

the textual descriptions provided. In the concluding section, the authors provide a useful comparative synthesis of the architectural features shared by dwellings across the Arctic. This synthesis, coupled with the detailed summaries of houses provided throughout the book, should provide an excellent point of departure for Arctic researchers interested in further exploring the structural and social dimensions of circumpolar architecture. For the lay reader, Lee and Reinhardt have produced a highly informative and enjoyable book that illustrates the important link between house form and culture.

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**Alison Wylie**, *Thinking from Things: Essays in the Philosophy of Archaeology*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 357 pages.

Reviewer: *Erika Evasdottir*  
*Columbia University*

One of the most enduring—and endearing—consequences of the New Archaeology is that it continues to make people think long and hard about the nature of archaeology, the questions it can and cannot answer, and the goals it ought to have in a changing world. Alison Wylie has produced a marvelous catalogue of all the ways in which New Archaeology has made her think over the years. She thereby exemplifies the possibilities engendered by the combination of theory and practice and shows throughout the value of inquiry to the discipline. Students of anthropology as well as archaeology would do well to read this book not so much for the substance, but as an example of how to be a curious, well rounded, and—above all—a thinking archaeologist.

Wylie begins her tale in 1973, in the summer after her first year of undergraduate studies, at the excavations at Fort Walsh, Saskatchewan. Archaeology was then a discipline deep in the throes of the revolutions begun in the late 1960s by the New Archaeologists. In reading her account it struck me how funny, almost quaint, the rhetoric of New Archaeology seems today, more than 30 years on, and how deeply misplaced the urgency of its posturing. Yet nevertheless, Wylie manages also to convey—and to remind those of us who have forgotten—the excitement of feeling like one was truly participating in a revolution. It was a time that made thinking acceptable, fun, and productive. The process of thinking itself became a site of competition and struggle. Archaeology had till then never been (or seen itself as) an oasis for the practical, taciturn, rugged outdoorsy type; perhaps we first needed a 1950s male-oriented “science” of archaeology in order to break down the contempt felt for the effete armchair thinker before we could move on to find creativity, diversity, and even room for the traditional male ego in more complex theories. For being the true proximate cause of the flowering of the many schools of archaeology that followed, Wylie reminds us to feel ungrudging gratitude for even the most acerbic of the New Archaeologists.

To anyone who prefers the polemical statement, Wylie’s writing can be frustrating because it is, and has always been, marked by a calm, even tone that refuses the rhetorics of extremist posturing or the grandiose statement. She refuses to ally herself with any school in particular. She is fundamentally confident in the persistent resistance of the archaeological record to the play of theory, but she is no processualist. Her basic certainty does not stop her from reading newer and more complex theories and reaching to the feminists, the interpretivists, and the critical theorists, but she is certainly no post-processualist. Wylie’s school is the middle road: the work of archaeologists may be more complex than heretofore expected, but it is both possible and worth doing and, most importantly, new knowledge about the past can indeed be accumulated. In Wylie’s mind, everyone and every theory has something important to contribute to archaeology’s common task. While each idea spurs her to consider the situation from a different angle, she never loses her own sense of where she stands on the basic issues.

That sense of certainty combined with the ability to see something important in every theory is a rare and laudable trait. She is therefore the ideal narrator to walk us through the rise and fall of New Archaeology since it is a tale marked by immoderate statements ranging from grand unified theory to the end of the possibility of knowledge itself. Wylie refrains from making fun of words that strike us now as simply silly, but rather shows the truly interesting issues and problems with which the speaker was grappling and explains how the answers are far more complex than their odd vocabulary may suggest. It is as if she is translating a 16th-century English play full of words that mislead because they seem familiar but whose context must be supplied before they can be understood.

Although the first main chapter does set the scene from a chronological standpoint, the book is not a slave to the order of things (pun intended). Wylie breaks the book into topics and weaves in older, already published essays with new commentaries or essays to show the range of issues and answers each topic brings up. Within each topic, the chronology and context of what was going on at any given time is provided and the topics themselves are wholly well researched. What is perhaps the most useful part of the book for a student is that Wylie provides an encyclopedic list of all the major names and actors in each topic and debate. As for a more established archaeologist, to teach “Intro to Archaeological theory” using this book would be a breeze—Wylie not only provides all the relevant citations but gives a short and easily digested version of each person’s position. For that alone, we must be grateful, and the fact that Wylie’s writing is clear, her précis apposite, and her compilation complete is merely an added benefit.

The problems with the book are not Wylie’s; on the whole, I was unimpressed by how ugly the book is and the font choice was frankly annoying and confusing. I found myself searching to figure out which essays were written when (their dates are cleverly disguised) and which was written solely for this book. Are these criticisms too picky? I would say not, since I found

my first glance through the book difficult and off-putting and students, as we know quite well, are far too easily off-put. Since I think this book's chief contribution to be the opening up of history to students, and since the book is clearly a compilation of Wylie's own intellectual history, I find it frustrating that the book is difficult to use and appears almost deliberately to hide the most important building blocks of history (time, dates, context).

