of introduction, the articles do not work particularly well together. Neither Sahlins' "Big man vs. Chief," nor Marcus' "Kingly vs. Populist Chief" dichotomies are robust enough to provide anything more than foils for the appearance of comparison. Indeed many of the articles challenge the assumptions of these earlier ethnological frameworks. The volume retains value because of the concern of the various authors for ethnographic quality (à la Firth), rather than its ethnological contribution.

One possible route towards a greater comparative frame, that is a focus on political economy and the significance of exchange processes for the reproduction and transformation of leadership structures, is sadly neglected. With a couple of exceptions, detailed consideration of economic processes is strangely absent in the articles. This absence is all the more disturbing, given that the volume is concerned with change. There is a tendency to view changes in leadership as simply political, while the impact of changing relations of production and exchange, growing from the integration of Pacific polities with the world system, remains curiously underanalyzed.

In the end, the volume exhibits both the strengths and weaknesses of the anthropological tradition. The authors provide ethnographically rooted and finely grained analyses respectful of indigenous constructions, actions and intentions, which can continue to inform the work of others. Nonetheless, the collection of these articles together in one volume should not be understood to suggest any theoretical coherence. While readers may find essays that will be valuable for comparative purposes (and there are some in this volume I found quite useful), the work of developing frameworks or narratives, capable of supporting comparative thinking, remains undone.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays: A Tribal Voice*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, xiv + 158 pages, \$45.00 (cloth), \$12.95 (paper).

Reviewer: *Winona Stevenson*
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, a Crow Creek Sioux Tribal member and Professor Emeritus of English and Native American Studies at Eastern Washington University, is well-known in academic and Native American circles as a forthright literary critic and proactive political commentator. *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner* is an anthology of her more provocative and insightful critical essays from the past three decades.

Cook-Lynn's essays address a range of Native American Studies concerns—from Indigenous philosophies, historical and contemporary realities, to literature, theory, criticism and appropriation. In addition to challenging Western paradigms and constructs of Native American experiences, she challenges Indigenous scholars to push beyond existing academic