in the Douglasian sense. Herdt examines incidents where such hermaphrodites, initially raised as females, choose male gender roles after puberty. He questions the statistical analysis conducted by researchers such as Imperato-McGinley on cases in the Dominican Republic, and, to my mind, convincingly demonstrates that the final choice of gender role may be the product of gender inequality and machismo rather than unaided biology (a brain that is "male" before birth).

Last but not least, there is an excellent description of Sambia song-ropes (*SSC*, chap. 1) which identify individuals at different stages in their lives and place them spatiotemporally in terms both of genealogy and of details of geographical locale.

This remarkable book is accessible to good students as well as to professional anthropologists. It is a noteworthy fact that there is as yet no comparable, "thick" analysis of heterosexual sexual meanings or lesbian experience in a non-Western culture.

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Petra Rethmann, *Tundra Passages: History and Gender in the Russian Far East,* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001, 219 pages, ISBN 0-271-02068-X (paper).

Reviewer: *Regna Darnell*
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Koriak reindeer herders of the Kamchatka peninsula's northeastern shore have remained frozen in the anthropological canon since the early twentieth-century ethnography of Waldemar Jochelson for Boas's Jesup North Pacific Expedition. Petra Rethmann's portrait of contemporary Koriak in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet state tacks elegantly between the often harsh realities of individual lives and the political economy which contextualizes their efforts at agency. For Canadian readers, the Koriak experience will evoke an all-too-familiar history of racism, discrimination, forced relocation, residential schools and dogged resistance to imposed assimilation alongside inevitable encroachment and loss of autonomy. The Koriak have been subjected to "the unmaking of their world" (p. 38). Despite their suffering, they have survived and seek a future under their own control. The Koriak are constructing "a historical self-critical consciousness ... about the purpose, function, and creation of tradition" (p. 157). Colonization has not precluded continuity; rather, the Koriak travel toward their future, drawing on traditions of the past.

Rethmann challenges the Soviet narrative of progress which systematically marginalized the Koriak, presenting their regional history in terms of diverse and contentious local standpoints. The meaning of this history is quite different for the state and for the people of the tundra, for women and for men, for elders and for the young. History is envisioned "as an exchange of alternating points of view, jostling with one another, answering back and forth" so that "for all players matters of history are matters of perspective" (p. 31). Such a history is necessarily storied and fragmented, depending on the positioning of the teller. Moveover, the stories themselves emerged in fragments, although assembled and edited by Rethmann with a view to their original flavour.

Although there is no single narrative of contemporary Koriak experience, the individuals who shared their stories with Rethmann were rarely at a loss for words: their "strategy ... involves transforming the rhetoric of primitiveness into the rhetoric of knowledge" (p. 112). That is, the capacity of the Koriak for articulate political debate itself belies their simplistic categorization as nomadic, wild, and primitive. Long-established devaluation of women intensifies these stereotypes, making their stories even more difficult to bring into the public domain. In fact, Rethmann retreats to the "writing" of women's culture (p. 140) through "skins of desire," using the tanning and sewing of furs "to perform and express poetic and alluring aspects of themselves on the surfaces of animal skin" (p. 133).

The metaphors of Koriak experience draw on their traditional culture: travel for a people very recently nomadic and relationship to animals. Travel is not just from known place to known place but also the travel of the shaman, which Rethmann oddly characterizes as "metaphorical" (p. 64). Distant places provide interpretive perspective for the auguries of experience. Rethmann interprets her offer of a gendered spirit guardian to the departing anthropologist's penchant for crossing boundaries and building larger communities: "The choice of Koriak friends to entrust a spirit to my care, and, in turn, me to her care, directed attention to the emergence and building of new forms of sociality" which are not locally bounded (p. 173). Rethmann focuses on the secular adaptation of the shamanistic idiom to contemporary circumstances rather than on the spiritual dimensions of continuing shamanistic practice.

In addition to the reindeer on which their subsistence has primarily depended, contemporary Koriak continue to perform remembered rites of circumpolar bear ceremonialism. Out-

siders associate the Koriak themselves with the bear—primitive, wild, travelling widely, consuming omnivorously. From the Koriak point of view, however, people and bears are much alike. The collectivization of reindeer herding under the Soviet state was, for them, an issue of human-animal relations. The animals of the tundra became "related beings" as Rethmann learned "how to read the animals' sounds and movements socially" and make appropriate ritual offerings (p. 50). Particular animals have their individuality and hunting is far from metaphorical.

