

This book provides intriguing insights for anyone interested in corporate managerial culture, and how this heterogeneous, dynamic culture is changing, affecting corporate culture in general. The level of academic jargon varies from chapter to chapter and thus the book as a whole does not provide a very consistent reading style, although the chapters do complement one another. The bulk of theoretical discourse is found in Chapter 1, and connecting this to following chapters, as well as understanding relationships between chapters, is sometimes difficult. I would recommend this book for use in fourth-year undergraduate or graduate program courses. As intended, the volume does illustrate the complex interplay between social science and managerial dialogue. The volume is intended to complement, not supplant more holistic ethnographical material (p. 3), and would be well-supplemented by texts providing narratives of frontline workers and workplace and/or managerial theory in more detail.

Ralph Maud, *Transmission Difficulties: Franz Boas and Tsimshian Mythology*, Burnaby, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2000, 174 pages, \$16.95 (paper).

Reviewer: *Christopher F. Roth*
Barat College

This volume concludes years of research into the collaboration between Franz Boas and his Tsimshian informant Henry Wellington Tate which resulted in Boas's *Tsimshian Mythology* (1916). Maud compares published texts with originals in preserved correspondence and manuscripts and uncovers disturbing and extensive "transmission difficulties" which Boas never acknowledges in print. Boas lets readers believe they are reading original narratives transcribed from the mouths of tellers and translated thoughtfully into English. In fact, Tate never transcribed face-to-face; he wrote in English, then translated into Tsimshian; and he cribbed from earlier publications, which Boas had sent him as models. Then Boas doctored the texts, often to disguise Tate's methods but sometimes also in the service of prudery or now-discredited approaches to textual "purity." Surely Boas's methods compromise the authenticity, immediacy, and usefulness of the result.

In showing this, Maud provides a valuable service. But in many ways *Transmission Difficulties*, with its meager bibliography and no index, is a troubling book. First, readers will be put off by Maud's attacks on Boas's character, of a ferocity almost never seen in scholarly writing. Not content to analyze the theoretical context for Boas's methodology, Maud attributes any problems in *Tsimshian Mythology* to Boas's personal failings. He calls him "silly," "officious" (p. 23), "uncaring" (p. 31), "ethically mixed up" (p. 39), and "egocentric" (p. 42), refers to Boas's "cowardice," "hypocrisy" (p. 43), "rank sophistry" (p. 65), and "strangely diminished intellectual state" (p. 42), and opines that Boas "gives pedantry a bad

name," deserving not "even the noble name of drudge" (p. 31). Nor does Boas's other great informant, George Hunt, escape such vitriol; Maud calls Hunt's texts "quite possibly the most dreary literary production that the world has ever been presented with" (p. 92).

Maud frames his attacks as a crusade, though he largely ignores a long tradition criticizing Boas's assumptions and methodology. This criticism is the foundation of North American anthropology as we know it, but Maud imagines himself a lone dissenter against a cult of Boasian divinity.

In the most egregious passage, Maud cites Tate's 1907 letter admitting omitting "very bad things" in stories because Tsimshians now live a "Christian life." In reply, Boas urges unflinching completeness, asking Tate not to be ashamed of "horrid customs of olden times" that are "quite distasteful to us" (pp. 37-38). Here Boas, like any ethnographer, gropes for a discourse in which to discuss discontinued practices. For Maud, however who misunderstands the integrative role of Tsimshian Christianity and interprets any Christian influence as anti-traditional—Boas's wording reveals an ethnocentric arrogance which "disqualifies Boas as an anthropologist" and surely convinced Tate that "Boas hates Tsimshian culture." After inferring baselessly that Boas was "genuinely horrified by savage practices" of the Tsimshian such as "head-hunting" [*sic!*] and "lineage boasting in the interminable garage sales called potlatches," Maud, who is not an anthropologist, offers his own version of anthropological ethics, by which anthropologists should even be prepared to "identify with . . . the necessity . . . and joy . . . of 'ethnic cleansing'" (p. 39). By this point it is no longer Boas's level of enlightenment (unimpeachable for his time and place, incidentally) that should concern the reader.

Regarding the botched Tate texts, Maud writes that "it has to be done over." But it has been done over, in a mountain of texts and ethnography by Marius Barbeau, William Beynon, Viola Garfield, and others which recapitulates, then dwarfs and eclipses Boas's clearly flawed book. This accounts for the silence over *Tsimshian Mythology*'s shortcomings that so baffles Maud (pp. 9-10): by the 1930s everyone knew the book was obsolete. Maud sees Tate's original English manuscripts, in all of their vernacular immediacy, as the real treasure trove; hence his 1993 edited text-collection (*The Porcupine Hunter*, Talonbooks), which did little more than reformat Tate's English with line-breaks. But his contention that Tate's compositions were original bricolages is untested against what we know about Tsimshian cultural rules governing memorizing and reciting. The rich post-Boas ethnography could have highlighted for Maud how Tate mostly neglects lineage histories he was culturally forbidden to relate precisely the narratives Beynon, who was Tsimshian, knew to elicit only from authorized tellers. Instead Tate mostly sticks to the far less culturally significant Raven cycle, which is "public property."

