Cha-ka-pesh (usually known as the trickster–hero figure), and technology (the bow and arrow versus the gun).

In the last chapter, Louis Bird is no longer the story teller but more the philosopher deciding that rendering these stories in English rather than Cree is a necessity as "you might as well teach them in the language they're going to live with" (p. 233). He feels the language will soon be gone and the traditional culture is already lost. Nor is he hopeful that present and future generations of Omushkego people can be persuaded to maintain the language and culture; in modern times there are too many distractions.

There is nothing in the book to suggest what could have been done differently, although the editors might have explained why they have given so much weight to matching Cree stories of first encounters with those recorded by Europeans. The puzzling aspect is that these stories are meant to herald back to the time of Henry Hudson or somewhat later in the 1600s. Yet the Omushkego people, along with other Algonquian speaking peoples distinguish between *a-ta-noo-ka-nak*: "stories about events that happened so long ago that the personages are beyond living memory and take on powerful even mystical qualities" (p. 22) and *ti-pa-chi-moo-wi-nan*: "stories...of recent historical events [that] involve people known to or remembered by the storyteller" (p.25). Stories referring to events of 300-400 years ago would likely fall into the first category and take on mythical or mystical qualities. Additionally why would a first encounter with a white man be a significant event worth recording, especially since they did not remain in James or Hudson Bay until much later? A more plausible explanation of why the story is told as a *ti-pa-chi-moo-wi-nan* story is found in Trudel (1992:68) who was told by a Cree elder at Whapmagoostui (east coast of Hudson Bay) that he had been told the story by a Hudson's Bay Company clerk. However, the editors are right to point to the instructive qualities of Cree and European versions of first encounters in that they provide information about how strangers met and how they behaved under the circumstances.

Louis Bird is self-effacing, yet his appreciation of how to relate the stories and legends of his people surely merits academic attention and discussion. He notes that translation of a story is not sufficient and that "you still have to interpret every word, on almost every subject" (p. 243). How true this is and how evident after reading his exceptionally rich narratives combining the original story interwoven with his own learned commentaries. This is the first collection of Algonquian stories where the reader feels the vibrancy of the society and gains a good measure of understanding of the meaning of the stories. Undoubtedly it will serve the modern generation of Omushkego people in the same way.

References

Trudel, Pierre
1992 On découvre toujours l'amérique: l'arrivée des Européens selon des récits cris recueillis à Whapmagoostui. Recherches amérindiennes au Québec 22(2-3): 63-72.

Ira Bashkow, *The Meaning of Whitemen: Race and Modernity in the Orokaiva Cultural World*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006, 329 pages.

Reviewer: *Wayne Fife*
Memorial University of Newfoundland

This is a good book, with one fairly serious flaw. First, the good part (which makes up 98% of the book). In this work, Bashkow provides us with thoughtful ruminations about the ongoing ways that racism is constructed and maintained in the contemporary world. He does this not through vague generalizations about how racism might work, but rather through a very specific reading of how the Orokaiva of Papua New Guinea have created racialized stereotypes about "whitemen" over the last several decades (men, because it has been almost exclusively "white" men and not women that have shared the Orkaiva world in the last 100 years or so). Along with a detailed consideration of raced thought and actions among the Orokaiva, the author also provides us with many comparisons of racism as found among other groups in Papua New Guinea and within the wider world. For me, a few chapters in particular stand out as examples of how we, as anthropologists, can pursue this thorny issue among the various peoples with whom we work.

In chapter 3, "The Lightness of Whitemen," Bashkow discusses how the social life of the Orokaiva and their cultural expectations regarding normal social relationships and interactions are used as a basis for them to try to understand whitemen. Seen as people who are not tied to specific pieces of land nor burdened with heavy social obligations regarding reciprocity, whitemen are thought to have a remarkable ability to project themselves and their influence across vast distances (p. 65). This creates their lightness, which can be compared to the heaviness of being Orokaiva. What are thought to be qualities of whiteness in this respect are both envied and ridiculed, depending on whether the speaker wishes to use them as an example to aspire to or in order to make a point about the superior ways of the Orokaiva. Therefore, whitemen and their actions end up occupying a morally ambivalent position in the Orokaiva cultural world. This ambivalence is further elaborated upon in chapter 4, "The Bodies of Whitemen," in which Bashkow explains that ideas concerning the lightness, softness, and brightness of whitemen are often coupled with the notion that these (positive and negative) qualities give whitemen the superior ability to achieve overall social harmony—a harmony that seems painfully absent from Orokaiva life (p. 143). This idea of social harmony is further tied to understandings concerning the success or failure of various forms of desired economic development on the part of the Orokaiva.