The women's stories are chosen to represent the diversity of standpoints within the contemporary community. Taken together, they lead the reader into everyday life broadly framed in terms of global political, economic and cultural forces that impinge upon local worlds. This book is both ethnography and ethnology; there is particular description and amplification of local voices but also interpretation of the ethno-nationalism and identity debates which replaced the Soviet preoccupation with class distinctions at the core of communist social engineering. Readers are invited to move between these standpoints with Rethmann, as she assures us the Koriak already do.

Paul Dresch, Wendy James and David Parkin (eds.), *Anthropologists in a Wider World: Essays on Field Research,* New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2000, xiv + 310 pages.

Reviewer: *Ian Cosh*
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As the editors of this volume remind us, times are tough for British anthropology, for reasons that will resonate with Canadians: neo-conservative budget priorities are making it hard to carry on the tradition of extended, open-ended fieldwork. From a certain "managerial" standpoint, anthropology's brand of research compares poorly with the "rapid field assessment" practices of other disciplines and corporations. In this context, it seems a token bit of money was granted to the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Oxford University for a workshop on methods (held in 1997). To their credit, the Oxford faculty used the occasion to defend anthropological fieldwork as a "patient engagement" with the "wider world." Since then, they have discussed, revised, and collected their papers into this volume, the seventh in a series on "Methodology and History in Anthropology" edited by David Parkin, Director of the Institute. The series abstract promises to offer timely reflections on the state of the discipline:

> Just as anthropology has had a significant influence on many other disciplines in recent years, so too has [*sic*] its methods been challenged by new intellectual and technological developments. This series is designed to offer a forum for debate . . . The intention is for critical essays to complement the intensive ethnolgraphic [*sic*] studies on which anthropology fundamentally depends.

The critical intent of the present volume is declared in the introduction by Paul Dresch and Wendy James. They argue that recent trends in anthropology have neglected "method" due to an excessive concern with the "personal experience" of the fieldworker. "Feminist arguments have been effective and powerful here," they observe (p. 3); but after this perfunctory bow (cf. Caplan, 1992:85) the volume speaks no more of feminism (until a parting nod on page 268), focusing instead on what the editors call a "complementary" mission: to "redress the balance" in favour of the realities of "an intransigent historical world." Searching for a method for apprehending that world, Dresch and James survey a time-honoured trail through the imperatives of listening for the "unsaid" and looking for patterns behind events, arriving finally at the sine qua non of long-term fieldwork. Many—perhaps most—anthropologists are charting new routes through this territory. The editors, however, seem determined to go it alone. For example, they discover, without the aid of a single citation of their many fellow travellers, the challenge of connecting local field experience to global processes. Undeterred, they offer this methodological conclusion: "One cannot see the whole, however. One can only be on guard against self-centredness, and a certain cross-cutting of experience with history deserves noting" (p. 18).

One certainly cannot argue with that. More on history and self-centredness comes in a separate essay by Wendy James. Her reflection on a long fieldwork career in North East Africa is quite interesting in its own right. The narrative supports her strong conviction that fieldwork, far from being a singular encounter, is embedded in a dynamic historical process. Most readers will surely be convinced, if they were not already. Having established this point, James turns her critical attention to Clifford and Marcus' *Writing Culture* (1986), observing that the book promotes an unhistorical approach to ethnography and a "simplistic notion of 'culture'" (p. 88). The source of both errors, she says, is an overemphasis on personal experience. She concludes by contrasting the "whimsies" of "postmodernism" (and this passage is helpfully indexed: "postmodernism: whimsies of, 89") to the "humble," "hard work" invested in "those analytical accounts of human life and experience which might outlast in their significance the emotional ups and downs of the author in producing them" (pp. 89-90). Her case against "postmodernism" rests exclusively on three references to Writing Culture, including a single quotation of two (consecutive) words. Given the gravity of her argument, James shows remarkable restraint in not pressing it forward. Mind you, if "postmodernism" is just a trifling emotion that is bound to be outlasted, then any in-depth critique would be worse than unnecessary; it would be immodest.

This prevailing island spirit is evident in many of the contributions. Notable exceptions are Roger Goodman's respectable effort to salvage the "culture-translation" model from Asad's critique (in *Writing Culture*); and Frank Pieke's intriguing call, in an endnote to his refreshing study of "serendipitous" events, for a poststructuralist adjustment of Manchester School methods. The book as a whole, however, is not greatly concerned with "critical" theory, i.e., the discordant polyphony of feminist, Marxist, and poststructuralist