Maud is at his least facetious in an extended discussion of the "Story of Asdiwal." Clearly he enjoys these narratives

for their own sake. He rightly chastises Boas for mining this tale for “story elements” but neglecting larger meanings, and he calls Lévi-Strauss’s famous analysis of “Asdiwal” an oversimplified “flight of fancy” (p. 93). But, after tearing down other approaches, Maud’s own lengthy analysis contains mostly questions which the ethnographic record could have answered for him. Maud conjectures that “Asdiwal” is an Eagle-clan saga (p. 105, p. 141), though it bears none of the hallmarks of lineage histories, such as protagonists who leave matrilineal descendants. This is obvious to anyone who has spent sufficient time with the Barbeau-Beynon corpus.

Maud’s own “flights of fancy” abound. Maud complains that little is known of Tate’s identity and offers a confused genealogy identifying him and Beynon as brothers (p. 14), but much could have been cleared up by consulting Garfield’s and Beynon’s preserved notes. Of Tate’s relative, the Tsimshian diarist Arthur Wellington Clah, Maud assumes that Clah is from Chinook Jargon and was a sobriquet given him by a missionary (pp. 11-12), though records are clear that it derives from Wellington’s Tsimshian hereditary name La’ax.

Whether it is details or larger issues, Maud seems obsessed with Boas’s injustices to Tate’s work but strangely uninterested in its context as elaborated elsewhere in the literature. The ludicrous suggestion that a lineage history is unreliable when told by a member of that lineage (p. 91) is a case in point.

Finally, in an epilogue, Maud complains of *American Anthropologist*’s rejection of his earlier paper on Boas and Hunt: “Boasians closed ranks with a vengeance, and the piece was not published” (p. 129). (One wonders: are there any more Boasians?) For a scholar to speculate about possible politics behind a rejection is only human, but airing conspiracy theories publicly is unsavoury. Any readers making it that far in *Transmission Difficulties* will remain unworried about A.A.’s review process but may well wonder what exactly is going on over at Talonbooks.

Caroline B. Brettell, *Writing against the Wind: A Mother’s Life History*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999, xxiv + 193 pages.

Reviewer: *Sally Cole*
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The title of anthropologist Caroline Brettell’s “life history” of her mother recalls Nisa’s words to Marjorie Shostak in *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (Harvard University Press, 1981): “I’ll break open the story and tell you what is there. Then, like the others that have fallen out onto the sand, I will finish with it, and the wind will take it away.” As Shostak sought to do with Nisa’s words, Brettell hopes to ensure that, by recording and publishing a life of her mother—a practice Susan Geiger calls “writing against the wind”—her mother’s words and life will not be lost to the

wind after her death. This life history is also Brettell’s attempt to come to terms with the loss of her mother to cancer in 1991.

Zoe Bieler was a talented woman whose life began on a farm in the Okanagan Valley in 1915. As a child she was an avid reader who dreamt of other worlds and who early discovered writing as a tool of self-realization and exploration of life’s possibilities and alternatives. Zoe was profoundly curious about the world and trained herself to be a keen observer and a good listener through the practice of journal-keeping which she began as a young teenager. At the University of British Columbia during the 1930s, she worked on the campus paper, the *Ubysey*. Through the gift of a savings bond, her dying mother encouraged her to travel to Europe after graduation and Zoe faithfully recorded her observations of that year, 1938-39, in a travel memoir. A few years after her return to Canada, she was launched in what became a lifelong career in journalism in Montreal working first for *The Standard* (1943-1954), then for *The Montreal Star* (1954-1979). In an appendix, Brettell provides a fascinating sample of Zoe’s writings as a journalist on topics such as adoption, divorce settlements, single mothers, working mothers, sexuality, genetics and pay equity.

Brettell organizes the book around the different genres of writing her mother explored throughout her life: the adolescent diary, the travel memoir, the published journalism. In addition to these sources, she draws on her own memories and those of relatives and her mother’s friends and colleagues as well as the weekly letters she and her mother exchanged from 1967, the year Brettell left home to study anthropology at Brown University, until a month before Zoe’s death in 1991. “As mother and daughter we were bound by writing,” Brettell recalls. Brettell’s structure for the book effectively creates a multiply voiced text: each chapter begins with a quote from Zoe, then a prologue in Brettell’s words as daughter-author-social scientist in which she situates the account that follows in social, historical and literary context. The text that follows relies largely upon Zoe’s words chosen by Brettell both to help “compose” her mother’s life and to offer her mother’s words as an observer of the world of women of her time and place. “It is my mother’s production of words that provides both the foundation and the structural framework for this book,” Brettell writes (p. xviii).

In her Introduction, Caroline Brettell—who has previously published the life histories of three Portuguese emigrant women in *We have Already Cried Many Tears* (Waveland Press, 1995)—reviews the anthropological literature on life histories and the issues of voice, authority, self and other that are present in all life writing and ethnography. In reading *Writing against the Wind*, I was reminded of *A Very Ordinary Life* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1974), anthropologist Rolf Knight’s life history of his mother who also grew up in British Columbia in the early years of the 20th century. When Knight had asked her if he could record her life history, his mother had replied: “Why would you want to tell my story? I’ve lived