For older archaeologists who can remember when, it is indeed a particular delight to see the earlier essays again. Yet it is also true that seeing them in this context rather changes their meaning. When they were new, and written in reaction to events happening at the time, they were further evidence of a thriving discipline in an exciting era; now, they are themselves symbols of accreted time and an indication that Wylie herself has reached doyenne status (and all the more power to her). In comparison with the tales told in this book, archaeology now appears quiescent; it seems that the exciting times are truly over. Wylie's characteristic lack of passion in her writing does fail in one regard, then, which is to fail to incite students today to jump into the fray and generate something as interesting as New Archaeology compelled us to do all those years ago.

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**Jeannine Koubi** : *Histoires d'enfants exposés. Pays toradja, Sulawesi, Indonésie*. Paris : Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003, Collection Asie, 428 pages.

Recenseuse : *Marie-Pier Girard*  
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La mise en graphe de la littérature orale constitue un défi considérable car il s'agit de rendre compte du style direct de la parole, de capter sur papier le rythme cadencé du verbe. Dans son ouvrage *Histoires d'enfants exposés*, Jeannine Koubi relève ce défi en présentant une anthologie de mythes et de contes tirés de la littérature orale des Toradja de l'île de Sulawesi en Indonésie. Ces récits, minutieusement transcrits et traduits, traitent de l'exposition infantine, un thème qui n'est pas sans rappeler les péripéties du petit Poucet, d'Oedipe et de ses émules, ainsi que les aventures de Hansel et Gretel. En fait, nombreux sont les enfants exposés, qui, comme ceux rencontrés en traversant l'univers imaginaire toradja, font figure de héros dans des contes et récits mythiques.

Cette traversée du monde toradja débute par un survol historique et ethnographique du contexte de production des narrations présentées. Quoique brève, cette section introductive permet d'explorer certaines dimensions fondamentales à la compréhension des contes, dont les multiples célébrations rituelles, la vision de l'enfance et la littérature de «[...] cette civilisation de l'oralité [où] la parole conserve toute sa puissance et [où] on préfère se taire plutôt que de mal dire» (p. 31). En plus de montrer comment cette sacralité de la parole est actua-

lisée dans les narrations, l'auteure décrit le caractère hautement stratifié de la société toradja, la complexité de son système rituel, ainsi que la place privilégiée qu'y occupent les enfants.

Ensuite, le périple entrepris nous amène à faire successivement la connaissance de l'enfant qui devait mourir (Datu Ruang), de la petite fille enceinte, de l'enfant qui n'a pas connu son père (Panggalo'-galo'), de la fille à la dentition singulière (Sangbidang), de l'enfant à la paume velue (Bulu Pala'), de la fille qui crachait de l'or (Timbura'Bulawan), des enfants au gilet de fibres (Babu'Solong), de la fille qui adorait tisser (Tuladidi'/Tulangdidi'), des benjamins (Labokko/Labongkona), et enfin, des orphelins. Dans tous les cas, les héros enfantins se voient exposés au sens mythique du terme, c'est-à-dire placés dans une situation périlleuse en raison de leur différence, de leur a-normalité, telle la possession d'une dentition singulière ou le fait de parler en crachant de l'or. L'enfant particulier, souvent perçu comme une menace potentielle pour son village d'origine, est alors condamné à mort par son père ou par les puissances surnaturelles et abandonné dans un lieu lointain renfermant d'innombrables et d'insondables dangers. Cette exposition constitue dans la plupart des contes toradja le point de départ des aventures des enfants qui, le plus souvent seuls, devront affronter ogres, ogresses et animaux féroces que renferment les denses forêts indonésiennes, endroit de prédilection du bannissement et de l'errance dans l'imaginaire toradja.

En fait, comme le mentionne Jeannine Koubi, l'enfant exposé, invariablement victime de parents indignes ou d'aînés jaloux, est l'être fragile par excellence, infiniment démuné et vulnérable face au danger (p. 239). Mais si l'enfant se retrouve indubitablement en danger de mort, il est également cru mort par ses proches qui effectuent les rites de deuil appropriés, et surtout par sa mère, qui le pleure inlassablement, complètement affligée par le départ prématuré et provoqué de son enfant chéri. Expulsé du cadre familial et rejeté du monde des humains, l'enfant exposé expérimente certes la mort sociale, mais trouvera aussi dans certains cas la mort physique. L'infanticide est donc accompli, mais il ne sera que temporairement maintenu car celui-ci se révèle foncièrement instrumental permettant une transition vers une nouvelle existence, source de richesse, d'épanouissement et de bonheur pour l'enfant exposé. Cependant, il n'en est pas de même pour le village natal de l'enfant qui voit s'abattre sur lui les pires calamités qu'on avait pourtant cru écarter par l'exposition de l'enfant. Ainsi, c'est l'éloignement de l'enfant de son village par son exposition, et non pas sa présence parmi les siens, qui se convertit en la cause même du fléau si redouté. Donc, qu'il soit ramené à la vie ou qu'il échappe à la mort, le héros enfantin des contes toradja, soit «celui qui porte malheur» (p. 246), devient, grâce et suite à son exposition, non seulement une personne influente et puissance, mais aussi un être bienfaiteur, bref celui qui porte chance.

Un tel revirement témoigne de la dimension positive conférée à l'exposition infantine, les narrations proposées permettant de réaffirmer à l'ensemble de la civilisation toradja que