However, it is not principally in the body that racism among the Orokaiva is engendered or elaborated upon. Rather, if we wish to understand racism we also have to look outside of the body. Or, as Bashkow states: "In this book I have argued that race is constructed not only in persons and groups but

also in objects, institutions, activities, and places which are interpreted as having racial characteristics" (p. 244). This is the key point of the book and it may prove to be a critical insight into why racism remains prevalent in the face of anti-racist counter-evidence that focusses upon the person, the body or the individual. If racial stereotypes do *not* depend primarily upon cultural categories of the body or the person, as Bashkow argues, then eradicating or even ameliorating racism becomes dependent upon our understandings of how it does become embedded in all kinds of extra-human locations.

An excellent example of how this embedding occurs is provided by the author in chapter 5 of the book: "The Foods of Whitemen." Food is raced among the Orokaiva in a complex fashion. Some foods that are thought of as coming from the world of money and generally acknowledged as being brought by whitemen, such as packaged noodles, white rice, cans of evaporated milk, and canned fish, are all thought of as store foods or whitemen's foods. These foods are thought to be light, wet and weak (p. 153) in comparison to the hard, heavy, and strong pork, taro, cooking bananas and other specific edibles that are thought of as Orokaiva foods. Along with the text, Bashkow provides us with an excellent table on page 197 of the book, in which he shows the complexity of Orokaiva thought in relation to food by dividing it up into five separate categories. These categories shade from food that is clearly thought to be whitemen's food, through three categories of a wide variety of foods that are much more weakly identified with either whitemen or the Orokaiva (such as onions, peanuts and soft bananas), to the category of foods that are firmly and strongly identified with the Orokaiva. It is this kind of subtlety that characterizes the book as a whole and that makes this work such a valuable discussion about the issue of racism in the contemporary world.

This makes what I am about to say all the more puzzling. Those of us who work "elsewhere" have an unfortunate tendency to engage in Occidentalism. I'm quite aware that I've done it myself on any number of occasions. We seem to know better, but we do it anyway. Bashkow is guilty of such an engagement when he states repeatedly that "The West" is a single culture, social formation, or otherwise capable of somehow acting as a singular entity in important ways (e.g., pp. 5, 9, 14-15, 58, 89, etc.). These are the kinds of reifications that drive our colleagues who conduct research concerning the Anthropology of Europe to distraction. At a time when debates rage even within self-identified European countries about what, if anything, constitutes "Europeaness" it becomes that much more problematic to state that there is anything that could be singularly identified even more broadly as a "Western Culture" or a "Western Society." This becomes even more absurd an idea when we add Canada and the United States, Australia and New Zealand, and other similar countries to the equation. Should Israel be included? How about Japan, or South Korea? Even trying to limit "Western" to "European" has become an issue in the contemporary world. Just ask those who are attempting to define the European Union on an ongoing basis. Is Turkey to be considered European or not? I would not be making this criticism of an otherwise fine book if it were merely an issue of semantics. Rather, this kind of reification has important real world implications as, for example, when Bashkow carefully explains that the greatest problem that the Orokaiva face today if they are going to retain their cultural autonomy comes from the possibility of continually expanding oil palm development projects at the expense of land for basic subsistence and minor market gardening. These projects are funded and sponsored by the World Bank. In the face of this danger, he states: "given the ineffectiveness and aid-dependence of the PNG government, it is up to no one but the West to prevent this from happening" (p. 239). This is dangerous thinking. To begin with, why should the Papua New Guinean government not be held responsible if they fail to act properly to protect the collectively owned lands of their own citizen-groups such as the Orokaiva? Who, exactly, does Bashkow mean by "the West" in this sentence? Does he really mean the United States dominated World Bank? If so, then why not say so?

This goes for the rest of us as well. If what we really mean to refer to in our critiques, for example, is capitalism as an interlocking set of economic systems and social processes at a given moment in time, then we should say so. If we really mean to refer to the actions of specific state governments or international agencies operating in a particular historical period, then we should also say so. Hiding behind vague statements about the West, which seems to implicate nearly everyone while blaming no one, does not take us very far as critical anthropologists.

I like this book and I would consider teaching classes with it, as there are many worthwhile lessons contained within its covers. As an exploration of the issue of racism and why it has proven to be so intractable, it is a first rate piece of work. The excellent chapter on the racialized symbolism of food alone is worth the price of the volume. *The Meaning of Whitemen* could be productively used for university or college courses dealing with the contemporary Pacific, social divisions and how they come about, racialized discourses, the ever-changing cultural world of modernity, or any number of other related issues.

Luis Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, *Droit légal et insulte morale. Dilemmes de la citoyenneté au Brésil, au Québec et aux États-Unis.* Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2005, 176 pages.

Recenseur : *Guy Lanoue*
Université de Montréal

Le problème central analysé par l'anthropologue brésilien Cardoso de Oliveira dans son œuvre *Droit légal et insulte morale* est bien exprimé par le paradoxe décrit dans le premier